

The Slovene Inter-War State-Building: *From Existential Fear to Seeking Opportunities*

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ABSTRACT

The restoring of the Slovenian state-building has begun in August 1918, passed through four windows of opportunity and remained unfinished in the context of the planned dismemberment of Slovenian lands between Italy, Germany, Hungary and Croatia in 1941. The incompleteness of this process was due to the indecision of the Slovenian national-political program, the split of the Slovene politicum on the trends of Yugoslavism and "Sloveneness", which was rooted in the confidence of the Slovene people in their "non-historicity". The state-building process has restored in the most part of the Slovenian lands, which became part of the state of Yugoslavia, common with related Slavic peoples. The windows of opportunity of the state-building process show its wavering character: it was restored and accelerated in times of internal political chaos – the collapse of multinational states within which the Slovenian people lived, in conditions of the increasing external threat across the Slovenian northern borders with Italy, Austria and Hungary. Thus, in the conditions of a stable existence in multinational states with an authoritarian regime, the process of Slovenian state-building slowed down.

KEYWORDS: Slovenia, state-building, Yugoslavism, Sloveneness, windows of opportunity

POVZETEK

Obnova slovenske državotvorne oblasti se je začela avgusta 1918, imela je štiri okna priložnosti in ostala je nedokončana v okviru načrtovanega razkosavanja slovenskih dežel med Italijo, Nemčijo, Madžarsko in Hrvaško leta 1941. Nepopolnost tega procesa je bila posledica neodločnosti slovenskega nacionalno-političnega programa, razcepa slovenske politike na trende jugoslovanstva in »slovenstva«, ki je bil zakoreninjen v zaupanju slovenskega ljudstva v njihovo »nezgodovinskost«. Državotvorni proces se je obnovil v večini slovenskih dežel, ki so postale del države Jugoslavije, skupaj s sorodnimi slovanskimi narodi. Okna priložnosti procesa izgradnje države kažejo obotavljanje: proces je bil obnovljen in pospešen v času notranjepolitičnega kaosa - propada večnacionalnih držav, v katerih je živel slovenski narod, v razmerah naraščajoče zunanje grožnje na slovenski severni meji z Italijo, Avstrijo in Madžarsko. Tako se je v razmerah stabilnega obstoja v večnacionalnih državah z avtoritarnim režimom upočasnil proces izgradnje slovenske države.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: Slovenija, državotvornost, jugoslovanstvo, slovenstvo, okna priložnosti

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of each nation there are necessarily periods that decisively affect its further historical and political destiny. Such periods, regardless of their real consequences, become the subject of historiographical legendarization and are either silenced or studied one-sidedly and overgrown with a mass of aggregate details, mostly taken out of the real historical context, creating the desired historical and political concept.

Such a role in the history, not only of Slovenia but also of the whole of South-Eastern Europe, belongs to the interwar period. This period decisively influenced the fate of the peoples of the Western Balkans. The most difficult fate befell Slovenia. Four states had dismembered its lands and divided people. In the interwar period, Slovenia lost the chance to unite, to protect its language and culture from Yugoslav unification and to gain independence in the conditions of an authoritarian state, which justified its centralization by that unification. The problem of Slovenian state-building in the interwar period is poorly studied even in Slovenian historiography. If we summarize the views of Yugoslav historians on the state-building and political development of Slovenia in 1918-1941, their first and main conclusion was based on the comparison and similarities with the Serbian position on the political parties' activities during the First Yugoslavia: it was parliamentarism and fierce party struggle even at the highest authority of the country, which led to catastrophic consequences like separatism, dictatorship and the defeat of the First Yugoslavia. All this served as a good theoretical basis for justifying the one-party system and Yugoslavism, which first reigned during the dictatorship since 6 January 1929, and gradually passed into the Second Yugoslavia.

Over the last three decades, significant results have been achieved in the study of the interwar history of Slovenia. Every year new publications of archival materials change the general picture of its political life. In general, the modern history of Slovenia can be characterized by the opening for scientific discussions of those topics and problems that were completely silenced in the Second Yugoslavia. But it is too early to talk about a full understanding of the process of Slovenian state-building in this period. Slovenian historians only consider a significant period in Slovenian state-building during the stay of Slovenes in the State of SCS.²

2 Perovšek, 2009, p.11, for more see Balkovec, 1992.

In the 20th century the process of disintegration of empires led to a rethinking (or rather - a new thinking) of self-estimation of national communities. The political and cultural existence of the “small” European Slavic peoples was practically reproduced, with the support of the national language and a return to the national spiritual tradition. Such peoples have included the Slovenes.

We consider the restoration of Slovenian statehood as a reproduction of the main branches of the Slovenian national state power - legislative, executive and judicial, among which research focuses on the first two.

Until October 1918, all Slovenian lands (except Venetian Slovenia) were administratively a part of Austria. At the end of the First World War, the Slovenes tried to unite their ethnic lands into a single state unit in a frame of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (hereinafter - the State of SCS). On December 1, 1918, the State of the SCS signed the Unification Act with the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro. Thus, in the Western Balkans, a new multinational state arose, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (hereinafter - the Kingdom of SCS), which in 1929 was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After World War II, Yugoslavia became a federation of six republics. In historiography, these Yugoslavias are often denoted by the terms First and Second Yugoslavia.

In the conditions of political stagnation of the First Yugoslavia, Slovenian state power was reduced to sprouts of self-government, the size of which depended on the balance of political forces under different regimes in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Historical processes in the Slovenian lands, with the formation of the Slovenian early feudal state of Carantania in 623, led to the creation of appropriate branches of government - legislative, executive and judicial. The historical heredity of Slovenian statehood, which until the end of the First World War existed only at the level of historical narrative, was studied and proven in the 1930s and 1940s by the prominent Slovenian medievalist Josip Mal. He pointed to the formation of the main state institutions and Slovenian legislation, which proves the full compliance of Carantania with the concept of “an independent state”. These proofs of the “historicity” of the Slovene people, despite opposition of the prevailing state internationalism in both Yugoslavias, gradually ideologically freed the Slovene people from obscurity of

their own statehood past and substantiated the Slovene national idea on a historical and legal basis.³

“WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY” AS A HISTORICAL RESEARCH METHOD

The peculiarity of the subject of research is that it is necessary to connect the uniqueness of the fact of the restoration of Slovenian statehood in 1918 and its further discreteness and incompleteness till 1941. This allows us to consider the process of state-building as a dynamic subject area through the construction of its model. We build this model in the continuity of a certain period; identification of manifestations (chronological “windows of opportunity”) and the reasons for its discreteness; as well as a set of factors of its failure. Its construction requires, above all, the definition of a chronological framework.

