

# War and the Power of Image

Visual Propaganda and Censorship in Slovenia during World War I



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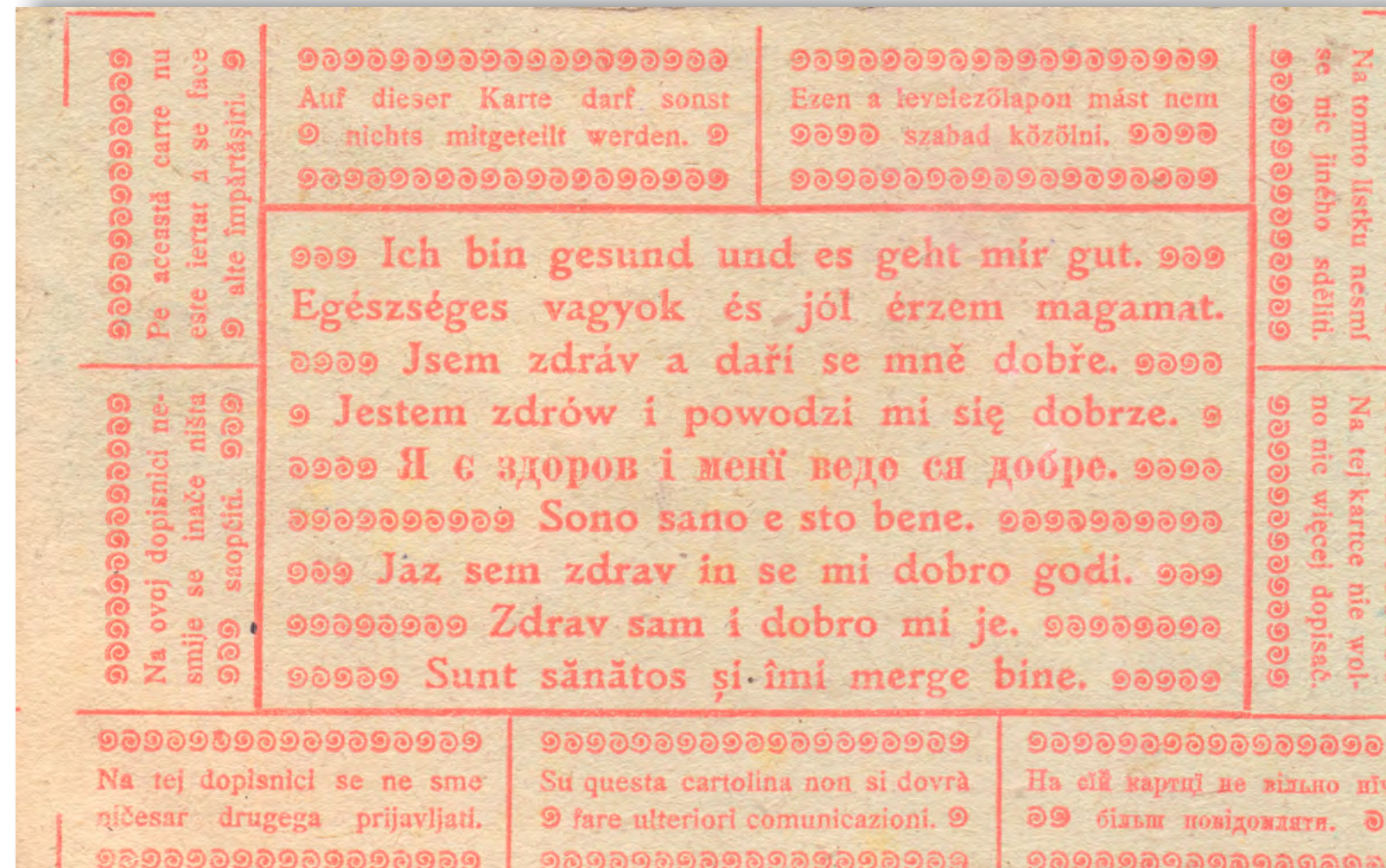
A Reflection of Images

War and the Power of Image  
COLOPHON



# Austrian Censorship during World War I – Principles and Effects

The everyday public and private life of Austro-Hungarian citizens during World War I was subject to a special wartime regime, referred to as war absolutism. It was based on the legislation that had been prepared already in 1912 and allowed the political regimes in the Austrian and Hungarian halves of the state to introduce extraordinary measures in case of potential wars. The Vienna Parliament stopped meeting as of March 1914. Therefore, Prime Minister Karl von Stürgkh implemented emergency measures with decrees without answering to any institutions. With 23 July 1914, all the personal and civil freedoms of the citizens were abolished, the press partially prohibited and censored, and political associations banned. In the provinces that became the immediate hinterlands of the fronts – in the case of the Southwestern Front, the provinces south of Brenner, Carinthia, Carniola, southern Styria, the Littoral Region, Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia – the military assumed control of civilian matters. To implement the extraordinary measures, the Supreme Command of the Austro-Hungarian Army established the War Surveillance Office (Kriegsüberwachungsamt), which supervised the citizens of the Austrian part of the Monarchy and controlled the information, released to the public.



During World War I, the correspondence between the front and the hinterlands became a massive cultural phenomenon as well as a significant problem for the post. The length of the letters was therefore prescribed, and on 28 August 1916, pre-written postcards in nine languages containing a calming and straightforward text were published for the soldiers to send home to their families. Except for the address, nothing could be added on them.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Škofja Loka, Škofja Loka)

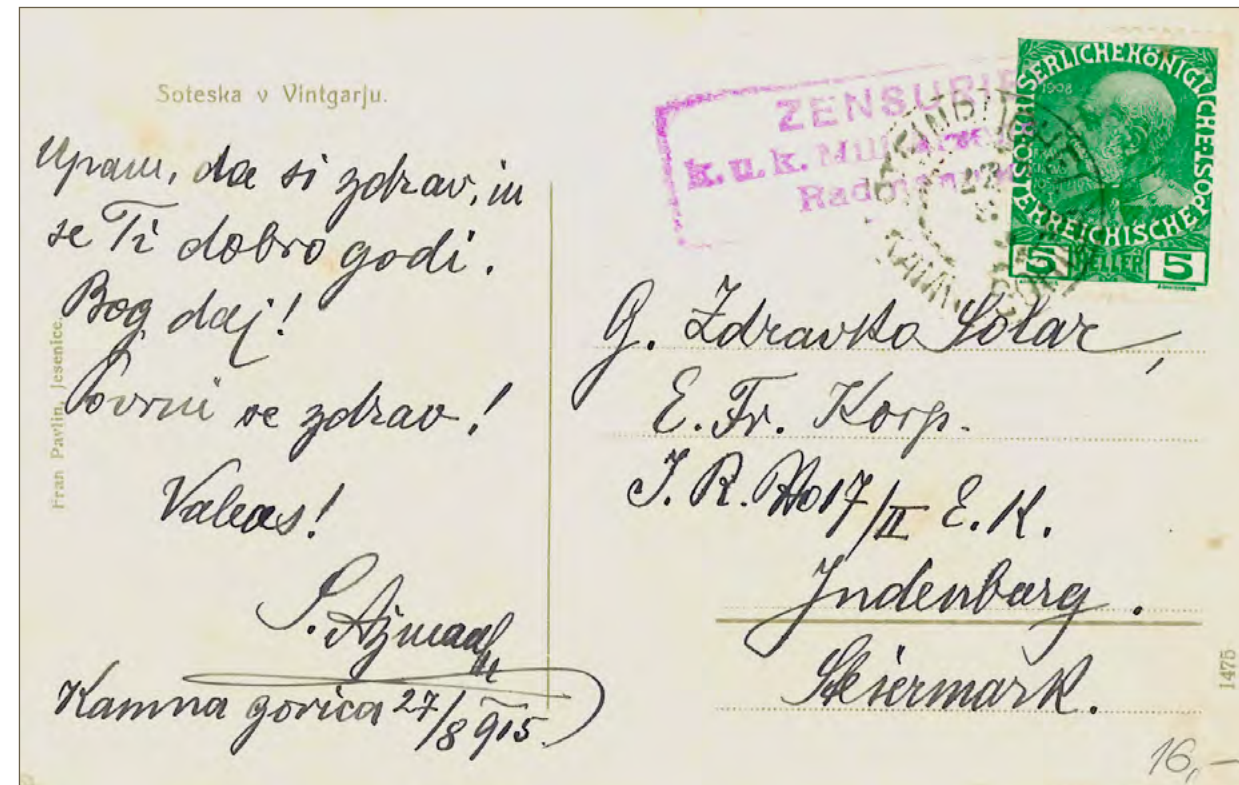


## Austrian Censorship during World War I – Principles and Effects

Strict censorship of the press and all other forms of information – correspondence, telegrams, telegraph, radio, film production, photography, postcards, and pigeon post – was introduced. The work of the mail censorship office, which carried out random examinations of internal correspondence and constant surveillance of war prisoner correspondence, was most extensive. The censors needed to pay special attention to the general disposition of the population at the various levels of the society; to the evaluations of the military, political, and economic position; the statements about peace; the attitude to the military allies and opponents; the descriptions of the internal situation in the Monarchy; the anti-state statements; and the opinions about the future of the Monarchy.

