Polticised Celebration: The 10th October in post-war Carinthia

ROBERT KNIGHT

Loughborough University

The plebiscite which was held in southern Carinthia on 10 October 1920 is still the central event of Carinthia’s celebratory calendar. Its decisive outcome in favour of the Austria Republic, in preference to joining the new Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (22,025 to 15,279 votes), has been celebrated since with a range of emotions including gratitude, joy, triumph and love of the Carinthian Heimat. At least until recently a sense of triumphalism has rarely been absent: in its more temperate form it celebrates a narrow escape from Slav South rule and a variety of evils associated with it. In any case, the vision of Heimat which is sustained through celebrating has generally included those Slovenes who were ready or willing to assimilate to Deutschum (in 1920 an estimated 10,000). Their readiness to abandon their own collective ethnic and cultural identity was widely taken as evidence of both their loyalty and their acceptance of German superiority. In much of the literature these assimilators were labelled ‘Windisch’ – a term which has often led to confusion, but rarely led to the scrutiny of an important point: the unequal conditions from which the assimilatory ‘will’ arose. Despite the conceptual fuzziness of the Windisch label its basic political point was clear enough: accepting only the ‘Windisch’ as authentic Carinthians was meant to


}

After sketching the trajectory of celebration in the First Austrian Republic and in the Third Reich this article seeks to show how German national anti-Slovene attitudes gained ground in the 10 October celebrations of the first fifteen years of the Second Republic. While not overlooking those countervailing forces which sought to redefine the celebrations as an affirmation of Austrian anti-Nazi identity, it concludes that they were too weak and fragmented to counter the resurgent German nationalism. Though modified and adapted to the changed conditions and not necessarily neo-Nazi in tendency, this offered a similar ‘utopian’ vision as had sustained Nazi rule – a Carinthia ‘freed of’ Slovene culture and language.

No discussion of the 10 October celebrations can ignore the controversies which have frequently accompanied them. One way to tackle them methodologically is offered by the recent shift, in the wake of the ‘memory turn’, to a scrutiny of the politics of commemoration themselves.\footnote{For the 10 October commemoration see i.a. Robert Kluger, ‘Politische Gedenktage und die Kärntner Presse (1918-1945)’, in Politische Festtagskultur in Kärnten: Einheit oder Einigkeit?, ed. by Ulfried Burz and Heinz-Dieter Pohl (Klagenfurt, 2005), pp. 24-38, 50-4, 61-4; Christian Pichler, ‘Politische Gedenktage und die deutschsprachige Kärntner Presse (1945-2000)’, in Politische Festtagskultur in Kärnten, Einheit oder Einigkeit?, pp. 205-245. Gabriele Stieber Die Briten als Besatzungsmacht in Kärnten 1945 – 1955}
public discourse and the politics which both underpinned it and was reflected in it. That involves examining published discourse, in particular press reports, but also exploring the politics which underpinned them. The assumption throughout is that while collective memory is rarely monolithic the politics of commemoration is driven by the attempt to make it seem so and thus attain what is sometimes called ‘Deutungshoheit’ [interpretative hegemony].

I

At the risk of oversimplifying a complex and messy field this discussion distinguishes three strands of the commemorative politics. The first emerged out of the 1920 plebiscite vote and the military confrontation which preceded it. It celebrated the outcome as a victory of Deutschum and called for the sacrifices to be given meaning by converting the dissenting pro-Yugoslav 40% to loyalty to Carinthia. As the Verweser (provincial administrator) Arthur Lemisch put it in a famous speech, those who had been ‘seduced’ into voting for Yugoslavia would have to be returned to Kärntnerum [Carinthiandom] within the next generation. The task was to be achieved with ‘German culture and Carinthian Gemütlichkeit’ [moderation].

(Klagenfurt, 2005) does not discuss either the 10 October celebrations or anti-Slovene politics as a whole.