This is due to the definition of the chronological framework of the study. Applying a systematic analysis and problem-structural method, the dates of 1918-1941 are chosen in isolation from the established chronology of the interwar period, which for Europe is traditionally determined by two events: the end of the First World War on European fronts in the first days of November 1918 and the beginning of World War II in September 1939, or the entry of a certain state into the war, for Yugoslavia this was April 6, 1941. The logic and dynamics of the Slovenian state-building process, which resumed in August 1918 (starting date) in the form of the “August” National Council of the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in Ljubljana, requires the final date of the study in September 1941, when in the conditions of Nazi-Fascist occupation the leaders of the second, “April” National Council for Slovenia, left the open political scene, and, thus, the Council finally went underground. Both dates are connected with the culminating crisis moments of the collapse of the states, in which Slovenia was involved, and are thus the widest “windows of opportunity”.

One of the political science concepts - *“windows of opportunity”* - is essential for considering the Slovenian statehood restoration as a dynamic subject area. The concept of “windows of opportunity” was developed by Vice President of the McKinnack Center for Public Policy (Midland, USA) Joseph Overton in the late twentieth century, as an elective political technology, so this type was called *“Overton windows”*.

3 Mal, 1939, Mal, 1942.

The main idea is that it is not politicians but challenges of society that influence the choice of the direction of the state course. Joseph Lehmann, president of the center, wrote in 2010:

“Many believe that politicians move the window, but that’s actually rare. In our understanding, politicians typically don’t determine what is politically acceptable; more often they react to it and validate it. Generally speaking, policy change follows political change, which itself follows social change... The Overton Window doesn’t describe everything, but it describes one big thing: Politicians will rarely support whatever policy they choose whenever they choose; rather, they will do what they feel they can do without risking electoral defeat, given the current political environment shaped by ideas, social movements and societal sensibilities”.⁴

By content, “Overton Window” is adjacent to the modern broader concept of “window of opportunity” in all its diversity of application, intersecting with it in many respects. The concept of “window of opportunity” is more voluminous. First, it is an “applied” political technology, and secondly, it is characterized by “processuality”.

Thus, we define the “window of opportunity” as a general theoretical concept of a holistic historical continuum - a complex and internally contradictory historical and political phenomenon, which is revealed through the emergence of a set of conditions for the possible implementation of this event; the increase of this complex to the highest probability and the further decrease to the final loss or seize of opportunity.

On the other hand, the “window of opportunity” is a holistic existential (historical) phenomenon with the limits of its implementation, i.e. the achievement of the full probability of its realization. In the case of such a phenomenon as the process of Slovenian state-building, the will to achieve this is the driving force of the Slovenian national movement.

In this methodological focus, all attempts of Slovenes to resume the process of state-building in 1918-1941 should be understood, of course, not as one-time separate historical and political actions, but as events that had a complicated pre- and post-history and were a large-

⁴ Lehman, 2010.

scale phenomenon with clear boundaries of existence, within which different vectors of motion were possible.

SLOVENIAN NATIONAL AND STATE-BUILDING IDEA: HOPES AND FEARS

The nineteenth century brought the “revival” to Central and South-Eastern Europe. The National Revival of the Slavic peoples, as the process of the formation of national identity among the southern and western Slavs, being under the rule of the Ottoman or Austrian empires, was associated with the struggle for political unification and state independence. As a rule, three stages of the National Revival are distinguished - 1) educational (late 18th - early 19th century), 2) national-religious (early 19th century - revolution of 1848) and 3) national liberation (after 1848-1849 until 1878 among the Slavs in the Ottoman Empire, and up to 1918 among the Habsburg Slavs).⁵

At the same time, the “revival” of Italians and Germans was taking place. *Risorgimento*⁶ - the national liberation movement of the Italian people against foreign domination, for the unification of Italy, actively developed in 1820 - 1861, was accompanied by numerous uprisings and Austro-Italian wars⁷ and ended in 1871 with the annexation of Rome to the Italian Kingdom.

Unification aspirations in Germany had already begun during the Napoleonic Wars (the creation of the German Confederation in 1806⁸) and were especially vigorous in the revolutions of 1848-1849 (Frankfurt Parliament⁹), but could not immediately lead to *de facto* unification. The problem was under whose hegemony to implement it - Austria (*Großdeutsche Lösung* - “Greater German solution”) or Prussia

5 For more see Hroch, 2000.

6 Il risorgimento (ital.) - revival, renewal. Italy was split into 8 states. More details: Giardini, Cesare (1958).

7 Three Austro-Italian Wars (1848-1849, 1859-1860, 1866) led to the unification of the Kingdom of Sardinia with Lombardy, Tuscany, Romagna, Parma and Modena, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and later, in 1867, the region of Venice with Venetian Slovenia was annexed to Italy. For more see Marušič, 2011, pp. 32-33 and Mack Smith, 1968.

8 The German Union (Deutscher Bund) is an association of 35 independent German states and free cities, created after the Congress of Vienna on the site of the Holy Roman Empire, which was dissolved in 1806. It included the German-speaking territories of Prussia and Austria (including the Czechia and Slovenia, which were administratively subordinated to Austria). See Kermavner, 1962, p.83.

9 From May 18, 1848 to May 30, 1849, a single national assembly for the whole of Germany met in Frankfurt. The deputies actively discussed options for German state-building, based on the «Little German» model and developed a draft, named «Paulskirche Constitution», built on the principles of parliamentary democracy. The ideas failed when faced with the refusal of the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV, of the proposed title of Kaiser. The most important provisions of the «Paulskirche Constitution» were taken as a model when creating the constitution of the Weimar Republic in 1919 and the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. See Kirilina, 1994, pp. 3-11, Granda, 2001, pp. 475-510.

(*Kleindeutsche Lösung* - “Little German solution”). Supporters of the “Little German” way believed that the participating countries should unite into a single Germany under the leadership of the King of Prussia and without Austria. They believed that with the unification of Germany under the leadership of the Habsburgs, due to the multinationality of the Austrian Empire, the share of the German population in the new state could never reach the majority. Both countries were dependent on Austria, and it also hindered their unification.