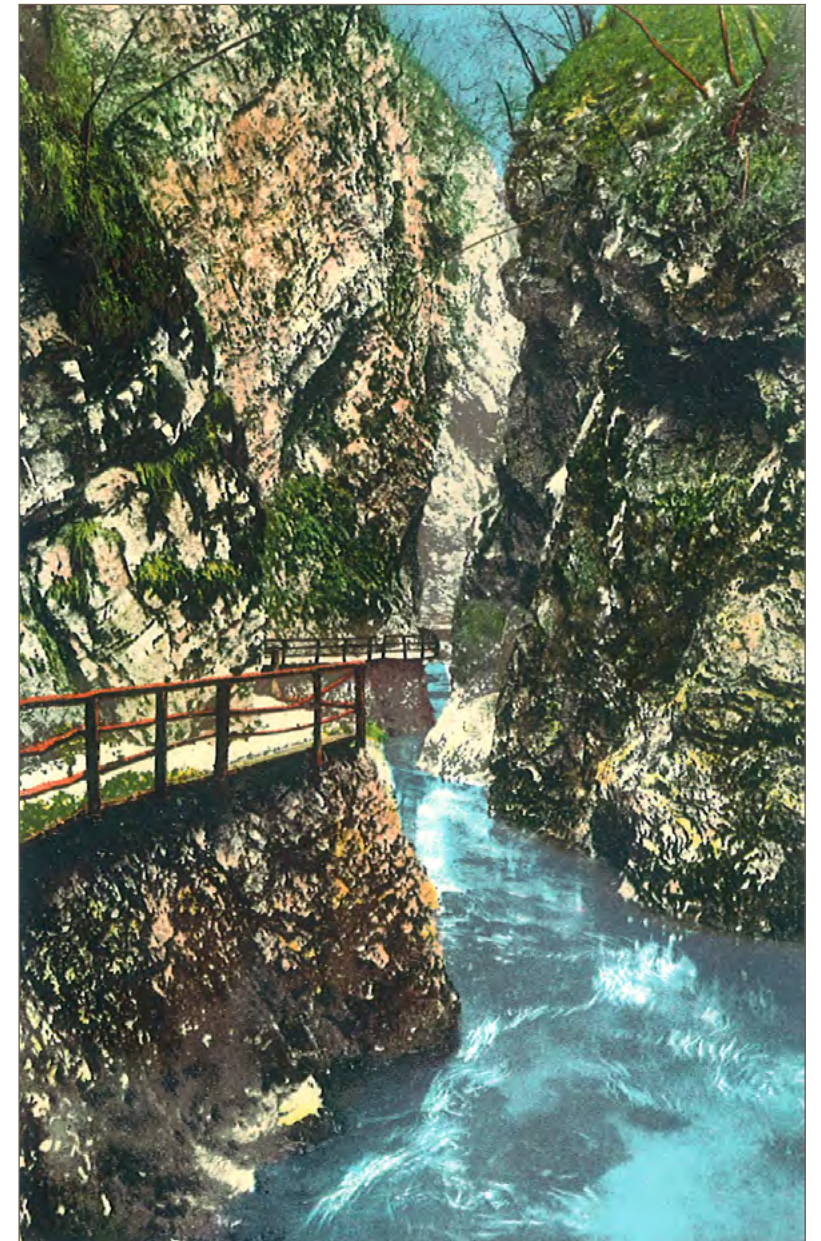
The censorship was abolished at the end of October 1918.

Petra Svoljšak



} A postcard depicting the Vintgar Gorge. Written correspondence was subject to censorship. Because of the enormous quantities of mail, inspections were random but frequent and strict. The inspected mail received a stamp stating "Zensuriert" (censored).

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit for Gorenjska Kranj, Kranj)





## Austrian Propaganda during World War I – Principles and Effects

In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy during World War I, the information management system was subject to censorship and propaganda. The War Press Office (Kriegspressequartier) as a part of the Supreme Command represented the central propaganda office. Its primary tasks included the supervision of the news about the Army and the war effort, communicated to the national and international press. The Office ensured that the Austro-Hungarian journalists wrote loyally and observed the guidelines. It reported on the situation at the battlefields at daily press conferences; systematically analysed the information published in the foreign press; drew up secret reports for the Imperial Office and the Supreme Command; focused on the propaganda; published newspapers for the soldiers; and prevented hostile propaganda. Among the Slovenian associates of the War Press Office, the lawyer Dr Ivan Kavčič, Dr Josip Pučnik, and brothers Božo and Dr Vladimir Borštnik were particularly active: by divulging internal information, they strengthened the activities of the Secret Committee of Younger Slovenian Intellectuals with the aim of weakening the Monarchy and collaborating with the Entente. The Office was also in charge of the artistic and visual propaganda in the illustrated newspapers, books, postcards, and other products presented directly to the public. The supervision and monitoring of the visual materials was carried out by the Art Department (Kunstgruppe), which would mobilise artists.



»Passport« of the war painter Ivan Vavpotič with his personal data.  
(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Ljubljana, Ljubljana)



# Austrian Propaganda during World War I – Principles and Effects

Among Slovenians, the documents mention Ivan Vavpotič, who was assigned to this Department at the beginning of 1917, Luigi Kasimir and Friedrich (Friderik) Gornik, while other famous names included Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele. War artists would make rough sketches at the front and finish their works in their studios. The propaganda efforts also included war photographers and the film industry. Despite enormous organisation, the Austrian propaganda was not very effective in comparison with the Western Allies due to the shortage of civilian participation in the development of information policy and the strict censorship that hampered the public space in the Monarchy.

Petra Svoljšak

} War postcards were an efficient and predominant propaganda tool. In the Slovenian territory, they were printed by the Katoliška tiskarna printing house and published by the *Bogoljub* and *Ilustrirani glasnik* newspapers from Ljubljana. The first set of sixteen postcards was released in a special envelope already in November 1914, while the last batch came out in March 1918. The last known number was 140. (National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)

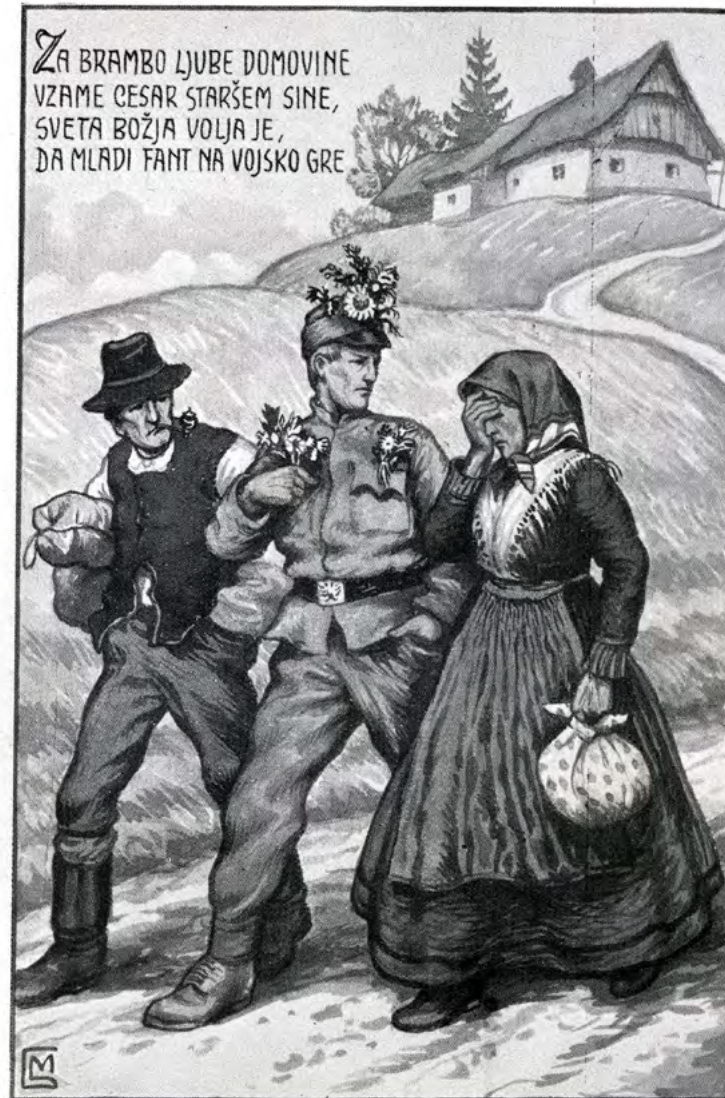




## Mobilisation and Farewell

# *Everything for faith, home, and the Emperor!*

On 25 July 1914, Emperor Franz Joseph I signed an order to begin a partial mobilisation against Serbia, while on 31 July 1914, he declared a general mobilisation against Russia. Unlike the Entente forces, where military service was not compulsory and where an intense visual and symbolic propaganda was thus initiated at the onset of the war, Austro-Hungary could resort to the solid structure of the compulsory military service, which had been introduced in 1868. At the beginning of the war, the mobilisation in the Empire was, rather than on propaganda, therefore based on the censorship that concealed the initial defeats at the fronts as well as on the loyalty to the Monarchy, which was still strong at the time. Although some politicians were concerned that the Slavic nations might turn against the Monarchy, the response of conscripts, reservists, and volunteers to the military mobilisation was considerable. In July and August, the Monarchy armed more than two million men. Between 30,000 and 35,000 Slovenians were drafted and mostly assigned to the Austro-Hungarian Army's infantry regiments of the Graz's III Corps, where they represented 60 percent of troops.



