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**Uroš Herman**mag., prof. zgodovine in geografije, Dolenja vas 25, SI-3312 Prebold
E-pošta: uros.herman@gmail.com

Dogajanje na Celjskem v letih 1917–1918 s posebnim ozirom na delovanje celjskih liberalcev

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku avtor obravnava dogajanje na Celjskem v zadnjih letih Habsburške monarhije. Prikazano je dogajanje v Celju in okolici v luči takratnega prebujanja slovenske narodne zavesti v dobi deklaracijskega gibanja in sočasnega boja za prevzem oblasti, s snovanjem Narodnih svetov in prehodne oblasti. Prikazano je tudi širše politično dogajanje – razvoj slovenskih političnih strank v obravnavanem času in pa nemško politično gibanje, ki je zavračalo spremembe in je izgubljalo svoj prevladujoč položaj v Celju ter še v nekaterih drugih središčih na Celjskem. Ker je v Celju in v nekaterih trških naseljih med slovenskimi političnimi silami prevladovala liberalna usmerjenost, je v liberalnemu taboru namenjena nekaj večja pozornost.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Celje, deklaracijsko gibanje, prevratna doba, liberalizem, 1917–1918

ABSTRACT

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CELJE AREA IN 1917–1918, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL LIBERALS

The author of the contribution deals with the developments in the Celje area in the last years of the Habsburg Monarchy, with the main focus on those that took place in Celje and its surroundings in the light of the emerging Slovenian national awareness during the period of the Declaration Movement and the scramble for power, the formation of national councils, and the establishment of transitional government. The author also presents a wider political context, i. e., the creation of Slovenian political parties in the period under examination as well as the German political movement, which was resisting change and losing its predominant position in Celje as well as a few other centres in the surrounding area. Owing to the prevailing liberal orientation among Slovenian political forces in the city of Celje and certain market towns, primary attention is devoted to the liberal camp

KEY WORDS

Celje, Declaration Movement, overthrow period, liberalism, 1917–1918



S U M M A R Y

Developments in the Celje area in 1917–1918, with particular regard to the activities of local liberals

In Celje and its surrounding area, the First World War changed people's lives in the social, economic as well as political spheres. As a result of the bloody toll at the battlefield, the initial enthusiasm to engage in war soon began to dwindle and the turmoil of war also began to increasingly affect the daily lives of the population. The desire for peace and the anticipation of change grew, and the relaxation of political life in May 1917 triggered an avalanche of ideas of the monarchy's postwar reconstruction that were not necessarily mutually congruent.

Given their military loyalty to the monarchy, the Slovenes felt morally audacious to demand a higher level of independence within the monarchy. The same period also saw the revival of the idea of uniting all Slovenes in a single province and of forming a separate state formation with other South Slavic nations in the monarchy. The said idea became publicly known as the May Declaration and was initially promulgated by the members of the national assembly in agreement with the major political parties. Soon afterwards, once the idea also reaped the support of certain eminent public personalities and the (Slovenian) Catholic Church, the Declaration Movement gradually grew into a pan-Slovenian campaign. As for state politicians, however, they were determined to maintain the status quo in the monarchy.

When it became clear that the war was nearing its end and that Slovenian politicians could no longer walk back from their demands, they did a step further, starting to set up national councils and appointing a parallel government, which was a fast

and straightforward process in places with Slovenian majority. In cities and market towns where the government was (pro-)Austrian or German-oriented or in major administrative units (districts, circuits), however, this change required the effort of nationally aware individuals. It was only the formation of national councils that finally enabled a smooth transition from Austrian to Yugoslav statehood.

As regards the political life in partisan terms, the two main Slovenian bourgeois political camps organised their provincial parties into national ones, thus marking the beginnings of the Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the Yugoslav Workers' Party (JDS). However, despite their general willingness to cooperate, neither party was ready to give up its prewar position, so they started a behind-the-scene scramble for filling the »vacant« space that was being created in what were formerly »German« areas, including in Celje. Taking control over Celje and its surrounding area was also made possible with the use of propaganda, more accurately, the (liberal) newspaper that circulated in the city, initially titled *Glasnik Narodnega sveta za Celje* [The Herald of the National Council for Celje] and then in 1919 renamed *Nova doba* [New Era]. Apart from the Slovenian one, there was also a German newspaper published in the city, i.e., *Deutsche Wacht* (later *Cillier Zeitung*). Meanwhile, more and more workers' representatives were entering the partisan struggle for power as well, particularly in industrially developed areas and many mining centres across the Celje area.

The overthrow was swift; in the wake of the collapse of the Italian battlefield, the retreat of the military forces was followed by the withdrawal of foreign officials. The Slovenian provinces found themselves in a »nation« state, the construction of which took some considerable time. Namely, persistently maintaining the prewar political power balance, the state and local governments, which had been set up during the overthrow period, did not change much until the first election.