At the same time, Slovenian lands are geographically located in a triangle between Italy, Germany and Austria. They used to be administratively divided into 6 provinces of Austria – Slovenian Littoral, Istria, Gorizia, Carniola, Carinthia, Styria (Slovenes inhabited them in different percentages), and thus were already part of the German Union. If the Germans chose the “Great German way”, the Slovenes would have to enter the “Greater Germany”. “The land on which Slovenes live, is the natural cross to the Adriatic Sea, which Germans would save for Mother-Germany”.¹⁰

On the other hand, the idea of irredentism,¹¹ which was developed in Italy at the end of XIX - early XX century, encroached on the Slovenian lands of Istria, Littoral and Gorizia.¹²

Namely at this time, at the beginning of the “Spring of nations”, the formation of internal preconditions for the restoring of the Slovenian statehood led to the drafting of the program of United Slovenia.¹³ As Matija Mrazović said, “Slovenes are divided into six administrative lands: Gorizia, Trieste, Istria, Carinthia, Carniola and Styria. And although they sit in six provincial councils, everywhere, except in Ljubljana, they are a minority, and their voice is not heard at the throne.

Because of this, they are oppressed in every province by the lordly

10 Mrazović, 1870, p.159.

11 In 1878, Menotti Garibaldi founded the Irredenta union (ital. irredenta – “unredeemed”) for annexation of the border territories of Austria-Hungary with the Italian population to the Italian Kingdom. Currently, the term irredenta denotes a part of a nation, that constitutes a minority within a given state, but compactly resides in close proximity to that nation state. Geographic proximity and compactness of residence distinguish irredenta from diaspora.

12 The Irredenta laid the foundation for the Italian irredentist movement, which aimed at uniting all ethnic Italians within one state. The territories, to which the movement made claims, included Trentino and Tyrol, as well as areas with a multi-ethnic population that included, in addition to Italians, Germans, Slovenes, Croats, Ladins and Istroromanians, such as South Tyrol, Istria, Gorica and a part of Dalmatia. Later, claims were made against the city of Rijeka (Fiume), Corsica, Malta, Nice and Italian Switzerland. For more see Večerina, 2001.

13 On the program of the United Slovenia see Granda, 1999, Melik, 1998, pp.15-20, Prunk, 1998, Prunk, 2000.

people, although, for the most part they are a nation; that is the case in Istria, Trieste and Gorizia, but not in Styria and Carinthia, where Slovenes are a minority in any case. The only parliament in which the Slovene tribe can raise its vote, is the *Carniolan Provincial Assembly* in Ljubljana. That is why today Slovenia is mostly only Carniola, and Slovenes cannot express themselves as Slovenes in any provincial council, except the one in Ljubljana”.¹⁴

Granda emphasizes that the consciousness of “Sloveneness” and “Slovenes” grew for at least several centuries, but only March 1848 created an opportunity for Slovenes to speak aloud for themselves and reveal their goals and desires.¹⁵

At the time, those goals were only outlined. On March 29, 1848, the Cathedral Chaplain in Klagenfurt and People’s Awakener Matija Majar-Zilsky in the article “Glory to God in Heavens” noted that “everyone should live in their country like at home, as he considers needed: a German in a German way, an Italian in an Italian way, a Hungarian in a Hungarian way”- that means, the Slovenes in a Slovenian way. He proclaimed the most important Slovenian aspiration: “let us be free, let us be able to introduce our Slovenian language in Slovenia when we want and as we want, in a small school or an office”.¹⁶

The essence of the program was most clearly expressed by Graz Slovenes: “Overcoming the historical division of the country into provinces, merging our Slovenian land within linguistic borders into a single country and thus the concentration of all of us into a single nation”.¹⁷

But after the election of the Frankfurt Parliament in May 1848, the Slovenes felt like a “small” nation threatened by “drowning in the sea of Germanness”.

The Croats had a similar goal - the unification of their state-administrative units into a single Greater Croatia - and saw it as nationalism, that is, the idea of creating a common state of Austria-

¹⁴ Mrazović, 1870, p.159.

¹⁵ Granda, 1974, p.53.

¹⁶ Majar, 1848, pp. 4-6.

¹⁷ Granda, 1974, p.53.

Hungary-Croatia. In addition, both nations had common historical external enemies (Turks and Italians). This strengthened the Slovenes, and they joined the united Yugoslav camp together with the Croats and Vojvodina Serbs.

The Slovenes wanted to save themselves either from the loss of any guarantee for their national development in Greater Germany, or from the dismemberment and pressure of Germanization and Italianization, which hindered their national development in Austria.¹⁸ Therefore, they began to demand not full independence, but only national autonomy in the form of unification of all Austrian administrative units, in which Slovenes lived. They considered the Catholic Austria as a defender against absorption by Protestant Germany, and Croats as allies and brothers. Although the demands of other Western Balkan Habsburg Slavs went much further, they all saw a way out in a joint struggle under the slogans of Yugoslavism.

Thus, in 1848-1849 the Western Center for the Unification of the "State" of Yugoslavia was established on remnants of Croatian statehood as part of the Habsburg Empire; In the resolutions of the Croatian Sabor, the Serbian Vojvodina from the east and the Slovenian lands from the west were also programmatically connected with Croatia.¹⁹

Hundreds of scientific publications are devoted to the study of the development of Yugoslavism in the XIX-XX centuries, in all its manifestations and aspects. The subject of perennial discussions in Slovenian historiography, among others, was the connection between the program of the United Slovenia, as a national idea, and Yugoslavism, as a political idea that would make the national one come true. The main issues for discussion were the time and conditions of the inclusion of Slovenes in the Yugoslav movement. Historians have found that, as already mentioned above, in 1848²⁰ Croatian Sabor, in Art. XI § 6, included the point that the Slovenian provinces of Lower Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Istria and Gorizia were in close alliance with the Triune Kingdom".²¹

18 Kermavner, 1962, p.84.

19 Ibid, p.82.

20 This decision of the Croatian Sabor in 1848 is forgotten too much somewhere, and we always hear it wrong, as if that first concrete formulation of Yugoslav or Croatian-Slovenian political reciprocity or unification arose on the Ljubljana Congress in 1870. For more see Kermavner, 1965-1966, p.339.

21 »Na visokome«, introduction, In: Zatočnik, št. 254 z dne 8. novembra 1870.

The failure of the “Spring of Nations” and the Greater Germany solution calmed the national liberation movements of the Habsburg Slavs for a long time. Among the Slovenes, the propensity for the idea of Yugoslavism developed slowly and gradually.

And already in 1867, Austria had to give Venetian Slovenia to Italy.²² The disappointment of the Slovenes in Austria, as in a defender, in 1867 strengthened the idea of United Slovenia and led to the beginning of the Slovenian “camp” movement in 1868-1871. The camps were realised as thousands of national assemblies in the form of tent camps in peasant fields, organized by Slovenian cultural and political actors and students. Peasants, who represented the vast majority of Slovenes, as the basis of the national movement, the spiritual and secular intelligentsia, and the burghers took part in them.