} Parting is among the most frequent visual motifs of the postcards from the *War in Pictures* series, designed by the Slovenian artists. Maksim Gaspari's pastel-coloured postcard of 1914 depicts a reservist adorned with flowers from home, who is departing to join the Army in the company of his parents, while the added verse underlines the duty to the Emperor, which is simultaneously God's will.

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)

## Mobilisation and Farewell

# *Everything for faith, home, and the Emperor!*

In the first days of the war, the bitter farewell was alleviated considerably by the feelings of a just conflict, joy in light of the promise that the Emperor and the homeland would be heroically defended, pride, and expectations of certain victory. The masses greeted the departing soldiers zealously, while the event was also accompanied by the far more intimate parting of young boys from their parents, girlfriends, fiancées, as well as their homeland. The visual representations of this occasion were especially emphasised in the Slovenian territory. In the depictions by the Slovenian artists, especially on postcards, the topic of departure was characterised by a melancholy atmosphere, notable national symbols, and motifs of soldiers bidding farewell to their wives and children, symbolising the sacrifice of the Slovenian nation for its Emperor, to whom it gave the most precious thing it had: its future. However, the parting scenes would soon give way to images of the wounded, the fallen, and the graves; while saying goodbye to the departing soldiers was soon replaced by bidding farewell to the fallen sons, husbands, fathers, and fiancés. However, because of the developments at the fronts and within the Monarchy, in the second half of the war, gloominess, sadness, and sacrifice were replaced by barely concealed anti-war and exceedingly nationally charged images, whose stronger colours explicitly foreshadowed a new sort of parting – farewell to the Monarchy.

Barbara Vodopivec



} The masses, which welcomed the Austro-Hungarian decision for war under the influence of the propaganda and censorship, bid a solemn farewell to the soldiers in the Slovenian cities. In the evening of 28 July 1914, Ljubljana honoured the mobilised troops with a great manifestation accompanied by the Imperial anthem, folk songs, and military band. The solemn farewell at the railway station in Ptuj, shown in the photograph, was similar.

(Public domain, Kamra, <https://www.kamra.si/mm-elementi/item/odhod-vojakov-na-fronto.html>)



## Mobilisation and Farewell

*Everything for faith, home, and the Emperor!*



}

The Austrian painter Stephan Mautner depicted the reserve forces (Landsturm) on the official charitable postcard No. 256 of the Red Cross, the War Help Office (Kriegshilfbüro des k. k. Ministeriums des Innern) and the War Relief Agency (Kriegsfürsorgeamt des k. u. k. Kriegsministeriums). The response of the older generations of reservists – the so-called “črnovojniki” – to the mobilisation was significant.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Škofja Loka, Škofja Loka)





## Mobilisation and Farewell

*Everything for faith, home, and the Emperor!*



Slovenian soldiers would also respond to the mobilisation under the influence of the postcard illustrations that promoted the departure to war, for example Maksim Gaspari's depiction of 1914 published by Maks Hrovatin. The proceeds from the sales of these postcards were intended for the support of the drafted soldiers' families. Graz's III Corps, to which the majority of the Slovenian soldiers had been assigned, was also called the "Iron Corps", as it was deployed to Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains, where the toughest fighting took place.

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)



In the depictions of parting, the pastel-coloured or black-and-white figures of Slovenian mothers, wives, and girlfriends would hang their heads and look away with tears in their eyes, just like the girl in folk attire who bemoans her fallen fiancé on Anton Koželj's postcard of 1915. It is almost incredible that the censorship allowed the publication of the postcard with the fallen soldier, which, together with a verse by Simon Gregorčič, in fact comes across as anti-war propaganda.

(Regional museum Goriški muzej, Nova Gorica)



## Mobilisation of the Hinterland

*Our Army needs us!*

On 28 July 1914, the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war arrived in Belgrade. On the very same day, the first trains transporting the mobilised soldiers headed towards the Serbian border. The Slovenian territory entered the war as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. However, as the Monarchy was in a relatively poor economic condition and structurally ill-prepared for a lengthy and unpredictable war, the mobilisation of the hinterland needed to be very swift. Already in the first year of the war, many decrees were adopted that, among other things, addressed the issue of food, workforce mobilisation, confiscation of materiel and horses, expropriation of the means of transport and individual buildings, as well as the militarisation of the larger companies. Above all, the Monarchy – just like Germany and Russia as well as other forces of the Entente – had no choice but to finance the war mainly with the funds raised by selling war bonds. In these efforts, it took full advantage of the centrally-managed propaganda, which was, as it addressed the broadest possible audience, visually rich and supported with visual elements and images that emphasised the loyalty to the Emperor, feelings of patriotism, and the duty of the home front's contribution to the wartime developments.



} The mobilisation of the hinterland was one of the primary purposes of visual propaganda. The predominantly green tones of the proclamation called upon people to gather and dry nettles for the production of fabric intended for sanitary material, linen, and other war purposes. It depicted a Red Cross nurse taking care of a wounded soldier; a mother placing an infant in its cradle; and workers gathering nettles and weaving. With its visual elements, the proclamation thus directly called upon women to contribute to the war effort.

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)



## Mobilisation of the Hinterland

*Our Army needs us!*

The mobilisation of the hinterland or the home front was also evident from charitable activities (e.g. collection of clothes and linen for the soldiers) and the support of charitable organisations. Visual propaganda was especially fruitful in this area, as the purpose of millions of patriotic postcards, issued by these organisations apart from the state institutions and private publishers, was to elicit compassion and adherence, while the resources gathered through sales were intended for war orphans, widows, the wounded, the disabled, and the refugees. In Slovenia, such postcards were published by the *Ilustrirani glasnik* newspaper as a part of the *War in Pictures* series. Nowadays, 140 postcards from this series are known. Most have been drawn by the Slovenian artists Maksim Gaspari, Anton Koželj, Hinko Smrekar, Ivan Vavpotič, Peter Žmitek, Fran Tratnik, Valentin Hodnik, and Helena Vurnik. In terms of motifs, these postcards were modelled after the ones published elsewhere in the Monarchy and in Germany. However, artists would often paint regionally-specific images from the Slovenian territory as elements of the visual propaganda that addressed the national audience: homesteads adorned with carnations, small idyllic villages, landscapes with belfries and crucifixes, and religious motifs placed in the Slovenian environment.

Barbara Vodopivec



} Austro-Hungary financed the war mainly with the funds raised by selling war bonds (Kriegsanleihen). To this end, it issued loans eight times. Brightly coloured visual messages, persuading people to buy bonds, reflected the aesthetics of the local environments and often depicted modern versions of familiar motifs. For example, the poster for the sixth war loan of 1917 shows St George defeating a dragon under the two-headed eagle flag.

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)