7 Lemisch to the Provincial assembly (Landesversammlung) in 25 November 1920, cited by Helmut Rumpler, ‘Die nationale Frage im Spannungsfeld von kärntnerischem
Despite Lemisch’s ostensible caution it is hard to ignore the impact of context of war and military values on the following celebrations. At their centre was the military prowess of the Carinthian militia who had fought Serbian troops in 1918-9. Their courageous initial resistance, it was declared, had led the Allies to decide to hold a plebiscite in the first place. In that sense the victory of 10. October had been ‘erkämpft’ [won by force]. The fact that this resistance had been against the military odds (it ended with a Serb occupation of Klagenfurt) elevated the courage and love of Heimat of the Abwehrkämpfer onto a higher plane, which lay deeper than calculation and Realpolitik. Yet the danger, though averted, was still lurking south of the Karawanken mountain range, and from the Slovene ‘enemy within’. There was also a strong anti-Viennese element in this commemoration, the Staatsregierung [State Government] was accused of having ‘left the province in the lurch’ in its hour of greatest need. Admittedly the related assumption that Carinthia’s – and Austria’s – destiny and economic survival were to be found in Anschluss with Germany was widely held across the political spectrum, including Social Democracy. But in Carinthia (and Styria) it became part of a radicalised pan-German ‘borderland myth’.

A second commemorative strand celebrated the plebiscite result as a victory of progress and republicanism against monarchy, organised religion and reaction, and placed the role of workers and soldiers councils in urban centres like Ferlach centre stage. Its understanding of democracy was ‘majoritarian’ which meant that it gave little space to the minority’s cultural or linguistic difference. However in 1924, concerned at the militaristic direction the celebrations were moving in, Carinthian social democrats left the Kärntner Heimatdienst and took no part in the 10 October celebrations. But when they returned six years later the climate had become more not less militarized. Hans Lagger, the Carinthian social democratic leader, warned that

die Kriegspsychose in gewissen Kreisen noch nicht abgeebbt [ist]! Ja, es sind Leute und ganze Organisationen da, die von Zeit zu Zeit im Gleichschritt aufmarschieren und sich


selbst glauben zu machen versuchen, sie seien im Abwehrkampf gestanden; es gibt gewesene Militärs, die gar so gern Heldenrollen übernehmen möchten; und es gibt wieder andere Menschen, die emsig tätig sind, durch allerlei Märchen, Fabeln und Legenden das wahre Bild der Abwehrkämpfe und der Volksabstimmung zu verfälschen und zu verzerren.

[the War psychosis in certain circles has not yet ebbed away! There are even people and whole organisations who are marching in drill from time to time and trying to convince themselves that they stood in the Abwehrkampf, and there are former soldiers who want so eagerly to adopt heroic roles; and there are yet other people who are busily active in falsifying and distorting the true picture of the Abwehrkämpfe and the plebiscite by every kind of fairy tales, fables and legends].

A third commemorative strand, which understood the plebiscite outcome as a humiliation for the nationally conscious Slovenes, and sought to remedy this within the new state boundaries, was articulated only weakly. It had been glimpsed at in the resolution which the Carinthian Landtag had passed on the eve of the plebiscite that they

den slowenischen Landsleuten ihre sprachliche und nationale Eigenart jetzt und allezeit wahren will und dass deren geistigen und wirtschaftlichen Aufblühen dieselbe Fürsorge angedeihen lassen wird wie den deutschen Bewohner des Landes.

[wish to preserve for their Slovene countrymen their linguistic and national identity now and for all time and will provide the same concern for their spiritual and economic blossoming as for that of the German inhabitants of the province].

Some years later the Social Democrats initiated negotiations on cultural autonomy, which might have given this commitment concrete form. In the end the talks foundered on a central point: how should membership of the proposed autonomous collective be determined? The position of the dominant parties was that it should rest on an individual ‘Bekenntnis’ [affirmation] of all adults. However, for minority leaders that appeared to leave individual

---

9 Abwehrkampf und Volksabstimmung in Kärnten 1918-1920, ed. by Hans Lagger (Klagenfurt, 1930), pp. 5-6.

Slovenes, most of whom were on the bottom rungs of the social ladder, exposed to political and economic pressure to declare their loyalty to German Carinthia; their alternative was to give a Volksrat [National Council] wide powers, including the power to send children to Slovene schools. As one Slovene leader put it, the Council would be able to make children learn Slovene, ‘ob die Eltern couragiert sind oder nicht’ [whether their parents are courageous or not]. The ‘German parties’ rejected this as a denial of ‘parental rights’ and an attempt to reverse the plebiscite result. In May 1929 negotiations collapsed amid mutual recriminations. Thereafter the minority’s position was steadily eroded, apart from a short period when Slovene clerical leaders found some shared ground in the anti-modern Catholic ideology of the ‘Ständestaat’. However, after 1936 their (limited) support in Vienna counted for little as support for the illegal Nazi party undermined the effectiveness of the federal government.

