

## POLITICAL RITUALS AND DISCOURSES: THE CASE OF CARINTHIA

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**Abstract:** This article discusses selected ritual practices in Klagenfurt (Sln. Celovec), the capital of the southernmost Austrian state of Carinthia (Germ. Kärnten). The first ritual is connected with October 10, when the 1920 plebiscite is commemorated on the streets of Klagenfurt. In this plebiscite, the majority of people voted for remaining a part of Austria, the successor state to Austria-Hungary. The second ritual is a more recent one, known as the Memorial Walk (Germ. *Gedenkgehen*, Sln. *Spominska hoja*). Various cultural practices are analysed, as well as the use of symbols and space, media, state, and national discourses.

**Keywords:** alternative practice, memorial walk, Nazism, plebiscite, ritual practices, use of discourse

Political rituals are practices set in concrete chronotopes. They express and materialise a sense of belonging, the formation of identities, and the establishment of local, regional, ethnic, national, or state entities. They also represent an area of social cohesion, self-identification, the marking of social affiliation and the exclusion of the Other. Political rituals are unavoidable in social integration (Lukes 1975), socialisation of hierarchies, relations, and the use of power. They are used repeatedly, year after year, to define, embody, and materialise ethnic, language, and other barriers which do not allow a single person, socialised in any community, to remain unaffected or undecided. As Steven Lukes has put it, political rituals mobilise bias, but they also raise questions about the relationships between different discourses, for example, between the official political discourse of the ruling parties, media discourses, the so-called common sense discourse, and the subcultural discourse present mainly among various extremist groups. Rituals speak to and about society and its institutions, and enable and recreate their extractive or inclusive characters (North 1991).

The dynamics of cognitive bias can be seen and indeed was seen on February 10, during the Memorial Day (Il Giorno del ricordo) in the Trieste region (cf. Fikfak 2009), where, in 2007, an intense interplay of political views was brought to

light: views expressed even by the Italian president, which included comments about bloodthirsty Slavs, the prevailing political and media discourses on the regional level of the Trieste region, and, finally, the subcultural discourses of a group called Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore or MS FT (Tricolour Flame Social Movement). The MS FT expressed their views by spraying neo-Nazi and neo-fascist graffiti on monuments dedicated to the partisans who died in the Second World War – monuments all along the way from Trebče (Trebiciano) and Padriče (Padriciano) to Boljunec (Bagnoli della Rosandra) (Fikfak 2009). The group's affinity for a neo-fascist discourse was materialised once more during a national Italian holiday on April 25, at a foiba<sup>1</sup> (cenotaph) in Bazovica (Basovizza), at a place of remembrance dedicated to the exodus of Italians and others from Dalmatia and Istria, and to the Italians and opponents of the communist system who were killed (hundreds of them thrown in foibe) near the end of the war or shortly afterwards.

By presenting politicians with opportunities to consciously select ritual places, events, and appropriate interpretations, political rituals also enable official politics to seize or limit the scope of argumentation of subcultural discourses and activities. Mayors and representatives of municipalities in the Trieste region, both Italian and Slovenian, gather annually on November 1 and pay their respects to the fallen on all sides. In Bazovica, for example, they gather both at the site of remembrance of the foibe victims and at the location where four members of the anti-fascist organisation TIGR were executed in 1930 (Fikfak 2009). The state prescribes and maintains order through its representatives; in doing so, the basic values and guidelines are conveyed, which have a potential to alter other discourses, including trivial, common sense, or subcultural discourses (Hayek 1960).

Such changes and decisions, i.e., the conscious formation of political or dominant discourses intended to prevent future antagonism and bring together the once quarrelling and hostile nations and countries (primarily France and Germany, but other nations and countries as well) also served as the basis for the European idea formulated by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman.<sup>2</sup> Implicit to this idea was an attempt to influence the general opinion through official discourse, and then use that general opinion to influence subcultural discourses, since they are the ones that most often re-create unease, opposition and animosity between different groups.

These dynamic relationships between different ruling, media, trivial and subcultural discourses, and between the different practices and materialisations of both memory and identity, are also present in the southernmost Austrian state, Carinthia.

After the Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved into several states in 1920, Austrian borders became a major point of contention with Italy and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SHS). Italians demanded and received the south of Tyrol and the valley around Tarvisio. On October 10, 1920, a plebiscite was held in Carinthia and Carinthians were asked to decide between Austria and the State of SHS. The majority of both German-speaking and Slovenian-speaking voters opted for the green ballot paper *Österreich – Avstrija*, and thus chose the main successor state of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy for their homeland. Slovenians chose Austria primarily for economic reasons (cf. Moritsch 2002), since the entire region naturally gravitated towards Klagenfurt. Their decision was also greatly influenced by the general promise and pledge of the Austrian authorities to protect Slovenian culture and language rights in the region. Another element that should be taken into account is the category of the Windisch or ‘Zwischenmenschen’, introduced through Martin Wutte (cf. Zinkner 2009; Valentin 2006), which was very successful in addressing the voters, as an element of pro-German Slovenian households.

In the following year, 1921, the result of the plebiscite (*Volksabstimmung*) that kept Carinthia “free and undivided” was celebrated in a ritual fashion. As Dr. Peter Kaiser, the current Governor of Carinthia and a member of the Social Democratic Party of Austria, wrote in an official communication, even this very first commemoration was distinctly pro-German, and so not only anti-Serbian and anti-Yugoslav, but also anti-Slovenian.