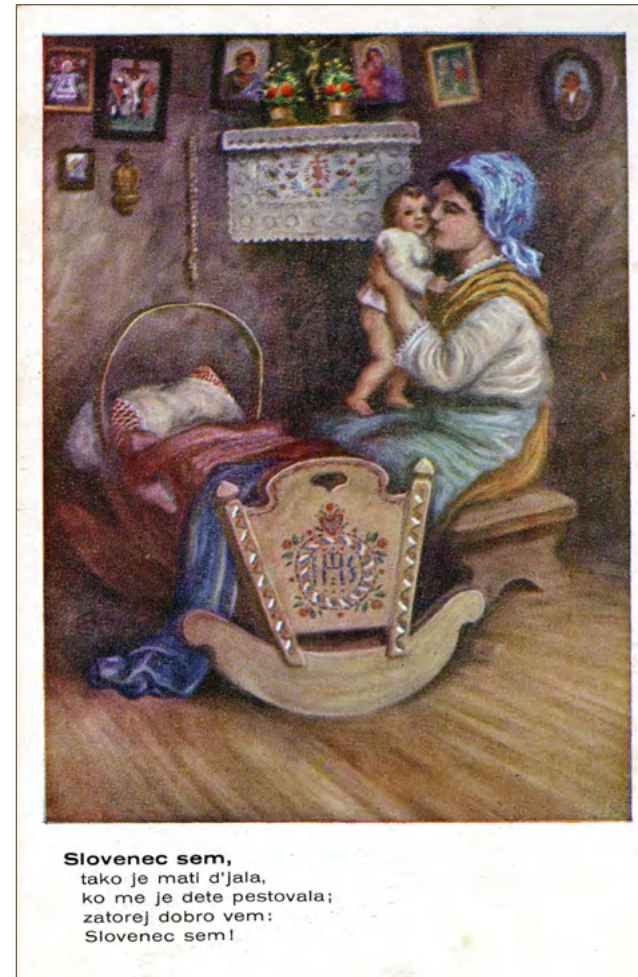
## Mobilisation of the Hinterland

*Our Army needs us!*



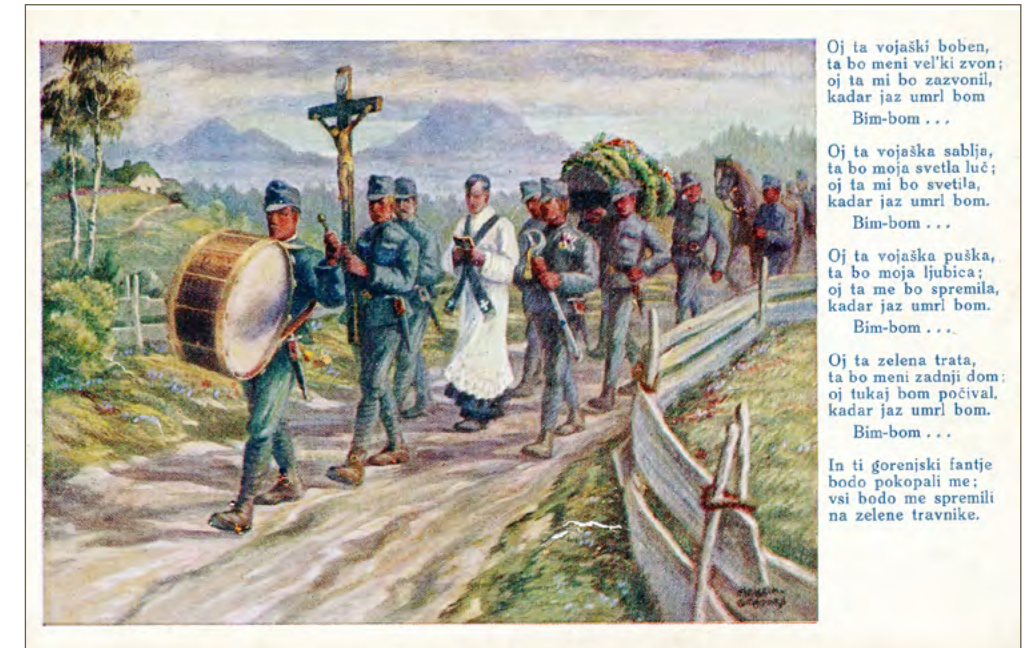
} Charitable organisations like the Red Cross, the War Help Office (Kriegshilfbüro des k. k. Ministeriums des Innern) and the War Relief Agency (Kriegsfürsorgeamt des k. u. k. Kriegsministeriums) would issue patriotic postcards, and the funds raised with the sales were intended for the victims of war. In 1914, Peter Žmitek drew an illustration for the charity postcard of the Red Cross's "Deželno in gospejino društvo Rdečega križa za Kranjsko" society, intended to raise the fighting morale.

(Regional museum Goriški muzej, Nova Gorica)



The Slovenian national feelings were additionally mobilised by the war developments, unfavourable for the Central Powers and characterised by numerous casualties. It is therefore unsurprising that in 1917 – in the time when the censorship had already been somewhat relaxed – an exceedingly nationally charged postcard by Maksim Gaspari was published, depicting a mother with a child and a crib in a homey room filled with national and religious symbols accompanied by a verse from the folk poem *Slovenec sem* (I am Slovenian).

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)



The series of postcards titled *War in Images* (as of 1915, *War in Pictures*) was initially published by the Katoliška tiskarna printing house and later by the *Ilustrirani glasnik* newspaper. Due to the relatively frequent openly anti-war scenes, these postcards were subjected to censorship as well. The publication of the postcard that depicted a soldier's funeral and included the folk song *Oj, ta vojaški boben* (Oh, This My Soldier's Drum), painted by Maksim Gaspari in 1916, was not allowed until as late as 1918.

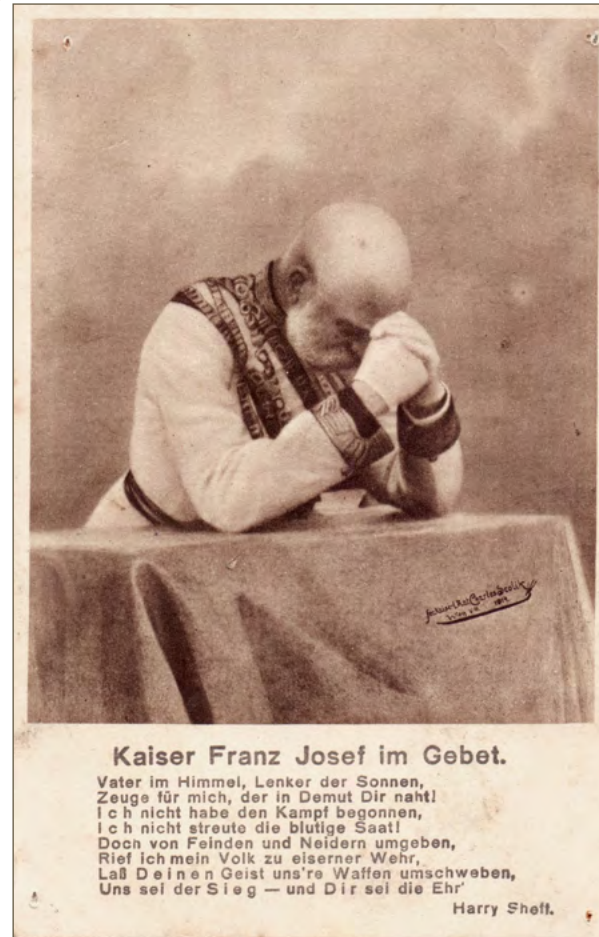
(Regional museum Goriški muzej, Nova Gorica)



## Images of the Imperial Family as a Means of Propaganda

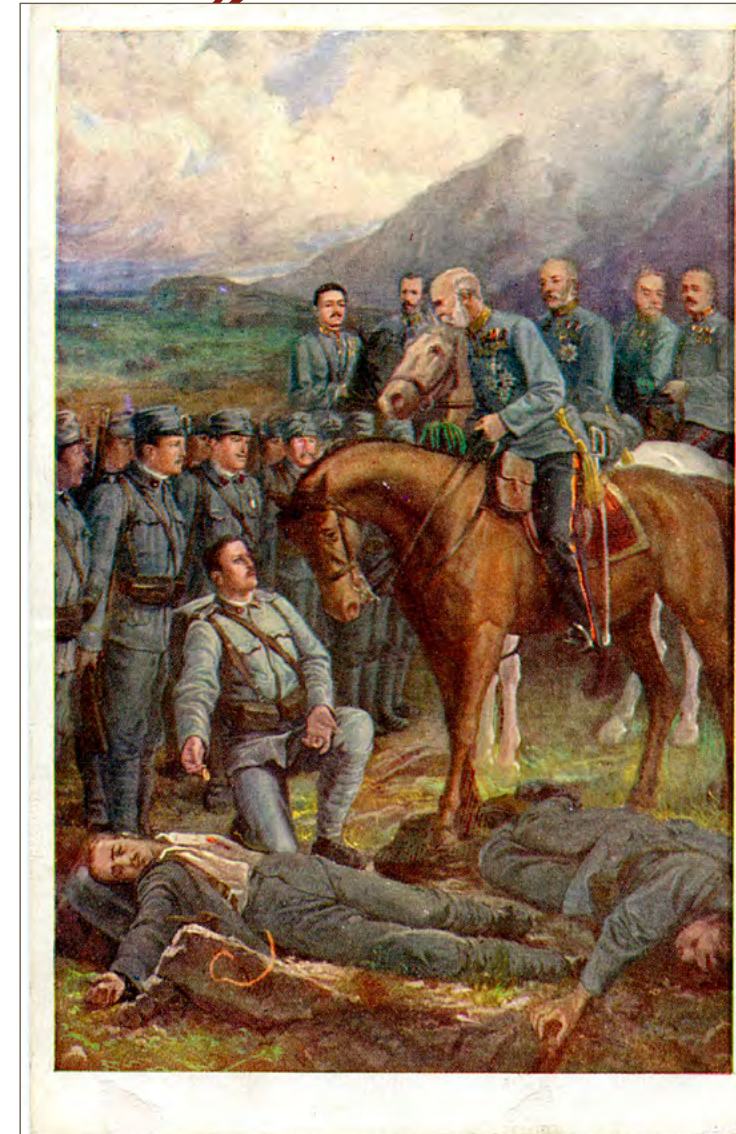
Depictions of famous personalities and their (genuine or imaginary) deeds can represent an extremely efficient means of propaganda. In the Austro-Hungarian territory, portraits of the most renowned military commanders (e.g. Svetozar Borojević von Bojna) as well as the depictions of the various members of the Royal Dynasty, especially that of Emperor Franz Joseph I, were used as war propaganda. The imperial visual propaganda, which kept developing throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, communicated an image of a calm ruler, a fatherly figure for his subjects, and a guarantor of stability in the Empire. The depictions of “the last ruler of the old school” (as Franz Joseph I described himself during a discussion with the American President Theodore Roosevelt) mostly triggered positive emotions in the population – also due to the many tragedies that affected the Emperor in the course of his long life (the execution of his brother Ferdinand Maximilian, suicide of his son Rudolf, murder of his wife Elisabeth, and finally also the assassination of his nephew Franz Ferdinand).