“Slovenes are aware of themselves, they have awakened, and despite the political fragmentation, they know that they are one tribe. Therefore, in their camps, they demand the unification of the Slovenian tribes into a single political body”.²³

In the autumn of 1870, under the influence of German victories in the Franco-Prussian War, Croatian and Slovene politics finally became closer. Prussia set out to create a new German empire and most likely wanted to seize the “hereditary” Habsburgs’ lands, which belonged to the German Confederation until 1866. There was the growing concern among non-German peoples in Austria who feared the worst ethnic oppression under the Prussian heel. “The German-French war raised the question of a closer national-political connection between the Triune Kingdom and the Slovene lands, which fell completely asleep after 1848”.²⁴

The Slovenes were “always ready, ...relying on Croatia, to save themselves from the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire, which could drag the Slovenes into the mouth of Greater Germany,²⁵ which... would like to reach Trieste through their territory”.²⁶

22 According to the Prague Peace Treaty of August 23, 1867, Austria transferred Holstein to Prussia and withdrew from the German Confederation, thus refusing to participate in the union of the German states under its own leadership. Italy got Venice and Venetian Slovenia.

23 Mrazović, 1870, p.159.

24 Kermavner, 1962, p.83.

25 Ibid., p. 84.

26 Zwitter, 1962, p.145.

So, the existential fear aroused the Slovenes' belief in the need to unite with any political force to prevent national destruction.

Therefore, Slovenian politicians began the negotiations. First, they came to the Croats for a conference in Sisak on November 8, 1870,²⁷ and a month later, December 1-3, organized the famous Yugoslav Congress in Ljubljana.²⁸ These conferences discussed strategic and tactical approaches to the trialist policy of Austria-Hungary. Regarding the "Slovenian question", support for Slovenian unification and national-political Croatian-Slovenian unity were accepted.²⁹

Obviously, the growth of Slovenian self-identification was accompanied by external factors: the threat of assimilative Germanization (Yugoslav Congresses of 1848³⁰ and 1870) and the beginning of the dismemberment of Slovenian lands (Austria's transfer of Venetian Slovenia to Italy in 1867). Since then, Slovenes have lost not only much of their people and their lands, but also their self-confidence in ability to protect the nation's integrity and identity.

Prerequisites for the restoration of Slovenian statehood were formed in the period 1848-1918. First, the Program of "United Slovenia" in 1848 formulated the Slovenian national-state idea (unification of all ethnic Slovenian lands into a single administrative unit with its own parliament and recognition of the Slovenian language, i.e. full national autonomy).

Secondly, the driving forces of the process were formed - the main political camps: clerical, liberal and socialist, whose programs were focused, to one degree or another, on the creation of a single national state unit. Their social bases sometimes intersected.

27 Kermavner, 1962, p.83.

28 In Slovenian historiography, the Slovenian-Croatian association has been discussed since 1921. Its origins, actors, ideas and their supporters, connections, proposals, the development of political events became the subject of heated discussions in the 1960s and continue to attract attention in the latest historical literature. For more see Radojčić, 1921, Kermavner, 1962, pp. 81-144, Zwitter, 1962, pp.145-170, Kermavner, 1963, pp. 155-170, Kermavner, 1965-1966, pp. 319-354, Podgoršek, 2009, pp. 37-66.

29 «The issue of Slovenian unification needs to be discussed more in newspapers, at meetings and, finally, in the Carniolan Assembly... The 'Sisak program' includes a federation between Slovenia and the Triune Kingdom... Points of the 'Ljubljana Agreement' are given by Zatochnik on December 5, 1870. The main difference between the points of the 'Sisak Agreement' and the 'Ljubljana Agreement' is that the Ljubljana Program is silent about the inclination either to Hungary or to Cisleitania, and is also silent about the combination in which the Slavs themselves, living in the south in Habsburg Empire, would like to enter the empire. The issue of national unity was strongly emphasized, and an agreement was reached in paragraph 6, according to which neither Slovenes nor Croats should enter into any other union combination without prior agreement between each other - because only in this way the collective benefit can be preserved, only achieved in national and political unity». For more see Mrazović, 1870, p.159.

30 The Slavic Congress was held in Prague on June 2-12, 1848. For more see Gestrin, Melik, 1966.

The Conservative camp had the support of large, medium, and small landowners, the Catholic clergy, and some intellectuals. The liberal camp relied on the petty-bourgeois social base. The workers' (or communist) camp, as in other countries of the world, had a proletarian social base, which was supplemented by the urban intelligentsia.

Slovene political camps in 1918-1941 were divided into two currents - nationalism, or "Sloveneness", and Yugoslavism, i.e. the national unification of the Habsburg Slavs. These currents saw different paths to the United Slovenia. The autonomists (the clerical camp - the Slovenian People's Party, hereinafter "SPP") promoted "Sloveneness" as the national idea and the United Slovenia - as the state idea. In politics, the way to achieve this goal was to implement the principles of *Corfu Declaration* (July 20, 1917), namely the federal structure of the future Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslavists-centralists (liberals) thought that only a unified Yugoslav nation in a centralized state could give Slovenes the opportunity to survive and develop.

The communist camp, which had been illegal since 1921, initially supported Yugoslavism, basing it on the principle of internationalism, but from 1923 had taken a hard nationalist stance. The positions of clerics and communists often coincided, albeit on opposite grounds.

THE FIRST "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

State-building processes in the Slovenian lands restored in August-November 1918. The meaning of those processes was the creation of the first national state bodies and the gradual formation and development of the main branches of government - legislative ("August" National Council in Ljubljana), executive (National Government in Ljubljana, National defense, military command, police) and judicial. Those processes took place in the Slovenian lands as part of the State of the SCS, a multinational entity that had a confederation character and all the features of a bourgeois-democratic republic.

The existence of the State of SCS, as the well-known Slovenian publicist and historian Fran Erjavec wrote in 1923, can rightly be placed among

the best parts of Slovenian history.³¹ For a short time during the “coup era”, as another famous Slovene, A. Prepeluh, called it,³² the Slovenes relied exclusively on their own strengths and capabilities and proved to be brilliant organizers in this ordeal. The period from August 1918 to January 1919, in Slovenian history, proved to be the most fruitful in the state-building sense.

