

**HISTORICAL HOLIDAYS IN A NATION-STATE:  
SLOVENES AS A MAJORITY AND AS A MINORITY**

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## ABSTRACT

In 2005, fourteen years after it became independent, Slovenia introduced three new national holidays, each of them celebrating an important event from Slovene national history when a certain Slovene populated region was attached to today's Slovenia. Two of the new holidays, the "Day of Slovenes in Prekmurje Incorporated into the Mother Nation" and the "Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland" were objected by representatives of the Hungarian and the Italian minorities. Thus the aim of this thesis was to disclose reasons behind the minorities' objections and to present practical as well as theoretical implications of the dispute between the majority politicians and representatives of the minorities. Standpoints of the majority media have also been taken into consideration during the analysis. Second, Slovene statesmen's and Slovene media's attitude towards the celebration of the new Slovene national holidays was compared with their attitude towards celebrations of annual anniversaries of the so called Carinthian plebiscite after which the Slovene minority was to live in Austria. Based on the research we can say that the introduction of the new holidays was not explicitly directed against the minorities, but the latter perceived them as such because their content was in conflict with the minorities' historical memory and national sentiments. Since their objections were rejected, representatives of both of the national communities had to realize that despite the high level of minority protection in Slovenia the rights of the minorities cannot be equal to those of the majority in a nation-state, especially when the latter wishes to emphasize the connection between the state and the Slovene national territory. Finally, even though Slovene politicians described the results of the Carinthian plebiscite as a loss of the Slovene national territory, the Slovene authorities – as well as Slovene media – are primarily concerned with the unsatisfactory level of minority protection of the Carinthian Slovenes.

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# INTRODUCTION

After 88,5% of eligible voters supported the Republic of Slovenia's independence at the plebiscite on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1990, Slovenia seceded from Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1991. Both of these dates are celebrated as national holidays in Slovenia: the second of them is named "Statehood Day", and the first was called "Independence Day" until 2005 when its name was changed to "Independence and Unity Day". According to the government's proposal the aim of this change was to emphasize the historic plebiscitary unity which resulted in the Slovene independence. It was further stated that this is the date that connects most of the Slovene citizens.<sup>1</sup> It can be said that these are the holidays to which the citizens of Slovenia can relate to regardless of their national belonging.

In addition to the abovementioned change the Law on National Holidays and Work-free Days in Republic of Slovenia from 2005 also introduced three new national holidays, each of them celebrating a certain historical point when a part of Slovenia's territory was acquired. Two of these holidays, the "Day of Slovenes in Prekmurje Incorporated into the Mother Nation" and the "Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland", refer to the territory where the Hungarian and the Italian "autochthon national communities"<sup>2</sup> live. As a result of the historical events the two holidays celebrate Hungarians living in the region of Prekmurje as well as Italians from Primorska region got separated from their mother nations and became national minorities within today's Slovenia's territory. Parliamentary representatives of both of the minorities

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<sup>1</sup> The Slovene government's proposal on changes and complementaions of the Law on National Holidays and Work-free Days in Republic of Slovenia, 24.5.2005: [http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125700E0043AB95&db=kon\\_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125700E0043AB95&db=kon_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc)

<sup>2</sup> Attila Kovács, Demographic trends of the Prekmurje Hungarians in the 20th century, in: Treatises and documents: journal of ethnic studies, No. 48/49, Institute of ethnic studies, Ljubljana, 2006, 6

opposed the introduction of the respective holidays with the argument that they would not unify the population of Slovenia, but would interfere with the minority rights and with the national feelings of the minority. In short, they would disrupt the harmony on nationally mixed territories in question. In the end, both parliamentary representatives of the minorities wanted to amend the law by adding a provision following which national flags of the minorities would not be hung out during the celebrations. Their argument was that hanging out the minorities' flags "is not in accordance with the spirit of the holiday".<sup>3</sup> The amendment was unanimously rejected by other parliamentary representatives.

The Hungarian minority populates approximately 195 km<sup>2</sup> of territory along the Slovene-Hungarian border in the Slovene geographic region of Prekmurje.<sup>4</sup> To this day official representatives of the Hungarian minority refuse to take part in the annual celebrations of the incorporation of the Prekmurje Slovenes into the mother nation. Especially after the first such occasion Slovene media have been critical regarding the minority's boycott of the holiday. At the same time, majority politicians maintained the holiday is not directed against the minorities and that the Hungarian minority is well taken care of, that is, it is properly protected within the framework of the Slovene Constitution as well as other minority legislation and that this should guarantee for the symbiosis of the majority and the minority population in the region.

In the first chapter of the research key principles of minority protection in Slovenia are going to be presented, that is, special status of the Hungarian and Italian national communities are going to be described. Understanding those principles will serve as a foundation for the main part of the

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<sup>3</sup> The amendment proposed by the parliamentary representatives of the Hungarian and the Italian minorities, 29.09.2005: [http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125708C00247D18&db=kon\\_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125708C00247D18&db=kon_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc)

<sup>4</sup> Attila Kovács, Demographic trends of the Prekmurje Hungarians in the 20th century, in: Treatises and documents: journal of ethnic studies, No. 48/49, Institute of ethnic studies, Ljubljana, 2006, 6

research which will start with the analysis of the content and theoretical implications of the new holidays in the chapters two and three. Our main sources will be the government's proposal of the holidays, the subsequent parliamentary discussion, media reports on their acceptance and theoretical literature from the field of nationalism studies. In the fourth chapter we are going to disclose the reasons behind the opposing viewpoints as regards to the nature of the Prekmurje holiday. By introducing the holiday the Slovene state arguably wanted to commemorate the turning points of Slovene national history with the emphasis on the acquisition of the certain part of its territory. While the same historical event after World War I has severed the Hungarian minority from its kin-state, the holiday discomforts the minority. The analysis is going to, on one hand, point out two conflicting national historical narratives and two conflicting emotional attitudes towards the holiday, on the other hand, it is going to shed light on contemporary disputes regarding the status of the Hungarian minority, especially regarding interpretations of its legal protection and preservation of its identity, that is, ensuring its linguistic rights and preventing its further assimilation.

Because of the high emotional intensiveness of such celebrations the discussion accompanying them can offer a valuable insight into the content of disagreements between the majority and the minority which otherwise remains relatively latent. At the same time, the argumentation used during it can generate negative attitude towards the other national group where they did not exist before. In order to elaborate on historical and contemporary reasons for the clash between Slovene majority and Hungarian minority regarding the new national holiday, we are going to take a look at the content of the dispute between parliamentary representative of the Hungarian minority and majority representatives during the parliamentary discussion. Furthermore, we are going to scrutinize national as well as local media's reports and commentaries on the introduction

of the Prekmurje holiday and on its first celebration in August 2006. Objections of representatives of the Hungarian minority as well as the presentation of the Prime Minister's speech in 2006 were also published in the media that we are going to analyze. During the discourse analysis we will try to detect the recurring nation-related concepts, such as national territory, minority rights, national history, national feelings, and in which way are they used in the arguments of both of the sides.

In the fifth chapter – by using similar set of sources – we are going to compare disputes surrounding this holiday with the celebration of the “Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland” which refers to the historical event after World War II when the western part of today's Slovenia was united with today's territory of the Slovene state. After that some tens of thousands people of Italian nationality left the Slovene part of Yugoslavia and today's Italian minority in Slovenia has only around three thousand members, which is a relatively small number compared to the size of the Slovene minority in Italy.<sup>5</sup> Even though the Italian minority in Slovenia is legally well protected, its parliamentary representative felt the new holiday is threatening to the minority, that is, according to him it is not only in conflict with its historical memories, but he also saw it as a political response to the Italy's introduction of “National Memorial Day of the Exiles and Foibe” in 2004. We are thus going to research the opposing argumentation and attitudes (e.g.: Do members of the Italian minority attend the celebrations? How are they mentioned in the speeches politicians give at the celebrations?) of representatives of the Slovene nation-state and the representatives of the minority as regards to the celebration of the new Slovene national holiday. Comparing it with the case of the holiday referring to the nationally mixed territory of Prekmurje we will see whether the nature of this clash is prevalently connected to different historical national narratives of the two nations in Slovene Primorska or to

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<sup>5</sup> Dušan Nečak, Božo Repe, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana, 2003, 263

contemporary unresolved political issues between the two states concerning the treatment of the respective minorities. This way we will also be able to get a deeper insight into motives behind introducing these holidays and further disclose the Slovene nation state's perception of the national minorities on her territory.

Ultimately, in the sixth chapter we are going to compare Slovene politicians' and Slovene media's attitude towards the new national holidays and the above mentioned national minorities with their attitude towards annual celebrations of the so called "Carinthian plebiscite" in Austria. The plebiscite took place in 1920 and based on its results more than fifty-seven thousand Slovenes were to live as a minority in the Austrian federal state of Carinthia.<sup>6</sup> Just as the celebrations of the new holidays in Slovenia, the anniversaries of the Carinthian plebiscite rather increase than alleviate national tensions between the Austrian majority and Slovenian minority. On one hand, what is celebrated here is one of the most traumatic points of the Slovene national history, and on the other hand, it is a time of the year when the problematic status of the Slovene minority's language and other rights are most discussed. As in the case of the Hungarian and Italian minority in Slovenia, the representatives of the Slovene minority in Austria maintain that the holiday is counterproductive as regards to the unity of population on the ethnically mixed territory. Since we are particularly interested in the Slovene nation-state's representatives' attitude towards anniversaries of the plebiscite we are going to concentrate on the celebrations and accompanying disputes in the period after Slovenia became independent. We must answer following questions: Do representatives of Slovenian authorities participate at the festivities? If not, how do they justify their absence? What is theirs and Slovene media's interpretation of the holiday? To answer these questions we are going to, first, take a look at the potential

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<sup>6</sup> The number of Slovenes in Carinthia according to the 1910 census, in: Matjaž Klemenčič, Vladimir Klemenčič, *The endeavors of Carinthian Slovenes for their ethnic survival with/against Austrian governments after World War II*, Mohorjeva založba, Celovec – Dunaj – Ljubljana, 2008, 31

correspondence between organizers of the celebrations and Slovene politicians or institutions. Additional information can be gained from Slovene media as well as from the public releases of organizations representing the Slovene minority in Austria which tend to closely follow the occurrences connected to the holiday. Again, we are going to focus on the most commonly used concepts and how they are integrated into the Slovene politics' and media's standpoints on the Carinthian celebrations. By doing so we might be able to see the difference in Slovenes' attitude towards celebrations of acquiring territory for the Slovene nation-state and towards celebrations commemorating the loss of the Slovene national territory. In both cases, we may argue, the attitude will be affected not only by historical memories, but also by legal and everyday status of the above mentioned minorities.

Our methodological point of departure is going to be a discourse analysis of the sources. Based on the obtained information further legal, historical, and theoretical interpretation of the nation-related phenomena is going to follow. The discourse analysis will thus be supported and generalized by applicable theories on nations and nationalism as well as by legal and historical literature. Let us now turn to the review of the applicable theoretical as well as empirical literature.

In the introduction to the book *Contemporary majority nationalism*<sup>7</sup> André Lecours and Genevieve Nootens tackle a common misperception that nationalism is utilized exclusively by minorities. They argue that nationalism in a nation-state can also emerge among majority nations. The latter is described as nationalism projected by a consolidated state. The focus of their text is on institutional and cultural aspects of the state that might be seen as neutral, but are in fact reflecting identity of the majority nation. These aspects, for instance, include choosing of the

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<sup>7</sup> Alain-G. Gagnon, André Lecours, Geneviève Nootens (eds.), *Contemporary majority nationalism*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2011

official language, national symbols, and, we can add, certainly also national holidays. Furthermore, the authors are concerned with the consequences majority nationalism has on the life of members of the minorities in such states. One of their crucial points is that majority nationalism tends to be relativized or interpreted as patriotism. Patriotism is supposed to have a positive role of defending the state, whereas expressions of minority's national identity run the risk of being denoted as unpatriotic, that is, disloyal to the nation-state. Even though the Slovene state does promote manifestations of minorities' national belonging, we may rightfully pose a question whether Hungarian and Italian minorities' refusal to celebrate specific dates of Slovene national history are seen as unpatriotic acts by members of the majority.

As implied by the title, scholars contributing texts to the book *Patriotism in the lives of individuals and nations*<sup>8</sup> deal with explicating the concept of patriotism. Herbert C. Kelman's article *Nationalism, patriotism, and national identity: social-psychological dimensions* points to the ideological nature of patriotism by saying that a country is not just a geographic location for a patriot, but it represents his homeland. Since "the concept of patriotism refers to the conjunction between country and nation,"<sup>9</sup> a patriot is loyal to his nation and its state. Following this we may claim that the fact that nation and country do not necessarily overlap puts national minorities in an uncertain position. Their position arguably becomes even more uncertain in intense cases such as commemorations of historical dates that are perceived as national tragedies by members of the minority and its kin-state.

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, Ervin Staub (eds.), *Patriotism in the lives of individuals and nations*, Nelson-Hall Publishers, Chicago, 1997

<sup>9</sup> Herbert C. Kelman, *Nationalism, patriotism, and national identity: social-psychological dimensions*, in: Bar-Tal, Staub (eds.), *Patriotism in the lives of individuals and nations*, 166

In *Banal nationalism*<sup>10</sup> Michael Billig speaks about everyday functioning of nationalism, that is, “how established nation-states are daily reproduced as nations.”<sup>11</sup> Majority’s nationalism thus no longer appears as something emotional, irrational, or dangerous. To use his example, “only the passionately waved flags are conventionally considered to be exemplars of nationalism.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, unwaved flags tend to remain unnoticed, which is precisely why they seem to be naturally embedded in routine of the state’s society. In other words, flags and other state symbols “[a]re so numerous and such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operate mindlessly, rather than mindfully.”<sup>13</sup> Since Slovenia can hardly be called an established nation-state, a question can be posed whether one of the purposes of the new holidays is promoting emotional waving of flags? Are these additional national celebrations a prerequisite for the Slovene nationalism eventually becoming unnoticed and for the Slovene national symbols to be treated as natural element in this nation-state? At this point it is necessary to introduce Billig’s critique of the distinction between supposedly beneficial patriotism and volatile nationalism. Proponents of the new holidays arguably see them as manifestations of Slovene patriotism, i.e., those who celebrate them are expressing their loyalty to the nation and subsequently to the state. What about those who decline to celebrate it? More concretely, what about the minorities who do not want to wave national flags of their kin-states at these celebrations? Billig’s book is going to help us interpret the interplay of concepts such as majority nationalism, patriotism and loyalty to the nation-state that are at work at the celebrations of new Slovenian holidays.

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism*, Sage Publications, London, 1995

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 39

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 38

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

Whether we are talking about banal or not-banal attitude towards national symbols we need to take into consideration Louis Althusser's text *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*,<sup>14</sup> especially his thesis about material existence of ideology. What keeps an individual embedded in ideology is his taking part in material practices, which may include celebrating holidays as well as being involved in everyday engagements – such as using a specific language – within the frame of one's society. If we apply this theory to national ideology we can hypothesize that national belonging is not primarily an idealistic identification with the nation, but we are rather connected with it by engaging in activities which bear national characteristics. To use Billig's description, we will be affiliated with the nation either by mindfully saluting to the flags or by just mindlessly passing them by.

We are going to explain irrational component of belonging to nation with the help of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory of ideology as developed by Slavoj Žižek. On an ideological level, Žižek says, national identity is a result of the process of individuals' identification with their nation.<sup>15</sup> In one of his main texts *The sublime subject of ideology*<sup>16</sup> Žižek argues that Althusser does not thematize senselessness accompanying execution of material practices or rituals. Put differently, the subject does not know what these practices mean, that is, he cannot rationally grasp his or hers identification with the nation. To overcome this trauma subject presupposes an existence of a bound symbolic universe, i.e., nation, within which rituals such as national celebrations have a meaning. At the same time the subject creates a fantasy scenario offering an explanation to why being a member of the nation is something to be desired. In other words, fantasy gives an answer to what is special about the nation we identify with. This specialness is perceived as an inexpressible hidden treasure which, for instance, accompanies practices and rituals we take part

<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, *Essays on ideology*, Verso, London, 1993

<sup>15</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Jezik, ideologija in Slovenci*, Delavska enotnost, Kočevje, 1987, 26

<sup>16</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The sublime subject of ideology*, Verso, London, 1989

in as members of a nation. Finally, it is this perception of hidden inner treasure to which enjoyment is attached. Therefore, the subject enjoys rituals which he or she feels have a special meaning within given ideology. Applying this to our case we are going to argue that being involved in celebrations of national holidays holds the subject within the ideological field of the nation. To sum up, by relying on Lacan and Žižek we should be able to determine the irrational dimension of the material practices in question, that is, we should see the role enjoyment and emotions play in tensions between majority and minority national groups in context of celebrating national holidays.

