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Jeglič, Anton

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Jeglič, *Anton* Bonaventura
Bishop of Ljubljana
Born 29 May 1850 in Begunje, Austrian Empire (today Slovenia)
Died 02 July 1937 in Stična, Yugoslavia (today Slovenia)

Bishop Jeglič was one of the most prominent Slovenian Church figures in the era leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. His political actions during the war decisively shaped the people's perspective on the Habsburg Monarchy and had an enduring impact on the Slovenian political and cultural landscape in the newly founded Yugoslav state.

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1. Early Career and Years in Sarajevo

Anton Bonaventura Jeglič's (1850-1937) education began in Ljubljana in 1859. In the autumn of 1861 he enrolled at a grammar school in Ljubljana and concluded it with distinction in 1869. He entered seminary in Ljubljana (1869-1873) and became a priest in 1873. Jeglič received his doctorate in theology from the Augustineum in Vienna in 1876. He first worked as a curate in a women's prison in Begunje, where he stayed until 1877. For academic purposes he then spent a year travelling abroad

to universities in Munich, Freiburg, Cologne, Tübingen, Würzburg, and Rome. In May 1878 he became a deputy principal at the seminary in Ljubljana and professor of church history and canon law; from 1 October 1881 he was also professor of dogmatic theology.

Jeglič was nominated as a canon in Sarajevo (1882-1898), where he acted as the administrator of the cathedral parish (1883) and as the archbishop's general vicar (1890). In 1896 Jeglič became apostolic pronotary and was ordained bishop of Sunj in 1897. He was a devoted confessor and advocate of missionary work in East Bosnia; he published numerous theological articles in periodicals *Srce Isusovo* (*The Heart of Jesus*) (1882-1884), *Balkan* (*The Balkans*), in which he advocated the advancement of the unification of the two Churches (1896-1898), and *Vrhbosna*. The *Archiv für Katholisches Kirchenrecht* published his view on *Die Pfarrfrage in Bosnien* in 1883; Jeglič was also worked as a firm supporter of Catholic rallies and wrote extensive reports on them.

2. Prince-Bishop of Ljubljana

On 11 February 1898, [Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria \(1830-1916\)](#) nominated Jeglič as a prince-bishop of Ljubljana; on 24 March 1898, [Pope Leo XIII \(1810-1903\)](#) confirmed the nomination, and on 20 May 1898, Jeglič was solemnly inaugurated in the Ljubljana cathedral. As prince-bishop, Jeglič invested his arduous energy in the (re)organisation of the life and work of the clergy and the faithful; he was the leading patron of Slovenian education (due to his initiative, the first grammar school with Slovenian as the language of instruction was established in Ljubljana), defender of Slovenian national rights and organiser of diocesan synods (1903, 1904, 1908). Because of the outbreak of the First World War, the fourth synod planned for 1914 was cancelled, but in its stead Jeglič published *Instructio Pastoralis Labacensis* (1915). The prince-bishop also eagerly promoted Marian devotions, St Mary's Societies and missions. In 1904 Jeglič introduced the perpetual adoration of Corpus Christi in his diocese and regularly published pastoral letters on burning moral and social issues. He was likewise at the forefront of the Catholic rallies (1900, 1906, 1918, 1923), Catholic sports club Orel, Catholic social union and various educational societies.

3. From Pro-Austria to Pro-Yugoslavia

Between 1905 and 1907, Jeglič acted in defence of [Janez E. Krek \(1865-1917\)](#)'s disputes with the Carniolan *Landespräsident* over the question of franchise. At the outbreak of the First World War, Jeglič loyally stood up in defence of the Catholic Habsburg Crown and argued for the justness of the Austrian cause. In view of increasing national anxieties aggravated by Italy's entry into the war and its territorial claims in the London Treaty (1915), combined with the Austrian government's Germanizing pressures, Jeglič relented on his previously uncompromising pro-Austrian stance. Upon the reconvention of the Viennese *Reichsrat* on 30 May 1917, Jeglič embraced the May Declaration proclaimed in Parliament by [Anton Korošec \(1872-1940\)](#) on behalf of the Yugoslav Club. The declaration demanded the unification of all Slovenians, Croats and Serbs into an autonomous, democratic state under the Habsburgs, free of foreign rule, founded on Croatian historic law and

possessing the right of national self-determination. The declaration was repudiated by the union of German parties in the *Reichsrat*, who insisted that the “entire body” of Austrian Germans would reject the constitutional reform of the monarchy.^[1] Jeglič accepted the idea of unification with “schismatic” Serbs in the monarchy, since he saw Germanization as a much greater threat to the national existence.

On 15 September 1917, Jeglič encouraged the presidents of all major parties in Carniola to sign the sympathetic “Ljubljana Statement”. It praised the peace initiatives coming from [Pope Benedict XV \(1854-1922\)](#) and [Charles I, Emperor of Austria \(1887-1922\)](#), thereby ensuring that the Viennese government would not view the document as “treacherous”.^[2] The statement gave an impetus to the Declaration movement, although Vienna refused to see Slovenians as part of the South Slavic question. In parallel to this ran an important cleavage within the Slovenian People’s Party: while [Ivan Šušteršič \(1863-1925\)](#) aimed to resolve the national question in a manner that would not require the dissolution of the dualist essence of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Krek’s circle believed in the elimination of the dualist state and the unification of Slovenians and Southern Slavs in an independent [Yugoslavia](#). Jeglič decidedly backed Krek’s perspective and described the Declaration as an act of “national self-defence”; the radical shift towards the idea of an independent Yugoslav state only occurred when it became clear that the Austrian government would not meet Slovenian national demands.

4. Later Years

In the newly emerged Yugoslavia (1918) Jeglič retained his moral and political authority within the Catholic Slovenian People’s Party (*Slovenska ljudska stranka*). He was, however, a strong opponent to the Slovenian liberal politics, communism and unitarist concepts in Yugoslavia.

Jeglič retired in 1930 and as the nominal archbishop of Garella (today Turkey) retreated to Gornji Grad; two years later he moved to the Cistercian monastery in Stična, where he died in 1937.

Through his work, Jeglič left a prominent mark on the [Church](#) and the political landscape of 19th and 20th century Slovenian history. His theological, pastoral and political outlooks, which ultimately argued for the Yugoslav state, were decisively shaped by the contemporary milieu and continued to sustain the Church’s response(s) to new challenges posed by the era that followed the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire.

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Notes

1. † Jeglič, Anton Bonaventura: Dnevnik [Diaries], 11 August 1918, Archdiocesan Archives Ljubljana
2. † Živojinović, Dragoljub: Vatikan, Srbija i stvaranje jugoslovenske države 1914-1920 [The Vatican, Serbia and the Creation of the Yugoslav State, 1914-1920], Belgrade 1980, p. 206.

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