Full autonomy was exercised on the most of Slovenian territory (with the exception of the occupied Slovenian Littoral, Carinthia and Prekmurje) within the State of SCS. On the domestic political scene, the newly created Slovenian authorities resolved almost all issues of state-building: the creation of their own administrative, judicial system on the ground and law enforcement structures, the formation of the Slovenian Armed Forces, the beginning of establishing the state borders. Slovenian became the official language. The peculiarity of their activity was that it went beyond the chronological framework of the State of SCS. The first National Council in Slovenian history functioned from August 16, 1918 to April 30, 1919, so the Slovenes had become the first between the other Habsburg Slavs in the process of the national emancipation. The National Government also worked for some time after the formation of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, hereinafter ‘SCS’ (December 1, 1918 – January 23, 1919).

Slovenes (represented by their most prominent politicians) entered the international arena with the aim of further resolving their national question - uniting all the ethnically Slovenian lands into a single state unit.

In domestic politics, the formation of its own legislative branch of the government had to end in the recognition of the National Council by the Slovenian Parliament. Its actual functions and methods of activity in August-November 1918 fully met its title. But attempts to recognize the “August” National Council as Slovenian parliament, however, remained only written on paper and were lost in the inter-party disputes of the National Government.

It was the widest “window of opportunity” that had never been renewed to such an extent. Unfortunately, this “window” also closed too quickly (finally with the adoption of the Vidovdan Constitution in 1921), and many Slovenian initiatives did not achieve their goal.

³¹ Erjavec, 1923, p. 67.

³² Prepeluh, 1938.

From the first days in the new common state - the Kingdom of the SCS - a gradual attack on the full autonomy of the Slovenes slowly began. The replacement of the National Government of the SCS in Ljubljana by the Provincial Government for Slovenia abolished Slovenian autonomy, halted the process of Slovenian state-building and marked the beginning of centralization. Of the previous 12 "Commissions" - "ministries", only four remained - the most politically and economically insignificant ones. "Thus, the last elements of Slovenian statehood, created in the struggle for liberation and unification, were eliminated".³³

On the Yugoslav political scene, attempts to secure guarantees of a federal-autonomous system failed. Koroshets's³⁴ achievements at the Geneva Conference proved futile because of the political games of other actors. An important role in the acceleration of Yugoslav unification in the form of a monarchy was played by an external factor - the Italian threat to the Slovenian Littoral and Istria and Croatian Dalmatia.

In foreign policy, the formation of the state had to be completed with uniting of all the Slovenian ethnic lands (except Venetian Slovenia) and the protection of the newly established borders, but this did not happen. Slovenians had to reconcile with the Italian occupation of Littoral, the loss of Carinthia and Prekmurje.

But ahead, the Slovenes were looking forward to the just fulfilment of their aspirations - to live their lives in the United Slovenia. These expectations, which did not come true with the 1st December Act, were now associated with the Paris Peace Conference and the Constituent Assembly. Again, the Slovenes were waiting for the resolution of fateful issues from external actors. The provincial government had to solve all the state-building problems inherited from the National Government, but in much more difficult internal and external conditions.

If we summarize the activities of the Slovenian authorities in the first "window of opportunity", we will see the stability and continuity of their efforts to fully resolve the "Slovenian question".

³³ Zečević, 1977, p.211.

³⁴ Anton Koroshets (slov. Korošec) – the leader of the Slovenian People's Party, the president of the Slovene Club (1906-1918), the president of the Yugoslav Club of the Austrian parliament in 1917, the president of the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs and a participant at the Geneva Conference (1918), vice-president of the first Yugoslav government and minister in different fields (forests and mining, traffic, education and internal affairs), the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (July 27, 1928-January 6, 1929), the minister of the later cabinets (1935-1940).

The ways in which Slovenian governments maintained their autonomy in the new domestic political conditions (gradual offence on democratic gains, liquidation of national authorities and considerable slowness of the Serbian bureaucracy) in the Kingdom of SCS in December 1918-June 1921 were: passive resistance to the centralization policy in the form of continuation of the activities of all departments of the National Government and the National Council in Ljubljana (until February and April 1919, respectively); the provincial government's struggle with Belgrade over the balance of competences between the center and the province (February 1919 - June 1921), in which the clerics succeeded in expanding its powers significantly in the socio-economic sphere.

The government achieved an increase of the number of permitted Commissions from four to six, and thus distinguished itself between the other provinces of the Kingdom. But its administrative responsibilities did not achieve Slovenia's previous full autonomy due to full subordination to the central government in Belgrade. When Slovenian liberals headed the government, Belgrade won the fight.

The work of the Slovenes in the Constituent Assembly in 1920-1921 was also unsuccessful. The Vidovdan Constitution was adopted hastily, despite all the remarks and shortcomings. It approved everything, what the leading Slovenes fought against, - the monarchy, centralization, national unification.

From December 1918 to October 1920, the National and Provincial Governments for Slovenia made every effort to implement the United Slovenia Program and to preserve the integrity of the Slovenian people, in a particularly unfortunate combination of international circumstances for Slovenian ethnic interests. Among them: the management of the armed forces, occupation of Styria, western Carinthia, Prekmurje, participation in resolving the Slovenian issue at the Paris Peace Conference (work of the Slovenian delegation as part of the joint delegation of the Kingdom of SCS and administrative and informational support of its activities during the conference on Slovenian borders).

The second of the main state-building tasks of Slovenian policy - to complete the process of uniting all Slovenes in a single country - was not achieved as well. The main reason was the unusual position of Slovenian lands on the international arena. During the First World War,

Slovenia was part of Austria-Hungary, which was defeated, and joined a state, common with Serbia, which was in the “winners’ camp”. So the Slovenes’ expectations to reach the “Slovenian question” solution on the Paris Peace Conference failed.

The Paris Conference made decisions in favor of Austria, not for Austria but against Yugoslavia, because it was supported by France from the beginning. The fact is that at the Conference, the Kingdom of the SCS was generally perceived as an enlarged Kingdom of Serbia, and it was not about the rights of peoples, but about the growing influence of France in the Balkans.

Serbia, in its turn, having entered the world arena for the first time, did not yet have sufficient experience in diplomatic battles. In addition, it used Slovenian lands as a “small coin” to bargain for territorial concessions for itself on the southern borders. Therefore, both military and diplomatic assistance from the Serbs in recapturing Slovenian borders was not sufficient. Italy, together with Austria, in their turn, made every effort to seize as many Slovenian lands as possible, despite Slovenia sought after uniting them.