The Carinthian calendar year, news reports, and literature (Burz & Pohl 2005) all show that the ritualised remembrance of the plebiscite is an event that has little to do with the common ritual calendar (Easter, Christmas, New Year, Fasching (Mardi Gras) sessions). Every year, the anniversary is commemorated in schools. No classes are held on that day and offices are closed as well. State leaders release official statements to the media and lay wreaths at monuments to *brambovci*, the armed guardsmen who fought to keep Carinthia Austrian, and a commemorative session of the Carinthian Landtag (State Diet) assembly is held. These commemorations tend to be more solemn than the ones marking the national holiday on October 26, which commemorates the day in 1955 when the Declaration of Neutrality was signed by the Austrian Parliament in Vienna. In recent decades, larger celebrations were held mainly every five or ten years. A sort of rationality or economy of ritual is apparent: long processions were held on the streets of Klagenfurt, the centre of Carinthia, in 1995, for the 75th anniversary, in 2000 for the 80th anniversary, and in 2010 for the 90th anniversary of the plebiscite. The next large commemoration event is planned for 2020, and is to mark the centennial anniversary.

Approximately 20,000 people were reported to have taken part in the 1995 commemorative parade, and 100,000 people came to watch them march by. In 2010, however, when I documented the *Festumzug* (the festival parade), the procession had only 16,000–17,000 active participants, and an unknown number of spectators. News reports mentioned from 5,000 to more than 10,000 spectators; most were gathered at or near the New Square (Sln. Novi trg; Germ. Neuer Platz), which is the main square in Klagenfurt. A special grandstand was set up on the square and members of the procession marched past the honoured guests of state and church authorities: Austrian President Heinz Fischer, Chancellor Werner Faymann, State Governor Gerhard Dörfler, Bishop of Gurk-Klagenfurt Alois Schwarz, and others. There were no representatives of Slovenian authorities. According to photographs, a single official representative of the Slovenian parties active in Carinthia (Dr. Marjan Sturm) attended the event,<sup>3</sup> since none of the other parties were invited to participate.

Watching the procession in person, on television or in YouTube videos, and sitting through the DVD video (over seven hours long), paints a relatively uniform portrait of the event characterised by the colours of various Carinthian and a few Austrian flags. The other characteristic colour is the conspicuous brown texture of the local Carinthian costume. The speeches – all in German – mainly praise and reaffirm the historic decision for unity and ‘undividedness’ of Carinthia within the borders of the old and new Republic of Austria, the main successor state of the former Austria-Hungary. There are carriages with large billboards which show historical depictions, almost in the form of a comic book, and either utilise or imitate the artistic moment and solutions that were used in propaganda materials in 1920. They show a brief history of the decisive events that happened after the war, between 1918 and 1920, and conclude with the German triumph at the plebiscite in October 1920.

The impressions gathered in Klagenfurt, and from video-documentation, newspaper reports, and online forums, all indicate that the event is a constituent of the image of the country. Ideal-typically, the Carinthian nature and unity of the land are restored again and again with each commemoration of the 1920 plebiscite.

In determining the basic configuration of the procession, I chose to start my observation at the front and continue towards the back of it. I kept noticing that members of the procession greatly outnumbered the spectators, who watched on the side of the road. The largest numbers gathered at the back of the procession, on the New Square and on the stands reserved for invited guests. According to the information published by newspapers (*Kleine Zeitung*, *Kärntner Zeitung*, etc.), approximately 20,000–25,000 people took part in the

celebrations, which is less than the number of mourners who attended the memorial service for the Governor of Carinthia, Dr. Jörg Haider (attended by more than 30,000). The ratio between active participants on the one side and the spectators on the other speaks to the fact that the parade is organised for the purpose of self-presentation and that it is a ritual in which both participants and spectators, many of whom wear traditional regional brown costumes or dirndls, can reaffirm their self-image. Moreover, in a public space and in full view of the large, predominantly Austrian public and the heads of state and the church, the participants themselves become the materialisation of Carinthia. The population of Carinthia is represented by the 5–6 percent who participate in the event. Their role in the procession in the streets of Klagenfurt, the capital of Carinthia, and their mere presence at the event define the horizon of the Carinthian chronotope, reaffirm the desired view of the world and, in doing so, renew Carinthian identity.

We should bear in mind who self-presents at these sacred, central locations in the capital of Carinthia and how they do it; in what measure are the state (Austrian), ethnic (German or Slovenian) or regional (Carinthian) selfhoods included in such ritual behaviour and activities, and to what extent they need and create a different Other in order to establish the 'Carinthianness'. To what extent do they require or utilise either the indigenous ethnic population, i.e., Slovenians, or foreign immigrants, for example, Chechens?

If we also consider the specific situation in Carinthia with regard to bilingual signposts, school curriculums, the official language, etc. – the basic relationship between the German majority and the Slovenian minority – the issue of different structurations of the general and, in this case, ritual discourses on German and Slovenian sides becomes important. How and where can or could people internalise the Carinthian-German self-presentation, which perceives and recreates its own history as that of the southernmost German border and a bastion of defence between its own, German culture, and foreign, strange Slavs? Or the realistic and mythological self-comprehension of Slovenians, which includes images of Carinthia as a historic centre of the Slovenian people and as the northernmost border of Slovenianness?

Either way, the images and messages conveyed and renewed by the festive event, and the ritual practice of the celebratory parade (*Festzug*), have become real for people – words have become things (Austin 1962). Past events, memories and traces of the spirit are materialised (Overmann 2001) in their presentation in front of the most important representatives of national, regional and church authorities. They are also part of the ongoing discussion on online forums and in everyday life. They influence actual decisions on which memories should be

internalised in schools, in a community or, for example, at a museum, as well as decisions on how that internalisation should be achieved. The spaces where ritual practices occur are true representations; they are the spaces of metonymic metaphors which symbolise unity, supported by red and yellow flags. In a synesthetic way, accompanied by music and a steadfast, almost militaristic self-presentation, these spaces signify and renew the determination to remain pro-German.