Under Nazi rule, militaristic version of 10 October celebrations was further radicalised to fit in with the needs of state propaganda and education policy. First the Anschluss, then the war was hailed as the natural continuation of the earlier struggle. For many radical Nazis (including some ‘over assimilating’ Slovenes) the legacy of the Abwehrkampf implied the duty to eliminate Slovene from the province altogether, starting with kindergarten and primary schools. After the German invasion of Yugoslavia in April 1941 celebration of the earlier German victory over the Slav enemy was also fused into the mission to Germanise the annexed part of Slovenia, now labelled ‘Oberkrain’ [Upper Carniola]. The task was supported – despite some reservations – by the weighty but tendentious scholarship of the


13 Kluger, ‘Politische Gedenktage’, pp. 61-64; for an educational example see Lehrstoffverteilung für die Kärntner Grundschule (Klagenfurt, 1941).
provincial historian and archivist Martin Wutte. Prominent veterans of the Abwehrkampf, like Hans Steinacher, looked back at their earlier ‘Sieg in deutscher Nacht’ [Victory in German night] and anticipated the victory of the ‘German sword’ wielded by the Wehrmacht. On 10 October 1944 the Gauleiter Friedrich Rainer once again invoked the spirit of the Abwehrkämpfer, which would make us ‘unbesiegbar’ [invincible].

Confidence in victory ebbed away in the following months as partisan activity increased, bombing took place (December 1944) and material conditions worsened. Nevertheless the Nazi regime was able to function in Carinthia up to the very end. It was only in May 1945, with Yugoslav and British troops rapidly approaching from the south, that Gauleiter Friedrich Rainer decided to hand over power to a group of party politicians. The common ground in the negotiation was the belief that what Rainer called ‘die Abwehrkampfidee’ [the idea of the Abwehrkampf] was needed to defend Carinthia at this time of crisis. More widely, the assumption of German superiority, whether understood culturally or racially, remained influential. In the words of one American intelligence report the minority ‘in the view of many German-Carinthians deserved and continues to deserve no better fate than absorption into the superior German community’. On that assumption the devastating effects of Nazi rule on the use of Slovene language were not a problem which needed addressing, much less


15 Hans Steinacher, Sieg in deutscher Nacht: Ein Buch vom Kärntner Freiheitskampf (Vienna, 1943).

16 Kluger, Politische Gedentage, p. 64

reversing. Slovene priests who returned to their parishes met with considerable resistance if they tried to reintroduce Slovene into church services. Opposition came not just from German nationalists and former Nazis but in many cases from those Slovene speakers who had internalized the stigmatization of their culture.  

II

In autumn 1945 there was a brief return of the third commemorative strand. In October 1945 the Catholic Slovene leader Josef/Joško Tischler, who joined the Carinthian government after his return from internal exile in Vorarlberg, initiated a radical education innovation. It meant that in over 100 Volksschulen [primary schools] in southern Carinthia, instruction for all pupils in the first three school years was now to be given equally in both Slovene and German. The assumption behind this was Tichler’s view that like Switzerland Carinthia was ‘ein von 2 Nationalen bewohntes Land. Seine Einwohner sind daher grundsätzlich zu verpflichten, beide Landesprachen zu beherrschen’ [a country inhabited by two nation; its inhabitants are on principle obliged to master both of the province’s languages]. Against objections from German Carinthians and assimilating Slovenes it was argued that ‘as in Switzerland the state interest must prevail over the individual interest’. 

The coincidence that the first post-war 10 October anniversary took place in the middle of these discussions may explain why Tischler decided to take part in a wreath-laying ceremony

---

18 For example, the agitation led by the former Landbund leader and later head of the ÖVP Hans Ferlitsch in the village of Vorderburg/Bláče see Consolidated Intelligence Reports Psychological Warfare Branch, Military Government Kärnten Mai 1945 bis April 1946. Eine Quellenedition zur Geschichte der britischen Besatzungszeit in Kärnten, ed. by Gabriela Stieber (Klagenfurt, 2005) [henceforth CIR].