As the continuation of the Paris Conference, on October 10, 1920, a plebiscite was held in Carinthia - the last hope to join the Slovenes who remained in Austria. But then, the consequences of centuries of Austrian social and national pressures on the local Slovenes have appeared which effects are still evident today. The internal reasons for this were centered around the social structure of Carinthian society, where a small number of nationally conscious wealthy peasants voted for the SCS, and mercenaries and burghers voted for Austria. Carinthian Slovenes were largely indifferent to the process of building their state, where they would be one of the titular nations, also because of fears of tax pressure from Belgrade. In addition, they were not campaigned for Slovenia, but for Yugoslavia (a kingdom, and, moreover, with an Orthodox dynasty at its head), but the Carinthians had the opportunity to remain in the Catholic bourgeois republic.

The plebiscite’s defeat, which for the Slovenes symbolically absorbed other territorial losses, became one of the decisive factors in slowing down the process of Slovenian state-building. The process of unification of Slovenian lands has remained unfinished. 40% of Slovenian lands

and population remained outside Slovenia, including about 1 million Carinthian Slovenes. All of this have complicated the Slovenes' relationships with the central government, which they blamed for the loss of Carinthia, and with their neighbours by borders, which "have torn" Slovenia - cut off Carinthia (Austria), Littoral with Trieste (Italy) and Porabje (Hungary). Only in the Kingdom of the SCS, the Slovenes did gain some quasi-self-government.

The conditions of the factual political demodernization, which began with Slovenia's entering the Kingdom of the SCS, and the intensive intervention of superpowers and neighboring countries in the process of defining Slovenia's borders, led to the defeat of the Provincial Government in all areas. Belgrade completely ceased its activities on July 12, 1921. The "window of opportunity" closed.

However, if the position of Yugoslavism in 1918 was taken by the vast majority of the Slovene electorate, then the liquidation of national authorities, the creation of the Kingdom of SCS with the regent on its head, undemocratic electoral law and the Constituent Assembly's way of working, undisguised centralism and national unitarism of the Vidovdan Constitution, which didn't generally meet principles of the Corfu Declaration, led to the transition of that majority of the electorate to the position of "Sloveneness".

THE SECOND "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

The development of Slovenian state-building in the 1920s was based on the new domestic and foreign policy position of Slovenia as a dependent territory with the people, whose national identity was no longer recognized. Moreover, the Slovenian lands, instead of uniting, were divided into two regions - Ljubljana and Maribor; in some places their borders did not coincide with ethnic ones. Therefore, the second "window of opportunity" (1927-1929) had a fairly long "vestibule".

The struggle of Slovene politicians for the preservation of the remnants of self-government and United Slovenia appeared in the form of confrontation between the ideological and political Yugoslavism and "Sloveneness".

In 1923-1925, the ranks of Yugoslavists were further reduced. This was facilitated by the transition of Slovenian communists to nationalist

positions (1923) and the results of the election campaign to the National Assembly in 1925, which did not have the desired effect due to a completely different political tradition - Serbian (i.e. personal ties, behind-the-scenes intrigues and political maneuvering).

The defeat in the Constituent Assembly, the use of undemocratic and morally conflicting principles at the highest levels of government had an impact on the activities of leading actors in Slovenian politics. Analysis of the political situation in daily circumstances had become an integral part of Slovenian political practice.

When the SPP understood the way of making decisions in the Kingdom (based on the Serbian tradition), its leadership resorted to political games, which were an integral part of Belgrade's policy. The main goal was to use every opportunity to win as many rights and benefits for Slovenia as possible.

Therefore, in 1926, autonomist forces, which found themselves in opposition to the central government, used political maneuvering to come to power in regional self-governing bodies. After the non-recognition of the Vidovdan Constitution and the political boycott of 1921-1925, the SPP reached an agreement with the ruling regime to return and preserve the autonomy gained in the process of state-building that began during the State of SCS.³⁵ Thus, the SPP achieved political dominance in the Ljubljana and Maribor regions, and most importantly, entered the central government, which provided the party with significant advantages on the ground and contributed to the implementation of the party's nationalist program. This opened a second "window of opportunity" for a new wave of Slovenian statehood.

The success of this tactic was the particularly extensive funding of activities and the expansion of the legislative jurisdiction of the assemblies of the Ljubljana and Maribor regions, which led the Yugoslavs to call Slovenia a "state within a state."³⁶

The activities of both Slovenian regional assemblies were characterized by distinctive features: parliamentary methods of work, synchronicity

35 In 1927, the SPP concluded a political agreement with the government on the recognition of the constitution and power of the king (Bled Agreement). For more see Friš, 1998.

36 Stiplovšek, 2008, p. 161.

of meetings and the constant struggle with the central government for the extension of their competences.

Unfortunately, political adaptation and related compromises have yielded only partial and temporary results. After the royal coup of January 6, 1929, the abolition of the fundamental bourgeois-democratic foundations in Yugoslavia and the beginning of repression sharply intensified the confrontation between the Slovene centralists and the autonomists. An additional catalyst for such an aggravation was the beginning of the Great Depression and the sharp deterioration of socio-economic conditions in Slovenia. This has led to the fact that the programs of Slovenian political camps have also become more categorical. The clerical autonomist opposition, which followed Croatia in an open statement against the unitarism and centralism of King Alexander's personal dictatorship, lost. Its leaders were repressed.

On the background of the general stagnation of political life in Slovenia, it would seem that no new opportunity for the restoration of even the smallest sprouts of self-government could arise. The only authority where Slovenes could express their opinions and make some decisions was the Brava Council of the Drava Banovina, which officially had only advisory functions, often addressing various aspects of difficult social problems caused by the economic crisis.

However, in 1933-1935 the activity of the ban council was significantly politicized. At the proceedings on the budget of the banovina, political dimensions gained, in particular, some discussions on the balance of competences between the banovina and local self-government, as well as the elections of the banovina council, on the state's financial policy towards Slovenia.

Alexander I needed to find ways to improve the domestic political situation, while maintaining all the power and raising his popularity among the population and abroad. Therefore, in 1933, the authorities were forced to demonstrate a return to democracy - elections to municipal councils, the lowest level of administrative responsibility. For this, the government gave the Ban Councils the power to make decisions on various aspects of elections. This meant expanding the competencies of the Ban Council of the Drava Banovina in the legislative direction.

The authorities used the long-awaited and therefore encouraging elections to disguise the municipal reform of uniting small municipalities, which saved the state budget but worsened the socio-economic situation in Slovenia, a mountainous region with weak infrastructure.³⁷ But, even in the semi-forbidden position, the autonomists still took the opportunity, received very strong support from the population and took many important positions in the municipalities, strengthened in the desire to find ways to resume intensive activities. The percentage of seats, won by the opposition in Slovenia, was the highest in Yugoslavia.³⁸

In general, it should be noted that the autonomist efforts of the Ban Council of the Drava Banovina were conditioned by its parties' compositions and, in particular, by the consequences of the changes of ruling regimes.