## **KEEPING TRACK OF CHANGES**

This is merely the initial perspective; yet, it is still the dominant one. 1995 brought the first trace of censorship in the standard image, with a speech given in Slovenian at the state assembly. 2010 indicated a further shift in the scenario of self-presentation: the commemorative procession included representatives of local settlements, who carried bilingual signs, written in both Slovenian and German. The reasons for these changes can, of course, be found on the level of political discourses and the relationships between the main actors in Carinthia, which changed following the sudden death of State Governor Dr. Jörg Haider. Another reason for the changes is the very nature of ritual practices and materialisations of political discourses, which are constantly being negotiated, constantly 'in crisis'. I can refer to Ulrich Oevermann's interpretation of the philosophy of crisis as understood by Charles Sanders Peirce, which considers crisis and routine to be the two characteristic parts of human life (Oevermann 2001). Due to their sequential nature, the routinised and ritualised practices are being tested all the time; they are the subject of constant negotiations between different sides or actors. On the one hand, we need to ascertain who shapes the discourses and who recreates the practices. On the other hand, we should identify the structurations of general discourses in this event and the niches or shifts which were, and still are, characteristic of, and significant for, the participants themselves, but invisible to the spectators or the wider public. What is the relationship between the different discourses and how do they resonate with the public?

The question here is who may present themselves, who is included and who is excluded from the event? Who can take part in the game of self-presentation and help shape the identity? More specifically, on what level is it a question of both self-exclusion and the exclusion of the Other, or of self-inclusion and the inclusion of the Other? How and to what extent are these exclusions and self-inclusions an integral part of unsuccessful habituation procedures? Both the location of the ritual and the ritual itself can be problematic. If we build on

Helge Gerndt's (1979) definition of participants and expand it, we can speak of leaders, organisers, participants, spectators, passers-by, the excluded, and those who either oppose or ignore the ritual.

Within this framework, the image of the event in Carinthia is highly differentiated. The German-speaking members of conservative parties, who see themselves as Carinthian patriots, attend commemorations organised by *brambovci* (*Abwehrkämpferbund*) and by such political parties as the one that Jörg Haider led. On the other side are Slovenians, the descendants of those who voted for Yugoslavia and of those who voted for Austria and then realised that the promises were false. They used to ignore the commemoration and kept themselves busy on that day, for example, with farmwork.

The events of 2010, however, have shown that this image is slowly changing; a few Slovenians, despite having great reservations, took part in the commemorative procession in Klagenfurt. A group from Bistrica even sang a Slovenian song in their local dialect in front of the representatives of the country, the state and the church. The image of the procession itself, and of its main participants, was different as well, because the *Kärntner Heimatdienst* (Carinthian Homeland Service) and its leader, Dr. Josef Feldner, were not invited to help organise the event, even though Dr. Feldner was by then already a member of the Consensus Group, along with Dr. Marjan Sturm, Dr. Stefan Karner, Heinz Stritzl and Bernard Sadovnik.<sup>4</sup>

## **POSTER: SAME AND DIFFERENT**

As mentioned above, the majority of Carinthians, including a significant and critical number of Slovenes, voted for Austria. There were various reasons for their decision; some were concerned with the economy, others with various pressures – they were themed in different ways. The issue now is how this decision was explained and presented at the event itself, i.e., at the solemn commemoration in Klagenfurt. The programme, which was printed on a poster, listed the festivities and other events in a chronological order. In a way, it also represented a list of the participants who had the right and obligation to represent certain layers and interests of the local population. The poster contained two items worthy of note and discussion. On the right side was an address by the then Governor of Carinthia, Gerhard Dörfler, from the Alliance for the Future of Austria (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich – BZÖ*), the successor of Dr. Jörg Haider, who had suffered a fatal accident just outside Klagenfurt. In his address the master of ceremonies, as Harald Wydra might call Mr. Dörfler

(Wydra 2009), presented the official, political interpretation of the events that took place 90 years ago.

*Carinthia celebrates the 90th anniversary of the Carinthian plebiscite under the motto “Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow”. On the foundation of our shared history, we should create our future together. 90 years ago, the people of Carinthia unequivocally decided to stay unified and to live in a homeland within Austria. This commitment to the unity of Carinthia was not merely a victory of democracy – it was a decisive rejection of the prevailing nationalisms of the time, as Carinthian speakers of German, Slovene and Windisch languages voted together for a new Austria and against the Greater-Serbian State of SHS.*<sup>5</sup>

The address touches on nearly all key issues, the problem and the image of the parade organised on the round anniversaries of the plebiscite. The address itself is incoherent, stretched between statehood, nation and ethnicity. The text contains still another element which furthers the division between Slovenes and Carinthians; the term *Windisch* is used to refer to the people who are ‘in-between’, i.e., not German, but no longer Slovene either – people on the path to becoming German. Two strategies can be noted on the level of the address and the self-presentation of the Windisch (see [windische.at](http://windische.at)). The first strategy is imposed by the dominant conservative discourse, which is propagated mainly by the Austrian Freedom Party and which aims to reduce the importance of the Slovene language environment and culture in Carinthia. This strategy is also used to disqualify the expectations and demands put forth by the prominent representatives of the Slovenian communities of both Carinthia and Slovenia. The second strategy is characteristic of numerous members of the Slovenian community, whose parents and grandparents spoke a Slovenian dialect but never attended school in Slovenian and were therefore unable to write in this language. The most convincing example of this particular identification was presented by Bertl Petrei, an ethnographer and ethnologist, who wrote about it in his autobiography called *Kokolore* (Petrei 1986) and in an online forum on [windische.at](http://windische.at) (Petrei 1995). Petrei sees the Windisch as a question of cultural rather than ethnic self-identification and self-presentation. The pervasiveness of the perception of the Windisch as that of a special form of belonging and the sense of language (in)competence are both indicated in the statement made by the intellectual who is known in museum circles: he uses the term ‘Windisch’ to refer to people who speak a form of the Slovenian language, but who cannot write in it. Of particular interest is another element of the poster – an element that refers to the democratic nature of decision-making and to the fight against nationalisms. In using the syntagmas ‘victory of democracy’ and ‘rejection of