19 Newole to Piesch, Amschl, Tschofenig (the three party leaders) on 3 August 1945, cited in Josef Tischler, Die Sprachenfrage vor 100 Jahren und heute (Klagenfurt, 1957), pp. 25-6. For Tischler’s own account see Zvest Domu, Narodu in Bogu: 40 let Narodnega sveta koroskih Slovencev 10 let smrti dr. Joska Tischlerja (Klagenfurt, 1989), p. 175.

20 Stieber, CIR, p. 229 (8 November 1945 report). The source was given as ‘Slovene circles'.

8
at Annabichl cemetery in Klagenfurt to mark the occasion. According to a British report he used the occasion to recall both ‘Slovenes and Yugoslavs’ who had ‘given their lives in the cause’. His presence at this central site of German Carinthian commemoration probably outraged the leaders of the secessionist Liberation Front/Befreiungsfront/Osvobodilna Fronta (OF), who were firmly committed to seceding to Tito’s Yugoslavia. For them no reforms could provide adequate protection for the minority against assimilatory pressure. The tension between the secessionists and Tischler was the main reason why only days after the final version of the new decree was agreed Tischler resigned from the government. That meant the end to a short-lived experiment of Slovene participation in the provincial government. The elections of 20 November cemented the SPÖ’s electoral superiority and the modest seeds evident in some early public statements by Carinthian leaders failed to germinate and develop into a ‘culture of contrition’. Instead a discourse soon re-emerged, which in harking back to 1920 invoked majorities and minorities (and stressed the rights of the former) but was also increasingly permeated by longstanding militarist and social Darwinist tropes of conflict and survival.

Polarisation along these lines was clearly also fostered by the secessionist course steered by the OF in support of Yugoslav claims to southern Carinthian territory. Yet the support from the Yugoslav (Slovene) authorities was sporadic. As early as spring 1947 the Yugoslav government was looking for a face-saving formula to allow it to abandon the border claim. The OF was also weakened by its attempt to fight on two fronts, not only against the

21 Stieber, CIR, p. 197 (17 October 1945 report).
22 Stieber, CIR, p. 197 (17 October 1945 report).
24 See David Large, The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria (Cambridge, 2006).
25 See Menz et al., Der Kampf geht weiter.
continued influence of Nazism but also against a Catholic Church, which it attacked as reactionary. The tension between secular (pro-Tito) and catholic conservative wings led to an open split at the end of 1947.

In the first post-war years anti-Slovene activists and secessionist Slovenes fed off each other. Both had an interest in inflating the likelihood of a border revision in order to mobilise their supporters and corral the ‘nationally indifferent’ into their respective group.26 But there was no level ethnic playing ground or free market for opposed ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ as is sometimes implied: German national activism was embedded in the culture and economy of Carinthian society, while Slovene activists had to agitate from the margins. Without real political backing the new bilingual school, which was attacked from the outset, was steadily undermined. In a Carinthian discourse centred on the defence of the ‘endangered border’ it was portrayed as a dangerous concession to Carinthia’s enemies and the first step on the slippery slope towards secession.

If the bilingual school nevertheless remained in place (though its implementation was patchy) one of the main reasons was the foreign policy imperative created by Austria’s State Treaty negotiations.27 So long as Austria’s southern border was under negotiation Yugoslavia was not to be given ammunition for its claim that the minority was being mistreated. This may also explain why in February 1947, just as treaty talks were starting in London, the Carinthian governor Hans Piesch proposed that the 10 October celebration be abolished altogether. However, his proposal had little or no impact on the course of commemorations and was clearly at odds with the direction of Carinthian politics. It became even less realistic after 1948 as both main political parties actively sought the votes of the newly enfranchised ‘minderbelastet’ [less incriminated] Nazis (in Carinthia around 40,000). With the entry into the Landtag of the VdU (Verband der Unabhängigen) in October 1949 provincial politics became a triangular contest in which few mainstream politicians wanted to risk appearing weak on the ‘national question’.

