

AUSTRIAN STATE POLICY AND ITS INTEREST IN SLOVENIAN FOLK CULTURE

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This article writes about the project „Das Volkslied in Österreich“ (Folk Song in Austria) that was supported by the then Government in Vienna and its meaning for Slovenians. This was the way how Slovenian language was recognised also as the language of Slovenian folk culture, after it was put into force as an official language and language of education in the time of Maria Theresa.

Keywords: *history, language.*

V prispevku je predstavljen sprejem projekta “Das Volkslied in Österreich = Narodna pesem v Avstriji”, ki je dobil podporo takratne vlade na Dunaju in je izrednega pomena tudi za Slovence. Slovenščina, ki se je od časa Marije Terezije naprej uveljavljala kot uradni jezik in jezik izobraževanja, je bila priznana tudi kot jezik slovenske ljudske kulture.

Ključne besede: *zgodovina, jezik.*

The official interest of the Austrian policy for folk culture, including Slovenian folk culture, came to expression in the monumental project *Das Volkslied in Österreich* (Folk Song in Austria), which was initiated with a joint-stock music company called Universal Edition, founded in 1901. Its goal was to collect the treasures of Austrian folk song and to present the original texts with a good German translation to the entire musical world, as Matija Murko [Murko 1929: 7] wrote. This plan was adopted by the Ministry of Public Worship and Education. The minister at the time, Wilhelm von Hartel from Moravia, showed interest in this project that included numerous nations and languages. This minister's decisions were very important for Slovenians because he arranged to send young Slovenian lawyers to study abroad in order to acquire competence for the planned faculty of law in Ljubljana, which was in fact founded only after the First World War. Because the folk song project only covered Cisleithania, and not all of Austria-Hungary, only the Croats and Serbs of Dalmatia were represented, but not others, and the Slovenians of the Prekmurje region were not included either.

It is interesting that the start of the program was strongly connected with Slovenia. The project's main initiator was Josef Pommer (1845–1918), born in Mürzzuschlag in Styria, a teacher by profession and also an important Austrian collector of folk songs. He had heard Slovenian folk songs in his youth, sung by his father, who learned them during his appointment as a judge in Celje.

It is mostly to the credit of Pommer – who was also a member of the national parliament – that the ministry accepted and financed this project.

The first meeting for the folk song project was convened by Minister Hartel on 18 No-

vember 1904. The members of the committee were: Adolf Hauffen (the German University in Prague); the Germanist R. Much, Josef Pommer, and Josef Schatz (Innsbruck); Otakar Hostinský (Prague); the music teacher J. Zack (Brno); Eusebius Mandyczewski (Vienna); Włodzimierz Szuchiewicz (Lviv); Giuseppe Vidossich (Trieste); and the professor of Italian Antonio Ive and Karel Štrekelj (Graz). Štrekelj represented the Slovenians together with Matej Hubad, a principal from Ljubljana. Universal Edition had its representative Weinberger on the main committee, which means that the Germans were the best represented, but the Slovenians with two representatives from the very beginning were also relatively well represented.

The ministry stayed involved in the project. As a deliberative organ, its main committee ensured the scholarly nature of the work. From the beginning there was a question of the dependence of different committees on the main committee. The initiator Josef Pommer stressed in his speech that the project would maintain complete national autonomy. As Matija Murko found out later, the Slovenian committee was also completely autonomous with the exception of its finances, which were controlled by the ministry.

The Slovenians were not only well represented, but they also began serious work immediately. The main committee provided the instructions for collecting songs, but Karel Štrekelj also gave specific independent instructions to the Slovenian committee and published them under the title *Osnovna načela za publikacijo Avstrijske Narodne Pesmi, ki jo namerja izdati c. kr. ministrstvo za bogočastje in nauk* (Basic Principles for the Publication *Austrian Folk Songs*, to be Published by the Austro-Hungarian Ministry of Public Worship and Education). These instructions were printed in 1906. Štrekelj also published the questionnaire *Poprševalna pola o narodnih pesmih, narodni godbi in narodnih plesih* (Questionnaire for Folk Songs, Folk Music, and Folk Dances), which was printed as well.

