

SLOVENIA AS AN OUTPOST OF THE THIRD REICH

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1952

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College  
of the Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
May, 1969

SEP 29 1969

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## PREFACE

This study is concerned primarily with the Nazi occupation of Northern Yugoslavia during 1941 and 1942. Hitler's plan for converting Slovenia into a germanized frontier zone of the Third Reich is assessed in the light of Slovene history, most particularly since 1918. The evidence for the Nazi resettlement program designed to achieve Hitler's goal came from manuscript documents, which were written largely by the SS officers in charge of population manipulation.

I wish to express appreciation to members of my advisory committee from the Department of History at Oklahoma State University who gave helpful criticism in the preparation of the text. Professor Douglas Hale served as committee chairman and offered valuable advice concerning the study from its inception to its conclusion. Professor George Jewsbury imparted to its development his own keen understanding of Eastern Europe. To Professors John Sylvester and Charles Dollar, who read the study in its final form, I am also indebted.

In addition, I wish to thank my father, Dr. E. A. V. Horiak, for his insightful comments. Dr. Joseph Suhadolc of the Department of Foreign Languages at Northern Illinois University gave freely of his time in reviewing the text. For his kindness, I am most grateful, because he was in a position to evaluate critically much of what here is recorded.

My appreciation is also extended to the staff of the Oklahoma State University Library for aid in the procurement of source material.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. SLOVENIA BETWEEN THE WARS. . . . .	5
III. NAZI POLICY AND SLOVENIA: JANUARY, 1933 TO JULY, 1941. . . . .	25
IV. THE GERMANIZATION OF SLOVENIA. . . . .	45
V. A POSTSCRIPT ON THE NAZI PLAN FOR SLOVENIA . . . . .	75
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	80

LIST OF MAPS

Map	Page
I. Areas of Slovene Residence within the Habsburg Empire. . .	7
Taken from <u>Andrees Allgemeiner Handatlas</u> (Leipzig: Velhagen und Klasing, 1901).	
II. Slovenia within Yugoslavia, 1918-1941. . . . .	8
Taken from <u>Stielers Hand-Atlas</u> (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1930/31).	
III. The Partition of Slovenia, 1941. . . . .	42
Taken from map, "Süd <sup>u</sup> kärnten und Untersteier- mark," September 15, 1941. United States National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microcopy T-81, <u>Records of the National Socialist German Labor Party, NSDAP</u> , Roll 284, Frame 2407066. (Hereafter cited as T-81/284/2407066).	
IV. Slovenia as an Outpost of the Third Reich. . . . .	46
Taken from map, "K <sup>u</sup> ärnten, der südlichste Gau des Grossdeutschen Reiches," <u>Reichspropaganda- amt Kärnten</u> , no date, T-81/279/2400568.	
V. Settlement Area A. . . . .	64
Taken from map, "Entwurf zum Generalsiedlungs- plan der Grenzsiedlungszone der Untersteiermark," <u>SS-Ansiedlungsstab Südmark</u> , no date, T-81/284/ 2406981.	

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Slovenia has been characterized by A. E. Moodie, one of its chief geographers, as "a zone of strain." Spilling over from the northernmost reaches of the Balkan Peninsula into Central Europe, it is bounded roughly by the Soča (Isonzo), Drava (Drau, Drave) and Kupa rivers. This land is located at the juncture of the two greatest geological regions of Europe--the Alpine and Dinaric ranges. Here run passes of incalculable strategic value leading between the heart of the continent and the Adriatic Sea. Indeed, the Slovene domain has served as the crossroads of the Danubian and Mediterranean powers since ancient times.<sup>1</sup>

The Slovenes themselves bear the imprint of their residence in "a zone of strain." A branch of the South Slavs, they came into possession of their land in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. Experiencing only a short and problematic independent political history in the early Middle Ages, they succumbed to German domination for fully a thousand years. By the fourteenth century, the greatest part of Slovenia had fallen to the Habsburg power.

Situated at the borders of the Slavic and Germanic worlds, these mountain peasants and herdsmen were torn between the two cultures. They maintained their language, a linguistically distinct branch of South

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<sup>1</sup>A. E. Moodie, "Slovenia--A Zone of Strain," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. III (1943), pp. 66-68.

Slavic, but were profoundly influenced by German thought. Many of them were assimilated into "Germandom" throughout the centuries. In recent times, when nationalism became a dominant force in Europe, the Slovenes defied clear-cut classification. Were they Germans because of their integral and age-old association with German history, or were they Slavs because of their ethnic heritage?