Benedict Anderson sees national groups as inherently limited imagined communities.<sup>17</sup> According to him member of such community feels connected to other members without meeting all of them in person. Arguably one of the desired goals of the new holidays is making members of the Slovene nation more connected to each other, and at the same time it appears to be pushing minorities out of the Slovene nation-state community. Anderson also addresses the phenomenon of patriotism by adding that national ideology presupposes that members of a nation would in last instance be willing to sacrifice their lives for the imagined community

Although the holidays in question commemorate historical events that occurred in 20<sup>th</sup> century, the argumentation of the involved actors refers even to medieval history. That is why our research should benefit from ethno-symbolic approach as found in Anthony D. Smith's book *National identity*.<sup>18</sup> Smith disputes the exclusively modernistic view on nation-building and underlines cultural elements and historical memories that constitute national identity. Together with him we can argue that nations are not simply constructed and national myths are not simply

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<sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities*, Verso, London, 2006

<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National identity*, Penguin Books, London, 1991

invented, but that the features constituting national identity can be based on culture and history from the times before the emergence of modern nations.

In *Das Europa der Nationen*<sup>19</sup>[The Europe of the nations] Miroslav Hroch dedicates a chapter to analysis of emotional aspect of national identity. He maintains a person has to possess more than a sheer abstract image of the nation in order to identify with it, namely, identification is impossible without certain emotional elements. Especially when national identity and nationalism become mass phenomena, he continues, they need to offer an emotional attachment to the nation. He argues that the strength of national feelings depends on a given social situation, for example, they tend to get stronger when there is a perception of threat. In his view these feelings might lead to discerning the nation as a person. If attitude towards the nation is felt as a love relationship, this according to Hroch means a tight bond between passion and patriotism. Perceiving nation as a person can be dangerous, he claims, when a part of the national body is separated from its main part, i.e., this loss is felt as an amputation, which is especially painful in the case of a minority living right across the border in other nation-state.<sup>20</sup> Hroch also addresses the question of national celebrations and national holidays. The key purpose of the repeating celebrations is to deepen the attachment of individuals to the nation and to its past. They call forth feelings of belonging and strengthen the socialization process within the nation.<sup>21</sup>

Since we are investigating tensions occurring between representatives and members of different nations, we also need to take into consideration the authors who analyze the identity of social groups. Henri Tajfel<sup>22</sup> maintains the unique value of group belonging is in that it positively contributes to the member's self-image. People thus enter groups based on their need for positive

<sup>19</sup> Miroslav Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2005

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 202-204

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 217-219

<sup>22</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981

self-perception. Daniel Bar-Tal<sup>23</sup> also elaborates on goals and ideologies of social groups, for instance, on the desired future state for the group. As for the relations between majority and minority, following Tajfel minorities become aware of their status at the point when they face discriminating treatment and negative attitude from the majority. The problem that concerns him is what psychological and behavioral effects can such negative attitude has on a minority. Rogers Brubaker dismisses the notion of firm national groups, he maintains that they are being constructed, that is, they ‘crystallize’ in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others.<sup>24</sup> As for our research it is precisely this latency and potential of groupness to become a national group that we are striving to disclose. Brubaker’s call for awareness of tentative memberships of (national) groups should therefore be taken seriously, but should nevertheless not lead us to over-relativizing the occurrence of national groups.

Will Kymlicka offers a consistent set of principles we should follow when protecting rights of national minorities in multinational states.<sup>25</sup> First, he makes a distinction between patriotism, that is, allegiance to the state, and national identity, the sense of membership in a national group.<sup>26</sup> According to him the precondition for a national group to feel allegiance to a multinational state is if such state recognizes and respects their separate national existence. National membership should, nevertheless, in principle be open to everyone “who is willing to learn the language and history of the society and participate in its social and political institutions.”<sup>27</sup> There are two forms of group-specific rights Kymlicka suggests that are interesting with respect to our case: self-government rights and special representation rights. In general, the aim of such external protection is “[t]o protect national minority’s distinct existence and identity by limiting the

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, Group beliefs as an expression of social identity, in: S. Worchel, J.F. Morales, D. Paez, J.C. Deschamps (Eds.), *Social identity*, SAGE Publications, London, 1998

<sup>24</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, Harvard University Press, 2004

<sup>25</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship: a liberal theory of minority right*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 14

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 23

impact of the decisions of the larger society.”<sup>28</sup> He implies a minority could not survive without such protection, no matter how liberal the state is. Because “government decisions on languages, internal boundaries, public holidays, and state symbols unavoidably involve recognizing, accommodating, and supporting the needs and identities of particular ethnic and national groups,” we cannot respond to cultural differences with “benign neglect”.<sup>29</sup> Members of the majority, Kymlicka infers, have to sacrifice some of their rights in order for a minority to preserve its culture. In short, the latter has much more to lose than the majority whose dominant status in the state can hardly be threatened.

In his article titled *The protection of ethnic minorities in the republic of Slovenia*<sup>30</sup> Miran Komac<sup>31</sup> presented Slovenia’s policies regarding minority rights of the Italian and the Hungarian autochthonous national communities. These rights include minorities’ self-administration, education in their national languages, usage of their national symbols, political representation in the Slovene parliament, public bilingualism, and so on. Special status of both of the minorities is guaranteed by the Slovene Constitution as well as by provisions in various laws. The author also shortly describes some of the negative responses members of the majority have regarding the rights of the minorities. Furthermore, he states the opinion of the European Council which believes Slovenia has a unique system of education on nationally mixed territories. According to the Council the guideline of this system is interculturalism, which stresses true coexistence, a dual cultural identity. It is through bilingualism, the Council believes, that cultivation of respect and understanding of national and cultural diversity as well as cooperation between members of majority can be best reached. Following Komac minority protection should promote the idea that

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 36

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 108

<sup>30</sup> Miran Komac, *The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia*, in: *Slovenia and European standards for the protection of national minorities*, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, 2002

<sup>31</sup> Miran Komac works at the Institute for Ethnic Studies in Slovenia.

“[t]he cultural and spiritual inheritance of an ethnically mixed area is the common property of all of its inhabitants.”<sup>32</sup>

The book *Interethnic relations in Slovene ethnic area*<sup>33</sup> contains a set of interdisciplinary empirical researches on how national groups in Slovenia perceive each other. The focus is on relations on nationally mixed territories we are interested in. Mojca Medvešek's empirical research compares the majority's and the minority's perception of the appropriateness and effectiveness of rights of the Hungarian minority.<sup>34</sup> Albina Nečak Lük interprets interethnic relation on the nationally mixed territories with a socio-linguistic research,<sup>35</sup> whereas Sonja Novak Lukanovič investigates the connection between education and interethnic relations on the territories in question.<sup>36</sup> The authors of these articles, just as Komac, do not make a theoretical distinction between the concepts ethnicity and nation and are using them interchangeably. Therefore, we can apply the results of their researches to the analysis of our case study.

By analyzing rhetoric of the sources and with the help of the above mentioned literature we will show that Slovenia introduced the new holidays with an intention to emphasize the connection between the Slovene state and the Slovene national territory. At the same time, the aim of the celebrations seems to be strengthening of patriotic sentiments towards the Slovene nation and its nation-state. Furthermore, while we will be able to conclude that the holidays were not intended to discomfort the minorities, their representatives nevertheless perceived them as an

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<sup>32</sup> Komac, The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia, 17

<sup>33</sup> Albina Nečak Lük (ed.), *Medetnični odnosi v slovenskem etničnem prostoru*, Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, Ljubljana, 1998

<sup>34</sup> Mojca Medvešek, *Analiza etnične vitalnosti Madžarov v Lendavi*, in: Nečak Lük (ed.), *Medetnični odnosi v slovenskem etničnem prostoru*

<sup>35</sup> Albina Nečak Lük, *Jezik kot kazalec stanja medetničnih odnosov*, in: Nečak Lük (ed.), *Medetnični odnosi v slovenskem etničnem prostoru*

<sup>36</sup> Sonja Novak Lukanovič, *Dvojezična vzgoja in izobraževanje*, in: Nečak Lük (ed.), *Medetnični odnosi v slovenskem etničnem prostoru*; Sonja Novak Lukanovič, *Pomen vzgoje in izobraževanja v medetničnih odnosih*, in: Nečak Lük (ed.), *Medetnični odnosi v slovenskem etničnem prostoru*

ignorance of the minorities' presence in the country. During disputes about the nature of the new holidays unresolved historical and current political issues regarding relations between national groups in question came to the surface. One of these topics is a status of the minorities and a level of minority protection in Slovenia. We will observe that the two minorities are well protected and are considered to be constitutive part of the state, but in the case of the new holidays their representatives had to accept the fact that Slovenia is predominantly based on Slovene national history and culture. As for the Slovene states' attitude towards anniversaries of the Carinthian plebiscite we will confirm that Slovene politicians discern the results of the consequences of the plebiscite as a loss of the Slovene national territory. Nevertheless, they – as well as Slovene media – are primarily concerned with the status and minority rights of the Carinthian Slovenes.

# 1. THE LEGAL POSITION OF THE HUNGARIAN AND THE ITALIAN MINORITIES IN SLOVENIA

Before World War I the Prekmurje region belonged to the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary. After the break-up of the Habsburg Empire the destiny of the region was settled at the post-war peace conference in Paris. At the peace conference the Yugoslav delegation demanded the territory between Mura and Rába rivers. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1919 the Yugoslav army – in accordance with the decision of the conference – occupied Prekmurje. After the Entente forces signed the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary Prekmurje became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS), whereas the Slovene populated region of Rábavidék was given to Hungary.<sup>37</sup> At the 2002 Slovene census 7,713 persons declared that their mother tongue is Hungarian,<sup>38</sup> 6,237 of them lived on the Hungarian minority's "autochthonous territory of settlement" in Prekmurje.<sup>39</sup> Demographic data of the 2001 Hungarian census showed that 3,180 citizens used Slovene as their mother tongue.<sup>40</sup>

The emergence of Italian minority in Slovenia was a more complex process. Treaty of London, signed during World War I in 1915, was a pact between the Entente forces and Italy which promised the latter a part of the Slovene national territory in exchange for Italy to attack Austria-Hungary.<sup>41</sup> After the war the Treaty of Rapallo was signed between Italy and Kingdom of SHS allowing Italy to acquire one third of the entire Slovene national territory and one fourth of the total Slovene population.<sup>42</sup> In an aftermath of World War II the borders changed in Yugoslavia's and Slovenia's favor. The peace treaty was signed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1947 and became effective on

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<sup>37</sup> Nečak, Repe, *Oris sodobne Obče in Slovenske zgodovine*, 45-46

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.stat.si/popis2002/gradivo/2-169.pdf>, 97

<sup>39</sup> Kovács, *Demographic trends of the Prekmurje Hungarians in the 20th century*, 6

<sup>40</sup> [http://www.nepszamlalas2001.hu/eng/volumes/18/tables/load1\\_29\\_1.html](http://www.nepszamlalas2001.hu/eng/volumes/18/tables/load1_29_1.html)

<sup>41</sup> Nečak, Repe, *Oris sodobne Obče in Slovenske zgodovine*, 30

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 46

15<sup>th</sup> September later that year. Additional border changes were made with the London memorandum in 1954 when the so called Trieste crisis was resolved: the zone A of the Free Territory of Trieste remained in Italy and the zone B – including Slovenia's seaside – became part of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, according to unofficial estimations there are still around 100,000 Slovenes living in Italy today.<sup>43</sup> As for Italians in Yugoslavia, the abovementioned treaties enabled residents of the Yugoslav territory to choose between Yugoslav and Italian citizenship. Those residents of the Yugoslav territory who opted for the acquisition of the Italian citizenship, however, had to leave the country.<sup>44</sup> 21,233 inhabitants from the newly attached Slovene territory opted for Italian citizenship and subsequently left the Slovene republic in the years after World War II.<sup>45</sup> It has to be mentioned that the majority of the Italian population left the territory already before the above mentioned agreement, that is, after the fall of fascism or right after the end of the war.<sup>46</sup> In 2002 there were 3,762 persons with Italian mother tongue living in Slovenia.<sup>47</sup>

We are now going to take a look at how both of the minorities are taken care of in the independent Slovenia. According to the preamble to the Slovene Constitution<sup>48</sup> Slovenia's independence is based on "[t]he fundamental and permanent right of the Slovene nation to self-determination."<sup>49</sup> It is also stressed in the preamble that Slovenes have established their national identity and asserted their statehood in a "centuries-long struggle for national liberation."<sup>50</sup> While Article 3 considers Slovenia to be the state of all of its citizens, it nevertheless reiterates that it is

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<sup>43</sup> There are no official data on the number of Slovenes in Italy.

<sup>44</sup> Nečak, Repe, *Oris sodobne Obče in Slovenske zgodovine*, 260-261

<sup>45</sup> Saša Oblak, *Eksodus narodnih manjšin*, Diplomsko delo, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Ljubljana, 2010, 37

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 33-39

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.stat.si/popis2002/gradivo/2-169.pdf>, p.97

<sup>48</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, Official Gazette RS, Nos. 33/91-I, 42/97, 66/2000 and 24/03, on: [http://www.pf.uni-mb.si/datoteke/janja/Angleska%20PT/anglesko-slovenska\\_urs.pdf](http://www.pf.uni-mb.si/datoteke/janja/Angleska%20PT/anglesko-slovenska_urs.pdf), p. 2

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*

founded on the Slovene nation's right to self-determination. The Slovene Constitution thus interprets Slovenia as a nation-state, that is, as a symbolic property of the Slovene nation. Furthermore, demographic data of the 2002 census confirm national homogeneity of the state; in that year Slovene language was the mother tongue of 87,7% of the population.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, with Article 5 of the Constitution Slovenia obliges itself to “protect and guarantee the rights of the autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national communities.”<sup>52</sup> As Miran Komac notes, these two communities fall under the category of historical minorities in the Slovene state.<sup>53</sup> They enjoy the highest level of protection among the minorities living in Slovenia. To begin with, Hungarian and Italian language are recognized as official languages equal to the Slovene in those municipalities where these two national communities reside,<sup>54</sup> i.e., within the so called autochthonous territory of their settlement. Article 64 is dedicated to the special rights of the aforementioned national communities exclusively, giving them the right of free usage of their national symbols, the right to establish organizations and to engage in cultural activities, “as well as activities in the field of media and publishing.”<sup>55</sup> Their members also have the right to education in their own languages and to foster relations with their kin-states. Additionally, the two national communities are entitled to “establish their own self-governing communities in the geographic areas where they live.”<sup>56</sup> Last but not least, the representatives of these communities are directly elected to the National Assembly as well as to local self-governing bodies. Moreover, any legislation, regulations, or general acts that concern the exercise of the constitutionally guaranteed rights of these minorities cannot be accepted without the

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<sup>51</sup> [http://www.stat.si/popis2002/si/rezultati/rezultati\\_red.asp?ter=SLO&st=9](http://www.stat.si/popis2002/si/rezultati/rezultati_red.asp?ter=SLO&st=9)

<sup>52</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 3

<sup>53</sup> Komac, The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia, 13

<sup>54</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, 5

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

consent of their representatives. The state, it is written in the Article, will materially and morally support exercising of these rights.

The Constitution underlines that the rights of the two national communities are in principle tied to the geographic area where they live, that is, to the abovementioned autochthonous territories of settlement. These are also referred to as nationally mixed territories and they are specified in the statutes of the respective municipalities.<sup>57</sup> Komac observes that the concept of nationally mixed area “may remind us of the ‘reservation’ type of minority protection which is often incompatible with the modern mobility needs of individuals.”<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, members of the minorities can, he continues, exercise some of their rights even outside the nationally mixed areas. Thus in Slovenia the right to be listed on the special electoral register in order to vote for the minority representative in the National Assembly can be exercised even if a person lives outside the nationally mixed area, and the language of the national communities can also be learned in other parts of Slovenia.<sup>59</sup> On a more abstract level, Komac implies, the advantage of a nationally mixed territory is that its cultural and spiritual inheritance can be seen as a common property of all of its inhabitants regardless of their national affiliation.

The Slovene Constitution states that “the rights of both national communities and their members [are] guaranteed irrespective of the number of members of these communities.”<sup>60</sup> Put differently, Slovenia did not introduce a numerical clause according to which minority rights would be given only if a certain percentage of Hungarians or Italians would live on nationally mixed territories. The Slovene model of minority protection, Komac notes, is thus based on territorial and not on personal principle of minority rights.

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<sup>57</sup> Komac, *The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia*, p. 17

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> *The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia*, 17

The absence of a numerical clause means, Komac asserts, that the state acknowledges minorities as important elements of the historical development of nationally mixed territories.<sup>61</sup> This can perhaps be further confirmed by the fact that the 2002 census was the last time Slovenia collected data regarding mother tongue and/or national belonging on the state level. In 2011 a register-based census was introduced, meaning that data are no longer collected in a traditional way with fieldwork, but are gathered from various registers, files, and databases. Thus in Slovenia data on nationality/ethnicity and religion are no longer collected with the censuses.<sup>62</sup> A person has a possibility to declare his nationality during the registration or deregistration of residence and change of address, but is not obliged to do so.<sup>63</sup> National affiliation can also be expressed by enrolling into the voting registry for elections of representatives of the national communities at the state or local level. To conclude, members of the minority still have a possibility to declare their nationality, but the state no longer systematically collects data on national belonging or mother tongue.