nationalisms', the State Governor is relying on the discourses and dichotomies of today. By using the syntagma 'Greater-Serbian State', however, he is creating an image of the Other, of the greater Serbia, of a culture that is unacceptable, undemocratic, and associated with nationalism. This is an image represented by a Serbian soldier in an exhibit at the Regional Museum of Carinthia: a soldier that wants to seize the entire territory of Carinthia. The State Governor used the discourses of today to create a discordance that makes it possible to overlook the nationalisms that resulted in the intensive Germanisation of Carinthia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The relationships between the communities and languages in Carinthia can be discerned from the left side of the poster as well.<sup>6</sup>

### **October 8**

1:00 pm Session of the Carinthian Parliament in the Great Hall of Arms in the State Parliament Building

3:00 pm Ceremony marking the anniversary in the Great Hall of Arms in the State Parliament Building with speeches by the president of Austria, the federal chancellor, and the state governor, performances by two youth choirs (German and Slovenian), and participation of the Slovenian ethnic community (ORF live broadcast)

### **October 9**

9:30 am Plebiscite commemoration at the cenotaph in the military cemetery in Annabichl

11:00 am October 10 celebration of the State of Carinthia in the courtyard of the State Parliament Building, in front of the Carinthian Unity memorial

2:00 pm Wreath-laying ceremony at the graves of Governor Arthur Lemisch (Holy Trinity Church in Sankt Veit an der Glan), Martin Wutte (Obermühlbach, near Sankt Veit an der Glan), and Lieutenant Colonel Ludwig Hülgerth (Rottenstein mansion)

Of particular interest is the representation of the non-German Carinthians who chose to vote for Austria and who made the 2010 celebration of the plebiscite possible.

Non-German voters were presented and included in the programme twice: once in an event organised by the Church and the Bishop of Klagenfurt on October 2, and again on October 8, two days before the anniversary, when prominent individuals and invited guests gather in the *Wappensaal* or the Armorial Hall. They are listed *Einbindung der slow. Volksgruppe* (Inclusion

of the Sln. ethnic community). Before we analyse how the Slovenian ethnic community was included in the programme and who was chosen to represent it, we need to consider the definition as it was expressed and published in the official self-presentation of the State and of the State Governor, and as it was conveyed in the programme of the commemoration. If the official poster shows a fairly visible and obvious political practice and if it sets and simultaneously reflects the dominant political discourse, to what extent is the Slovene ethnic community presented on the poster? What does 'Inclusion of the Sln. ethnic community' mean? Does it mean that politicians did not know who would represent this community and how they would represent it? Does it mean that the speaker was to be appointed or chosen at the last moment? Or that they were to be chosen by a proponent of the ruling discourse in order to achieve a desired effect? Or was the community so divided that it did not have a genuine, unanimously chosen representative? An analysis of the poster and a comparison with other participants show that everyone except the Slovenian ethnic community had appointed speakers and chosen a set form of self-presentation. The representative of the Slovenian ethnic community could have been announced without mentioning any names as well, in the same manner in which the President, the Chancellor, and the State Governor were announced. The actual (and possibly unintentional or undesired) result of using '*Einbindung der slow. Volksgruppe*' with the abbreviation of *slowenischen* into *slow.* is an anonymising strategy, and a practice in which the one responsible for the dominant discourse is also the orchestrator of the event. In this case, the event was organised by the state government, the Governor, who simultaneously granted the minority the right to express themselves and limited or reduced the recognition of that same minority into a meticulously planned chronotope, which prescribed how, where, and for how long the minority was allowed to present itself within the framework of the official ritual practice.

The 'inclusion of the Sln. ethnic community' happened with the participation of Dr. Valentin Inzko, the chairman of the National Council of Carinthian Slovenes, who was also the European Union Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time, and the first person in fifteen years to speak Slovenian in the Carinthian Armorial Hall. In 1995, his father had given a speech in the same hall. What happened with Dr. Inzko's speech? The diplomat Dr. Valentin Inzko, the most prominent Slovenian speaker at the time, seized the opportunity presented to him by Dr. Marjan Sturm, who allowed him to speak in his stead, and turned what was to be a brief and marginal self-presentation of the Slovenian community, i.e., a five to seven minute speech representing five to seven percent of the duration of the commemorative session, into a 45 minute speech.<sup>7</sup> He gave one of the most thorough summaries of the history of Slo-

venes and Germans in Carinthia. The underlying message was that it was the Slovenian community that contributed to an undivided and united Carinthia. He included a vision of a Carinthia where both ethnic communities would live together in mutual respect for one another and offer their youth a secure future. Discussions with conservative Carinthian intellectuals revealed that Dr. Inzko broke the agreement and the rule of the self-limiting perspective common in Slovenian self-presentations. He went far outside the limits of the chronotope prescribed for the Slovenian community by the dominant discourse.

The use of the two languages in posters, advertisements, and other materials also speaks to the relationships that are in play in the plebiscite commemoration. According to available data, Slovenian was used in only two instances: in Dr. Inzko's address (2010) and in the case of the villages that presented themselves in both languages. All other materials financed by the state government, for instance, the official poster, advertisements, etc., were published in German.