When Hitler created the Third Reich for his master race, he decided to include a portion of Slovenia within its confines. He deemed that the German impact upon at least some of the Slovenes had not been significantly erased by their brief inclusion in Yugoslavia between the two world wars. Certain of these particular South Slavs were eligible for the supreme honor of becoming Germans, he believed. Slovenes who could not qualify for germanization were to be deported and replaced by Germanic people. After the invasion of Yugoslavia in April, 1941, Hitler ordered one of his lieutenants in Slovenia to "make this land German again for me."<sup>2</sup> When the reconstruction work was complete, the Slovenian outpost of the Third Reich was to form a living wall against the encroachments of the racially unsuitable hordes on the southeastern frontier.

The implementation of the Nazi dream for Slovenia failed and not simply because of the exigencies of the military situation after the defeat at Stalingrad in early 1943. The Nazis justified their territorial expansion into Slovenia on the basis of the age-old Slovene

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<sup>2</sup>"Machen Sie mir dieses Land wieder Deutsch." Quoted in Tone Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," in Petar Brajovich, Jovan Marjanovich and Franjo Tudman, eds., Les Systèmes d'Occupation en Yougoslavie, 1941-1945 (Belgrade: L'Institut pour l'Étude du Mouvement Ouvrier, 1963), pp. 50, 121-122.

attachment to the Habsburg Monarchy, which they considered a predecessor of the Third Reich. The Nazis chose to ignore the nature of that attachment, however. While the Habsburgs had ruled their domain with the assumption of German supremacy, they were not Pan-German. However begrudgingly, they tolerated national self-expression among their subject peoples. Rule by the Austrian German Habsburgs was, therefore, a substantially different matter from rule by Hitler. The Slovenes supported the concept of loyalty to the Emperor (Kaisertreue) as Slovenes, not as Germans. The supposed Nazi inheritance of Slovene lands was thus consummated under false pretenses.

The Nazis failed because they arrogantly underestimated the strength of Slovene nationalism, since the right of national self-expression for non-German societies would have contradicted the basic premise of the Third Reich. The evidence permits one to contend that the vast majority of Slovenes could not have been transformed into Germans at the behest of the Führer.

This study deals with Hitler's attempt to convert traditionally Slovene territory into an ethnically homogeneous extension of Greater Germany. The situation of Slovenia within prewar Yugoslavia and Nazi diplomacy prior to occupation will be explored as background. An important source for the investigation of the grandiose program of germanization was the chapter "The System of the Nazi Occupation in Slovenia," contributed by Tone Ferenc to the official Yugoslav report on the systems of occupation in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945, presented to the Third International Congress on the History of the European Resistance, held at Carlsbad in 1963.<sup>3</sup> Ferenc's account was the first attempt to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-133.



present the whole picture of the Nazi occupation in Slovenia.

The Yugoslav archives upon which Ferenc's work is based are incomplete and inferior to those found in other countries.<sup>4</sup> Certain lacunae have been filled by a perusal of German records pertaining to World War II microfilmed at Alexandria, Virginia, under the direction of the United States National Archives and the American Historical Association. Five rolls of microfilm, covering records of the German Foreign Institute or DAI (Deutsches Ausland-Institut) in Stuttgart, were utilized for this study.<sup>5</sup> The files of the DAI are of particular interest, because that agency was responsible for the documentation of all Nazi resettlement activities. Information on the phase of the Nazi occupation of Slovenia dealing with germanization was thus attained to supplement Ferenc's pioneering endeavor. Also extremely valuable to this study were the Documents on German Policy, 1918-1945, published jointly by the United States Department of State and the British Foreign Office.<sup>6</sup> It is hoped that this work will provide some basis for further investigation.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>5</sup>United States National Archives, Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Virginia (46 vol., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1958-1965). Vol. 16: Records of the Deutsches Ausland Institute, Stuttgart, Part I: Records on Resettlement (1960).

<sup>6</sup>United States Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945 (18 vols. to date, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949- ). Hereafter each volume of the Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, will be designated DGFP followed by the series letter and volume number.