In 1905 [Murko 1929: 8] the committees for Styria, Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Salzburg, Carinthia, Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Moravia and Silesia, a committee for the Poles, Rusyns, and Romanians in Bukovina, and two committees for Italians – one for the Italians in the Littoral and in Dalmatia and the second for the Italians in south Tyrol – were founded, as well as a separate committee for the Ladins in Tyrol. One committee for Croats and Serbs in the Littoral and Dalmatia was founded and led by Milan Rešetar in Vienna.

Setting the policy for the Slovenian committee was entrusted to Karel Štrekelj. In the Slovenian area a committee for the Germans in Kočevsko (Germ. *Gottschee*) was also founded and led by Hans Tschinkel. The organization was not unified – the Slovenians, Croats, Serbs, Poles, and Rusyns received national committees whereas the Germans had eight. The national unified committees had an advantage concerning uniformity of work, but the German division resulted in more votes in the main committee and also more funding.

International conflicts in the monarchy were typical at this time, and the project was also no exception. International differences of opinion surfaced in the session on 15 and 16 December 1910 [Murko 1929: 9]. There were 13 Germans, 6 Slavs, and 1 Italian present. In his very active fashion, Karel Štrekelj suggested changing the title *Volksdichtung in Österreich*

(Folk Poetry in Austria) to *Das Volkslied, Volkspoesie und Volksmusik der in Österreich lebenden Völker* (The Folk Song, Folk Poetry, and Folk Music of the Nations Living in Austria). He also began to use the expression *Volk* 'nation' instead of *Stamm* 'tribe', which had been in use until then. The question of the language in the main title was the most complicated. A select committee suggested that the main title for non-German nations be in German as well, and that the non-German prefaces also be translated. The non-German representatives did not adopt this suggestion. President Wiener's argument was that German speakers would not buy these works if there were nothing in German [Murko 1929: 13]. An easy decision was impossible, but on the following day Rešetar's suggestion was adopted. He claimed that:

the question of the title and the language of the edition has an eminent national character for all non-German committeemen. Future cooperation between Slavic and Italian committees depends on this solution, which is possible without considerable growth in the costs, if two editions are edited for the non-German areas. The one for the nation should be exclusively in its language, and the other for the scholarly community should have the national main title with a German translation and a supplement in German at the end with a preface, complete scholarly explanations, and all other scholarly elements. [Murko 1929: 14]

President Wiener said he absolutely supported this suggestion, but that the minister himself should decide. Everybody agreed, except for the Ladins, who said they did not need a special edition because they did not have a literary language, and Romanians did not have special requests. Because the main committee reserved its right to control the entire edition, they increased the number of select committee members to eight (4 Germans, 3 Slavs, and 1 Italian).

Despite the complications and international conflicts that came up during the sessions, we have to stress the very high level of communication and success in finding satisfactory solutions. At the end of the session in 1910, for example, Rešetar thanked the Germans specifically, because they considered the other nations and their suggestions when it came to questions of national importance.

The ministry was also faced with several other questions. Carinthia was a special case. In 1908 Štrekelj contacted the ministry in hope that it would persuade the board of education in Klagenfurt to issue an order for teachers in bilingual schools to become active collectors of songs. However, the ministry's answer was not positive because it feared the teachers' resistance [Murko 1929: 29].

In collecting folk songs the authorities were also active among soldiers during the First World War. The Ministry of War in Vienna ordered military songs to be recorded. On 12 November 1915 it turned to the Audiovisual Research Archive of the Academy in Vienna and asked if it already had recordings of military songs or if it would record them as a *testimony to a momentous period*. Because the archive did not have such songs, it responded to the ministry's initiative, and Leo Hajek assumed this task. The ministry demanded songs

in every language spoken by the soldiers (including military songs, marches, and battle songs). They found that the singing habits were not the same among all the nations. The South Slavs preferred to sing after work in peace, whereas the others liked marches. The Slovenians in particular did not have marches, and they sang while resting after a hard day of work. Even though Hajek found the Slovenian songs very pleasing, he did not record all of them in order to conserve discs. With the help of texts and notes it would have been possible to record them later.

To expand on the title “Austrian State Policy and its Interest in Slovenian Folk Culture,” the project *Das Volkslied in Österreich* (The Folk Song in Austria) demonstrated the interest of the policy and the state in folk cultures, including that of Slovenia.