At the 30th anniversary of the plebiscite in 1950 the tensions between foreign policy concerns and provincial pressures can be seen. On the one hand, although Austria was still occupied, the southern border was no longer on the international agenda; policy-makers in Vienna wanted to move to a less strained relationship with Yugoslavia. On the other hand, the provincial dynamics which for five years had inflated the border issue could not simply be turned off. In a cabinet discussion of the approaching anniversary on 11 June 1950 ministers on both sides of the grand coalition expressed scepticism about the Carinthian claim to ‘exceptionalism’. Yet, while they were suspicious about German nationalism in the province they were cautious about confronting it. Last not least, the discussion reminds us of the universal truth that celebrations cost money. In this case the Carinthian government requested federal support to the tune of 163 million Schillings for a range of investment projects. The sum was, as Chancellor Figl explained heatedly, ‘ein Ding der Unmöglichkeit’ [a matter of impossibility]. If the government granted the payment, Burgenland, Styria and Vorarlberg would come with similar demands. Ferdinand Graf, the State Secretary of the Interior, and a Carinthian, objected:


[We can’t suddenly start downplaying Carinthia. Hopefully even the Carinthians will see that the size of the demand can’t be taken seriously. Above all they want a generous investment. And we won’t be able to prevent them making as big song and dance as possible].

A discussion of the economic plight of other deprived areas (including parts of Lower Austria) followed. Graf’s claim to ‘Carinthian exceptionalism’ may not have been accepted but his main political concern – to keep the VdU at a distance from the celebrations – was not contested. Graf’s ÖVP colleague, Foreign Minister Karl Gruber, echoed a recent message from Karl Braunias, the Austrian envoy in Belgrade, warning of the harm to relations with Yugoslavia ‘wenn augenblicklich so viel Porzellan in Kärnten zerschlagen werde’ [if at this

---

28 Approximately 60 million US dollars in current value.
moment so much China is smashed in Carinthia]. Gruber stressed that there was no need to
rub the Yugoslavs’ noses in their defeat in a manner which could slow down the steady
improvement of Austrian-Yugoslav relations. All aggressive tones should be avoided; he
concluded that when he went to Klagenfurt the next day ‘ich werde Gelegenheit haben […]
etwas Wasser auf die heißen Köpfe zu gießen’ [I will have a chance to pour some water on
the hot heads].

On the 10 October itself Chancellor Figl, speaking in Klagenfurt, gave a coded appeal for
restraint: He told the assembled crowds ‘daß gerade heute jene damals an den Tag gelegte
Liebe und Treue zum Vaterland Österreich nötig sei. Ohne Disziplin und Vertrauen hätte
Kärnten keinen Sieg erreichen können’ [that precisely that love and loyalty to the Austrian
fatherland was necessary today which had been demonstrated then necessary. Without
discipline and trust Carinthia would not have achieved victory]. According to police
reports earlier VdU agitation against the school had been an ‘ausgesprochenes Fiasko’
downright fiasco and most of its planned meetings had to be cancelled for lack of
interest. Braunias was able to report from Belgrade that despite some critical articles ‘der
10. Oktober gut überstanden worden ist’ [the 10th October had been got through well],
having received less press coverage than Yugoslavia’s disastrous football defeat against
Austria two days earlier (seven goals to two). The 10 million Schilling grant of assistance
which the government finally agreed went into a special fund (despite some rearguard
resistance from the Ministry of Finance).

29 Cabinet minutes no 211 (federal government Figl II), 11 June 1950, Österreichisches
Staatsarchiv [ÖStA], Archiv der Republik [AdR], Bundeskanzleramt [BKA]; Braunias to
Gruber, 4 March 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA AA, pol-50/Jugoslawien 2/120.228 - 122.117.
31 Sicherheitsdirektion Kärnten, Lagebericht [situation report] September 1950, ÖStA,
AVA, Bundesinnenministerium, 30.344-2/50.
32 Braunias to Gruber, 15 October 1950, ÖStA, AdR, BKA AA, pol-50/Österreich
10/120.077 - 128.437.
33 Figl to Finance Minister Margarétha, 24 January 1951 (draft), ÖStA, AdR, BKA, 14-Pr
1a/1951.
It is not known what Gruber said or did in Klagenfurt but it is likely that his main targets were those ÖVP politicians who barely differed from the VdU in their visceral hostility to Slovene culture and language. Several of them had been leaders of the pre-war Landbund and continued its anti-clerical, anti-Slovene path. Some (like Hans Ferlitsch, Josef Glatschnigg) were themselves assimilating or assimilated Slovenes. Together with the German national politicians who were now re-emerging virtually unscathed from ‘denazification’ they ensured that the abolition of the bilingual school stayed at the centre of provincial politics for the following decade.