The official speeches given at the event, at the commemorative parade, also presented an opportunity for using Slovenian. However, not a single Slovenian speaker was included – all speeches were given in German. The only one who dared open the space to the second language in Carinthia was the Austrian President, Dr. Heinz Fischer, who spoke three sentences in German and followed up with an approximate Slovenian translation. This was an official greeting, an address, which contextualised the event and indicated that there exist two language communities in Carinthia. The second part of his address had to do with the central point of contention in Carinthia at the time, i.e., bilingual signs. He concluded by expressing a wish for a good and peaceful future:

*Werte Festgäste! Liebe Kärntnerinnen und Kärntner!*

*Cenjeni Častni Gosti! Drage Korošice in Korošci ! [---]*

*“Die Zeit ist reif”. (Čas je zrel) habe ich schon im Juli in meiner Antrittsrede als wiedergewählter Bundespräsident gesagt.<sup>8</sup>*

*Ich wünsche dem Bundesland Kärnten und allen Menschen, die hier ihr Zuhause haben, eine gute und friedliche Zukunft.*

*Deželi Koroški želim dobro in mirno prihodnost.*

Honoured guests! Dear Carinthians! [---]

“The time is ripe,” is what I said back in July in my inaugural speech as re-elected president.

I wish the State of Carinthia and all the people who make their home here a good and peaceful future.

I wish a good and peaceful future for Carinthia.

The sentence that was the most important and also the most often quoted, both after the President's re-election and today, at the commemoration of the plebiscite, was: *The time is ripe*.

The above statement opens and expresses two levels on which the reality of the ethnic group can be approached within ritual practice. The ethnic group, the minority (*Minderheit*), is defined as an important problem or issue; it stresses the use of both languages on the place-name signs which are relevant for the minority. The utterance 'The time is ripe', however, does not refer to a comprehensive solution of the question of the minority; it only addresses a part, a particularity. At the same time, this statement functions on another level, on the level of the Austrian state: within the horizon of the discourse conveyed by the President, bilingual signs are a solution of totality, i.e., a solution of the Austrian state contract. According to the official Austrian-Viennese discourse, the signs would fulfil the most critical and, as Stefan Karner puts it, the loosely defined Article 7 of the contract, on the basis of which the Austrian state was constituted. This would also prevent actions such as the one in which Rudi Vouk placed the minority in the centre of the discourses in Carinthia and made topographical signs the focal point of the issue concerned with the minority.

Since these were the only official words spoken in Slovenian on October 10, 2010, they accentuated the speech by pointing out one of the most pressing matters in Carinthia. In this very thought-out and, given the situation in Carinthia, relatively balanced speech, the President imagines what the 2020 commemoration of the plebiscite should look like, with Austrians and Slovenians celebrating the centennial together. At the same time, Dr. Fischer simplifies and sets boundaries for the discourse about the position of Slovenians and of the Slovenian community in Carinthia. In his speech, every aspect of Article 7 of the Austrian contract, which addresses the rights of the Slovenian community in Carinthia and the obligations and commitments of the Austrian state, is reduced to the single issue of bilingual signs.

These few words in Slovenian also point to the ambivalences related to the issues in Carinthia, which are characteristic of the perception and reception of the Slovenian ethnic community; they concern not only the relationship between a particular solution and a comprehensive solution, but also the constituting of 'majority' and 'minority' perspectives.

The interplay between local/regional, national, and media discourses, as well as the majority perspective, became apparent, for example, during a TV show about bilingual signs,<sup>9</sup> in which only one of the six guests who spoke about the Slovenian ethnic minority was a Slovenian. Valentin Inzko was the only one to present a viewpoint that demanded a more thorough recognition of the

Slovenian ethnic minority, which would include bilingual signs. In addition to the other five guests, he also faced the general Austrian auditorium, in which representatives of the Austrian state step up with the demands of the local authorities. In a position such as the one Dr. Inzko found himself, it is next to impossible to avoid becoming a scapegoat, since any position that differs from the dominant one is predestined to be condemned or characterised as trouble-making.

The next problem, which can be gathered from discussions with Dr. Josef Feldner and with intellectuals and historians from various Carinthian state institutions, concerns the oft expressed opinion of how generous the German majority is, and should be, towards the Slovenian minority. The most defined viewpoint is held by Feldner, and he expresses it within the Consensus Group: “With our 97 percent majority, we can afford to be generous without clinging to every letter of the law.”<sup>10</sup> On the one hand, Feldner’s generosity is an expression of the nearly 100 percent majority; on the other hand, it is based on the expectation that Slovenia will also show generosity and recognise the fundamental rights of its own indigenous German population.<sup>11</sup>

Josef Feldner said in an interview<sup>12</sup>, and once more on television, that Kärntner Heimatdienst had more members than there were declared Slovenians, so there was nothing to fear.<sup>13</sup> This ‘generous’ standpoint confirms the regional hierarchical and ethnic structurations and says much about the distribution of power, about who rules the region, and who decides what a member of the minority can or cannot do.

Valentin Inzko’s speech, the bilingual place-names on the self-presentational signs of some Carinthian settlements, and the words spoken by the Austrian president, implicitly opened a niche among the established images of the manifestation of belonging to Carinthia and Austria, and offered opportunities for different practices in the political celebration of the ritual.

These opportunities and the need for a different commemoration were addressed in 2010 by the participants themselves, when they criticised the poor organisation of the event, inadequate provisions, and the long wait times. Andrea Bergmann addressed these organisational issues in an article published in the most prominent Carinthian newspaper, *Kleine Zeitung*. She asked the main organiser, Horst Moser, whether it made sense to organise the parade at all, given that only a few thousand people came to watch it.<sup>14</sup> Criticism that was far more direct was written by those who actually participated in the parade, albeit anonymously, in the comment section of Bergmann’s article.

## IMAGES OF OPPOSITION: FROM DEMONSTRATIONS TO COMMEMORATIONS

The concepts and practices presented at the commemoration of the Carinthian plebiscite, and especially the rituals performed by the members of the *Ulrichs-berg Burschenschaft* (student fraternity), are controversial for the members of smaller, alternative groups, which have, in recent years, gathered mainly around the concepts of *Aufklaeren* (clarifying) and *Erinnern* (remembering). Different practices have become established in this context.