Members of the minority, however, are quite concerned with their number. Taking a look at the official censuses from 1910 to 2002 Attila Kovács concludes, for instance, that “the number of Hungarians, populating the autochthonous settlement area, decreased by half.”<sup>64</sup> While in 1910 90,8% of the area’s population was Hungarian, the proportion dropped to 49,1% during the nine decades. In 1996 Lajos Bence maintained that even the positive discrimination of the Slovene state cannot guarantee the future existence of the small Hungarian national community.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, in May 2003 Mária Pozsonec, the representative of the Hungarian minority in the National Assembly, asked for an explanation from the Slovene Minister of the Interior regarding

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<sup>61</sup> The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia, 17

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.stat.si/popis2011/eng/Faq.aspx?lang=eng>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Kovács, Demographic trends of the Prekmurje Hungarians in the 20th century, 6

<sup>65</sup> Lajos Bence, Hungarians in Slovenia, Institute for Central European Studies, Budapest, 1998, 21

the decrease of Hungarian minority population in Slovenia.<sup>66</sup> In an interview in 2009 Roberto Battelli, the parliamentary representative of the Italian minority, said that demographic picture of the minority looks like a death certificate.<sup>67</sup> He referred to a statistical research based on a sample of people who declared they belong to Italian or Hungarian nation at the 1991 Slovene census. Results of the research showed that 25% less of the same people chose Italian national belonging at the 2002 Slovene census. In the case of members of the Hungarian minority the number decreased by 22%. From linguistic point of view, Battelli implied, the rate of assimilation was less worrying, that is, the 2002 census data showed that 5% less persons than in 1991 used Italian language as their mother tongue.<sup>68</sup> The Italian minority, he concluded, requires an active politics in order to preserve its language and its culture.

The question arises whether the Hungarian and even the smaller Italian minority can in a long run resist assimilation. Whereas answering this question in its entirety would go beyond the scope of this research, we can nevertheless evaluate legal measures devised to preserve multinational character of the aforementioned areas. Due to Slovenia's territorial principle of minority rights protection of the two national communities also directly concerns members of the national majority.<sup>69</sup> For example, all of the inhabitants of the nationally mixed areas – including the members of the Slovene majority – are obliged to have bilingual documents, the languages of the minorities are taught as compulsory subjects in public schools in these areas, and the majority also has to “tolerate” the bilingual toponymy. It has to be mentioned, however, that the new Slovene Law on Personal Identification Cards from 2011 enables obtaining this documents also

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=30166CBFF63A7157C1256D42003A0E62>

<sup>67</sup> “To je sramota za demokracijo v Sloveniji”, *Delo Mag*, 03.08.2009

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Komac, The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia, p. 17

outside of the area of residence.<sup>70</sup> This most probably means that not all residents of the nationally mixed areas will continue to have a bilingual document. On the other hand, a bilingual personal identity card can still be obtained only in the officially bilingual areas. László Göncz, the current parliamentary representative of the Hungarian minority, raised his concerns regarding this issue. He claimed the newly introduced law erodes the legal role of the nationally mixed area as constitutionally defined territory and living space of two or more nations, which share positive values and other specificities of this territory. This case, he continued, can produce a domino effect with an unpredictable outcome.<sup>71</sup>

While bilingual documents such as personal identification cards or driver's licenses as well as bilingual toponymy must have a great symbolic value for members of the minorities, it is nevertheless a possibility of an education in a mother tongue and its usage before official authorities that enables the most active exercise of minority rights. In the nationally mixed part of Prekmurje region, compulsory bilingual education system was introduced in 1959, whereas Italian monolingual schools have been established in the Slovene coastal area.<sup>72</sup> Today the bilingual system of education – in the frame of which both Slovene and Hungarian are languages of instruction as well as of school administration, etc. – stretches from kindergartens to secondary schools, just as is the case with Italian monolingual education. Within the system of Italian monolingual school, however, instructions are conducted in Italian language, while Slovene language appears as compulsory subject.<sup>73</sup> Conversely, in the Slovene schools in this area the

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.pomurje.si/aktualno/pomurje/dvojezicne-osebne-izkaznice-le-na-dvojezicnih-upra/>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Bojan Hozjan, O dvojezičnem šolstvu na narodnostno mešanem območju Prekmurja, *Geografija v šoli* ISSN: 1318-4717.- Letn. 16, št. 1 (2007), pp. 12-19

<sup>73</sup> Komac, *The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia*, 41

language of the minority is also compulsory. It has to be added that Italian monolingual schools are not limited only to members of the minority, other children can also enroll.<sup>74</sup>

The special rapporteur of the European Council – after visiting Slovenia – wrote about the uniqueness of the bilingual education system in Prekmurje: “It is of great interest not only because it enables total implementation of special minority rights in accordance with international standards, but also because of the manner in which these rights are implemented. Its guideline is interculturalism, stressing true coexistence and a dual identity of the children who attend bilingual schools.”<sup>75</sup> The same could be to a lesser extent also claimed about the schooling in the coastal area. Following principles from Article 3 of the Slovene Law on the Special Rights of the Members of the Italian and Hungarian Communities in the Field of Education and Upbringing the objective of the above described models is not only preserving the languages of the minorities, but also cultivating knowledge about the historical, cultural, and natural heritage of the Hungarian or Italian national communities and their kin-nations. All this adds up to the most important objective of developing skills required to coexist in nationally mixed areas.<sup>76</sup> Finally, referring to the studies presented in above mentioned book about interethnic relations on nationally mixed areas in Slovenia, Komac points out that an educational model offering members of the majority and members of the minority at least a receptive knowledge of the language of the other national group has a support of the greater part of the population of the nationally mixed territories.<sup>77</sup>

With the respect to the usage of the minority language in administrative procedures Chapter 4 of the Law on Administration prescribes that in municipalities “where, apart from the Slovene

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 43

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 39

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 37

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 37

language, Hungarian and Italian are also official languages, the administrative proceedings shall be conducted in Slovene and also in the language of a national community, if the party submits in this language the claim upon which the procedure was started or if the party should so demand at any point of the proceedings.”<sup>78</sup> Consequently, according to the same law official documents issued in the administrative procedures are to be issued in both of the official languages of the areas if the party uses the minority language.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the Law on the Employees in the State Bodies stipulates an active knowledge of both Slovene and minority language for employment of “higher level administrative workers and for the professional technical staff who have direct contact with the public.”<sup>80</sup> Article 5 of the Law on Courts states that court in nationally mixed areas should also operate in the minority languages if the party uses them. Additionally, “when a court of higher jurisdiction used the Italian or Hungarian language as well, it should issue a decree also translated into the Italian or Hungarian language.”<sup>81</sup> As for political representation, parliamentary representatives of the minorities have a right to use the minority languages in National Assembly. The same applies to the usage of the minority languages on a local political level, i.e., in municipal councils on a nationally mixed territory.<sup>82</sup>

Guaranteeing linguistic minority rights is further enhanced by the Slovene media legislation, following which Italian and Hungarian national communities are entitled to exercise the right to public information in their respective languages.<sup>83</sup> More concretely, radio or television programs dedicated to the minorities are broadcasted in the respective languages within the framework of Radio-television Slovenia. Thus bilingual half an hour long TV show *Hidak-Mostovi* [Bridges] – addressing local affairs as well as issues concerning Hungarian nation and state in general – can

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 51

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 52

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 45

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 53

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 56

be seen four times a week on the Slovene public television, whereas the Italian minority has its own TV-station called *TV Koper-Capodistria*. The state also ensures that the minorities have their own radio frequencies. Furthermore, Slovenia financially supports publishing of the Hungarian minority's weekly newspaper *Népújság* [People Newspaper].<sup>84</sup> The Italian minorities in Slovenia and in Croatia cooperate in publishing their common daily newspaper *La Voce del Popolo* [The Voice of the People]. It is financially supported by both the Slovene as well as the Croatian government.<sup>85</sup>

Let us sum up the most important features of the Slovene protection of the Hungarian and the Italian minorities with Kymlicka's conceptual apparatus. Despite its apparent national homogeneity, Slovenia is evidently a multinational and thus multicultural state, that is, a state with different national groups representing different cultures.<sup>86</sup> Following Kymlicka we can say the minority national communities in Slovenia require collective rights, that is, they need an external protection which will reduce their vulnerability vis-à-vis the majority nation's culture.<sup>87</sup> This may, as we have seen, require some sacrifice from the part of the majority, but the minority has much more to lose, namely, the further existence of its culture in the state. Still, what may motivate the majority to prevent disappearance of the minority culture? Can it be motivated by a pure interest in cultural diversity of the state? Kymlicka notes that this argument should not be completely neglected, nevertheless, he thinks it cannot be the crucial one: "Protecting national minorities does provide benefits to the majority, and these are worth pointing out. But these diffuse benefits are better seen as a desirable by-product of national rights, rather than their

<sup>84</sup> Brankica Petković, "Koliko medijev manjšinam", <http://mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/bilten/seznam/14/manjsine/>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Kymlicka, Multicultural citizenship, 22-23

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 37

primary justification.”<sup>88</sup> Therefore, giving minority rights is not based on the principle of interest of the majority, but on the principle of justice.<sup>89</sup>

Solutions such as official public bilingualism are thus justified by preserving the minority culture, but at the same time members of the majority culture can benefit from it. Furthermore, Kymlicka describes three forms of group-specific rights which might prevent vulnerability of the minority.<sup>90</sup> Slovenia grants two of these rights to its autochthonous national communities: self-government and special representation rights. First, self-governing national communities located in each municipality in the nationally mixed areas are central political institutions of the minorities.<sup>91</sup> Second, members of the minorities have a dual voting right, that is, they can cast two votes at all levels of elections: one vote goes to the candidate matching their ideological political affinity, and the second one goes to the desired representative of the minority.<sup>92</sup>

From the viewpoint of our discourse analysis of the new national holidays in Slovenia it has to be underlined that the majority occasionally objected the rights given to the minorities in front of the Constitutional Court. These were the cases when members of the majority felt the sacrifice they are making to accommodate the minorities is too big. Starting with minorities’ dual voting rights, Constitutional Court decided that “although this is a departure from the principle of the equality of voting rights, such ‘positive discrimination’ is not unconstitutional.”<sup>93</sup> On the contrary, the Court concluded, constitution in fact suggests such a solution. Second, in 1999 the Slovene National Council requested a constitutional evaluation of the right to freely use Hungarian and Italian national symbols in Slovenia. The argument was that these symbols are

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 123

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 27

<sup>91</sup> Komac, *The protection of ethnic communities in the Republic of Slovenia*, 27

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 41

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 24

equal to the symbols of the Hungarian and the Italian state. Again, the Court did not find this usage unconstitutional, i.e., minorities are entitled to use national symbols which are also symbols of their kin-states.<sup>94</sup> A year earlier the Constitutional Court refuted the arguments of three applicants from the nationally mixed territory in Prekmurje who maintained that the bilingual education system puts the Slovene children from the area into inferior position as opposed to the children from the rest of Slovenia and is therefore unconstitutional. According to the Court, however, there was no material evidence proving lower quality of the knowledge gained at bilingual schools. It further stated that the Slovene children are not in any way deprived of being educated in their own language. Finally, the Court argued that abolishing the bilingual schools would – in the given historical and social context – lead to an end of education in the minority language.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, we may add, that would endanger the existence of the minority.

While some members of the majority, as we have shown, feel the minorities have too many rights, the representatives of the minorities are concerned about the inconsistencies in the execution of these rights from the part of the state. For example, in 2009 László Göncz – as a parliamentary representative of the Hungarian minority – raised a question regarding problems with the financing of the bilingual education and with the respect to inconsistencies in erecting bilingual street signs.<sup>96</sup> Following Oto Luthar, a historian and director of the Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the leaders of the Hungarian minority feel the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 19-20; Ruling of the Constitutional Court:

<http://odlocitve.us-rs.si/usrs/us-odl.nsf/o/C63B4C09D2191BB6C125717200280E31>

<sup>95</sup> Ruling of the Constitutional Court:

<http://odlocitve.us-rs.si/usrs/us-odl.nsf/o/C63B4C09D2191BB6C125717200280E31>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.dz->

[rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=A316826D468E4426C12579680060085;](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=A316826D468E4426C12579680060085;)

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[rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=735A15C8FD3C3AA6C1257968006166B8](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=735A15C8FD3C3AA6C1257968006166B8)

needs of the latter are not taken care of well enough and that Hungarian language is losing its value in the society, etc.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, Miran Györek, member of the Slovene parliament – addressing the Slovene government in 2009 – maintained that legal and factual position of the Slovene minorities in Hungary and Italy is considerably worse than the position of the two autochthonous communities in Slovenia. He was especially worried about the uncertain future of the “Slovene national body” in Hungary.<sup>98</sup> We can observe that he was referring to the principle of reciprocity in the way two states accommodate each others’ national minorities. This principle will also be present in arguments appearing in debates regarding new national holidays in Slovenia.

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<sup>97</sup> Oto Luthar, Meja kot sindrom II?, Multi in interkulturalizem ter diferenciacija kultur v Prekmurju skozi 20. stoletje, <http://www.drzavlanska-vzgoja.org/Portals/0/Dokumenti/clanki/LUTHAR%20-%20MEJA%20KOT%20SINDROM.pdf>, p. 9

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/poslanskaVprasanjaInPobudeIzbrano?unid=B8032C98734C7223C125796800616630>

## 2. THE ACCEPTANCE AND THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE NEW HOLIDAYS

At the meeting at the end of the May 2005 the Slovene government prepared a proposal on the changes of the Law on National Holidays and Work-free Days in Republic of Slovenia which was to be discussed in the parliament.<sup>99</sup> The initial law, the government explained in the beginning of the proposal, was accepted in 1991 and the government observed that public discussion had occurred lately regarding potential new holidays, i.e., regarding the commemoration of important historical events. Thus besides renaming “Independence Day” the government proposed the 15<sup>th</sup> of September to be celebrated as “Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland” and the 23<sup>rd</sup> November as “Rudolf Maister Day”. Let us see how these proposals were explained.

With the respect to the restoration of Primorska to the territory of today’s Slovenia, first, the losses suffered due to Treaty of Rapallo were brought to attention. Furthermore, fascist atrocities over the Slovene population in interwar Italy as well as during World War II occupation were stressed. According to public opinion, it was stated, the region of Primorska deserves a memorial day because of its faithfulness to Slovenehood and because this is where the earliest anti-fascist resistance in Europe took place. While several different dates would be worth to be commemorated on a state level, the government decided to suggest 15<sup>th</sup> September (1947), the day when the peace treaty with Italy came into effect. The signing of the London memorandum from 1954, the government implied, would be less appropriate to celebrate since that is not only

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<sup>99</sup> The proposal of the Slovene government on the changes and complementations of the Law on National Holidays and Work-free Days in Republic of Slovenia, 24.05.2005: [http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125700E0043AB95&db=kon\\_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc](http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125700E0043AB95&db=kon_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc)

when the city of Trieste, the Slovene historic economic and spiritual center, but also its mostly Slovene populated hinterland was lost to Italy.

What was the role of General Rudolf Maister in Slovene history? According to the government his successful military action against the Austrian troops after World War I enabled establishment of the northeastern border between Austria and today's Slovenia. In other words, his occupation of the Slovene national territory to the north of the city of Maribor was acknowledged by the peace conference. Slovenia thus has to be thankful to Maister's "nation-enforcing will". While Maister himself did not intervene in post-war Prekmurje, he nevertheless influenced the organization of military forces in that area. Consequently, the government concluded, the incorporation of Prekmurje into the mother nation can also be symbolically celebrated with "Rudolf Maister-Day". Both of the suggested dates were thus considered to be "very important milestones in the historical concrescence of the Slovene national unit", which is why they also fit into the Slovene state memory.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the government underlined that according to the public opinion poll, both of the proposed holidays were supported by approximately 70% of Slovenia's population. For economic reasons, however, neither of these two holidays would also be a work-free day.

Parliamentary representatives coming from Prekmurje were not completely satisfied with the proposal and put forwards an amendment in which they claimed that Slovenes in Prekmurje deserve a separate holiday. They maintained that due to the loss of Primorska and Carinthia after World War I, Slovenes never really appreciated the great importance of acquisition of Prekmurje.<sup>101</sup> The region, they continued, had been a part of the Hungarian state for around

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> The proposed amendment to the changes and complementations of the Law on National Holidays and Work-free Days in Republic of Slovenia, 14.09.2005: <http://www.dz->

thousand years, but had nevertheless remained faithful to the Slovenehood. “This is,” they concluded, “one of the miracles of the Slovene history.” The celebrations would take place on 17<sup>th</sup> of August, thus remembering the day when Kingdom of SHS Army handed over the authority over Prekmurje to a temporary civil administrator in 1919. The government accepted the amendment in September 2005.