While some of these may have deserved Gruber’s label of ‘hot heads’ German national politics – and the 10 October commemorations – are better understood as the outcome of both the mobilization of emotion and well calculated and thoroughly rational lobbying tactics. For the bilingual school that meant that politics rather than pedagogy made it steadily more unworkable. As provincial school inspectors warned in 1952, in Völkermarkt, one centre of anti-Slovene agitation ‘wird immer wieder der Versuch gemacht, ein Präjudiz zu schaffen und die Verordnung über das zweisprachige Schulwesen zu beseitigen’ [the attempt is repeatedly being made to create a precedent and abolish the decree]. Over time the high decibel anti-Slovene agitation and lobbying also ground down resistance in Vienna. The key federal authorities, in particular the Foreign Ministry (Federal Chancellery) and Federal Education Ministry began to give ground.

By the time the State Treaty was signed in May 1955 the days of bilingual primary education were clearly numbered. The recovery of Austrian sovereignty brought, in the words of a leading campaigner against the bilingual school, ‘die Möglichkeit, gesetzliche Regelungen auf Gebiete zu treffen, die seit 1945 festgefroren waren. So ein Gebiet ist auch die Kärntner Schulfrage’ [the possibility of taking legislative measures in areas which have been deep frozen since 1945. One such area is the Carinthian School question]. The minority protection provisions of the State Treaty (Article 7) provided only a slight counterweight. While it did give the Slovene (and Croat) organisations fresh impetus to formulate a series of


demands, the article was vaguely worded in several respects and on bilingual education completely silent. Its ban (paragraph 5) on ‘Die Tätigkeit von Organisationen, die darauf abzielen, der kroatischen oder slowenischen Bevölkerung ihre Eigenschaft und ihre Rechte als Minderheit zu nehmen’ [the activity of organisations whose aim is to deprive the Croat and Slovene population of their minority character or rights] virtually remained a dead letter.

It certainly did not inhibit the revigoration of a network of anti-Slovene organisations, above all the Kärntner Heimadienst and the Schulverein Südmark. Many of their members clearly saw the abolition of the school as part of their sacred duty towards the dead Abwehrkämpfer.

Three years after the signature of the State Treaty the pressure and lobbying against the bilingual school paid off. The SPÖ governor Ferdinand Wedenig, one of the few prominent supporters of the bilingual school, was forced by pressure from his own party to allow parents to remove their children from bilingual instruction. A short, frenetic campaign of intimidation and ‘persuasion’ of Slovene parents followed. Its success was shown by the dramatic decline in the number of children learning Slovene. The number of children learning both languages fell from over 12,000 to over 2,000 (in a population of about 60-85,000 Slovene speakers). In some schools children were deregistered from Slovene even though their German was poor or non-existent. For example, in the remote single class school of Bärental/Zavŕh pressure from the land-owner and employer ensured that all 17 Slovene speaking children were withdrawn from Slovene instruction.


37 See Knight, Slavs in Post-Nazi Austria, p. 91; as in other ethnic conflicts language statistics are highly contested. The 1951 census results were subject to a wide range of interpretations, giving the highest figure for the minority as 42,095. Carinthia’s Amtsdirektor [chief civil servant] Karl Newole estimated the number for those who were ‘of slawischer Sprache’ as 80-85,000. Meeting in Klagenfurt, 24 August 1955 (324.442 – Pol/55), ÖStA, AVA, Schöner PP, E/1773: 326.

III

Two years after the effective demolition of the bilingual school system came the 40th anniversary of the 1920 referendum. In principle the celebration of the victory of 1920 should have been enhanced by the recent demolition of the demonised ‘Zwangschule’ [coercive school]. The preparations for the day showed how much ground the anti-Slovene lobby had gained over the past decade. There was now no question of excluding either the FPÖ or the Kärntner Heimatdienst, on the contrary Governor Wedenig now argued that they should be included in order avoid Unfug [nonsense]. Slovene requests to exclude ‘Hetzer’ [rabble-rousers] fell on deaf ears. Conversely, the attempts by Slovene organisations to be included themselves foundered on protests led by the FPÖ. Overall responsibility for organising the celebrations was given to Franz Koschier, the chair of the Carinthian Heimatwerk. Koschier’s career demonstrated his life-long commitment to eliminating Slovene, not just in Carinthia but beyond its borders. After the German occupation of Yugoslavia he had been appointed head of the Lehrerbildungsanstalt [Teacher Training Institute] in ‘Oberkrain’ [Upper Carniola]. Among his tasks had been the organisation of the pulping of Slovene books. Admittedly the official guidelines did call on organisers in the villages and towns to exercise restraint, avoid ‘falsche Heimattümelei’ [false Heimat jingoism] and to set aside ‘völkisch’ [ethnic] differences (along with other kinds) in the interests of unity. But the grass-roots had its own dynamics. One implication of ‘the politics of disturbance’ was that celebration should not be allowed to lead to complacency. The province was still in danger from the Slav South, the struggle had to continue.


