

a compulsory subject. Serbo-Croat began to spread, already at the beginning of the 1920s officially a compulsory subject. At the same time, the language rights of the Carinthian Slovenes and Slovenians under Italy became increasingly truncated.

There was a considerable confusion at the beginning in the Yugoslav State's financial market. Four currencies were in circulation at the same time: Serbian dinar, Montenegrin perper, Bulgarian lev and Austro-Hungarian crown. Crown remained the only official means of payment in a significant part of the new state, including on Slovenian soil, for another two years after the end of the war. Because its value sharply dropped, and the state sought to prevent the introduction of new banknotes from Austria and Hungary, all the **money** in circulation was stamped. In 1920 the crown banknotes were exchanged for dinar-crown banknotes (according to the exchange rate of the four crowns for one dinar), and on 1 January 1923, dinar became the only currency in Yugoslavia.



The Austro-Hungarian banknotes equipped with an official mark and fiscal stamp were in circulation until spring 1920, when they were replaced by dinar notes, which also had their value in krone marked. (Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia; privately owned)

At the end of the First World War, **health conditions** in Slovenia were alarming. Birth rate was increasingly down, mortality high, the number of tuberculosis patients increased dramatically. The Spanish flu, dysentery, typhoid fever, spotted typhus, smallpox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, and sexually transmitted diseases were on the rise. The authorities implemented various preventive measures in the fight against these diseases and informed the population with occasional pamphlets and newspaper articles about the dangers of diseases, their symptoms and methods of treatment. However, measures were not always sufficient, especially in the case of the Spanish flu, which was epidemic in the autumn of 1918. Due to high mortality among schoolchildren, most schools closed for a while. The Spanish flu had claimed the lives of 6,306 people in Slovenia.

**Disability issue** was one of the most difficult and painful issues of the post-war social services, considering there were 11,467 war invalids and 31,049 war widows, with 49,182 dependent family members living in Slovenia in 1921. Sixty-two percent of military war invalids were aged between 30 and 40 years. Authorities helped them by supplying prosthesis, paying disability benefits, hospital treatment and climate therapy, with retraining and offering job vacancies, caring for the disabled etc., while the population contributed by collecting clothing, footwear and voluntary financial contributions.



Announcement of free vaccination against smallpox in Ljubljana (June 1919). (SI\_ZAL\_LJU/0489, Mesto Ljubljana, splošna mestna registratura, fasc. 1857, fol. 384)

Courts had a lot of work in the first post-war years in declaring deaths of **fallen and missing soldiers**, of which every trail was lost, transferring their property to their relatives and governing the guardianship of orphans. They started procedure for a declaration of death at the suggestion of relatives, with period for declaration of death lasting from six months to one year. If the missing person did not come forward and in the absence of any evidence that the person was still alive, they were legally declared dead. Of these, there were many such cases.

War-disabled Matic Debeljak from the village of Stara Oselica in the valley of Poljanska dolina. (privately owned)



Ivan Jurkovič: Grieving Slovenia, 1928, bust, part of a monument to victims of the First World War in Škofja Loka. (photo: Tomaž Lunder)

**Slovenes, a new era is beginning ... (1918–1920)**

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**SLOVENES,**

**A NEW ERA IS BEGINNING ...**

**(1918–1920)**





The "chain man" breaking his shackles. The first postage stamp of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs – drawn by Ivan Vavpotič. (Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia and Historical Archives Ljubljana)



This plebiscite postcard warned about the indebtedness of Austria after the war with the slogan "Isn't it a waste of your shoes, of your legs, to stride for the debt-ridden Austria?" (SL\_ZAL\_NME/0191, Zbirka Koroški plebiscit, t. e. 1)



In June 1920, Regent Alexander, heir to the throne, made his first official visit to Slovenia. (SI\_ZAL\_LJU/0342, Zbirka fotografij, A5-075-043)

Rally marking the establishment of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs at Kongresni trg (Congress Square) in Ljubljana (29 Oct 1918). (SI\_ZAL\_LJU/0342, Zbirka fotografij, I1-013-001)

In the spring of 1918, the Italian **front began to fall apart**; restlessness and dissatisfaction overwhelmed the Austro-Hungarian army. Spontaneous rebellions that erupted in the hinterland were quelled with bloodshed, the Austro-Hungarian army, composed mainly of soldiers of non-German nationality, had become unreliable. Political dissension in the Austrian Parliament increased and the Southern Slavs had grown louder in their request for independence.