THE THIRD "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

The 1930s were a turning point in ideological views in Europe, the liberal democracy lost credibility, and the proponents of class visions came to the fore, that an individual should subordinate his interests to the collective – community, class, nation. Adherence to both corporate and class organization meant the rejection of individualism and the restriction of democratic freedoms. This global phenomenon has not bypassed Yugoslavia, and certainly not Slovenia, especially after the assassination of King Alexander I, in the autumn of 1934.

Thus, on the eve of the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1941, Slovenian clerics-autonomists remained the main driving force of the state-building process. After the Alexander I's assassination, they were given the opportunity to withdraw from the long-standing opposition and re-enter political life. The only way to do this was to join the regime party, the Yugoslav Radical Union (YRU).

The decision of the permanent chairman of the SPP, A. Koroshets, to join the YRU and the government of M. Stoyadinovich³⁹ in 1935, has

37 Žontar, 1999, pp. 609-613, Grafenauer, 2000, pp. 230-237.

38 The opposition in Slovenia was the most successful compared to other banovinas (25.7% of the vote, a majority in 1/7 of Slovenian municipalities). Gašparič, 2007, p. 201.

39 Milan Stoyadinovich (*serb.* Stojadinović, 1888-1961) - the Prime Minister of Yugoslavia from 1936 to 1939.

fatefully marked the political events in Slovenia.⁴⁰ This allowed them to open the next “window of opportunity” for returning of Slovenian autonomy, and it was by the example of Croatia.

The Concordat crisis of 1935-1937 laid the ground for Croatian separatism, which manifested itself in the creation of the Banovina of Croatia, bypassing the Octroyed Constitution, in accordance with the “*Tsvetkovich-Machek* (Cvetković-Maček) *Agreement*” of August 26, 1939. This precedent raised the question of the creation of the Banovina of Slovenia. The reason for this was the decision of the central government to extend the right to create a national banovina to other peoples of Yugoslavia. The condition for this was the timely preparation of all necessary documents for approval by the regent, while the Slovenian political elite had an influence in the central government, especially in the person of Koroshets. Active preparation for the creation of the Banovina of Slovenia⁴¹ was carried out by the Ban’s Council, which at that time consisted mainly of the members of the SPP.

The issue of the Banovina of Slovenia forced the clerical camp to look for a state-political model of Slovenian society, considering the examples of solving the national question provided by Europe in the second half of 1930s. The rapid course of events in Europe in 1938-1941 caused significant fluctuations in the choice of survival model. The SPP was inclined to the Slovak experience, where a Catholic social model with elements of European democracy was implemented in its autonomy. And after the Nazi lightning conquest of Poland, the clergy, in concern for the self-preservation and territorial integrity of Slovenia, finally leaned towards the example of Slovakia’s survival through its accession to the Nazi “New Order”.⁴²

The outbreak of World War II gradually shifted the focus of the Belgrade government’s policy to the international arena, and the process of creating the Slovenian banovina was curtailed at February 1941. Not the least role in this was played by the death of A. Koroshets on December 14, 1940. One more “window of opportunity” has been closed.

40 Ibid, p. 245. , Godeša B., Dolenc E., 1999, p.150.

41 See more Gosar, 1940.

42 Godeša, 2004, pp. 69-80.

THE FOURTH "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY"

The last "window of opportunity" for Slovenian statehood was related to the *attempt to restore national autonomy during the Nazi-Fascist occupation of Slovenia in April-September 1941*.

In foreign policy, the SPP admitted the possibility of the Axis powers' victory and the «New Order» in Europe. After the coup in Yugoslavia on March 27, 1941, the SPP changed its tactics - in the case of occupation, the party leadership decided not to cooperate with the occupier and fulfil its civic duty to Yugoslavia.

But at the beginning of the April War of 1941, the occupiers' invasion to Yugoslavia has begun through the territory of Slovenia. The state-building program of the SPP for the war period, hastily formulated in difficult domestic political circumstances on the last day before the occupation, was based on several principles, the main of which were in any way to preserve the unity of the Slovenian people; the physical composition of the population, economy and infrastructure, and, the first of all, to prevent bloodshed.

The defeat of the policy of independence, i.e. the slowing down and cessation of the process of Slovenian state-building in 1919-1920, laid the ground for further resumption of this process in similar conditions in April 1941, but on the basis of collaborationism. That group of the leaders, who remained in the homeland together with Ban (Governor) Marko Natlachen,⁴³ for the salvation of the Slovenian people, chose full independence as the only way of survival, apparently following the example of Slovakia, and saw a temporary solution under the auspices of the occupiers.

Influenced by information about Yugoslavia's inability to resist the attack, as well as Nazi plans to create a protectorate of Slovenia, the SPP changed its patriotic plans to nationalistic: the creation of a single, indivisible, independent Slovenian state (possibly common with the Croats) under one occupier. Political tactics were chosen to continue

⁴³ Marko Natlachen (*slov.* Natlačen, 1886 - 1942) the last Ban of Drava (September 1935 - 17 April 1941), the leader of the Slovenian People's Party during the Nazi-Fascist occupation of Slovenia.

the positive tradition from the time of the State of SCS, i.e. to create a multi-party National Council.

The task of the National Council for Slovenia was to take power in Slovenia and to do its best to implement the strategic plan of the SPP.

In the eyes of the Yugoslav government, although the direct connection with it was severed, the existence of the National Council for Slovenia was unacceptable and could not and was not recognized by the government, as no official law of Yugoslav legislation provided for dual power. The creation of the National Council was a state-building step that was not renewed by any other people of Yugoslavia. The National Council was thus an exception in Yugoslavia.

With the declaration of sovereignty on the territory of the Drava Banovina, the Ban and the National Council *de facto* refused to submit to the authorities in Belgrade. With the transformation of the National Council into a government and an attempt to form a Slovenian army (with the organization of the Slovenian Legion), steps were taken to implement the plan of the United Slovenia as a “kind of German protectorate.”

The rapid changes in the Slovene autonomists' state-building program right before and during the five-days occupation process in April 1941, the use of a set of methods of communication with the highest occupying authorities, the hope of restoring the entire Slovenia and uniting all the Slovenes under one new government make us think, that the Slovenian autonomist forces (at least until September 1941) felt the similarity of their position in the Kingdom of the SCS / Yugoslavia and under the occupier. None Slovene was killed during the April War. Therefore, they did not see a betrayal in collaboration with the new government; on the contrary, it was a natural transition for them, a step towards a possible improvement of the political situation, towards achieving the long-awaited autonomy.