One of them is directly related to the commemoration of the plebiscite and is centred in Klagenfurt: in 2010, on the eve of the main parade, a demonstration was organised in Klagenfurt by the group ANTIFA, mainly by young people. They protested against the nationalistic German character of the plebiscite commemoration, which ignores the Other, the Different, and excludes not only Slovenians but also immigrants.

Other practices are mainly connected with remembering the victims of Nazi and fascist violence, both at the Ljubelj (Loibl) concentration camp and in Klagenfurt. These practices were neither encouraged nor organised by local or national governments. The incentives came from individuals, for instance, Dr. Peter Gstettner, Franc Wakounig, Hans Haider (in Beljak/Villach), and from their societies. Commemoration ceremonies for those who died at the Ljubelj camp, which was part of Mauthausen, are also attended by the survivors of the camp, first on the Austrian side of the border and then on the Slovenian side.

A different practice, the scenario and the choreography of which are based on ritual, is the so-called *Schweigemarsch* or *Gedenk-Gehen*<sup>15</sup> – the Memorial Walk. It has been organised every year, in the last week of April, since 2008. The march commemorates the victims of the anti-fascist, anti-Nazi struggle, in the years between 1941 and 1945. Special courts, usually presided over by the 'bloody' judge Dr. Roland Freisler (Baum 2011), condemned victims to death by hanging or by decapitation. The verdicts were still being carried out in the last months before the end of the war. A disproportionately large number of women who were sentenced and the examples of the nature of their executions should be noted. At the last trial alone, which took place in January 1945, six men were hanged and five women decapitated.

The ritual practice first suggested by Franc Wakounig and started by the society Memorial Kärnten/Koroška defines a new content every year (a commemorative plaque bearing the names of the fallen members of the anti-Nazi movement was unveiled in front of the courthouse in 2013), and always has some basic characteristics, for example, a march, speeches, the presence of a priest,

etc. This ritual practice is also important and interesting because it expresses a certain attitude towards the Slovenian ethnic minority, since nearly all victims of the Nazi aggression or regime were members of the Slovenian community.

In its first year, 2008, in the time of Jörg Haider, this practice was controversial. The organisers had to obtain a special dispensation from the local government, which was not granted until they threatened to involve the media.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, when I examined the practice, it was mentioned both in the Carinthian newspaper *Kleine Zeitung* and on the Austrian national television network ÖRF. Among those who spoke at the site of the former Gestapo headquarters, from where prisoners were taken to the courthouse and into their deaths, was the then (second) Vice-Governor of Carinthia, Dr. Peter Kaiser, who was also the representative of the Social Democratic Party of Austria in the Carinthian Landtag.

This ritual practice did not gain an official status until 2013, which corresponded with the March elections and changes in the Carinthian government. At this time, the right-wing parties, particularly the Freedom Party, lost their primacy, mainly due to the Hypo Bank affair (see Economist 2010) and other scandals. This also changed the attitude towards the two languages on a symbolic level. When Dr. Peter Kaiser was elected State Governor, he spoke in Slovenian, decisively and frequently, and a representative of the Slovenian ethnic community spoke in both languages as well.

Dr. Bernd Lutschounig, a judge in Klagenfurt, and chief prosecutor Dr. Mirko Borotschnik, took the floor at the 2013 commemoration, and Franc Wakounig spoke about the past aggression against the Slovenian community and against all opponents of Nazism. The fact that the commemorative plaque was co-sponsored by the Office of State Secretary Wolfgang Waldner, speaks to a type of an official recognition and clearing up of the past.

These types of ritual practices can be understood as fresh attempts, similar to the ones organised by the Concordia et Pax group in the Gorica/Gorizia region (cf. Fikfak 2009), by the Erinnern group in Beljak/Villach<sup>17</sup>, or by the Aktionskomitee Mauthausen group. The latter and Dr. Peter Gstettner are the organisers of a similar programme, a commemoration of those who were sent to concentration camps on the Austrian side of Ljubelj. This gathering is a ritual by itself. Its content is commemorative, the remembrance of the dead, the condemned, the victims from the groups that said no to Nazism and to violence against those who were different. The spectators and the participants themselves are affected, since they involve survivors of the camps, and the children and other relatives of the victims. Next to them stand those who support diversity and self-reflection of the past.

In media discourses, these ritual practices are still considered to be marginal. The Austrian state television network lists them among reports about the minority, so they are not considered on the same level as events that concern the entire State of Carinthia. In the same vein, the Carinthian *Kleine Zeitung* published an announcement on April 25 of an event that was due on April 29, yet did not comment on the event on April 30, the day after it had taken place. The only noteworthy response that the event evoked in Slovenia was an exhaustive news report by Boris Jaušovec (2013) in the daily newspaper *Večer*.

It can be said that the production, reception, and perception of this ritual practice have been changing. It is obvious from the responses in the general public that the *Gedenk-Gehen* or Memorial Walk is becoming one of the most typical ritual practices in Klagenfurt. By attracting several parties, but mainly due to its placement within a broader context of reflecting on Nazi-fascist aggression and the role of Austria in that aggression, the Memorial Walk reaches beyond the horizon of the Slovenian ethnic community. An analysis of ritual practices shows that change is an integral part of discourses which are (influenced by the ruling structures on the level of the regional government, the constitutional court, and the country) increasingly using self-reflection to influence the changes in perception.

The stories about ritual practices are stories about ritualisation, constant negotiation, sequencing, and routine in crisis, the opening of new spaces for decisions, new shifts, and turns.