*I did not start the fight  
Or spread the seeds of blood!* (Harry Shett)



} Emperor Franz Joseph I praying  
for the victory of his soldiers.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana,  
Unit in Škofja Loka, Škofja Loka)



} The depiction of Franz Joseph visiting  
the wounded soldiers at the front is  
based on the long tradition of similar  
artworks. One of its direct models  
was the painting of Napoleon visiting  
the plague-stricken in Jaffa, painted  
by Antoine-Jean Gros in 1804. The  
message is clear: the Emperor cares  
about his Army. He is not only a wise  
commander but also possesses a  
strong sympathy for his fellow man  
– soldier.

(Regional museum Goriški muzej,  
Nova Gorica)



## Images of the Imperial Family as a Means of Propaganda

During World War I, various images of the Emperor were circulated in the form of photographs, postcards, and other printed materials. Apart from the Emperor's portraits (where he is most often wearing a blue hussar uniform), scenes directly related to war were also frequent (the Emperor praying for the victory of his soldiers, his visits of the wounded in the battlefield), as were his depictions together with his loyal ally, the German Emperor Wilhelm II – most often with Franz Joseph's added personal motto *Viribus Unitis* (Strength in Unity), which gained an entirely new significance in the context of World War I and the alliance with Germany. The portraits of the Emperor in the company of the new crown prince Karl and his son Otto, which were intended to prepare the people for the time after the ruler's death, represented another group. Similar visual propaganda was also characteristic of Emperor Karl I, who assumed the leadership of the state in November 1916. At this time, in the Slovenian territory, Karl's visit to the Goriška region, destroyed during the war, was mostly used for propaganda purposes.

Franci Lazarini

*I did not start the fight  
Or spread the seeds of blood!*

(Harry Shett)



} Emphasising the alliance with Germany, which would supposedly ensure the final victory, represented an important element of war propaganda. Double portraits of the rulers of both empires were particularly frequent. One of the most original examples was the painting depicting the German Emperor Wilhelm II reaching for his sword to stop the enemy hand from snatching the crown of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and the Austrian Imperial Crown.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Škofja Loka, Škofja Loka)



## Images of the Imperial Family as a Means of Propaganda

*I did not start the fight  
Or spread the seeds of blood!*  
(Harry Shett)



} Franz Joseph's death on 21 November 1916 was one of the pivotal events of World War I. It is therefore not surprising that the photographs from his funeral were used for propaganda purposes as well. One of them depicts the new Emperor Karl I with Empress Zita and their four-year-old son Otto. The curly fair-haired boy would often appear in the depictions of the Imperial Family ever since the beginning of World War I.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Škofja Loka, Škofja Loka)



} In 1918, Emperor Karl I and Empress Zita visited the western part of today's Slovenia to inspect the consequences of the Isonzo Front. The photos of the imperial couple's visit represent a continuation of Franz Joseph's imperial propaganda while also reminding us of the great hopes that the population invested in the new ruler.

(M. Škrabec, *Slovenstvo na razglednicah*, Ljubljana 2009)



## The Idyllic Slovenian Landscape

*Sunny mountains, my paradise,  
I am also to depart.*

(Simon Gregorčič)

The idolised national landscape, depicted in line with the modern painting principles, was among the most frequent (as well as most abused, from the viewpoint of the casualties) motifs of the Slovenian war propaganda. It was effective due to the national awareness that had been evolving as of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and resulted in the development of the landscape as a modern motif, which asserted itself in the Slovenian art as late as a decade before the onset of World War I. The Slovenian national fine arts had been developing ever since the emergence of the architect Ivan Jager's national style and the first Slovenian exhibition in 1900. In 1904, Ivan Cankar recognised the Slovenian "mood" in Grohar's painting *Pomlad* (Spring) and associated it with national rebirth, while Slovenian books introduced the illustrations by the so-called *Vesnani* – a group of Slovenian artists – in Vienna. In 1909, Rihard Jakopič established the first gallery in Ljubljana's Tivoli park, focused on impressionist landscapes. The conditions were thus created that enabled the efficacy of the propaganda message of the landscape as a national symbol, as its form and content corresponded to the expectations and values of the Slovenian public as well as the environment in which it was used.



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In the Slovenian visual propaganda materials, the human figure only rarely appears in neutral spaces or in front of an empty background. The backdrop is usually defined, almost personified with soft hills, dotted with little white churches and snowy mountain peaks, while the foreground features depictions of small chapels or crucifixes signifying strong faith, cultivated fields, and modest yet tidy homesteads.

(Regional museum Goriški muzej, Nova Gorica)



## The Idyllic Slovenian Landscape

*Sunny mountains, my paradise,  
I am also to depart.*

(Simon Gregorčič)

Despite the contradiction between the message of the idyllic native landscapes and the purposes of war propaganda – which, ultimately, supported the unimaginable slaughter in the battlefields and unprecedented utter devastation of the landscape, caused by humankind – some of these images, for example Gaspari's postcards, would never lose their authenticity in terms of national awakening. In a way, landscapes replaced the pictures of national leaders and their authority, prohibited in the Slovenian context because of the censorship. Although we cannot deny the popular folklorism that the theoreticians headed by Alois Riegel criticised and later associated with the so-called *Heimatkunst* imagery, the development of these motifs cannot be understood without the simultaneous flourishing of Slovenian literature and beginnings of the modern humanities.

Vesna Krmelj



} By resorting to landscape motifs, artists could avoid the state propaganda, as the imagery still fulfilled the requirements of the war propaganda office. After Italy had entered the war, the Monarchy would, up to a point, allow national features for strategic reasons: on the one hand, to prevent any association with the Slovenian western neighbours; while, on the other hand, it thus strengthened the Slovenian perception that the struggle in their national territory was their war, which a Slovenian national poet had already foreseen and described.

(France Bevk Public Library Nova Gorica, Nova Gorica)



## The Idyllic Slovenian Landscape

*Sunny mountains, my paradise,  
I am also to depart.*

(Simon Gregorčič)



So to svetišča našega zidovi,  
kjer materinski blagoslovi  
kropili so nas v solnčnih dneh,  
so bili naša moč v skrbeh?  
Prisveti skoraj, sprave dan,  
Mariji dom pozidamo krasan.



(Dom in svet, 29/3-4, 1916)

} The propaganda message of the destroyed Franciscan monastery should also be understood in the context of the activities of friar Stanislav Škrabec, who lived and worked in the Kostanjevica pri Gorici monastery between 1873 and the 1915 attack. From the viewpoint of the national propaganda, the brutally destroyed monk's cell of the Slovenian linguist who strived to ensure the independence of the Slovenian language had a much stronger effect on the Slovenian intelligentsia than, for example, the destruction of the frescoes painted by Giulio Quaglio, an artist of Italian descent, in Gorizia.

(France Bevk Public Library Nova Gorica, Nova Gorica)



## The Power of Faith, Charity, and Education

*My dear wife, take care of our child  
When I do not return.*

(Slovenian folk song)

Vavpotič started working on his painting *Kranjski Janez* (Carniolan John) already during the battles at the Isonzo Front, where he was sent as an official painter of the War Press Office (Kriegspressequartier). This is evident from the sketch dated 1916, which depicts a similar motif of a crucified soldier and two bound figures that probably supplement the scene of the biblical crucifixion.

The crucified soldier motif may be based on more concrete events than previously believed. At the beginning of 1915, Oton Župančič published the poem *Otroci molijo* (Children Praying) in the *Ljubljanski zvon* literary magazine, which was allegedly the first wartime public statement of this poet. The poem condemns war, questions religion, and expresses doubt in God's assistance. In August 1916, Gorizia fell. In view of the figure at the forefront of the sketch, which could represent a statue of a saint, and the background that reminds us of ruins, the motif might have been a response to these events.



Ivan Vavpotič: *Kranjski Janez*, private collection



## The Power of Faith, Charity, and Education

*My dear wife, take care of our child  
When I do not return.*

(Slovenian folk song)

Depictions of children for the purposes of war propaganda were widespread. Children in military uniforms and brandishing weapons were frequent, especially in the German, Russian, and Italian propaganda. Except for a few Gaspari's attempts in this direction, dating back to 1916 (*Gospod poročnik javljam pokorno, da gremo na vojno!* – Sir Lieutenant, I Humbly Report that We Are Going To War!), which depicts children accompanying and mimicking the adults, militarisation among children was not appropriate for propaganda among the Slovenian people. They could much more easily relate to the motifs of abandoned mothers with children or mothers with cribs, depicted in many versions.