The work of the National Council during fateful days April 6-17, 1941 can be considered in stages: at first, the Croats hurried to create the Independent State of Croatia, and the plans of a joint Slovenian-Croatian state failed. The creation of an independent Slovenian state was hampered by the unexpected Italian occupation of western Slovenia, together with Ljubljana. Attempts

by the advisers to unite Slovenia under a single occupation authority, first Nazi and then Fascist, also failed.

The Italian occupiers banned the National Council (and it went underground), but promised to recognize Slovenian autonomy and set up the *Consulta* (an advisory body to the head of the Italian occupation authorities in Ljubljana), which included representatives of the National Council. Because of this, the *Consulta* could be for a while considered a legal continuation of the Council, then already illegal.

Due to the failure of all its plans, the SPP again came to the recognition of the Yugoslav government in exile. Slovenia found itself at war, and the difference between Slovenia's position in Yugoslavia and under Nazi-Fascist occupation became apparent.

After the German attack on the USSR and the expansion of Partizans' operations, the conditions of the Italian occupation changed to more severe, and in September 1941, the main actors of Slovenian politics - the leaders of the main Slovenian political camps, left the *Consulta*. This could be considered the end point of legal Slovenian state-building activity in the interwar period.

CONCLUSION

The process of restoration of Slovenian state-building in 1918-1941 was complex and nonlinear, with advances and retreats, which allowed building *the model of the dynamic system of political relations* within Slovenian society and the relations of Slovenian society with the external environment.

We see an important external factor in the process of restoration of Slovenian statehood in relation to international actors in the 19th - first half of 20th century to Slovenes and their ethnic lands as a bargaining chip in interstate border trade involving Austria, Hungary, Italy and Serbia.

This, in turn, affected the *particular features* of the Slovenian state-building process, such as the limited territory where the process resumed, and the *search for partners* to defend the unity of Slovenian

lands, first outside Austria, which failed to guarantee this unity, and later outside the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. State-building in Slovenia, as an idea and practice, developed in the form of self-government.

This model allows us to determine the chronological “windows of opportunity” for the restoration of Slovenian statehood.

The Slovenes took advantage of **the first “window of opportunity”** within *the borders of the State of SCS*, when the *first-ever national democratic authorities were established*. In August-November 1918, an interesting unique collision arose concerning the division of powers between the Slovenian National Council and the National Government, and at the same time between the Slovenian authorities and the Zagreb National Council. In fact, it was a *question of the independence of the Slovenian bourgeois-democratic republic or its full autonomy within the federal State of SCS*. As a result of the discussion, the National Government adopted a resolution on the executive subordination of the National Council⁴⁴ in Zagreb and the advisory role of its own National Council.

It can be concluded that the restoration of state-building in the Slovenian political space during the stay of Slovenes in the State of SCS had a specific character - it took place as the genesis of Slovenian statehood in the form of a bourgeois republic within the multinational federation of Habsburg Slavs. Internal and external factors determined the specific feature of this process - it took place on the basis of common political practice, not theory, i.e. empirically, through their own unique experience. Political practice has shown that the presence of an external legislator - the National Council of the SCS in Zagreb - indicated the topical relevance of the National Government in Ljubljana. The National Council would take place as the Slovenian parliament only if the Slovenes dared to create their own sovereign state.

The next opportunity arose only in 1927-1929, when it was allowed to elect the *Ljubljana and Maribor regional assemblies*. The election of regional self-governing bodies was a significant achievement of the political struggle of Slovenian deputies (along with Croatian ones) in the Constituent Assembly. The territory of Slovenia at that time was divided into two areas, which was a step backwards from

44 Narodno Vijeće.

an administrative point of view. Therefore, the main tasks of the leadership of the regional assemblies were to synchronize the activities of both assemblies, especially in the making common decisions on all issues, which was a step forward in the development of Slovenian parliamentarism, as far as possible under the Vidovdan Constitution.

The third opportunity to continue the state-building process in Slovenia reopened with the creation of the *Drava Banovina and its Ban's Council*. The Drava Banovina united all Slovenian lands under a single administration, which was a step forward in this respect. The culmination of this process was the preparation for the creation of the *Banovina of Slovenia* in 1939-1941. Foreign policy factors, however, were not in favor of Slovenian efforts. The Belgrade government gradually reversed all reforms after the occupation of France, its main ally in Europe.

The last, fourth, attempt to restore Slovenian national autonomy during the activity of the "*April*" *National Council for Slovenia*, in the first period of Nazi-Fascist occupation of Slovenia (April - September 1941), naturally followed the failed attempt to create the Banovina of Slovenia and was closely related to the culminating period in Slovenian statehood during the "*August*" National Council and the State of SCS. But the Slovenes' hopes for salvation of own people and land, at least by getting autonomy under Italian occupation, were quickly lost. The brutality of the occupation regimes in Slovenian lands took away the last chance to create a United Slovenia within the framework of bourgeois democracy.

The reason for the termination of the Slovenian state-building process in each "window of opportunity" was an external factor. In 1919-1940, it was the Serbian policy of state centralization and national unification. The dictatorship regime added rigidity to the framework in which the political process was driven throughout the state. The last time, in April 1941, the complete cessation of any development of Slovenia was due to the Nazi-Fascist occupation.

As we can see, crises open windows of opportunities, and ***the deeper is the crisis, the wider is the window***. It was the political crises in Austria-Hungary (May-November 1918), the State of SCS (late November 1918) and the Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia (1926, 1934, 1937, March and April 1941) that opened "windows of opportunity"

for the Slovenian state-building. The most acute were the first and last of those crises, and they have been associated with the highest intensification of this process and the activities of the two Slovenian National Councils - the "August" one in 1918 and the "April" one in 1941.

We see that Slovenian state-building resumed at the end of 1918, but did not end due to the indecision of the Slovenian national-political program, due to the split of Slovenian politics in the currents of Yugoslavism and "Sloveneness". The combination of external and internal factors was such that the process of Slovenian state-building was "wavering". It was restored and accelerated in times of domestic political chaos - the collapse of multinational state-buildings in which the Slovenian people lived (Austria-Hungary, Kingdom of SCS / Yugoslavia), in the context of increasing external threat throughout the Slovenian northern border by states created by linguistically unrelated peoples (Italians, Austrians, Hungarians), in most of the Slovenian lands, which became part of a state common to related Slavic peoples (Croats and Serbs). In the conditions of stable existence in multinational states with an authoritarian regime, the process of Slovenian state-building slowed down.

But in any situation, Slovenian autonomists ***looked for opportunities, and when they found them, they made every effort*** to fulfil the program of United Slovenia.

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