The parliamentary discussion followed later that month. All of the parties supported the law introducing the new holidays and none of the members of the parliament, regardless of his or hers political affiliation, voted against it.<sup>102</sup> Parliamentary representatives of the Hungarian and the Italian minorities, however, objected the acceptance of the Prekmurje and the Primorska holidays. First, let us take a look at the argumentation in the support of the holidays. The representative Jožef Jerovšek said it was about time that Slovenia accepted the holidays which reflect the most important events and personalities of its national history. Such holidays, he continued, contribute to the development of peoples’ personalities, they create their identification with the nation’s history, cultural legacy, and help constitute national pride, patriotism, and national consciousness. He also reiterated the faithfulness and persistence of the Slovenes in the region of Primorska and denoted the acquisition of Prekmurje as one of the brightest events in Slovene history, as it enabled the rounding up of the Slovene national territory. Jože Horvat, a representative from Prekmurje and one of the initiators of the amendment regarding the Prekmurje holiday, said that such holidays aim to develop peoples’ consciousness and their identification with cultural identity, religion, history, state, and nation. This consciousness is the strongest, he added, in the case the identification with the holiday comes naturally without much effort. In this vein the

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[rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125707C0041B6FF&db=kon\\_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc](http://rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/zakonodaja/izbranZakonAkt?uid=C12565D400354E68C125707C0041B6FF&db=kon_zak&mandat=IV&tip=doc)

<sup>102</sup> Transcript of the parliamentary discussion: <http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/seje/evidenca?mandat=IV&type=sz&uid=3C185DA6AC35D612C1257096002E75B8>

representative Stanislav Brenčič hoped these holidays will generate patriotic sentiments of all of the Slovenes, especially the young ones.

Turning to media reports after the acceptance of the new holidays in September and October 2005, the main Slovene daily did not use the same kind of elevated rhetoric as the abovementioned politicians.<sup>103</sup> In a few sentences the reporter neutrally presented the procedure of acceptance of the new holidays and historic events to which they refer to, as well as the dispute which followed the objections of representatives of the minorities. A regional weekly published in Prekmurje was similarly neutral in its main article informing about the introduction of the new holidays.<sup>104</sup> A separate commentary, however, focused on the Prekmurje holiday.<sup>105</sup> The author was convinced that the region required such a symbolic gesture, but he could not sense any special euphoria surrounding it. In his opinion the holiday is supposed to boost the self-confidence and the pride of this area which often considers itself neglected by the rest of the state. The holiday, he continued, would serve its purpose only if it would help build the identity of the region and its people. One of the constituents of this identity, he implied, should be Prekmurje's connectedness with the Slovene spirit and the Slovene state. A regional newspaper from Primorska also gave a relatively short account on the parliamentary debate and its outcome. It has to be mentioned, however, that the first commemoration of the restoration of Primorska to the motherland actually took place a couple of weeks before the acceptance of the law, on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2005. The article thus quoted the parliamentary representative Jerovšek who was happy about the success of this year's festivities and claimed the people of Primorska fully

<sup>103</sup> Jože Poglajen, "Prazniki v srcih ljudi", <http://www.delo.si/arhiv/tiskano/30.09.2005/Delo>, 2

<sup>104</sup> "Trije novi prazniki v državi", *Pomurski vestnik*, 20.10.2005, 2

<sup>105</sup> Janez Votek, "Pod čigavo zastavo", *Pomurski vestnik*, 6.10.2005, 3

identified with the celebration.<sup>106</sup> The latter was reported on in details in previous issues of the newspaper in September 2005.

First the speech of the Prime Minister Janez Janša was presented. In his view the celebration gave appreciation to the nation's strength to survive.<sup>107</sup> He then underlined historical and cultural importance of the region from viewpoint of the Slovene nation and depicted Primorska as "spiritual lungs of Slovenia", referring to a popular phrase according to which the Slovene heart is in Carinthia and the Slovene lungs are in Trieste. Furthermore, the article titled *The lungs full of love*<sup>108</sup> described the procedure of the ceremony and cited its planner who told that the red thread of the program was the word love connecting the people of Primorska. It was this love, she maintained, that gave birth to their resistance. At the end, the reporter noted, the audience complimented the artists with standing ovations. Another article summarized the impressions of the visitors by underlining their excitement about the event.<sup>109</sup> The former Slovene president Milan Kučan, for instance, thought the celebration expressed happiness, which was in accordance with remembering a great thing from the Slovene past.

Returning to the Prekmurje holiday, the first celebration was arranged in 2006 and the local weekly covered the event extensively. A separate article was dedicated to the Prime Minister Janša's speech.<sup>110</sup> He pointed to the fact that while Prekmurje had its own history living separately from the rest of the Slovene territory, it nevertheless defied this thousand years long seclusion and remained loyal to the Slovenehood and to the Slovene language. Due to losses of Primorska and Carinthia after First World War, he explained, Slovenia could never really

<sup>106</sup> Jaka Elikan, "Zastave bodo vihrale", *Primorske novice*, 30.09.2005, 3

<sup>107</sup> Sašo Dravinec, "Duhovna pljuča Slovenije", *Primorske novice*, 17.09.2005, 2

<sup>108</sup> Maksimilijan Ipavec, "Pljuča, polna ljubezni", *Primorske novice*, 19.9.2005, 2

<sup>109</sup> "Mladost, veselje, optimizem", *Primorske novice*, 19.09.2005, 2

<sup>110</sup> "Slovenija ima dolg do Prekmurja", *Pomurski vestnik*, 24.08.2006,

appreciate the acquisition of Prekmurje. Therefore, this holiday should affirm the importance of the incorporation. Analyzing the interviews with the visitors we can come to the conclusion that they found the event beautiful and that the incorporation required a celebration on a state level.<sup>111</sup> One of the interviewed attendants was convinced that the celebration meant a lot to everyone who was there.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> “Prekmurje 1919 – 2006, praznik ljudstva”, 24.08.2006, 10-11

<sup>112</sup> Ibid

### 3. THE THEORY BEHIND THE CELEBRATIONS

To shortly sum up the presented rhetoric in the favor of the holidays, the goal of their celebration appears to be commemorating certain regions' loyalty to the nation as well as to reaffirm and strengthen it. In other words, the faithfulness of the regions' people to their nation supposedly enabled the attachment of these territories to the state where this nation was one of the constitutive elements. In an independent Slovenia the Slovene nation is in clear majority and the leaders of the state felt a need to emphasize the Slovene nature of these territories by celebrating the dates of their acquisition on a state level. Introducing the new holidays also had a support of the majority of the population and, according to their advocates, the celebrations ought to enhance the peoples' identification with the state and the nation, more concretely, with their culture and history. Consequently, national pride and patriotic sentiments should emerge or become more salient.

We are starting the analysis and the contextualization of these concepts and arguments with Hroch's thoughts on national celebrations. First of all, such events can only take place in modern transparent political cultures. They presuppose a freedom of opinion, a freedom of press, i.e., an open "public space" which was missing from the absolutist societies before the French revolution. Since then these kinds of celebrations have been calling forth feelings of brotherhood and community of their attendants, i.e., they were awakening national enthusiasm of the masses. Moreover, not only did they strengthen the communities within, but they also demonstrated their strength to the outside. The celebrations go hand in hand with rituals, that is, the ritual deepens an individual's relation to the nation and its history. This relation is further reinforced by regular

repetitions of rituals. They have an emotional, rather than rational effect; they therefore evoke feelings of belonging and strengthen the socialization process within the nation.<sup>113</sup>

Hroch creates a typology of celebrating depending on the context of the event. From our point of view a category of commemorating important events from national history is of special interest. These celebrations, he argues, have been aiming to spread the awareness about the nation's history among the people. The transition from national celebrations to national holidays, he continues, happens with the occurrence of nation-states and is thus in principle, but with exceptions, not a part of nation-building process itself. We will see whether or not this principle can be applied to the celebrations of the new national holidays in Slovenia.

As we have seen, the holidays have been introduced to celebrate the historic concrescence of the Slovene national unit. Arguably, the Slovene nation-building was already finished by that time and the main goal of the holidays is thus to emphasize the fact that the territory in question belongs to the Slovene nation. One of the differences between *ethnies* and nations, Smith maintains, is that the latter actually possess territories "whereas in the case of *ethnies* the link with a territory may be only historical and symbolic."<sup>114</sup> The concept of nations, he claims, involves a "fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong."<sup>115</sup> At the same time, he maintains, the strength of the identification with the nation's territory depends on the strength of historical and mythic memories of the nations's homeland. Finally, since according to Smith nations are forms of political communities and are in possession of common institutions, we may observe the way Slovenia as a political community of the Slovene nation tries to deepen the majority population's identification with the

<sup>113</sup> Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen*, 217-218

<sup>114</sup> Smith, *National identity*, 40

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 9

nation's and its state's recent as well as with more or less mythic history. For example, not only memories of the occurrences from Second World War were evoked in the arguments in the favor of the holidays, but also the city of Trieste is still commonly placed on the map of the Slovene national territory, despite the fact that the city did not have a Slovene majority when it was attached to Italy.<sup>116</sup> On the other part of the country, a thousand year long loyalty of the Prekmurje region to the Slovene nation is praised, even though this assumed historic loyalty did for long periods not consist of much more than people in Prekmurje speaking what is today recognized as a dialect of the Slovene language. Moreover, as we could infer from the Prime Minister's speech as well as from the commentary in the local newspaper, both Prekmurje Slovenes and the rest of the nation are somewhat unsure regarding their connectedness with each other.

We are trying to prove, however, that it is exactly such doubts that the new national holidays strive to overcome. They try to tighten the bond between contemporary Slovenes and the history of the nation. In order to do so, we can agree with Smith, references to ethnic elements constituting the nation are also made. In any event, the members of the nation are supposed to develop as strong as possible sentiments towards nation's historic events, heroes, landscape, and so on.<sup>117</sup> On a more abstract level, as Smith implies, an intimate relation towards symbols such as flags, coins, uniforms and ceremonies has to be established.<sup>118</sup> Ceremonies as described above thus have a double role. On one hand, attending them already infers sentimental identification with the nation, and on the other hand, they rather explicitly call for strengthening of this kind of attachment. In short, the celebration in an open democratic space tends to promote a "deep

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<sup>116</sup> Nečak, Repe, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*, 260

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *National identity*, 38

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 17

horizontal comradeship” of the attendants.<sup>119</sup> It thus strengthens an imagined community of members of the nation who would, Anderson concludes, in last instance sacrifice their lives for the community.<sup>120</sup>

Supporters of the new holidays infer that the Slovene community will prosper from its members’ identification with the nation. We have to further analyze this identification, relying on Žižek’s interpretation of Lacan’s theory of ideology. First, we have to take look at how the identity of abstract concepts such as nation is formed. They are not simply a sum of positive features such as language, territory, and so on. These are merely “proto-ideological elements” which are “[s]tructured into a unified field through the intervention of a certain 'nodal point' (the Lacanian *point de capiton*) which 'quilts' them [...] and fixes their meaning.”<sup>121</sup> Positive elements are thus unified by a master-signifier – for example, “the (Slovene) nation” – which does not have any meaning on its own, but it does retroactively give meaning to the elements it quilts into a unit.<sup>122</sup> In other words, once the concept of the nation is established, the language and the territory receive a special connotation as regards to the nation; they become national language and national territory respectively.

Second, how does identification with the nation come about? How do we become members of a nation? Žižek asserts the identification is a result of a paradoxical “forced choice”. We are to freely accept our nationality that has already been assigned to us by the society: “the community is saying to the subject: you have freedom to choose, but on the condition that you choose the right thing.”<sup>123</sup> It is a tautological process: You identify with the Slovene nation because you are

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 7

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>121</sup> Žižek, *The sublime object of ideology*, 95

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 96

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 186

already its member. Nevertheless, as Žižek notes, the identification is never fully successful, there is “[a]lways a residue, a leftover, a stain of traumatic irrationality and senselessness sticking to it.”<sup>124</sup> In order for a subject to make sense of the identification he creates a fantasy, an image of a distinct community worth to identify with, worth to emotionally embrace and cherish in its uniqueness. It is this fantasy around which subject’s enjoyment is organized. At the end of the day, it is not about objective features which constitute one’s nationality, but about the enjoyment in being its member.<sup>125</sup>

We can now better understand why the celebrations of the new holidays could mean a lot to the attendants. They enjoyed the ceremony that celebrated their nation. This enjoyment is part of an irrational conviction that there is something special about one’s nation. To complement this conclusion with Tajfel’s social identity theory, there is a specific value and emotional significance attached to individual’s membership in national group – such membership thus positively contributes to his or hers self-image.<sup>126</sup> According to Bar-Tal it does not take much for a social group to be formed and for its members to identify with it. It is enough for any arbitrary group of people to be given a certain name: “The individuals may be told that they are given the same label (category) and this information may cause them to form the belief ‘We are a group’.”<sup>127</sup> In our case the group is not that arbitrary. The fundamental group belief “We are Slovenes” definitely required a name with which the members expressing this belief could identify with. Nevertheless, this name – or master-signifier – did not simply quilt random features into a national group, but it used historic or cultural content that have a salient enough connection with today’s Slovene nation. To this extent Smith is right, nations may be constructed, but what

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 43

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 1-92

<sup>126</sup> Henri Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories*, 254-255

<sup>127</sup> Bar-Tal, *Group beliefs as an expression of social identity*, 105

gives them their vitality are elements that existed already before the occurrence of modern nations. When the concept of nation was introduced, it gave these elements a connotation to the national group.

Finally, paraphrasing Bar-Tal, we must ask ourselves what is the desired future state of the Slovene national group as envisioned by the initiators of the new holidays? In other words, what will be achieved by strengthening the Slovenes' identification with their nation? Arguably, there is more to it than positive self-image of the members of the nation. Politicians stressed the consciousness about the nation, that is, a high level of awareness about nation's existence and its attributes such as language and history. As it is implied, being conscious of these attributes should generate national pride. But what do these abstract formulations mean on a more concrete level? Following Craig Calhoun a stronger sense of belonging to the community could bring about a higher level of social solidarity among the members.<sup>128</sup> At the same time, as Hroch points out, the celebrations are manifestations of strength and cohesion of the community to the outside world. Adding Hroch's and Calhoun's argument together might bring us back to Anderson's conclusion about the ultimate patriotic sacrifice a member of a national community can make, i.e., give his or hers life for it. Is this the undertone of such holidays? In any event, patriotism was one of the crucial concepts that appeared in dispute between members of the majority and representatives of the minorities in our study case.

André Lecours and Genevieve Nootens argue that the contradiction between patriotism and nationalism, according to which patriotism stands for a "legitimate defense of the state" and nationalism for an "attempt to destroy it", is artificial.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, they introduce the notion of majority nationalism to explain how new states consolidate themselves by highlighting the

<sup>128</sup> Craig Calhoun, 'Belonging' in the cosmopolitan imaginary, in: *Ethnicities*, vol. 3(4). 2003, 532

<sup>129</sup> Gagnon, Lecours, Nootens, *Contemporary majority nationalism*, 3

majority's traits. This, we can say, is especially valid for new nation-states such as Slovenia. In short, majority nationalism is nationalism projected by the state.<sup>130</sup> The authors refer to Brubaker's concept of nationalizing nationalism. The latter "articulates claims made in the name of the core nation, which is defined in ethnocultural terms and considers itself the rightful 'owner' of the state."<sup>131</sup> Departing from this we may hypothesize that the Slovene state wishes to increase the level of patriotic sentiments in the country by underlining the majority's culture, history, i.e., the cohesion of the Slovenes. If the minorities would have been emphasizing their nationality, Lecours and Nootens imply, they would have been proclaimed as being nationalistic.<sup>132</sup> According to them the consequence of such relation of powers is that "majority nationalism is not readily identified as nationalism."<sup>133</sup>

In Kelman's view patriotism is an ideology. It is "a set of attitudes and beliefs [referring] to individual's attachment and loyalty to their nation and country."<sup>134</sup> The country, he goes on, is more than just a geographic location to its citizens, it is theirs homeland. From the argumentation of the Slovene politicians we could infer that the Slovene territory is (a historical) homeland of the Slovenes. Although, as Kelman notes, "country and nation are not necessarily conterminous [as] some members of the nation may live outside of the country, and some inhabitants of the country may be part of a different nation,"<sup>135</sup> the notion of patriotism still refers to their conjunction. We may observe this conjunction in the case of the new holidays in Slovenia.