Thus, in 2009, the military and the Minister of Defence, Norbert Darabos, decided to distance themselves from the memorial gathering that takes place on the Ulrichsberg Mountain.<sup>18</sup> Another example of a shift in perspective can be found in the case of the Kärntner Heimatdienst, under the leadership of Josef Feldner. The Heimatdienst changed its stance on defending Germanhood and was involved in the process of creating a consensus between both language groups. The change is also highlighted by the participation of four settlements with bilingual signs in the procession in Klagenfurt. Their decision clearly points to an altered understanding of ethnicity as a different self-concept and self-presentation of the Slovenian community.



## NEGOTIATIONS AND (RE)INTERPRETATIONS

It can be said about both ritual practices that they are in motion and in crisis. In the case of the October commemorative parade in the streets of Klagenfurt, it has become less clear who the event is supposed to address. Who or what is embodied by the members of the groups who march in the parade? Who are they addressing, who is included in it and who is still excluded? The decline in the number of spectators indicates that interest is waning and that the event has become less important. It is no longer as constitutive for the image of the land as it was more than twenty years ago, when the large country called Yugoslavia peeked over the Karavanke Mountains.

The other ritual practice is also in the process of change, not only with the image and the ritualisation that are being formed, but also with the relatively slow progression of its establishment in the discourses on the local and national levels. Commemoration of the victims, be it in Klagenfurt or at the site of the Ljubelj concentration camp, reinforces the need for reflecting on the role that Austrians played in the Nazi prosecution of the Others and the Different.

We can see changes, constant negotiations and re-interpretations of the meaning of the ritual practices. There is the desire of, for example, historians at the Carinthian State Museum, to prepare an exhibition about the plebiscite, in cooperation with their Slovenian colleagues, and there was the speech given by the Austrian President Heinz Fischer. Most importantly, there was the speech given by Valentin Inzko, in which he shifted focus from the syntagma “indivisible and united Carinthia” to “Carinthia with another, with a neighbour”. All of these are the latest acts and ritual practices that create a space for different discourses that would enable different politics of commemorating.

In this context, a commemoration was held in Velikovec (Völkermarkt) for all fallen defenders, “for those who fought for the northern Slovenian border, and for the Carinthians who fought for the unity of Carinthia”.<sup>19</sup>

The changes in the ranks of the holders of state power were especially important for the altering of the perception and production of the ritual. New and different elements of the official discourse began to be emphasised. State Governor Dr. Peter Kaiser wore a casual or ‘business’ suit instead of a traditional costume in the local colour when he spoke at a monument in the Annabichl cemetery, on the anniversary of the plebiscite in October 2013. He also said a few words in the Slovenian language, and the official poster bore the following motto, printed in both languages and in letters of the same size:

*Zukunft gestalten; Vergangenheit verstehen.  
Prihodnost oblikovati; preteklost razumeti.*

To shape the future; to understand the past.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Foibe are chasms or caves, common in the Kras (Carso) region, a karstic plateau region shared by Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia. They were used as open-air cemeteries especially in 1943 and 1945. Many books and papers have been written about the foibe and foibe massacres; different interpretations are offered and estimates of victims vary according to the viewpoint of the author (cf. Slovene-Italian Relations 2000; Pupo & Spazzali 2003; Cernigoi 2005; Pirjevec 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/archives/publications/booklets/eu\\_documentation/04/txt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/archives/publications/booklets/eu_documentation/04/txt_en.pdf), last accessed on December 17, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> The Slovenian Press Agency reported that the National Council of Carinthian Slovenes (NSKS) was not invited to participate in the organisation of the ceremonies; in addressing the Landtag of Carinthia, the NSKS President Valentin Inzko expressed the hope that Carinthia would become forward-looking and show more support for its Slovenian minority (<http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1556191>, last accessed on December 17, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Members of the Consensus Group endeavour to establish a dialogue between different groups in Carinthia, particularly between Slovenian and German language communities. The group received several Austrian and European awards for its efforts (<http://www.kleinezeitung.at/kaernten/3104293/vierte-auszeichnung-fuer-konsensgruppe.story>, last accessed on December 17, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Original text: *Kärnten begeht das stolze Jubiläum “90 Jahre Volksabstimmung” unter dem Motto “Gestern – Heute – Morgen”. Auf dem Fundament der gemeinsamen Geschichte gilt es, gemeinsam die Zukunft zu gestalten. Vor 90 Jahren hat die Kärntner Bevölkerung eine klare Entscheidung für den ungeteilten Verbleib ihrer Heimat bei Österreich getroffen. Das Bekenntnis zur Einheit Kärntens war nicht nur ein Sieg der Demokratie, sondern auch eine klare Absage an den damals in Europa vorherrschenden Nationalismus, weil deutsch- und slowenischsprachige ebenso wie windische Kärntner gemeinsam für das neue Österreich und gegen den großserbischen SHS-Staat stimmten.*

<sup>6</sup> Original text:

### **8 Oktober**

13.00 Uhr Festsitzung des Kärntner Landtages im Großen Wappensaal des Landhauses

15.00 Uhr Festakt zum Jubiläum im Großen Wappensaal des Landhauses mit Reden des Herrn Bundespräsidenten, des Herrn Bundeskanzlers und des Herrn Landeshauptmannes, musikalische Umrahmung durch zwei Jugendchöre (deutsch und slow.), Einbindung der slow. Volksgruppe (ORF-Direktübertragung)

### **9 Oktober**

9.30 Uhr Abstimmungsgedenkfeier beim Ehrenmal auf dem Soldatenfriedhof in Annabichl

11.00 Uhr 10.-Oktober-Feier des Landes Kärnten im Landhaushof – Stätte der Kärntner Einheit

14.00 Uhr Kranzniederlegungen an den Gräbern von Landesverweser Dr. Arthur Lemisch (Dreifaltigkeit bei St. Veit/Glan), Dr. Martin Wutte (Obermühlbach bei St. Veit/Glan) und Obstlt. Ludwig Hülgerth (Schloss Rottenstein).