41 ‘Aufgaben der Gemeinden im Kärntner Volksabstimmungs-Gedenkjahr 1960’ [Tasks of the Parishes in the Carinthian year of plebiscite commemoration], Kärntner Gemeindeblatt, 81, 4, 2 June 1960, 61-2.

An insight into the climate on the eve of the celebrations is provided in a report in the *Kleine Zeitung*. Under the headline ‘Tito-Büste in Klagenfurter Auslage’ [Tito bust in Klagenfurt shop front] it recorded that the ‘Tito-Slovene’ bookshop in Klagenfurt had allowed itself a ‘Höchstmass an Frechheit’ [highest degree of impudence]. While almost all the rest of the Klagenfurt business world was adorning their fronts in commemoration of the plebiscite it had placed in the shop window a large bust of Tito,

[whose partisans have caused so much harm in the loyal population and whose state has still not given up its unjustified and excessive claims to Southern Carinthia. This kind of shameless behaviour can and will not be tolerated by a loyal Carinthian population, especially in the jubilee year of the victory for the freedom and unity of our Heimat, which had been won with great blood sacrifices].

The article was signed ‘Ein Heimatfreund’ [a loyal son of the Heimat]. Even before it had appeared a passer-by (possibly the author of the article himself) had taken matters into his own hands. According to the police report he had gone into the shop and left a piece of paper with the dire warning: ‘Wenn die Titobüste nicht verschwindet bis heute Abends [sic], so kann für nichts garantiert werden’ [if the Tito bust does not disappear by this evening nothing can be guaranteed]. The message was signed ‘Karlen’.

However, the bust was not of Tito but of the Slovene writer Prežihov Voranc (a pseudonym for Lovro Kuhar) who had died ten years earlier. Although Kuhar had certainly been a vigorous activist for the revision of the Carinthian border the *Kleine Zeitung* felt it had to publish a correction the following day under the heading a ‘verblüffende Ähnlichkeit’ [baffling similarity]. It explained that

Die Klagenfurter Staatspolizei hat auf Grund der durchaus möglichen Verwechslung der beiden Persönlichkeiten der Buchhandlung empfohlen, um Zwischenfälle zu vermeiden, den Namen des Dichters sichtbar auf der Büste anzubringen, was auch geschah.
[The police has suggested to the book shop that, so to avoid incidents based on the possible confusion of the two personalities Voranc and Tito, they should make the name of Voranc visible on the bust, which was subsequently done].43

Two days before the official celebration 2,500 German national fraternity students, including members of the FPÖ Akademikerverbände [Academic Associations] and fraternity delegations from West Germany, marched through Klagenfurt in a traditional Festkommers [festive march].44 On the day itself the main march-past, attended by a huge crowd, included not only Heimat associations in costume and full regalia but also members of the SS veterans ‘welfare organisation’ (Kameradschaft IV). Some of the marchers wore war decorations with swastikas on them. 45

On 10 October itself the ethnic conflict was absent, but only in the sense that there was barely an indication that a Slovene minority even existed in the province. The official slogan ‘Macht Kärnten schöner’ [make Carinthia more beautiful] made no mention of Slovene literature or Slovene popular culture.46 The officially published ‘Great Picture Book of the Heimat’ had no Slovene contributions.47 The official record contained one caption referring to the Untergail folk costume as ‘das Festkind unserer slowenischen und deutschen Landsleute’ [the Lower Gail valley costume, the festival child of our Slovene and German fellow country people].48 As the military courage shown in defense of the Heimat in 1918-19 was stressed the distinction between it and the two world wars became blurred. The