The statesmen whose rhetoric we have analyzed are talking about patriotism as a quite an abstract sentiment, but we are interested in its concrete implications. Here Althusser's thesis on

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 6

<sup>134</sup> Kelman, Nationalism, patriotism, and national identity: social-psychological dimensions, 166

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

material existence of ideology should be considered. If we take it that patriotism is an ideology, then Althusser would maintain it does not exist spiritually, but in practices and rituals.<sup>136</sup> Subject's ideas, Althusser says, are his material actions.<sup>137</sup> What keeps the subject part of the ideology is not abstract thoughts he or she has, but ritual practices that bear an imprint of a given ideology. In our case, the ideology of patriotism (or majority nationalism?) within a given society is not reproduced with awareness about the importance of the nation, but with, for example, everyday usage of the national language or attending celebrations commemorating events from the national history. Žižek agrees with Althusser: by following a certain custom we already accept the ideology without knowing it.<sup>138</sup> More precisely, the subject's unconscious belief gets materialized in an external ritual or practice.<sup>139</sup> What is missing in Althusser's analysis, Žižek writes, is the abovementioned notion of enjoyment that can explain why material practices are important for the subject.<sup>140</sup> Members of the nation enjoy taking part in practices and rituals related to their nation. We have already described why identification with the national group generates convictions about the uniqueness of this membership. Such feeling of uniqueness thus accompanies the execution of practices with a connotation to the nation.

Let us summarize the arguments we have been developing so far. Hroch maintains repeating ritual at national celebrations deepens one's attachment to the nation.<sup>141</sup> In the context of our case study we can interpret the celebrations themselves as if they were rituals. What is the result of their annual repetitions? We tried to prove their intent is indeed deepening the bond between the Slovenes and their nation. With the help of Žižek and Althusser, however, we have argued this – assumingly patriotic – bond exists primarily on material and not on spiritual level. While we said

<sup>136</sup> Althusser, *Essays on ideology*, 39-44

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 43

<sup>138</sup> Žižek, *The sublime object of ideology*, 39

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 39

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 43

<sup>141</sup> Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen*, 218

that attending the celebrations already implies accepting ideology that the holiday represents, it is true that claims for more patriotism were made at these celebrations. Nevertheless, we quoted parliamentary representative Jožef Horvat who claimed that the identification with the holidays has to come naturally without much effort. Such a smooth identification would in his opinion be an evidence of a high level of consciousness about nation's history, culture, etc. Since these holidays, as we have argued, emphasize the Slovene character of the territories and the state, this desire for effortless identification with the holidays implies that members of the Slovene nation should take their majority position in Slovenia for granted.

In established nation-states, Billig asserts, majority nationalism is on work every day, yet it is not perceived as dangerous or volatile. It is not even perceived as nationalism, but as patriotism. In these states, Billig continues, most of the flags go unnoticed.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, it seems that the reason why flags are “passionately waved”<sup>143</sup> at the celebrations of the new Slovene national holidays is that the majority nationalism would eventually be discerned as something natural, as patriotism. Is a desired future state of the Slovene majority a country where peoples' material practices would unequivocally reflect its Slovene character? If this is true, we could conclude with a speculation that from the point of view of the presented rhetoric of the Slovene statesmen the celebrations need to be repeated as long as they will not be necessary anymore.

The following analysis of the disputes between official representatives of the minorities and members of the majority will show whether or not we are being too harsh with the Slovene National Assembly when denoting its passing the law on the new national holidays as an act of majority nationalism. In any case, we should keep in mind Althusser's observation that “[t]hose who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of

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<sup>142</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 40

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, 38

ideology is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'.”<sup>144</sup> That is to say, nationalism does not perceive itself as nationalism.

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<sup>144</sup> Althusser, *Essays on ideology*, 49

## 4. OBJECTIONS OF THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY

As we have mentioned, parliamentary representatives of the Hungarian and the Italian minority disapproved of the acceptance of the new holidays. Therefore, they raised their concerns during the parliamentary discussion.<sup>145</sup> Speaking on behalf of the Hungarians in Slovenia Mária Pozsonec was convinced that national holidays should not insult feelings of any of Slovenia's citizens. She said the holidays refer to the period after WW1 when Hungarian as well as Slovenes became national minorities in their neighboring countries. Is Slovenia, she asked, supposed to celebrate the fact that many Slovenes live in Austrian Carinthia or in Italia? She felt the new holidays do not connect all of the citizens and that they open up wounds that were already healed. She implied that celebrating the "Independence and Unity Day" is the right kind of holiday to be celebrated on a state level.

In a reply Geza Džuban, a parliamentary representative from Prekmurje, explained that the proposal had no intention to interfere with emotions of the Hungarian minority. That is why the title of the holiday no longer talked about attachment of Prekmurje, but about incorporation of the Prekmurje Slovenes. The aforementioned representative Horvat reiterated the argument that there was no intention of hurting the Hungarian national community which lives in symbiosis with the Prekmurje Slovenes. He said it would be appropriate for both Hungarians and Slovenes to celebrate these holidays, just as both of the national groups celebrate Hungarian national holidays in Prekmurje together. Another representative from Prekmurje, Jožef Ficko, agreed with Pozsonec that there were "some Hungarian families"<sup>146</sup> staying outside the Hungarian state and

<sup>145</sup> Transcript of the parliamentary discussion: <http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/seje/evidenca?mandat=IV&type=sz&uid=3C185DA6AC35D612C1257096002E75B>

<sup>146</sup> Pozsonec talked about many Slovene and Hungarian families who were to live the life of national minorities.

that there are also some Slovene families still living in Hungary today. On the other hand, he underlined, there were “many more families” who did not live in the Slovene state until the end of World War I when they were united with their mother nation. Slovenia, he added, takes a much better care of the Hungarian minority than Hungary does of the Slovene minority. Finally, the representative Alojzij Sok was convinced the holidays will not create any divisions and that – if properly evaluated – they can be celebrated by all of the citizens.

The Hungarian parliamentary representative was not persuaded by the counterarguments so, as we have already mentioned, she and the Italian representative proposed an amendment to the law, according to which the flags of the minorities would not be hung out during the days of the celebrations, i.e., hanging out the minorities’ flags would not be in the spirit of the nation. During the debate that followed other representatives expressed their opposition to such solution.<sup>147</sup> The representative Breda Pečan was not in favor of the amendment because holidays celebrated by the state should be holidays of everyone living in Slovenia regardless of the nationality. The fights for the region of Primorska were not about attaching Slovenes or Italians, she claimed, but about attachment of the national territory of Slovenia. The representative Aleš Gulič remarked the holidays do not only serve to glorify the history, but at the same time they affirm today’s desired harmony between nations. He thus thought these holidays can also be celebrated by the minorities.

Similarly, Jožef Jerovšek was concerned that such an act would be harmful to symbiosis between national groups. Furthermore, he said, accepting such an amendment would imply that autochthon national communities do not recognize Slovenia’s sovereignty on these territories. The representative Branko Grims explained that the Constitution regulates the principles of

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid

cohabitation in the country which is also home of both of the minorities. In his opinion such an amendment would be unconstitutional. The representative of the Slovene National Party Zmago Jelinčič was harsher and asserted that the representatives of the minorities do not feel themselves citizens of Slovenia. The proposed amendment, he stated, is an attempt to usurp part of the history, part of the Slovene territory and part of the Slovene national body. In his view suggesting that the minorities' flags should not be hung out during the celebrations is meanness that cannot be supported. Interestingly, in 1999 his party started the above mentioned procedure in which the Slovene Constitutional Court decided that the minorities are entitled to use symbols of their kin-states in Slovenia

The representative Mitja Slavinec, who comes from Prekmurje, noted that Hungarians hang out their flags at the celebrations of the Hungarian national holidays and that his feelings are not threatened by the fact that the celebrations on nationally mixed holidays are bilingual. If Slovenes can celebrate with the Hungarian minority, he argued, there is no reason why the Prekmurje holiday would be problematic for Hungarians in Slovenia. They can surely celebrate more with the Slovene majority than the Slovenes in Rábavidék can celebrate with Hungarians during Hungarian national holidays, he concluded.

We have already quoted a commentary from Prekmurje's local newspaper after the acceptance of the new holidays. It also touched on the objection of the parliamentary representative of the Hungarian minority and the intention not to hang out the minority's flags.<sup>148</sup> The journalist argued that the Prekmurje holiday is not about opening up old wounds, but about the people in Prekmurje who celebrate an important event in their history, i.e., when they ended up where they

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<sup>148</sup> Votek, "Pod čigavo zastavo", 3

belong.<sup>149</sup> Slovenes in Prekmurje, he maintained, are not responsible for what Hungarians did and what were the consequences of their actions. They will have to, he went on, clarify their role in both of World Wars on their own, but not by revising the Treaty of Trianon on Slovenia's territory as they tried in the past. The author was most probably referring to the fact that Hungary occupied Prekmurje in Second World War.

In the next issue of the newspaper László Göncz wrote about the new holiday from Hungarian perspective. According to him Slovenia and the people of Prekmurje have a right to set any date from the history of the region as a national holiday, nevertheless, the newly accepted holiday does not have a positive influence on symbiosis of the nations living on this territory. Furthermore, it also negatively effects the shaping of minority's national consciousness. Nowadays, he was convinced, Slovenes cannot fear losing territorial integrity or the Slovene cultural-linguistic character of the region. On the other hand, he was concerned, the number of the Prekmurje Hungarians has decreased and that their identity has become quite "loose". He agreed that the Slovene population in the region was treated unjustly in the last decades before the break-up of Austro-Hungary Monarchy, but he also stressed the planned assimilation of Hungarians in Kingdom of SHS. He noted that the positive contributions of Hungarians to the region have not been brought to attention during previous decades, which resulted in negative attitude towards anything Hungarian in Prekmurje. Would it be logical, he asked, if members of the minority would celebrate the date which separated them from the rest of their nation? That would be the same, he thought, as the Carinthian Slovenes celebrating the Carinthian plebiscite. Finally, in his view disagreeing with the holiday does not mean the minority is not loyal to Slovenia.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid

Representatives of the Hungarian minority did not attend the celebration of the new holiday in 2006. The local newspaper published the press release of the self-governing community of the Prekmurje Hungarians.<sup>150</sup> The latter stated that the holiday arouse painful feelings in the hearts of members of the Hungarian autochthon national community. Namely, at the same time the Prekmurje Slovenes were incorporated into their mother nation, the Hungarians in the region were severed from their mother nation “after almost thousand years”.<sup>151</sup> This separation can be regarded as a “historical injustice” since this separation occurred against the will of the Hungarian population. Conversely, it is written, a part of the Slovene nation was left in Hungary. It was further implied that such holidays do not unite nations as envisioned by the principles of the European Union and are in conflict with high standards of minority protection. Finally, since the minority was not invited to take part in preparations for the celebration, the press release maintained, it is obvious what the intention of the holiday was.

In an interview in the newspaper *Mladina* [Youth] shortly after the 2006 celebration György Tomka, a former president of the above mentioned self-governing community, bemoaned the fact that their arguments were not listened to during the procedure of accepting the law. The president of the National Assembly gave them a reply that the legislation on national holidays is not an issue that would have to be negotiated with the minorities. Tomka reiterated that the Prekmurje Hungarians are not willing to celebrate something that causes pain to them and that the boycott is unanimous decision of the Hungarian national community.<sup>152</sup> They were invited to the celebration, but none of the representatives of the minority attended it. Also, they did not hang out Hungarian flags during the holiday, even though it is one of the official flags on the

<sup>150</sup> “Državni praznik, priznanje zvestobe prekmurskih Slovencev slovenstvu”, *Pomurski vestnik*, 17.8.2006, 7

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

<sup>152</sup> “Ne bomo praznovali nečesa, kar nas boli”, *Mladina*, 28.08.2006, <http://www.mladina.si/95055/ne-bomo-praznovali-necesa-kar-nas-boli/>

nationally mixed territory. Despite their disagreement of the holiday, Tomka emphasized, the minority does not intend to further protest against it. He understood that Slovenia is a new country and requires its national holidays, nevertheless, it cannot be expected from the Slovene Hungarians to celebrate the holiday with their national symbols. Similarly, he thought, the Carinthian Slovenes do not celebrate the plebiscite which separated them from the rest of the Slovenes. While Romania and Slovakia are less benevolent as regards to their Hungarian minorities than Slovenia, he remarked, they are politically careful enough not to celebrate the fact that millions of Hungarians stayed out of their kin-state after the Treaty of Trianon. It is true, he said, that there were no problems this year, but conflicts could be provoked sometime in the future because of the celebration.

Tomka admitted that Slovenia takes better care of its minorities than Austria, Hungary, or Italy. He was proud of the fact that Hungarian national symbols can be used in Slovenia. But even the high level of minority protection, he was worried, did not seem to be preventing the assimilation of the minority, especially because of the weak economic position of the region. Two years later, soon after he was elected as parliamentary representative of the Slovene Hungarians, Göncz gave an interview in which he asserted that different date should have been chosen for the Prekmurje holiday in order for all of its inhabitants to identify with it.<sup>153</sup> Just as Tomka, he agreed that the Slovenes had a right to this holiday, but that they cannot expect for representatives of the Hungarian minority to be enthusiastic about it. In the same year, few days before the 2008 celebration, an editor's commentary appeared in the above mentioned weekly of the Hungarian minority stating: "We repeat: the Hungarian minority respects the holiday of the Prekmurje Slovenes, but it cannot celebrate it."<sup>154</sup> At the same time, the reports on the holiday in

<sup>153</sup> "Prizadeval si bom, da bo moja dejavnost kar se da nekonfliktna", *Pomurski vestnik*, 9.10.2008, 12

<sup>154</sup> Jutka M. Király, "Ünnepelni – és nem ünnepelni", *Népújság*, 14.08.2008, 3

the aforementioned local newspaper became significantly shorter after 2006. Ultimately, the next government – due to economic reasons – decided that the state will organize the celebrations only every five years.

To recapitulate the presented arguments, representatives of the Hungarian minority maintained celebrating the Prekmurje holiday hurts the feelings of its members because it commemorates a historical period when the Slovene Hungarians were separated from their mother nation. That is why they decline to attend the celebration and do not wish for Hungarian national flags to be hung out during the day of the holiday. Furthermore, in their view not only all of the Prekmurje's inhabitants cannot identify with the holiday, but it also endangers the symbiosis between the nations in the region. The majority politicians, however, insisted that the celebrations are not directed against the minority and emphasize the fact that Hungarians are also allowed to celebrate their national holidays in Slovenia without any problems. They also asserted that the level of minority protection in Slovenia is higher than in neighboring countries where Slovene minorities live, implying the Slovene Hungarians cannot complain regarding their status.

One of the Slovene parliamentary representatives pointed to the name of the holiday according to which the unification of the Prekmurje Slovenes with the mother nation is celebrated and not the attachment of the region. Nevertheless, we have to observe, this unification coincides with the act of attachment of whole of Prekmurje to the Kingdom of SHS, and a part region, as we have seen, was populated predominantly with Hungarians at the end of First World War. On the other hand, as it was said during the parliamentary discussion, the majority of the region's population was Slovene. Following rhetoric analyzed in the previous chapter we could see that the members of the majority consider the whole region to be a part of the Slovene national territory. This view was supported with historical arguments, i.e., it is the region where the population has remained

faithful to Slovenehood and therefore enabled the attachment of Prekmurje. Moreover, since the state celebrates an important event from the national history we can imply the region is also regarded as a part of the Slovene national territory simply due to the fact that it is a part of the Slovene nation-state.

Referring to Smith we can say that the Slovene nation is in possession of the territory in question. Claims to this territory are made based on an ethnic argument, that is, on historical memory going back to pre-modern times before the occurrence of nations. As we have seen, the Hungarian self-governing community also referred to the millennium long presence of Hungarians in the region. In fact, as they are considered to be an autochthonous national group by the Slovene Constitution their ethnic ties to this land do not seem to be denied. Therefore, it can be maintained that they are recognized as co-possessors of the nationally mixed territory in Prekmurje. This is confirmed by the fact that they are allowed to use their national symbols on this territory. The commentary appearing in the local newspaper reminded its readers of the Hungarian occupation of Prekmurje in World War II and expressed hope that Hungarians would not plan another revision of the Treaty of Trianon. Göncz's commentary, however, implied that the border changes are no longer an agenda and in 1990 Pozsonec – as a parliamentary representative of the minority – called the Slovene Hungarians to support Slovenia's independence and vote for their “common homeland”.<sup>155</sup> Together with Smith we can conclude that while the Prekmurje Hungarians identify with their national territory they live, they still consider Slovenia to be their country. Hungarian national symbols they use therefore do not represent their identification with the Hungarian state as such, but the identification with the state where majority of members of their nation live.