It is more difficult to find this kind of interest in folk culture in earlier times, but one could nonetheless speak about the developments that made the project described above possible. The great role that the authorities had in the development of the Slovenian language – which, in the case described above, represented the basis of the folk culture – began with Maria Theresa, who raised Slovenian to the level of an official state language. During her reign official documents began to be published in Slovenian. On 4 December 1768 a patent on the *general sharing of grassland* was published, on 10 March 1770 a *list of souls* as a basis for recruitment, on 25 May 1770 *rules regarding bandits*, on 31 May 1770 *payments for wine transport on the Sava River*, on 12 December 1772 a *patent on tithing*, and others [Gruden 1992: 1054]. The measures of Joseph II took into consideration Slovenian toponyms and showed – even if combined with German, Hungarian, and other toponyms – the broad territorial circulation of the language. The intrinsic value of the assertion of Slovenian as a national language necessary for education became clear with Joseph II’s reforms of diocesan borders. At the request of the emperor, the Bishop of Klagenfurt made the first list of parishes according to language use. This list was used for apportioning dioceses. For the first time and on his own initiative, he defined a linguistic border between German and Slovenian in Styria. Thanks to him, Slovenian-speaking Bad Radkersburg/Radgona, Mureck/Cmurek, Arnfels/Arnež, and Soboth/Sobota joined the new Diocese of Lavant. This new diocese for Lower Styria was named a Slovenian one (Windishes Bistum) until Joseph II moved the seat to Maribor, which happened quite late because many opposed it. One of the most important reasons for this was the extreme importance of Slovenian for people’s education [Rajšp 1999: 341-361].

In spite of all the difficulties, the use of Slovenian was put into force in the 19th century. Applicants for the position of regional commissioner were required (by the emperor’s order in Ilyria) to speak Slovenian [Kranjc 1998: 171].

According to emperor’s patent of 1849, provincial and state regulations were required to be in the language that was common in the area as well as in German. Although the decree for the state statute book was in force only until 1852, and until 1860 for the provincial one, it was not possible to stop the expansion of the Slovenian language in public life. From

1868 to 1871 the use of Slovenian in administration and education was one of the central demands of mass political meetings (the *taborsko gibanje*).

It is also not easy to speak about Austrian national policy and its interest in Slovenian folk culture, but one must consider the fact that there would probably have been no interest in Slovenian folk culture without the previous positive development of the position Slovenian language in state administration. Slovenians used all these opportunities well. The ambitious work of the project *The Folk Song in Austria* and results of this work only confirm this.

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AVSTRIJSKA DRŽAVNA POLITIKA IN ZANIMANJE ZA SLOVENSKO LJUDSKO KULTURO

Uradno zanimanje avstrijske državne politike za ljudsko kulturo in s tem tudi za slovensko kulturo se je izrazilo v monumentalnem projektu "Das Volkslied in Österreich = Narodna pesem v Avstriji". Vladno podporo projektu je zastopal takratni minister Wilhelm vitez Hartel. Za

Slovence je bil projekt izredno pomemben, saj je bil slovenski odbor pod vodstvom Karla Štreklja zelo aktiven.

Težave pri uveljavljanju slovenščine v javnem življenju, predvsem na sodiščih, pri uradovanju in v šolstvu, od druge polovice 19. stoletja dalje ne kažejo naklonjenosti osrednjih oblasti do slovenščine. Vendar pa je s privolitvijo oblasti slovenščina postala drugi uradni jezik: od izdaje prvih patentov v slovenskem prevodu v času Marije Terezije, preko prevoda državnega in deželnih zakonikov sredi 19. stoletja do uveljavljanja šolstva od druge polovice 19. stoletja dalje. Slovenski jezik kot najboljše sredstvo za dvig izobrazbe so oblasti upoštevale tudi pri preoblikovanju škofij v drugi polovici 19. stoletja, posebej še pri prenosu sedeža Lavantinske škofije v Maribor. Podpora oblasti projektu "Narodna pesem v Avstriji" pa je pomenila prvič tudi uradno priznanje pomena slovenske ljudske kulture.

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