(Ljubljanski zvon, 35, 1915)



Ivan Vavpotič: Kranjski Janez, private collection



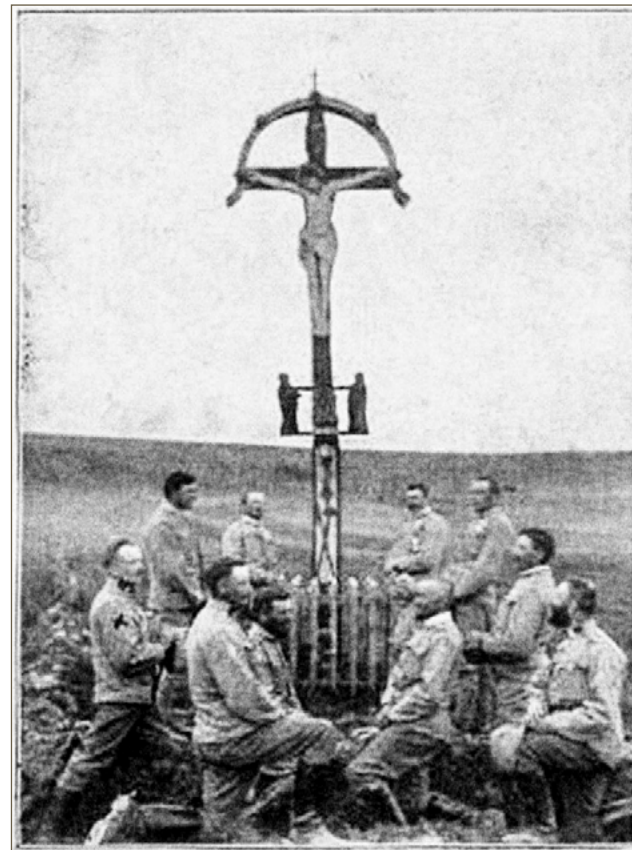
## The Power of Faith, Charity, and Education

*My dear wife, take care of our child  
When I do not return.*

(Slovenian folk song)

Crosses represented one of the most commonplace visual realities of World War I. They were not only present in the provisional prayer rooms, where soldiers could find some solace from the fighting, but instead dotted the crossroads and graves by the paths as well as the graveyards, which the state paid particular attention to, managed, and planned already during the war.

In the European history and even nowadays, the crucified soldier motif represents one of the most controversial propaganda images of World War I, also because of the diplomatic dispute regarding the case of the Canadian sergeant who was supposedly nailed to a barn door in the vicinity of Ypres in Belgium, during one of the worst European battles on the Western Front. Already during the war as well as after it, the event, which allegedly took place around 24 April 1915, was depicted by several artists and appeared in a propaganda film. Comparable scenes from Serbia (where victims were hanged in a similar manner) were probably also accessible to Oton Župančič in Carniola already in 1915.



(*Ilustrirani glasnik*, 1/43, 24. 6. 1915)



Andrej Furlan: from the series *Kraj spomina*, 2017, collection of the author





## The Power of Faith, Charity, and Education

*My dear wife, take care of our child  
When I do not return.*

(Slovenian folk song)

The crucified Canadian soldier was depicted in 1918 by the British artist Francis Derwent Wood. The work immediately became the subject of a heated debate, as the sculpture was exhibited for the first time at the exhibition in Burlington House in London in 1919, during the peace conference in Versailles. Supposedly, the sculpture represented a peacetime continuation of the propaganda war. It was therefore removed from the exhibition and was not exhibited again until as late as in 1989 in the Canadian War Museum.

Vesna Krmelj



Francis Derwent Wood: Canadian Golgota, 1918  
(© Canadian War Museum, Ottawa)



Fernando Amorsolo: Liberty Bond, a war bonds poster, 1917.

([https://www.reddit.com/r/propagandamedia/comments/f006bj/your\\_liberty\\_bond\\_will\\_help\\_stop\\_this\\_us/](https://www.reddit.com/r/propagandamedia/comments/f006bj/your_liberty_bond_will_help_stop_this_us/))



George Grosz: Maul halten und weiter dienen (Shut Up and Keep On Soldiering), Hintergrund map 1928. The depiction is no longer merely symbolic: it criticises the role of the Church in World War I.

([file:///C:/Users/hp/Desktop/Fotografije%20vojna%20in%20umetnost/SI\\_11\\_Georg%20Grosz%20list%20Maul%20ten%20und%20weiter%20dienen.webp](file:///C:/Users/hp/Desktop/Fotografije%20vojna%20in%20umetnost/SI_11_Georg%20Grosz%20list%20Maul%20ten%20und%20weiter%20dienen.webp))



## Declaration Movement

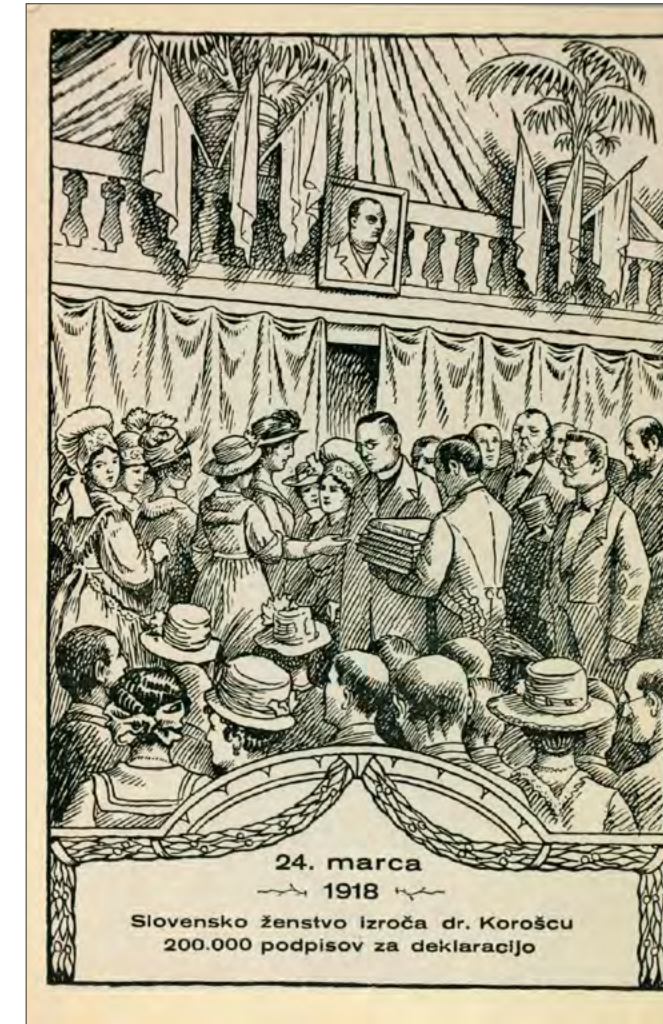
*Yugoslavia is coming  
Now before you, our illustrious Emperor*  
(Simon Gregorčič)

On 30 May 1917, Dr Anton Korošec read the *May Declaration* in the Vienna Parliament in the name of the Yugoslav Club, arguing for the unification of all territories inhabited by Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs into an independent state under the Habsburg rule. Dr Janez Evangelist Krek played a crucial role in the formation of the new regime in the Monarchy that would include a South Slavic state unit.

Petra Svoljšak



Dr. Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917)  
(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Ljubljana, Ljubljana)



In Carniola, Styria, the Littoral Region, and even in emigration, the movement supporting the Declaration was organised. On 15 December 1917, Franja Tavčar and Cilka Krek promoted the action *Slovenian Women and Girls for the May Declaration*, ensuring the active involvement of Slovenian women in the political movement that strived for South Slavic unification. They collected more than 300,000 signatures and solemnly submitted 200,000 of them to Dr Korošec in the Unionska dvorana hall in Ljubljana on 24 March 1918. On 29 October 1918, the independent State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs was established.

(Historical Archives Ljubljana, Unit in Ljubljana, Ljubljana)



## Declaration Movement

*Yugoslavia is coming  
Now before you, our illustrious Emperor*  
(Simon Gregorčič)



A series of eight Declaration postcards was published in support of the Declaration Movement. They were a part of the patriotic propaganda series *War in Pictures*, starting with the serial number 138. The Declaration postcards, produced by Maksim Gaspari, were also printed by the Katoliška tiskarna printing house and published in the *Ilustrirani glasnik* newspaper. The motifs were national and expressed Slavic reciprocity.

(National Museum of Contemporary History, Ljubljana)



## A Reflection of Images

*This is the time of many realisations, but two things are obvious: the old yet still valid truth that art in the service of political, nationalist, or any other current circumstances has undoubtedly taken the wrong path.*

(Izidor Cankar)

During World War I, the media production technology started creating parallel worlds consisting of virtual images without any realistic bases in the real world. For the first time, we can talk about media warfare, which influenced the development of the contemporary media from painting and photography to film, just like these activities and the propaganda efforts influenced the very course of the war. Artists would mostly base their paintings on photographs. However, they would usually not depict what they saw, but rather what they had come to know from art history: i.e., the proven iconographic formulas and formal solutions that ensured the desired effect and communicated visual messages as swiftly as possible. The form of picture books with merely the most essential captions accompanying the images that took over the narration was invented for information as well as propaganda purposes.



Naši vojaki v kmetijski kuhinji v Benečiji sredi žensk in otrok, ki so ostali doma.