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<sup>155</sup> The Slovene plebiscite, a documentary: <http://tvslo.si/predvajaj/dokumentarna-oddaja-izobrazevalni-program/ava2.54700179/>

It is not our intention to scrutinize decisions of the peace conference after World War I. It decided to preserve territorial integrity of the region within the frame of Kingdom of SHS. The journalist we referred to implied that it was a historical necessity for the Prekmurje Slovenes to start living in the same country as the majority of the Slovenes. The opinion of the Hungarian self-governing community was that the decision would be more just if the territory with the Hungarian minority would be attached to Hungary. Both of the sides also referred to the state-directed assimilation attempts in the region before and after World War I. We are not going to deal with this issue. We merely wanted to point to the conflicting historical interpretations appearing in the heated discussion regarding the new holidays, especially since we saw Göncz's concern regarding historical arguments constructing negative image of Hungarians in the region.

Although the Hungarian minority accepts Slovenia as its undisputed homeland, the Trianon trauma was still latently present among the community. The introduction of the holiday has apparently opened up this wound. For the majority the date of the celebration stands for the concrescence of its national body, whereas for the minority it evokes feelings of mutilation. This brings us to Hroch's argument regarding the dangers of perceiving nation as a person. In our case the minority feels it has been amputated from its main body and what makes its position especially painful is that it is bordering on its kin-state.<sup>156</sup> Hroch's further assumption is that identification with the nation is impossible without emotional attachment to it.<sup>157</sup> Irrespective of the fact that both of the nations in question regard Slovenia as their country, the new holiday arouses positive feelings in Slovenes and negative feelings in Hungarians.

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, 202-204

<sup>157</sup> Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen*, 202

Representatives of the Hungarian minority imply its members have no problems with national holidays important to the Slovene state. To paraphrase Althusser and Žižek, by enjoying those celebrations they confirm their belonging to the community of Slovenia's citizens. Arguably, they might be neutral as regards to material practices – including holiday rituals – that stand for identification with the Slovene nation as such. As for the new holiday, it is clear what kind of meaning does master-signifier “Hungarian nation” attribute to the historical events leading to signing of the Treaty of Trianon. It is an element with an explicitly negative connotation within Hungarian national identity. Consequently, those indentifying with Hungarian nation would commemorate the date of the Prekmurje holiday by grieving, and not by celebrating. In this case it is in such ritual where psychoanalytic enjoyment keeping them part of their nation would be placed. Ultimately, representatives of the Hungarian minority compare their historical trauma with the negative result of the Carinthian plebiscite from the viewpoint of the Slovene nation. Following question is repeated several times: Do Carinthian Slovenes celebrate the outcome of the plebiscite?

Hroch pointed out that emotional attachment to the nation gets stronger when there is a perception of threat. Arguably the Slovene majority did not feel threatened by the minorities during acceptance of the new holidays. We have tried to prove, nevertheless, that the aim of the holidays was to strengthen the cohesion of members of the Slovene nation in Slovenia. We have also implied that the underlying premise of their introduction was that elements such as Slovene national history or Slovene national symbols are to be considered as natural constituents of the Slovene state. While Hungarians have a right to nurture their culture and to use their national symbols in Slovenia, it is an interpretation that this is the country of the majority nation that prevailed during the discussion whether or not to introduce the Prekmurje holiday. Slovene

historian Metka Fujs thus inferred the Slovene Hungarians have no right to be insulted: they should accept the fact that they are living in a state based on Slovene national values. Their protest, she further claimed, is an attempt to deny the existence of nation-states.<sup>158</sup> We may conclude such a stance is representative of majority nationalism.

Kymlicka underlined the vulnerability of the minority groups in nation-states. In order for the minority to preserve its culture, members of the majority have to make some sacrifices.<sup>159</sup> In the case of the Prekmurje holiday, however, the majority was not willing to give up celebrating important events from its history. Consequently, representatives of the minority were convinced that national feelings of the minority population were neglected. This might have resulted in a feeling that the state is not unconditionally interested in minority's existence. Since, as has been emphasized, the number of members of the minority is in decline, its representatives presumably expected even higher institutional and moral support from the state, and not ignorance of part of the minority's history. Here we can also mention the above presented change of the Law on Personal Identification Card which is in practice a step away from the principle of bilingualism. As we have pointed out in the introduction, according to Tajfel minorities become aware of their status at the point when they face discriminating treatment and negative attitude of the majority.<sup>160</sup> Taking into consideration general standards of minority protection in Slovenia we cannot say that the autochthonous national communities face direct discrimination or threat. What they may fear, however, is that emphasizing the Slovene character of the state during celebrations could lead to strengthening of the banal majority nationalism and to further decline of the minority population or to their "looser identity".

<sup>158</sup> "Nacionalne praznike obhajajo tudi Madžari", *Delo*, 18.08.2006

<sup>159</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 109

<sup>160</sup> Tajfel, *Human groups and social categories*, 312

We can only speculate whether or not national feelings of the members of the minority will weaken over the time. At the time of the celebration such emotions are intensified with both members of the majority and the minority. Following Hroch this way identifications with the respective nations are enhanced. At this point we can test Brubaker's skepticism regarding the existence of national groups. He infers the latter do not exist in their discernible substantiality.<sup>161</sup> They may be categories helping us interpret our social world, he continues, but that does not prove them being real. According to him national conflicts are not confrontations between preexisting bounded entities, but rather quarrels instigated by certain entrepreneurs using national(istic) imagery. In his words: "[g]roupness' can 'crystallize' in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others".<sup>162</sup> The plan of the Prekmurje holiday was to raise the awareness of the Slovene national community. At the same time, representatives of the minority also became more aware of their nationality. More or less latent issues concerning relations between the two groups have emerged to the surface during the dispute. Still, with Žižek's help we can argue that the debated elements such as history and symbols could have only been important to the opposite sides as a part of ideological fields of both of the nations. Put differently, national history is perceived as such only if the subject already identifies with his or hers nation. Furthermore, a discussion on minority rights is possible only if we presume at least two groups people belonging to separate nationalities.

The tensions we are researching did not form national groups, but they did manage to strengthen identifications with them. From this point of view Brubaker is right when he says that "[h]igh levels of groupness may be more the result of the conflict than its underlying cause."<sup>163</sup> The minority representatives might have rightfully worried that the celebrations would be

<sup>161</sup> Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, 11

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid*, 18

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 19

counterproductive from the perspective of the symbiosis of the two nations in the region. We can imagine them creating more clear-cut division between the two nationalities than have existed before the new holidays.

The trend of favoring the majority nation and making clearer distinctions between the majority and the minorities could be detected since Slovenia's independence and has been inspired with the enthusiasm regarding the new nation-state.<sup>164</sup> In her empirical research on vitality of the Hungarian national community in bilingual city Lendava in 1990s Sonja Medvešek discovered that the above mentioned tendency can also be discerned on this part of the nationally mixed territory. That is, according to the research in 1994 more Slovenes than in 1991 felt Hungarians have enough minority rights or that the minority protection even puts Hungarians in an advantageous position. At the same time, the Lendava Hungarians were more critical regarding the position of the minority than the Slovene population was.<sup>165</sup> The feeling that the Hungarian minority is too privileged is further reinforced, as our discourse analysis revealed, with the conviction that the part of the Slovene national body in Hungary does not have a same kind of minority protection than the autochthon national communities in Slovenia

Since life on the nationally mixed territory in the part of Prekmurje is based on principle of bilingualism, it would be interesting to get an insight into processes of national identification of people in this area. As they are in touch with culture and rituals of both of the nations it is not that obvious which nation they will identify with. For the time being we can presume existence of two quite distinct national groups on the bilingual territory. To one of the groups it is the Hungarian flag that represents membership in a national group, whereas the Slovene flag represents

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<sup>164</sup> Medvešek, *Analiza etnične vitalnosti Madžarov v Lendavi*, 102

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*

allegiance to their home-state.<sup>166</sup> Since we have established that Slovenia recognizes and respects separate existence of the Hungarian minority, there is presumably no reason why this national group should not nurture patriotic sentiments towards the country.<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, the representatives of the minority were accused of being disloyal to the state because they were against hanging out the minority's flag during the Prekmurje holiday. How could this misunderstanding occur? When the Slovene constitution granted the minority the right to use its national symbols on the nationally mixed territory, it recognized Hungarian nation as one of the constituents of the state. Nevertheless, the majority still considered its nation to be the "owner" of the state and decided to introduce a holiday celebrating one of the crucial events of the Slovene national history. As the minority intended to protest against the holiday by not hanging out its national flag, it did not realize that the flag has come to represent its allegiance to the state. Moreover, not hanging it out was evaluated as not recognizing the sovereignty of the Slovene nation-state. Paradoxically, they have been first reminded of these facts by a politician who previously questioned the legality of using Hungarian nation-state symbols in Slovenia.

Last but not least, representatives of the minority were told that they too have a possibility to celebrate important dates from their national history and that the majority does not oppose that. While this is true, the comparison is not completely in place. Even though representative of the Slovene state do attend celebrations of Hungarian holidays, these are – contrary to the Slovene ones – not celebrated on a state level. Moreover, it is a question whether or not Slovenia would permit the Hungarian minority to publically celebrate an event that would be in a direct conflict with the Slovene historic memory. Ultimately, it would be most unlikely to expect for Slovenia to

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<sup>166</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship*, 14

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 13

celebrate such an event on a state level and by hanging out the Slovene flag which according to the applicable legislation denotes belonging to the Slovene nation.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Act on the Coat-of-arms, the Flag and the Anthem of the Republic of Slovenia and on the Flag of the Slovene Nation: <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/index?edition=199467>

## 5. THE PRIMORSKA HOLIDAY AND SLOVENE-ITALIAN RELATIONS

As we have mentioned, the parliamentary representative of the Hungarian minority was not the only one protesting against the new holidays during the process of their acceptance. Her Italian colleague Roberto Battelli claimed that the already existing national holidays, including the one celebrating the resistance against Italian fascism and German Nazism, can satisfy the feelings of those proposing the new holidays without making the others feel uncomfortable. With this proposal, he maintained, Slovenia is making a step away from the concept of secular modern state. All in all, he found it hard to imagine that the revengeful banishment of almost all of the population of the Slovene coast, Italian and Slovene, could be something worth celebrating.<sup>169</sup> Finally, he implied that the new Slovene holiday is a response to the recently introduced Italian memorial day commemorating victims of foibis and the so called exile of the Italian population from the Yugoslav territory after World War II.

When reproached for being disloyal to Slovenia Battelli replied that representatives of the minorities are being accused of something that was the responsibility of advocates of the new holidays. He thus probably wanted to say that the reason for the minorities not wanting to hang out their flags lied in the problematic nature of the suggested holidays from the viewpoint of the national communities. While both of the minorities are constitutive parts of the independent Slovenia, he inferred, the new holidays are not in accordance with constitutional principles. By saying the Primorska holiday is not a holiday of all of the Slovenes, Battelli presumably wanted to imply that not all of Slovenia's inhabitants can identify with them. He further emphasized his

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<sup>169</sup> Transcript of the parliamentary discussion: <http://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/deloDZ/seje/evidenca?mandat=IV&type=sz&uid=3C185DA6AC35D612C1257096002E75B8>

respect for the Slovenehood and pointed to the fact that the minority's flag is hung out at the Slovene culture holiday. Since this holiday is about the state celebrating the greatest Slovene national poet, we can conclude that the Italian minority does accept the Slovene nation having a determinant role in Slovenia. Therefore, the minority's representative does not oppose the new holiday because it celebrates a significant date from the Slovene nation's history, but because this specific date symbolizes a historical trauma of the Italian national community in Slovenia.

Furthermore, Battelli also thought the diction of the Primorska holiday's title was in contradiction with the historical facts. How can be something returned to where it never was, he asked, referring to the coastal towns Koper, Piran and Izola with the Italian majority until the end of World War II.<sup>170</sup> Again, representatives of the Slovene National Party reacted with the most severe criticism. Srečko Prijatelj, for example, responded by implying that Battelli argued in favor of the Rapallo or the fascist border and in favor of the neo-fascist Italian aspirations for reestablishing these borders. The above mentioned representative Jelinčič from the same party backed this opinion by claiming that both of the minorities' representatives have fascist tendencies. He reminded them that it was Italians and Hungarians who attacked Slovene territory during World War II and not the other way around. From this perspective then not hanging out the minorities' flags would not only mean disloyalty to the state, but also questioning its territorial integrity. Such charges were not new to Battelli. In an above mentioned interview in 2009 he claimed that those members of the majority who find certain actions of the Italian minority problematic often equate them with fascism.

During the parliamentary discussion several of the representatives suggested that the minorities' protest would disrupt the harmony between national groups in question, more

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<sup>170</sup> Nečak, Repe, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*, 261

concretely, between the majority and both of the minorities. In this vein the representative Jožef Horvat said he is glad to be living in a state which is trying to upgrade an already exceptional level of minority protection. From his point of view, we can conclude, giving rights to the minorities equals symbiosis between the Slovenes and the autochthon national communities. Furthermore, the Slovene statesmen whose rhetoric we have analyzed seem to believe that conjunction between Slovenia and the Slovene nation ought not to be questioned, i.e., determining which elements of the Slovene national culture should be celebrated on the national level does not concern the minorities. Therefore, we can argue the majority politicians assume that the minorities' opposition to this presupposed natural right of the Slovene nation in its state would irritate the majority population. This, they seem to imply, would result in unnecessary disagreements and bigger divisions between the majority and the minorities.

On the other hand, based on the above presented arguments of representatives of the minorities we could detect their conviction that it is precisely the introduction of the new holidays that would produce greater cleavages. They arguably acknowledge that Slovenia is a nation nation-state and generally accept policies that could be described as acts of majority nationalism. In the case of the new holidays, nevertheless, representatives of the minorities appeared to be concerned that the connection between the majority nation and the state is emphasized on the expense of the minorities' history and culture. Presumably, this is the reason for them claiming that hanging out the minorities' national flags would not be in the spirit of the holidays. To conclude, representatives of the minorities did not perceive the introduction of the new holidays as an institutional neglect, but as a neglect of certain elements of their, as Kymlicka puts it, separate national existence.<sup>171</sup> We can assume that it is from this perspective that Battelli – during the parliamentary discussion – claimed that the diction of the Primorska holiday title contradicts

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<sup>171</sup> Kymlicka, Multicultural citizenship, 14

the mechanisms of minority protection in Slovenia. Regardless of the high level of minority protection, at this point the representatives of the minorities might have felt that the state is not fully interested in the minorities' existence. Paraphrasing Tajfel's argument we could conclude that this was a point when the Hungarian and the Italian autochthon national communities got aware of their minority status.<sup>172</sup>

Let us take a look at how the existence of the Italian minority was presented from the majority's point of view in the context of the holiday. At the first celebration in 2005, that is, few weeks before the official acceptance of the law on the holiday, the minority was not even mentioned in the Prime Minister's speech.<sup>173</sup> A reference, however, was made to Slovenes across the border. They are, the Prime Minister told, an equal part of the Slovene national body. Again, we can see that the holiday is more about the Slovene nation than about Slovenia's citizens in general. It is not only about the Slovene national territory in the state, but also about the one left outside of it. From this perspective it is not surprising that the Italian minority did not appear in the speech; especially since the Slovene minority in Italy is significantly bigger than the Italian one in Slovenia.

The local newspaper reported that the Italian translation of the speech was attached to the program of the event, but that the audience was not greeted in Italian language.<sup>174</sup> A week after the celebration the same newspaper published a commentary of a Slovene historian Jože Pirjevec who thought that the Prime Minister should have shown respect to members of the Italian

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<sup>172</sup> Tajfel, Human groups and social categories, 312

<sup>173</sup> The Prime Minister's speech at the celebration in 2005:

[http://www.forumzagorisko.si/images/stories/dokumenti/dok2005/dato3\\_16sep05\\_govor\\_vrnitev\\_primorske\\_maticni\\_domovini\\_52a.pdf](http://www.forumzagorisko.si/images/stories/dokumenti/dok2005/dato3_16sep05_govor_vrnitev_primorske_maticni_domovini_52a.pdf)

<sup>174</sup> Ipavec, "Pljuča, polna ljubezni", 2

minority by touching on their problematic in his speech.<sup>175</sup> During the above mentioned parliamentary discussion the parliamentary representative Bojan Kontič observed that members of the Italian national community were not part of the scenario of the celebration which might have caused the minorities' opposition to the holiday as well as the suggested amendment. It should not be overlooked, he argued, that a lot of Italians fought for the liberation of Primorska. The content of the celebrations, he implied, ought to connect Slovenia's citizens.