With the signing of the armistice between Italy and Austro-Hungarian Empire (3 November 1918) Austro-Hungarian army demobilized, forced to surrender half of its war equipment, immediately release all prisoners of war and withdraw from the territory which had been promised Italy under the Treaty of London. The bulk of the army returned home on foot, and upon reaching the railway continued by train to the inland of the former monarchy. The passage of the half a million strong army through Slovenia was finalised on 12 November, with the last major transportation of soldiers on 14 November 1918.

**Process of independence of Slovenes** took place in parallel with the disintegration of the Austrian army and the state. The Yugoslav club demanded in its May Declaration (30 May 1917) in the National Assembly in Vienna the unification of South Slavs in an autonomous unit within the monarchy. Increasingly, there were tendencies for the establishment of independent states. In August 1918, the Slovenian National Council – Slovene national authority – was established, which operated in parallel with the authorities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. On 29 October 1918, the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (SHS) was declared, which remained independent only until 1 December 1918, when the Serbian Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia declared its unification with the Kingdom of Serbia into a new country – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

**Slovenian territory** was immediately after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1918) divided between four states. Most Slovenes lived in the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (later the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). After the signing of

the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920) Prekmurje, until then within the Hungarian state, was annexed to its home country, but we lost Slovene Littoral (Primorska), which became part of Italy.

By signing the Treaty of Rapallo (12 November 1920), with minor variations in force until 1947, the **Italian Government** introduced on the occupied territories disarmament of the national guards, establishment of the military court, prior censorship of the press, a ban on crossing demarcation line and movements in Julian March without authorization and prohibition of public gatherings. This was followed by a ban on displaying Yugoslav and Austrian flags and wearing badges with Yugoslav colours. Resistance of the population was persecuted by internment and deportation of the civilian population and men liable for military service.

In Carinthia, the fight for **the establishment of the state border** ended with the plebiscite (10 October 1920), with its results in favour of Austria. Before the plebiscite both sides held intense (anti) propaganda with political meetings and rallies, there was also a lot of violence. The Yugoslav plebiscite campaign had a strong emphasis

Border crossing between the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the Kingdom of Italy at the village of Hotedršica after the Treaty of Rapallo (1920). (Idrija Municipal Museum)



on national consciousness and warned of the Austrian war debt, whereas the Austrian propaganda underlined above all the economic advantages and the preservation of the unity of the Klagenfurt basin. The Austrian side proceeded with the policy of oppression after the plebiscite, with which they began to restrict the language rights of the Slovenians living in Carinthia, which they had had in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the years following the plebiscite, the German nationalists from several organizations exerted pressure on the Slovenes, who voted against the merger with the Republic of Austria, and triggered a wave of emigration.

Thus, at the end of the war a new **wave of refugees** arrived on the Slovenian territory fleeing the Italian and Austrian occupation of Littoral and Carinthia. The refugees consisted mainly of officials, police officers, education and railway workers as well as students. Authorities in Ljubljana financially supported refugees from Carinthia up to 1921.

In 1919, the Government in Belgrade established **national symbols and holidays**, which represented the Yugoslav State for the next twenty years, renamed institutions, bearing the names of former Austrian rulers and abolished the old Austrian holidays. Decree on 15 November 1919 introduced three new national holidays: the Union Day (1 December), the birthday of King Peter I (12 July) and St Vitus Day (28 June). Public holidays were work and school free holidays, with mandatory participation in ecclesiastical ceremonies and celebrations for officials, students and their teachers. Military parades were organized. A new tradition of celebrating birth and death anniversaries of important Slovenians and other Slavic men began, especially in schools.

Alexander of Yugoslavia, Serbian regent since 1914, undertook his **first official visit** at the end of June 1920, around Croatia and Slovenia, on which



Building of University of Ljubljana, established in 1919. (SI\_ZAL\_LJU/0342, Zbirka fotografij, A01-027)

the newspapers reported with keenness and affection. First, he visited Zagreb, and then stopped in Ljubljana, Bled, Tržič, Kamnik, Kranj, Celje and Maribor at the end. In all the places he visited, he received a magnificent reception - people greeted him with flowers, greenery and flags while singing the national anthem.

The creation of the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes represented the confirmation of the state building of the Slovenian nation. The national government constituted at its first session in November 1918, Slovene as the **official language**; all the inscriptions on the official buildings were to be in the official language. Slovene language became the exclusive language of instruction in Slovenian schools, and in German schools, Slovene language was