} Slovenian soldiers in the peasant kitchen in the Veneto region among women and children who remained at home. During World War I, photomontages and collages as cubist forms of artistic expression became popular among the Dadaists and as a means of war propaganda.

(Tedenske slike, 5/16, 17. 4. 1918)

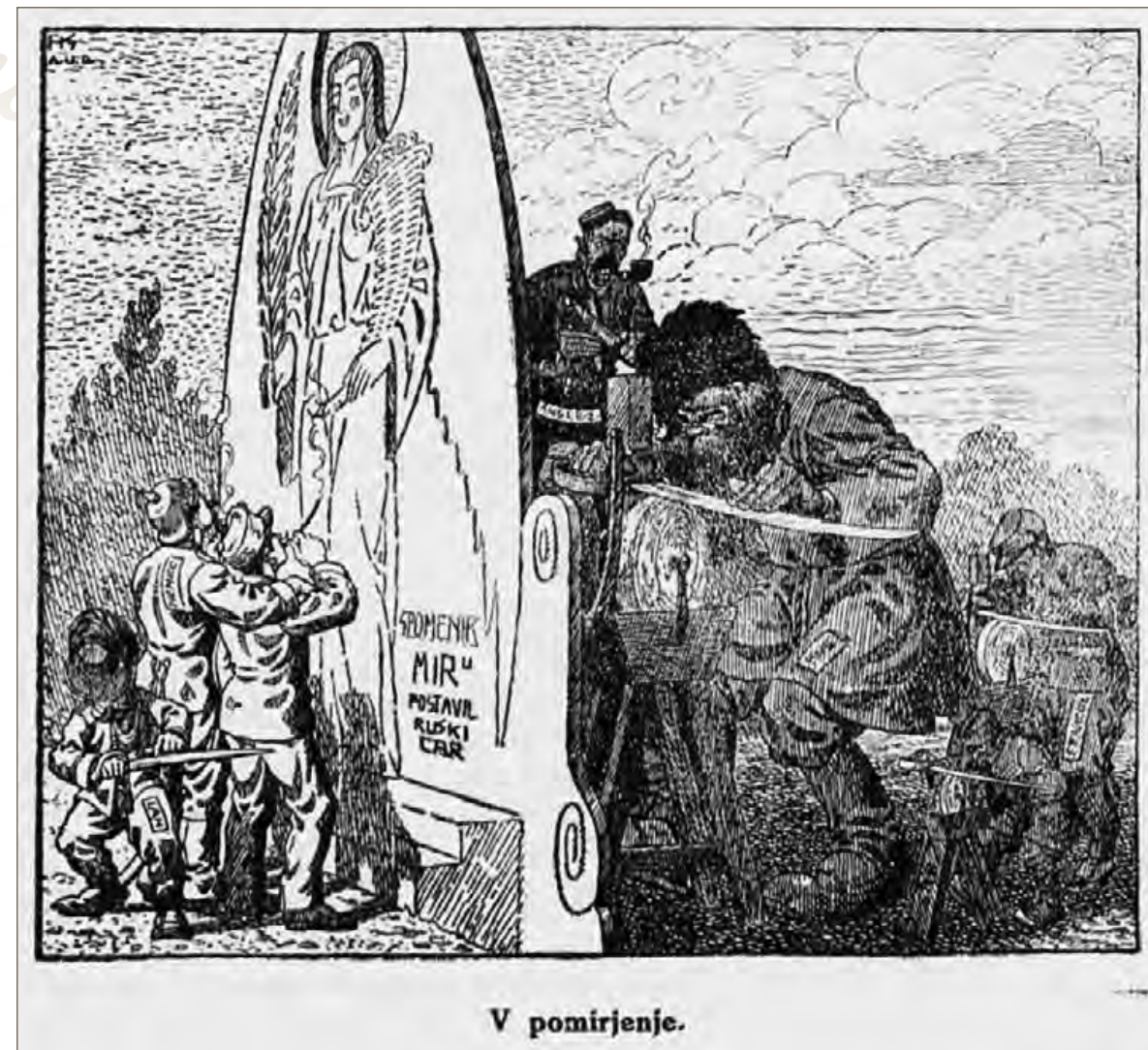


## A Reflection of Images

Already during the war, the relevant countries considered historiography as well as the memorialisation of wartime events, presentation of materiel from uniforms to weapons, and visual materials from portraits to films, which would preserve the memory of the momentous events for posterity. The idea of the “history written by the victors” represented an important part of the propaganda. At the same time, all chronicles and documentation, produced by the state services, were subject to supervision and censorship. At the end of 1915, the Central for Homeland Security for Carniola and the Provincial Association for Foreign Tourism started preparing an exhibition in line with the Monarchy’s model and the German exhibitions, aimed at preserving the memory of the fighting at the Isonzo Front and, after the expected victory, attracting tourists to the areas where the battles had raged. For the purposes of the exhibition, museums were planned in Ljubljana, Bled, and Bohinjska Bistrica. Apart from weapons, uniforms, documentary materials, letters, and photographs, war paintings and sculpture portraits that would be created by the painter Ivan Vavpotič (who had already started working on his contribution), Matej Sternen, and the Viennese sculptor Carl Anselm Zinsler, author of the relief *Menschen am Tor zu einem Ort ohne Wiederkehr* (People at the Gate for a Place of No Return) in the Vienna Central Cemetery, were to be exhibited.

Vesna Krmelj

*This is the time of many realisations,  
but two things are obvious: the old yet  
still valid truth that art in the service  
any other  
undoubtedly*



} Hinko Smrekar’s caricature *V pomirjenje* (In Appeasement) depicts a German, an Austrian, and a somewhat indecisive Italian standing in front of a monument to peace, while Russia, England, France, and little Serbia are sharpening their swords in the background.

(*Svetovna vojska*, 1/2, 1914)





*This is the time of many realisations, but two things are obvious: the old yet still valid truth that art in the service of political, nationalist, or any other*

# LISTEK.

**Pogled iz škatljice.**

Novelist, nečimerneč, posuj si  
tame s pepelom!

Z zlagano boleščjo, ki ti je slast, brskaš po svojih spominih in spominčkih. Ob ženski, ki si jo goljufal, se razjokaš; ne zaradi nje, temveč zaradi svojega genliverga kesanja. — Mladost — »oj, kam si šla?« — zalivaš s solzami, da bi ne usahnila; bilo bi je škoda. V škatljici živiš in v škatljico gledaš. Udari ti žila za pestjo — »smrt, tovarišica bela, stojiš mi ob rami!« Sam in edini si v škatljici, toliko da ima ogledalo še prostora.

Odpahni pokrov, ozri se s strahopetnimi očmi!

Tam je veseljnost, kakor jo moreš videti in objeti s tem očesom človeškim. Buljiš, trepcčeš od osuplosti in groze.

Narodi gredo svojo silno pot. Tako mogočna je senca, ki gre pred njimi, da zastira samo nebeško solnce. Že razločiš obraze, čuješ glasove. Kdo je bil izklesal te obraze? Ne Bog! Bledi so do ustnic, oči strmé in

silijo iz jam, na voščenenem čelu so krvave kaplje. Upognjeni so, pleča kipe, pesti se stiskajo v krič, prsa hropé. Odkod ta glas? Ne božji ni, ne človeški, živalski je. Ni v njem sovražstva, ne srda, še bridkosti ne — brezbesedno, iz globočine zemlje izruvano tulenje po krvi. —

Zapri pokrov! Mir je v škatljici; toliko da ga narahlo razziblje prijetna bolečnica, drobno veselje.

Jezero počiva pod vročim opoldanskim solncem, zablešči se komaj srebrna luskina. V drevoredu je senca, nepremična in tiha; široko vejeve se ne gane.

Ona hodi naglo, z drobnimi, lahki koraki, toliko da se dotika tal. Gleda naravnost prědse, na peščeno pot, sklonjena je pod težo kostanjevih las.

»Nekoč sem mislila — takrat sem bila še mlada v svojih mislih —, da so umetniki boljši ljudje od drugih, da so najboljši na svetu. Vidi v dušo vsem, pozna jih od rojstva do smrti, sovraži in ljubi z njimi, joka se z njimi in smeje; bolj široke so njegove oči, bolj globoko je njegovo srce; spoznanje ga izčisti in poviša. In vse to ni res! Umetnik je v svojem nehanju nizkotnejši od najbolj zapitega konjskega hlapca. Spozna-

nje, kolikor ga je bil zadobil, ga je potrdilo in izmojstrilo v hinavščini. Lagati zna, zato ker vé, kedaj da je laž verjetna, koristna in lepa. Zna se pretvarjati, zato ker vé, kakšno lice da je najprijetnejše ob taki uri in ob takem vremenu. In trpljenje bližnjega mu je vsakdanji krun ... »

»Ti sinjeoki otrok moj —«

»Trpljenje bližnjega mu je vsakdanji kruh, mu je staza, ki ga napaja z vinom in ovenča z gloriijo. Jaz sem ta sinjeoki otrok tvoj. Pa vendar veš, da si me še snoči goljufal... in da bi me konjski hlapec poklical po imenu, kar ne s tako végasto in priskutno besedo.«

Stopil je korak naprej, naglo in trdo, s sključenim irbtom. Oledala je nanj, obrvi strnjene, ustna stisnjena. Okrenil se je sunkoma, zamahnil je.