The president of the Italian self-governing national community Silvano Sau explained that members of the minority have no reason to celebrate the results of the peace treaty – that is why they did not attend the ceremony in 2005.<sup>176</sup> Aside from this statement and aside from the representative Battelli's protest in the Slovene parliament no other reports on the Italian minority's opposition to the holiday could be found in the selected media at the time of the celebrations. The responses of some of the politicians from Italy to the Slovene Prime Minister's speech were harsher. Massimiliano Lacota from the Union of Istrians believed that the celebration was a nationalistic response to the above mentioned Italian memorial day.<sup>177</sup> According to him the speech of the Slovene Prime Minister was insulting to the exiles we have discussed earlier. A senator from Trieste Giuglio Camber claimed the speech incited hate and divisions. He pointed out that the Slovene Prime Minister regretted the fact that the Italian towns Trieste and Gorizia were not part of Slovenia. Even the Italian Foreign Ministry sharply protested against the speech.<sup>178</sup> Stelio Spadaro, a politician from Friuli-Venezia Giulia, was more moderate: he condemned the rise of the Slovene as well as the Italian and the Croatian nationalisms.

<sup>175</sup> Jože Pirjevec, Brez NOB še Postojne ne bi dobili, *Primorske novice*, 23.9.2005, 15

<sup>176</sup> Lojze Kante, "Tržaška desnica kritično o Janševem govoru", *Delo*, 22.09.2005

<sup>177</sup> Ibid

<sup>178</sup> "Fini: Zaradi govora Janše v Portorožu smo ostro protestirali", 16.10.2005, <http://www.dnevnik.si/novice/znanost/146382>

While the Italian minority did not agree with the Primorska holiday, it apparently did not want to be dragged into the dispute between the two states either. Massimiliano Lacota praised the minority for not attending the celebration of the “Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland”, but claimed it should have celebrated the memorial day in Italy. Shortly after the 2005 celebration a Slovene historian Boris M. Gombač wrote that the exodus of the Slovene and the Italian population from the territory in question ought to be reevaluated and that the people who opted for their country should have found their place in the speech.<sup>179</sup> The Prime Minister, Gombač concluded, should have been aware that Primorska is still dealing with a complex past and a complicated future. As we can see, the so called exodus of Italian population from the Slovene Primorska has not yet been resolved neither from historical nor from political point of view.

In their reply to the Italian Foreign Minister’s protest the Slovene authorities stated the speech at the celebration had merely internal political value.<sup>180</sup> As we have argued, the celebrations of the new holidays in Slovenia aimed at strengthening patriotic sentiments of members of the majority nation by emphasizing conjunction between the nation and the country. At the same time, pre-modern ethnic links of the Slovene nation with today’s territory of Italian state were also established during the Prime Minister’s speech.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, due to the noteworthy Slovene population inhabiting this area the latter can be considered as a territory in possession of the Slovene nation as well. Meanwhile, representatives of the Italian minority regard a part of Slovenia’s territory as historically as well presently also belonging to Italian nation. As we have seen, they cannot celebrate the day when the peace treaty came into effect because, first, that is when they were separated from their mother nation in Italy and, second, a lot of persons of Italian

<sup>179</sup> Boris M. Gombač, “Uvajanje kolektivne krivde“, *Primorske novice*, 23.09.2005, 13

<sup>180</sup> “Fini: Zaradi govora Janše v Portorožu smo ostro protestirali”

<sup>181</sup> Smith, *National identity*, 40

nationality left the territory in still quite disputed circumstances. While members of the Italian minority can identify with the Slovene country and also with the state level celebrations of the Slovene cultural achievements, their identification with Italian nation prevents them to celebrate the holiday with negative connotation within the history of the Italian community on today's Slovene territory. Moreover, their additional argument against the holiday was that not only Italian, but also the Slovene population was leaving the territory in that specific period.

Although none of members of the majority quoted above opposed the introduction of the holiday, some of them were critical as regards to ignoring the minority at the 2005 celebration. Two years later the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peace treaty coming into effect was celebrated at the day of restoration of Primorska to the motherland. In the speech given by the Slovene Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel it was called to attention that the majority nations recognize the minorities as a welcomed heterogeneity of the states.<sup>182</sup> Since the recent enhancement of protection of its Slovene minority, he continued, Italy can also be counted among these states. Heterogeneity, he concluded, is what binds contemporary Europe together, which also goes for the Italian minority in Slovenia. Later in the speech the Foreign Minister mentioned that around 30,000 people, prevalently Italians, left the territory that came under the Slovene sovereignty after Second World War. Rupel, however, did not interpret their departure as an exile, but as a choice for freedom, that is, they were supposedly afraid of being trapped on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>183</sup> This argument, we may observe, relativizes the issue of the so called Istrian exodus by addressing it in the context of internal political debates in Slovenia.

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<sup>182</sup> The speech of the Slovene Foreign Minister:

[http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/si/medijsko\\_sredisce/novica/article/141/23489/](http://www.mzz.gov.si/nc/si/medijsko_sredisce/novica/article/141/23489/)

<sup>183</sup> Ibid

Interestingly, members of the Italian minority were not addressed neither in the beginning of the 2005 nor in the beginning of the 2007 Primorska speech, whereas the Prime Minister Janez Janša opened the 2006 Prekmurje speech by explicitly greeting the Hungarian population in Prekmurje. One of the possible explanations for this difference could be that the “Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland” refers to a territory significantly bigger than Prekmurje, and Italians constitute a very small proportion of the area’s population compared to Hungarians in Prekmurje. A difference in the perception of the two minorities from the perspective of the two celebrations might be, furthermore, attributed to the historic periods the holidays refer to. Before Prekmurje Slovenes got incorporated into the mother nation after the First World War, they lived in a Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire. The assimilation going on in the region in the last decades prior to the war<sup>184</sup> is incomparable with the Italian fascist inter-war and Second World War policies and violence on the Slovene national territory attached to Italy with the Rapallo peace treaty.<sup>185</sup>

Moreover, not only is the acquisition of the today’s Slovene Primorska territory unequivocally interpreted as liberation from under the occupation of the Italian enemy, but there is also a conviction that even more of the Slovene populated Italian territory ought to be attached to the Slovene motherland. In other words, the speeches at the Primorska celebration actually imply that it is the Slovene state and its majority nation – and not the Italian minority – that should be disappointed with the results of the peace treaty. Since the Hungarian minority in Slovenia and the Slovene minority in Hungary are approximately of the same size, such rhetoric is absent from the Prekmurje celebrations. Just as in the case of the Primorska holiday, nevertheless, the Prekmurje celebration speech in 2006 underlined Slovenia’s high standards of minority

<sup>184</sup> Fran Zwitter, Jaroslav Šidak, Vasa Bogdanov, *Nacionalni problemi v Habsburški monarhiji*, Slovenska matica, 1962, 156 -177

<sup>185</sup> Nećak, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*, 95-100

protection which Hungary has yet to meet. A reference was also made to the Hungarian occupation of the region during World War, but that arguably does not affect Slovene image of the Hungarian minority as much as the fascist activities in Primorska affect the image of the Italian minority. Lastly, the Primorska region as well as the Slovene populated territory in Italy have a great a historical and cultural significance for the Slovene nation, whereas awareness regarding the population of Prekmurje being a part of the Slovene nation was very weak at the time of the attachment of the region to Kingdom of SHS.<sup>186</sup> We could thus speculate that the Prekmurje Hungarians are – at least historically – perceived as a lesser threat than the Primorska Italians and that in the context of the holidays the cultural and national diversity of Prekmurje is more emphasized than that of Primorska.

To summarize, both of these holidays are primarily about manifesting and promoting cohesion of the Slovene nation. The fact that this cohesion is celebrated on a state level puts minorities into a secondary position. We have discovered that arguments of their representatives against the introduction of the new holidays were largely ignored by the majority politicians. The latter maintained the minorities' protest would create divisions between the national groups in the country, whereas the former claimed it is precisely the new holidays that would be responsible for such unnecessary divisions. The quoted members of the majority thought the symbiosis between the majority and the minorities is adequate, if not ideal. In this context they pointed to the successful model of minority protection based on concept of bilingualism. In her research on bilingual education in Slovenia Sonja Novak Lukanovič proved that the majority of inhabitants of the nationally mixed territory in Prekmurje support such a form of cohabitation,<sup>187</sup> even though, for example, 27.7% of the Slovene population thought that there were too many possibilities to

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 46

<sup>187</sup> Novak Lukanovič, *Dvojezična vzgoja in izobraževanje*, 121

use Hungarian language in bilingual schools.<sup>188</sup> After conducting a similar research in Primorska Novak Lukanovič concluded most of the population of the nationally mixed part of Primorska spoke in favor of the equal position of the Italian language.<sup>189</sup> Albina Nečak Lük confirmed most of the residents of the nationally mixed territory in Primorska support cultural and national diversity of the territory.<sup>190</sup> On the other hand, there was also a relatively high number of the Slovene population wishing for a nationally homogeneous outlook of the territory.<sup>191</sup>

Representatives of the Hungarian minority are in principle satisfied with the minority protection in Slovenia, but are concerned regarding the increasing assimilation. According to Nečak Lük's research from 1996 the majority of the Italian population in Slovenia was convinced their number will remain stable or even increase.<sup>192</sup> Nevertheless, in an above mentioned interview in 2009 Roberto Battelli was rather pessimistic regarding future existence of the Italian minority in Slovenia. In short, most of Slovenia's population is in favor of keeping the country's national diversity. At the same time, the above mentioned statesmen and the minorities' representatives wish to avoid disputes and conflicts between them. What is the role of the new holidays in this context? At the Prekmurje celebration in 2006 the mayor of the nationally mixed town Lendava said he could relate to the Hungarian minority's pain because of its different view on the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, according to him this holiday is about celebrating the fact that the borders are losing its importance in united Europe. The intention of the holiday is thus warning us about the conflicts that can occur due to the border disputes.<sup>194</sup> Based on our above analysis we can doubt that this was the real aim of the new holidays.

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 117-118

<sup>189</sup> Novak Lukanovič, *Pomen vzgoje in izobraževanja v medetničnih odnosih*, 356

<sup>190</sup> Nečak Lük, 344

<sup>191</sup> Ibid

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 343

<sup>193</sup> "Državni praznik, priznanje zvestobe prekmurskih Slovencev slovenstvu", 8

<sup>194</sup> Ibid

To conclude, on one hand, the debate surrounding the celebrations gave an opportunity to openly address previously more latent historical as well as contemporary issues preventing a more perfect symbiosis between the majority and the minority national groups. It is a question, however, whether these topics can be most objectively and constructively discussed during events when, to paraphrase Brubaker, conflicts create high level of groupness.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, emotions strengthening identification with our nation might help us empathically understand the same emotions and identifications of members of other nations. We could then realize, for instance, why our close neighbors cannot enjoy the ritual we are enjoying.

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<sup>195</sup> Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups*, 19

## 6. ANNIVERSARIES OF THE CARINTHIAN PLEBISCITE FROM THE SLOVENE POINT OF VIEW

Several of the representatives of the Hungarian minority posed a question whether the Carinthian Slovenes celebrate anniversaries of the Carinthian plebiscite. From the perspective of our research, nevertheless, a more intriguing question is whether Slovenia as a state celebrates the fact that its national body's symbolic heart is a part of another country. Based on conclusions we have reached so far it would be absurd to expect that a nation-state would in any way self-initiatively celebrate a part of its national territory being left outside its borders. We are thus going to, first, analyze Slovene media's reports on the Carinthian celebrations, and second, interpret the Slovene state's political representatives' absence from the anniversaries. Before we do that, let us shortly outline the historical as well as contemporary position of the Slovene minority in Austria.

According to the estimations of historians, on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1920 around 41% members of the Slovene nation attending the Carinthian plebiscite voted for the plebiscitary zone A to become part of the Austrian state. Without their votes this region would have been attached to Kingdom of SHS, and an additional plebiscite would be carried out in the plebiscitary zone B. Slovenes voting for Austria were presumably convinced by Austrian propaganda, especially by the argumentation of social democrats. In any event, pragmatic considerations prevailed over national feelings.<sup>196</sup> Much has been speculated on whether the Carinthian Slovenes opted for their familiar "Carinthian homeland" rather than for the unknown Yugoslav state. Be that as it may, the publication of Slovene students in Vienna from 1980 implied that annual celebrations of the Carinthian plebiscite were traditionally expressing victory of the German majority over the

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<sup>196</sup> Nećak, Repe, *Oris sodobne obče in slovenske zgodovine*, 44

Slovene minority, the logic being: “Carinthian homeland is German; Slovenes can only be tolerated if they assimilate.”<sup>197</sup>

The same kind of politics continued in the times when Jörg Haider was the most influential statesman in Carinthia until 2008. Just like Haider was, the current Carinthia’s governor Gerhard Dörfler is also member of the Freedom Party of Austria. The party’s program from 1995, for instance, stated that Austria is a homeland of its traditional national groups, but that the relations among them should depart from the fact that most of Austrians belong to the German national group.<sup>198</sup> In practice that meant that Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty which obliged Austria to ensure bilingual education, an official usage of minority languages, and bilingual signposts in “all settlements of southern Carinthia and parts of Southern Styria inhabited by Slovenes” regardless of the number of members of the minority<sup>199</sup> was never properly carried out. The most exposed issue as regards to minority protection of the Slovene population in Austria – most of them living in southern Carinthia – is the erection of bilingual locality signs. Following the aforementioned Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty around eight hundred locality signs should have been erected, whereas the latest compromise solution from April 2011 sanctioned the erection of 164 such signs in southern Carinthia.<sup>200</sup> The representatives of the Slovene minority were not completely satisfied with the compromise, nevertheless, although their heart kept saying no, their head said yes to the compromise.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Ludvik Druml, Marjan Jelen, Roman/ Schellander, Monika Srienc, Eda Velik, Tatjana M. Zeichen, Kärnten bleibt Deutsch, Zur Tradition und Gegenwart der Feiern zum 10. Oktober, Wien/Klagenfurt, 1980, cover page

<sup>198</sup> Boris Jesih, Med narodom in politikom, politična participacija koroških Slovencev, Založba Drava in Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, Celovec - Ljubljana, 2007, 165

<sup>199</sup> Klemenčič, Klemenčič, The endeavors of Carinthian Slovenes for their ethnic survival with/against Austrian governments after World War II, 55

<sup>200</sup> [http://www.slo.at/zso/sturm\\_sl\\_archives.php?id=A2011046](http://www.slo.at/zso/sturm_sl_archives.php?id=A2011046)

<sup>201</sup> Ibid

Returning to the question whether the Slovene minority celebrates the Carinthian plebiscite, let us take a look at the commentary written by one of the politically active Carinthian Slovenes in 2009. He is former vice-mayor of one of the Carinthian municipalities. The commentary, published on a webpage of the Community of the Carinthian Slovenes,<sup>202</sup> presented a minority point of view regarding celebrations of the holidays we are discussing. The author touched on the introduction of the new holidays in Slovenia. He mentioned the objections of the Hungarian community and added their organizations were not present at the recent celebration. He also brought to attention that no Hungarian words were spoken and that the Slovene Hungarians were not thanked for their contribution to the country. Moreover, there was no plebiscite in Prekmurje and attachment of the region was a political decision of the great powers.<sup>203</sup> He also visited the celebration of the Primorska holiday and the only thing in Italian language he noticed there was a fascist command from the period when Primorska was part of Italy shown on the screen. The Italian minority, the author concluded, was not mentioned in the Prime Minister Borut Pahor's speech in 2009.<sup>204</sup>

Comparing these two holidays to the Austrian ones, the author claimed that the Slovene minority has no problems celebrating the Austrian National Day. They are happy to live in a democratic and well developed Austria and by attending the celebration they confirm their loyalty to the country. Nevertheless, even on these occasions they remind the public of the unsatisfactory execution of the minority rights as envisioned by the Austrian State Treaty. But celebrating anniversaries of the Carinthian plebiscites, he continued, is a more problematic issue

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<sup>202</sup> SKS – Skupnost koroških Slovencev in Slovenk/ Gemeinschaft der Kärntner Slowenen und Sloweninnen

<sup>203</sup> „Proslave in državni prazniki – dnevi veselja in zadovoljstva ali žalosti in potrtosti?“, <http://www.skupnost.at/2010/05/proslave-in-drzavni-prazniki-%E2%80%93-dnevi-veselja-in-zadovoljstva-ali-zalosti-in-potrnosti/>

<sup>204</sup> Ibid

from the viewpoint of the minority.<sup>205</sup> He explained there were disputes among its representatives whether to attend them or not. On one hand, the author asserted, the minority is happy to have stayed in Austria, on the other hand, the nationalistic pressure has reduced the number of those willing to declare themselves as Slovenes. In Slovenia, he wrote, phrases like “lost Carinthia” and “it is a pity that ...” can be heard. Should we, he asked, share an opinion of Hungarians and Italians in Slovenia and refuse to celebrate the holiday? The result of the Carinthian plebiscite is a fact, the author maintained; and it is also a fact that a lot of Slovenes in Carinthia voted for Austria in 1920.<sup>206</sup>

In 2010 the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Carinthian plebiscite was celebrated in Carinthia’s capital Klagenfurt. On that occasion the president of the National Council of the Carinthian Slovenes Valentin Inzko gave a speech in which he explained that this part of Carinthia could not have become part of Austria without the Slovene votes. He underlined the Slovenes’ loyalty to the land, but reminded the audience about the unfulfilled provisions of Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty. Furthermore, he bemoaned the fact that the size of the minority is decreasing and that nationalists in Austria interpret the outcome of the plebiscite as a win over the Slovene population.<sup>207</sup> That was the third time a representative of the Slovene minority spoke at the celebrations of the Carinthian plebiscite.<sup>208</sup> The vice-president of National Council of the Carinthian Slovenes Nanti Olip said that, aside from Inzko’s speech, the council would not take part of other ceremonies at the celebration.<sup>209</sup> Taking into consideration the unresolved question of bilingual locality signs, disproportionate financing of the Slovene music school and lowering a

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> Ibid

<sup>207</sup> The speech in German language: [http://www.skupnost.at/wp-content/uploads/govor\\_dr\\_inzko\\_sc.pdf](http://www.skupnost.at/wp-content/uploads/govor_dr_inzko_sc.pdf)

<sup>208</sup> “Valentin Inzko bo govornik koroških Slovencev na plebiscitni proslavi”, <http://www.demokracija.si/arhiv/arhivostalo/3019-valentin-inzko-bo-govornik-korokih-slovencev-na-plebiscitni-proslavi>

<sup>209</sup> Ibid

financial support for the minority, Olip stated, a full participation would imply that the council agrees with the way these celebrations ignore historical facts.