44 SiDion, Lagebericht August - November 1960, ÖStA, AdR, BMI, 30,000-2 a/60.
45 Police estimates were 60-70,000; the Volkszeitung, 12 October 1960, referred to ‘at least’ 100,000. For Communist attacks see ‘Der Mißbrauch der 10.-Oktober-Feier’, Wahrheit und Volkswohle, 27 August 1960, 1 and 3; Pichler, ‘Politische Gedenkteile’, pp. 221-2.
sacrifices of 300 Abwehrkämpfer praised for having forced the plebiscite were linked to the 33,000 ‘fallen Carinthians’ of both world wars.\textsuperscript{49} Adolf Schärf, the Austrian president, provided a national, and ostensibly international, endorsement to Carinthian German interpretative dominance when he declared that Carinthia had given the world an example of just and humane solutions of border and minority problems.\textsuperscript{50}

One of the main groups which marched past on 10 October itself was the \textit{Kärntner Heimatdienst} headed by Hans Steinacher. He had just republished a thinly anonymised and partly sanitised version of his 1943 book \textit{Sieg in Deutscher Nacht}.\textsuperscript{51} In public he declared, with all the authority of the authentic eyewitness, that ‘dass es ohne den Freiheitskampf der Kärntner keine Volksabstimmung gegen hätte’ [without the \textit{Abwehrkampf} there would have been no plebiscite].\textsuperscript{52} This unprovable slogan was to become a central thesis of some Carinthian historians over the following decades.

\textbf{III}

The 10 October celebrations dominated but did not displace all other Carinthian celebrations, whether secular or religious. The calendar of the Catholic Church continued as before, not least in those Slovene-speaking villages of Southern Carinthia where the Catholic milieu was still partially intact. At the same time, the 10 October also shows how reluctant the Catholic authorities were to support those Slovene priests who tried to resist Germanising pressure. For example in Kappel an der Drau / Kapla ob Dravi a Mesner [sacristan] who refused to follow the order to ring church bells on 10 October 1948 was disciplined by the Klagenfurt

\textsuperscript{49} ‘Totengedenken auf dem Ulrichsberg’, \textit{Neue Zeit}, 4 October 1960; see also Walter Fanta and Valentein Sima, ‘

\textsuperscript{50} ‘Der Welt ein Beispiel’, \textit{Neue Zeit}, 12 October 1960.


\textsuperscript{52} ‘An der Grenze nicht Bunker, sondern Kultur!’, \textit{Volkszeitung} 12 October 1960, 7.
Ordinariat. As for secular celebrations, May Day (*Tag der Arbeit*) continued to be celebrated by Social Democratic and Trade Union organisations. Yet when it came to the 10 October 1950, the SPÖ, far from criticising German national interpretations of the anniversary, as Lagger had in 1930, concentrated its fire on the ÖVP employers’ organisation for blocking a proposal to make the day a paid holiday.

Last not least the dominance of the German national interpretation of 10 October can be seen in the rhetoric of liberation, and contrasted to changing meanings given to the end of the war and national socialism. Admittedly the first anniversary on 8 May 1946 was commemorated with a military parade of British troops and Carinthian politicians expressed due gratitude to the Allies. But they also began widening the circle of victimhood. For example, Governor Piesch recalled not just those Austrians and Carinthians who had fought against Nazism but also those ‘who had to bear arms against their will’.

In the following decade Carinthian politicians continued to pay lip service to the Allied victory. But many clearly saw 8 May less as an occasion for celebration than a reminder that, in the words of the president of the Carinthian Landtag in 1950, ‘sich die Hoffnungen, die an den Befreiungstag geknüpft worden seien, nicht erfüllt haben’ ([the hopes, which had been linked to the day of liberation have not been fulfilled](#)). In the German national narrative the end of the war had brought Yugoslav partisans into the Carinthian *Heimat* where they had kidnapped and killed nearly 100 Carinthians. The establishment of the bilingual school a few months later fitted well into that view of the war’s end. The idea of liberation from Slav rule, culture and the obligation to learn Slovene, by contrast, had greater resonance. The dominant militarist strand was only partly tempered by a celebration of plebiscite result in terms of majoritarian democracy, which largely overlooked issues of cultural and linguistic difference.

---


This was a party which Slovenes who were nationally and culturally conscious were not invited to. However, most recently there have been some signs of change in a more pluralist, tolerant direction. In 2016 it was decided to the protests of the hard line Kärntner Abwehrkämpferverband to included Slovene representatives for the first time. Whether this will continue in the 2020 centenary celebrations remains to be seen.