- <sup>7</sup> The speech is available in both Slovenian and German at <http://issuu.com/nedelja/docs/inzko> (last accessed on December 17, 2014). For a report on the speech see *Festlicher Auftakt im Jubiläumsreigen*. Klagenfurt, ÖRF, October 8, 2010, at <http://ktnv1.orf.at/stories/474845> (last accessed on December 17, 2014).
- <sup>8</sup> Dr. Fisher's inaugural speech was covered, for example, by the *Kleine Zeitung* on July 8, 2010 (available at <http://www.bundespraesident.at/newsdetail/artikel/rede-von-bundespraesident-heinz-fischer-in-klagenfurt-anlaesslich-90-jahre-kaerntner-volksabstimm/>, last accessed on March 20, 2015).
- <sup>9</sup> In the TV show *Im Zentrum* on ORF2, on April 10, 2011, the host Ingrid Thurner discussed topographical signs with Dr. Josef Ostermayer, State Secretary in the Federal Chancellery of Austria, Gerhard Dörfler, the Governor of Carinthia, Valentin Inzko, Chairperson of the National Council of Carinthian Slovenians, Josef Feldner, leader of the Kärntner Heimatdienst, and Antonia Gössinger, a journalist with the *Kleine Zeitung* (<http://www.be24.at/blog/entry/657253>, last accessed on December 23, 2014). It is interesting how the reporters mentioned the doctoral title held by Ostermayer, yet omitted the titles held by Inzko and Feldner.
- <sup>10</sup> Original text: *Mit unserer 97%igen Mehrheit können wir es uns leisten, großzügig zu sein und nicht kleinlich auf dem Buchstaben des Gesetzes zu kleben*. Statement Informations- und Diskussionsveranstaltung. St. Michael ob Bleiburg/Šmihel nad Pliberkom, 22. Juli 2010 von Josef Feldner, Obmann Kärntner Heimatdienst ([http://www.zeitdokument.at/ztdok/b\\_txzz02.html](http://www.zeitdokument.at/ztdok/b_txzz02.html), last accessed on January 5, 2015).
- <sup>11</sup> Original text: *Bei Großzügigkeit gegenüber unserer kleinen slowenischen Volksgruppe dürfen wir umso berechtigter auch vom Nachbarstaat Slowenien Großzügigkeit erwarten gegenüber der heute nur mehr wenige Tausend Personen umfassenden autochthonen deutschen Volksgruppe und die endliche Zuerkennung von Basisrechten verlangen* ([http://www.zeitdokument.at/ztdok/b\\_txzz02.html](http://www.zeitdokument.at/ztdok/b_txzz02.html), last accessed on January 5, 2015).
- <sup>12</sup> Conversations with prominent representatives of Carinthian politics in English and German (Dr. Rudi Vouk, Dr. Josef Feldner, Dr. Klaus Ottomeyer) were gathered by myself and by Dr. Thomas Wolfe from the University of Minnesota (USA).
- <sup>13</sup> Estimates about the size of the Heimatdienst vary; even Feldner mentions numbers between 15,000 and 20,000. We can draw some conclusions based on the number of ballot papers (5000) used when Josef Feldner was re-elected President, as stated next to a photo in *Kleine Zeitung* on 14 September 2012: 100 members and 10,000 supporters (<http://tinyurl.com/ny7xheo>, last accessed on March 23, 2015).
- <sup>14</sup> Andrea Bergmann asked: *“Ob es in Anbetracht der wenigen tausend Zuschauer entlang der Umzugsstrecke überhaupt noch einen Festumzug geben soll?”* Horst Moser answered with: *“Das entscheidet die Politik.”* (<http://www.kleinezeitung.at/kaernten/volksabstimmung/2513597/zorn-kritik-nach-dem-festumzug.story#forummain>, last accessed on January 5, 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> Different names are in use. The most recent one, from 2013, is *Gedenk-Gehen* or *Memorial Walk* (as named by Franc Wakounig).
- <sup>16</sup> Information provided by Franc Wakounig.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Haider presents the group in more detail at <http://www.net4you.com/haiderftp/ueber/index.html> (last accessed on January 5, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.presseurop.eu/en/content/news-brief/84821-ach-no-more-ss-tributes>, last accessed on January 5, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Marjan Sturm wrote about this in one of his columns called *Marjanizmi* (Marjanisms), which was published on October 11, 2013, and is available at [http://www.slo.at/zso/sturm\\_sl\\_more.php?id=1746\\_0\\_6\\_0\\_m](http://www.slo.at/zso/sturm_sl_more.php?id=1746_0_6_0_m) (last accessed on January 5, 2015):

*The politics of dialogue and cooperation pays off*

*Two important events were organised recently: Feldner and I initiated a memorial commemoration for the fallen in Velikovec: for those who fought for the northern Slovenian border, and for the Carinthians who fought for the unity of Carinthia. "They died believing in their homeland", was the motto of the commemoration. This was an exceptionally humane and reverent message, which had never before been heard in Carinthia. Feldner also pointed out that all the victims of National Socialism in the country needed to be considered as well.*

*We also invited the Ljubljana General Maister Society, which was not even aware of the existence of the cemetery in Velikovec and which, because of whispers coming from Klagenfurt, did not attend the commemoration. That is not what a humane and reverent way of treating your own fallen is supposed to look like.*

*The commemoration of the plebiscite was a bit different than usual this year. Slovenians were welcome, our language could be heard, and the celebration was considerate and reverent. The youth and the state governor were allowed to take center stage. Feldner and I answered the moderator's questions as to why we started the politics of dialogue in the country. Afterwards, people would stop me in the street and congratulate me on my politics. A lot has changed and I am a bit proud of the part that I played in that.*

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