»Saj je vse res!«

»Vedela sem, da je res!«

»Res je! Snoči sem te goljufal in te bom še! Praviš, da je umetnik nizkotnejši od najbolj zapitega konjskega hlapca. Seveda je! Kolikor več vode lije v vodnjak, toliko bolj je poln. Rajša bi me bila postavila poleg osa; ni prav nič nizkoten, raste na kamnu.«

»Najhujše je, da umetnik ne pozna usmiljenja, razen do sebe!«

Sladko mu je zaključalo v srcu.  
»Če govori o usmiljenju...«

Pogledal jo je od blizu s svojimi rjavimi očmi, kalnimi od solz. Ustna so mu za hip vztrepetala.

»Saj ni to... ni take...«

Beseda se mu je zatikala, glas mu je bil zamolkel in hripav.  
»Ali če ukažeš, pa bodi tako! Nič takih besed, ki bi švrkale po licu in po srcu. Roko mi daj, saj si me časih rada imela...«

Ozrl se je nagio v stran, trepetajoča njegova desnica je iskala strahoma njene roke.

Ona se je naslonila na kamenito steno, na tisto, ki stoji visoko kraj jezera in na kateri je podoba Matere božje. Skrila je obraz ter zajokala, da se je tresel gibki život.

Tenek nasmeh, kakor od srebrne luske z jezera poslan, mu je vzdignil zgornjo ustnico. Stopil je k nji, razstrl ji mokre roke ter jo poljubil, toplo in dolgo. —

Odpahni pokrov, novelist! Ozri se z očmi, kalnimi od nesramnih solz, zastrmi z ustnicami, razpokanimi od prešestnih poljubov!

Kdo je še tam, kaj je tam, kjer  
so stali nekoč narodi tega sveta? —

Kaj se je godilo, ko si spal svoje nečimerno spanje, zaklenjen v škatljico? Prilezi, poglej, artist, ki ti je bilo zoperno življenje, zato ker nisi živel!

Ti nisi mogel živeti enega samega življenja, si objokaval rahel udarec, ki je bil utripljaju življenja podoben, si v nizkotni zavisti pljuval na resnično in lepo življenje drugih — glej tam, tisočkrat tisočero jih leži poteptanih! Velikih življenj, ki so s silnimi rokami segala do nebes; tihih življenj, ki so s šepetanjem svojega srca segala do Boga. Na tleh! Pod konjskimi kopiti! Pod železnimi kolesi! Tako gredo narodi svojo pot.

Še malo poglej, še malo pomisli!  
Ni treba še, artist, da bi se zaklenil  
v svojo škatljico!

Premisli: odkod je bilo, čemu je bilo? Če niso tvoje oči že čisto lene in kalne zaradi ogledala, premisli: kod in kam in kako zoper to vesoljno krivico, zoper to vesoljno smrt?

Kadar opraviš to preišljevanje, razbij ogledalo, zakleni škatljico enkrat za vselej, da ne segnišeš v nji.

Če si preslab v teh časih strahote, moči in boja, se zakleni ter segnij; nič te ne bo škoda. —

**Ivan Cankar.**

Next to the declaration regarding the general mobilisation, the first page of the *Slovenski narod* newspaper included Ivan Cankar's article *Pogled iz škatlice* (A Glance from a Small Box). In it, Cankar, in anticipation of wartime horrors, criticised novelists harshly, questioned himself, and outright demanded that artists should speak up against the killing and step out of their boxes. Apparently, the censorship either overlooked the point of Cankar's article or misinterpreted it, blinded by the coming events.

(*Slovenski narod*, 67/176, 1. 8. 1914)



## A Reflection of Images

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still valid truth that art in the service  
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instances has undoubtedly  
one path.*



} One of the leading Italian writers Gabriele D'Annunzio supported the Italian military intervention. By signing the London Memorandum, Italy entered the war, thus directly threatening Slovenians. As early as on 24 May 1915, the central Slovenian newspapers published the news on the signing of the Treaty of London and its contents, including the Italian demands. In July of the same year, Ivan Cankar, in his article *D'Annunzio*, unmasked the poet who had sold out and accepted the role of an instigator of war in return for the repayment of his debts.

(*Ilustrirani glasnik*, 1/43, 24. 6. 1915)

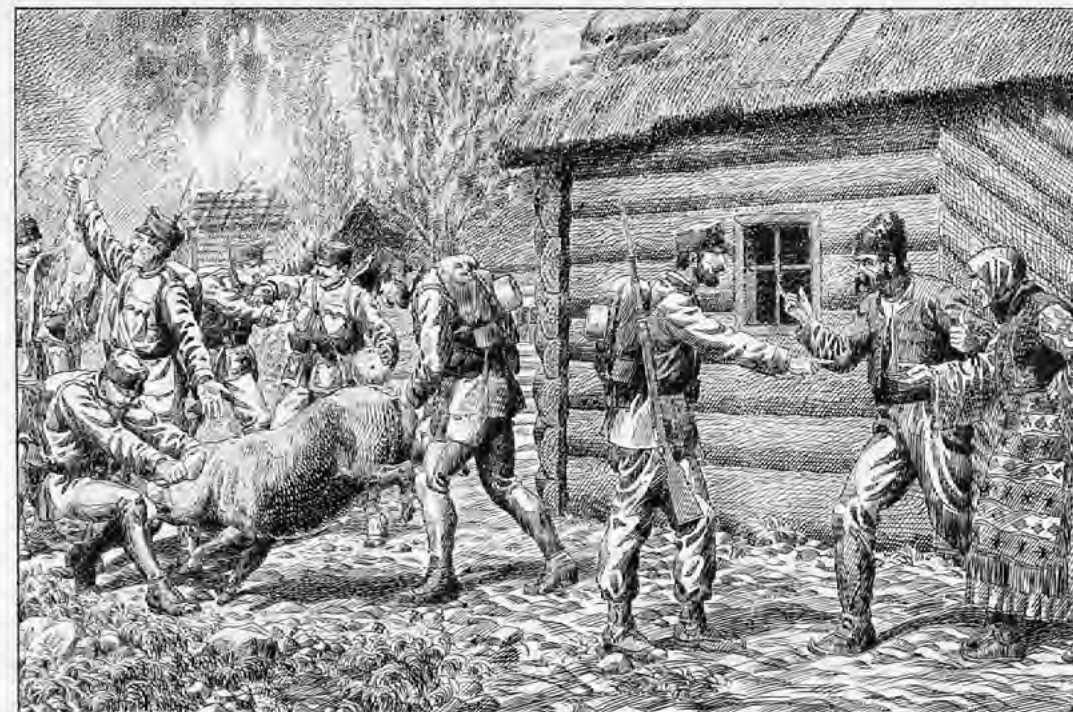


## A Reflection of Images

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Srbski četasi in njih žene so napadli zahrbtno naše mirno prodirajoče vojake.



Prepir naših vojakov s srbskim kmetom, ki je hotel imeti dvakrat plačano kupaino.

The active struggle with the issue of propaganda is apparent from the works of the painter Hinko Smrekar, who made a living by publishing illustrations and caricatures in the propaganda press, even though he was a resolute opponent of Austria. The illustrations he drew for the *Svetovna vojska* publication between 1914 and 1915 when he was drafted clearly attest to this fact.

(*Svetovna vojska*, 2/10, 1915)



# War and the Power of Image

Visual Propaganda and Censorship in Slovenia during World War I



## about the exhibition

Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

France Stele Institute of Art History • Milko Kos Historical Institute

University of Maribor, Faculty of Arts, Department of Art History

Concept of exhibition: Barbara Vodopivec, Franci Lazarini

Authors: Vesna Krmelj, Franci Lazarini, Petra Svoljšak, Barbara Vodopivec

Language editing: Tjaša Plut

English translation: Borut Praper

Design and layout: Andrej Furlan

Ljubljana, 2020

The exhibition was conducted as a part of the research programme *Slovenian Artistic Identity in European Context* (P6-0061), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency, and as part of the research project *Visual Arts between Censorship and Propaganda from the Middle Ages to the End of World War I* (L7-8282) funded by the Slovenian Research Agency and Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.



## about the project

This interdisciplinary applicative project focused on less researched fields of propaganda and censorship in art from the Middle Ages to the end of World War I, i.e., a time when the territory of Slovenia was part of the Habsburg monarchy. The main research question that we posed is how propaganda and censorship influenced art in the Habsburg Empire and its reception. The question was studied from two points of view; from the point of view of the capital (Vienna, as well as Graz in the Early Modern Period), and the Habsburg provinces (Carniola and Styria).

The scientific basis of the project presents the fact that throughout history, art and politics (as well as ideology) were closely connected through censorship and propaganda. Visual means enable an influence on the largest segment of the population and a relation to the other, which is why the task of the proposed project was to analyse the art of the Habsburg monarchy from two points of view, which are, on a Central European scale, relatively poorly researched; they represent a great desiderate especially for the Slovenian area. [\(More ...\)](#)