As we can see, unlike in the case of the national minorities in Slovenia, the representatives of the Carinthian Slovenes do not refuse to fully participate in the celebrations because it reminds them of the separation from their mother nation, but because their minority rights are not in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Austrian State Treaty. The author of the aforementioned commentary inferred that people in Slovenia feel sadness because the Carinthian Slovenes ended up living in Austria. Based on the Slovene politician's rhetoric analyzed in the previous chapters we can conclude that from their point of view the results of the plebiscite represent the loss of one of the vital parts of the Slovene national territory. The feeling of loss is arguably further intensified by the fact that Carinthia is publically perceived as a mythical "cradle of Slovenhood".<sup>210</sup> Even the official website of the Slovene government regards medieval Principality of Carinthia as the first Slovene state.<sup>211</sup> A Slovene historian Stane Granda, for example, said that he had not yet been researching the history of Carinthia because that would have been too painful for him.<sup>212</sup>

Among Slovene newspapers the daily *Večer* [Evening] from Maribor was the one dealing with the celebration of the Carinthian plebiscite in 2010 most intensively. On 8<sup>th</sup> October it reported on the preparations for the parade that, according to the journalist, had a German nationalist character in previous years. The article stated that the Slovene minority will not officially present itself at the procession on 10<sup>th</sup> October, but that some of the municipalities will appear with

<sup>210</sup> Metka Krznar, *Sodobna slovenska politična mitologija*, Diplomsko delo, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Ljubljana, 2005, 24

<sup>211</sup> [http://www.vlada.si/si/o\\_sloveniji/zgodovina/](http://www.vlada.si/si/o_sloveniji/zgodovina/)

<sup>212</sup> "Sam koroški plebiscit je zame še posebno boleč", <http://www.demokracija.si/index.php/v-fokusu/druba/3437-rsam-koroki-plebiscit-je-zame-e-posebno-bolel>

bilingual names. The president of the political party of Carinthian Slovenes was quoted saying that this is a first step towards the right direction.<sup>213</sup> The same politician said that by participating in the parade he will show respect to the Austria's president as well as to the Chancellor. Furthermore, the aforementioned Valentin Inzko's speech at the solemn session of the Carinthia's State Diet was announced in the article. The latter ended with discussing the latest proposals for resolving the issue of bilingual locality signs in southern Carinthia.

On next day the content of Inzko's speech as well as the speech of the president of the Carinthian homeland organizations were presented in the newspaper. The second speech, it was noted, received a bigger applause than Inzko's. It was added that among foreign guests only the president of the Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia is going to greet the attendants of the celebration.<sup>214</sup> An article titled *The procession without statesmen from Slovenia* was published on the day after the celebration.<sup>215</sup> The reporter observed that the procession was predominantly in sign of German national victory on the plebiscite. Nevertheless, the reporter wrote about the Carinthian Governor Gerhard Dörfler expressing a wish that Slovene statesmen would attend the next round anniversary of the plebiscite, because all of the demands of the Slovene minority would be fulfilled by then.

Anja Lorenzetti, a secretary of The Government Office for Slovenes Abroad, confirmed that representatives of Slovenia have not been attending the celebrations of the Carinthian plebiscite.<sup>216</sup> In 2010, she explained, the Carinthian Governor Dörfler invited the Minister for Slovenes Abroad Boštjan Žekš to attend the ceremonies, but the latter responded with an excuse letter. In the letter the minister stated that he would have attended the celebration if there would

<sup>213</sup> Boris Jaušovec, "Na plebiscitni povorki prvi koraki v pravo smer", *Večer*, 08.10.2010, 6

<sup>214</sup> Boris Jaušovec, "V znamenju obletnice plebiscita", *Večer*, 09.10.2010, 5

<sup>215</sup> "Povorka brez državnikov iz Slovenije", *Večer*, 11.10. 2010, 8

<sup>216</sup> An e-mail from The Office for Slovenes Abroad, [Urad.Slovenci@gov.si](mailto:Urad.Slovenci@gov.si), 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012 (see Appendix)

have come to at least a minimal and symbolic progress regarding the position of Carinthian Slovenes. Because that had not happened, Lorenzetti explained, the minister Žekš was not present at the celebration. We have mentioned the compromise solution regarding erection of bilingual locality signs in Carinthia. This solution can be seen as a progress in securing minority rights of the Carinthian Slovenes. During her first official visit of the Austrian Carinthia the new Minister for Slovenes Abroad Ljudmila Novak said that even more bilingual locality signs could be erected in future. The Carinthian Governor strongly disagreed with her standpoint.<sup>217</sup> We are yet to see whether representatives of Slovenia will attend the celebrations of the Carinthian plebiscite in the future.

Let us conclude. Based on analysis of the content of speeches of Slovene politicians at the celebrations of the Primorska and the Prekmurje holidays we can infer that they discern the outcome of the Carinthian plebiscite as a loss of the Slovene national territory and thus not something to be celebrated. They do not attend celebrations of the plebiscite's anniversaries. In 2010 the Minister for Slovenes Abroad was invited to the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the plebiscite in Klagenfurt, but he refused the participation due to unsatisfactory level of minority protection of the Carinthian Slovenes. Slovenia media's reports on the celebrations also focus on the issues regarding unrealized minority rights of the Slovenes in Carinthia. At the same time, they are concerned about expressions of German nationalism occurring at the ceremonies. We cannot make conclusions on individual politicians' and reporters' intimate perceptions of the Carinthian plebiscite, let alone generalize them. We have seen a commentary of member of the Slovene minority in Carinthia who observed that people in Slovenia regret the results of the plebiscite. An opinion of a Slovene historian was also presented – to him thinking about the Carinthian plebiscite is a painful experience. Again, we cannot generalize his attitude towards the plebiscite

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<sup>217</sup> »Ministrica ni rekla nič spornega«, <http://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/ministrica-ni-rekla-nic-spornega.html>

to the rest of the population without adequate empirical data. In case we would have conducted such a research, it would be interesting to find out how does the fact that the Slovene populated part of Carinthia was attached to Austria based on a plebiscite and not based on a decision of the great powers affects the attitude towards it. In any event, the response of the Slovene minister who was invited to the anniversary of the plebiscite in 2010 implies that Slovene state respects the results of the plebiscite and that its main concern are the rights of members of the Slovene minority living on territory in question.

## CONCLUSION

In 2005, fourteen years after it became independent, Slovenia introduced three new national holidays, each of them celebrating an important event from Slovene national history when a certain Slovene populated region was attached to today's Slovenia. Based on arguments of Slovene politicians we argued that the introduction of these holidays can be seen as an act of majority nationalism. That is to say, celebrating the new holidays was supposed to underline the connection between the Slovene state and the Slovene national territory and thus emphasize the conjunction between Slovenia and the Slovene nation. Furthermore, the intention was to strengthen the majority members' patriotic sentiments towards their nation and its nation-state. This kind of effort, we saw, is characteristic for young nation-states such as Slovenia. In a long run it could arguably result in what Billig denotes as banal nationalism, i.e., in a perception that Slovene national history and symbols are completely natural components of Slovenia.

Two of the new holidays, the "Day of Slovenes in Prekmurje Incorporated into the Mother Nation" and the "Day of Restoration of the Primorska Region to the Motherland" were objected by representatives of the Hungarian and Italian minorities. The aim of this research was, first, to disclose reasons behind the minorities' objections and to present practical as well as theoretical implications of the dispute between the majority politicians and representatives of the minorities. Standpoints of the majority media have also been taken into consideration during the analysis. Second, we compared Slovene statesmen's and Slovene media's attitude towards the celebration with their attitude towards celebrations of annual anniversaries of the so called Carinthian plebiscite after which a Slovene minority was to live in Austria.

The Slovene Constitution defines the Hungarian and Italian national minorities as autochthon national communities. They can exercise their rights primarily within the so called nationally mixed territories. Geographically, these territories are located in the aforementioned regions of Prekmurje and Primorska respectively. On the nationally mixed territories the minority languages also count as official languages in public life. The Slovene model of minority protection is thus based on the principle of public bilingualism. For example, both languages of the majority and minority are taught in schools, residents of the territories have bilingual documents, and locality and other public signs are in both languages. Furthermore, Hungarians and Italians in Slovenia have a right to use their national symbols as well as to celebrate their respective national holidays. The quoted authors observed that the above described system of minority rights guarantees a successful cohabitation of national groups on the bilingual territories.

From the arguments of representatives of the minorities we could conclude that they feel allegiance to the Slovene state and have no problems celebrating events leading to Slovenia's independence. Moreover, the fact that Slovenia commemorates important dates from history of the Slovene nation on a state level is generally also acceptable to them. Therefore, they acknowledge that Slovenia is a nation-state and that it specifically emphasizes the role of the Slovene nation in the country. Nevertheless, in the case of the two new national holidays representatives of the minorities refused to celebrate historical dates which are perceived negatively within histories of the Hungarian and Italian nations. More concretely, the two holidays celebrate the events after which the minorities were separated from their mother nations in Hungary and Italy. As both of the holidays were accepted in a parliamentary process, representatives of the minorities further expressed their protest against them by not wanting to hang out the minorities' national flags during the holidays and by not attending the celebrations.

According to the survey the government referred to more than two thirds of Slovenia's citizens agreed with the introduction of the new holidays. As for opinion of members of the minorities, in this research we relied on the comments of their official representatives.

We found out that the majority politicians consider both of the minorities – as well as their national symbols – as constitutive parts of Slovenia. Therefore, from the viewpoint of Slovene politicians the minorities' boycott of the celebrations can be interpreted as a disloyalty to the state. Furthermore, they claimed that the new holidays are not directed against the minorities, that both of the national communities should be satisfied with the level of their rights, and that their objections to the holidays would create greater divisions between the majority and the minorities. Representatives of the Hungarian minority agreed that Hungarians in Slovenia have a better status than Slovenes in Hungary, but in the case of the Prekmurje holiday they were convinced that their national history and national feelings were not respected, that is, they felt that the minority's presence in Slovenia was ignored. This feeling, we argued, was further reinforced by their concerns regarding assimilation of the minority. Finally, contrary to the opinion of the majority politicians, representatives of the Hungarian minority thought that it is precisely the celebrations of the holiday that would create a greater division between the two national groups.

A further empirical research could be able to determine whether or not relations between members of the majority and the minorities on the nationally mixed territories in Prekmurje and Primorska regions have in fact deteriorated due to the introduction of the new national holidays. Previous researches have shown that most of the population of nationally mixed territories supports the bilingual model of minority protection, but the number of those who feel that the minorities, for instance, have too many possibilities to use their language also cannot be neglected.

National as well as local media more or less neutrally reported on the process of acceptance of the holidays as well as on their celebrations. A local newspaper from Prekmurje, however, published a few commentaries in which the decision of representatives of the Hungarian minority not to participate at the celebrations was criticized. One of the articles thus claimed that the region rightfully belongs to the Slovene state and reminded the readers that Hungary occupied the region during Second World War. The protest of representatives of the minority, the journalist implied, could be seen as an attempt to revision the Treaty of Trianon. Since the holiday celebrating restoration of Primorska to the motherland is, as we could deduct from political speeches at the celebrations, interpreted as a victory over the Italian fascism, similar historical arguments were used by certain Slovene representatives during the parliamentary discussion. One of the representatives of the Slovene National Party thus even accused parliamentary representatives of the minorities of having fascist tendencies because they opposed the new holidays. All in all, quite a few unresolved historical and adherent contemporary political issues concerning relations between the majority and the minorities emerged during discussion in the parliament or in the media. In the case of the Primorska holiday, even the Italian Foreign Ministry negatively responded to the Slovene Prime Minister's speech at the first celebration of the holiday in 2005. On the other hand, a local newspaper from Primorska published some commentaries in which it was observed that more attention should be given to the Italian minority during the celebrations and that historical events leading to the occurrence of the Italian minority in Slovenia need to be reevaluated. In this context, we have also pointed out that contrary to the Slovene Hungarians members of the Italian minority were not directly addressed in the beginnings of the speeches at the respective celebrations.

To summarize, based on our research we can say that the introduction of the new holidays was not explicitly directed against the minorities, but that the latter had their reasons to perceive it as such. Opinions of the majority politicians could be summed up by the statement of the above mentioned Slovene historian who asserted that representatives of the minorities should accept the fact that they are living in a state that is based on the Slovene national values. Nevertheless, we saw that representatives of the minorities only objected that fact because the Slovene state introduced holidays that were in contradiction with the minorities' national values. Since their objections were rejected representatives of both of the national communities had to realize that despite the high level of minority protection the rights of the minorities cannot be equal to those of the majority in a nation-state, especially when the latter wishes to emphasize the connection between the state and the Slovene national territory. We could detect slight differences in the way above quoted members of the majority view upon both of the minorities in the context of the celebrations, but additional research would have to be conducted in order to reach more systematic conclusions.

Finally, we discovered that the Slovene authorities symbolically accept the results of the Carinthian plebiscite, even though the rhetoric of political speeches at the new Slovene holidays implied that the results of the plebiscite are interpreted as a loss of the vital part of the Slovene national territory. We cannot generalize this attitude to the rest of the population without additional systematic data, but we gave some examples that imply that the Slovene public regrets the results of the plebiscite. In any event, so far none of the Slovene statesmen attended annual anniversaries of the plebiscite. In 2010 the Minister for Slovenes Abroad was invited to take part in the ceremonies, but declined the offer by claiming that the rights of the Slovene minority in Austria are not appropriately taken care of. Similarly, the Slovene newspaper whose reports on

the Carinthian celebrations we analyzed focused on the unresolved issues regarding the minority protection of the Carinthian Slovenes.

One of the representatives of the Hungarian minority asserted that neither Romania nor Slovakia introduced holidays that would create tensions between the majority and the Hungarian minority in these countries. We did not investigate whether this statement was accurate. It would be interesting, nevertheless, to compare the results of our research with the analysis of – if they exist – similar holidays in nation-states with national minorities.

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# APPENDIX

## An e-mail from The Office for Slovenes Abroad:

Slovenska manjšina v zamejstvu - Avstrija - Odgovor na vaše vprašanje - magistrska naloga na CEU  Prejeto x

 **Urad.Slovenci@gov.si**

26. apr.

Za meni ▾

Sporočilo poslal(a): Ladislava Mlakar/USZS/GOV

Spoštovani Tomaž Horvat,

hvala za vaše pismo in zanimanje za našo manjšinsko problematiko, ki jo boste predstavili v vaši magistrski nalogi.

Pravilno ste seznanjeni, da se v preteklosti predstavniki RS niso udeleževali proslav ob 10. oktobru, so se pa prireditve v zadnjih letih udeleževali nekateri najvišji predstavniki koroških Slovencev.

Tudi nekdanji minister za Slovence v zamejstvu in po svetu dr. Boštjan Žekš se je na povabilo deželnega glavarja zvezne dežele Koroške Gerharda Dorflerja odzval z opravičilnim pismom.

V pismu je dr. Žekš deželnemu glavarju Dorflerju napisal, da bi se slovesnosti ob 90. obletnici koroškega plebiscita, ki so bile v Celovcu 8.10. in 10.10.2010 udeležil,

v kolikor bi v mesecih pred dnevi praznovanja "prišlo pri urejanju položaja Slovencev na Koroškem vsaj do minimalnega in simboličnega napredka", na kar je dr. Žekš deželnega glavarja opozoril dolgo pred časom praznovanj.

Ker do napredka v odnosu deželne vlade do koroških Slovencev ni prišlo, se dr. Žekš, takratni minister, dogodka ni udeležil.

Lep pozdrav,

Anja Lorenzetti  
sekretarka