## CHAPTER II

### SLOVENIA BETWEEN THE WARS

A necessary context for the Nazi rule in Slovenia from 1941 to 1945 can be gained by examining the Slovene experience in Yugoslavia from 1918 to 1941. The Slovenes benefited from their political association with the Serbs and Croats after the creation of Yugoslavia in late 1918, but they were not altogether happy in the new South Slav state between World War I and II. Although they were at last the rulers in their own lands, and their shrewd and opportunistic leader, Monsignor Anton Koroshets (Korošec), had won for them a position of power out of proportion to their numbers, they chafed under the hegemony of the Serbs in Belgrade as a result of a number of geographical, ethnological, economic, and political factors.

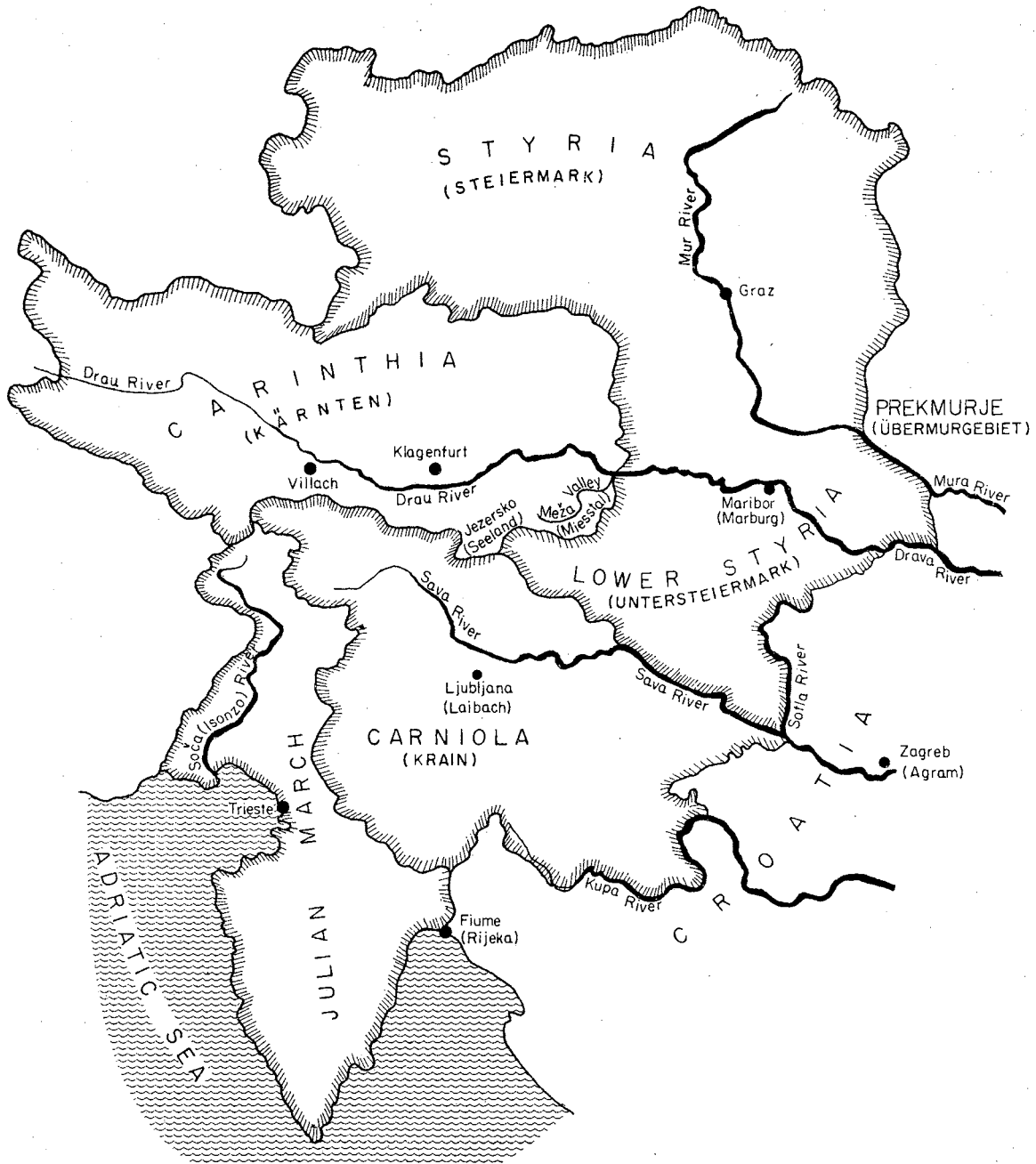
Slovenia existed only as a concept, not as a political reality prior to 1918. The Slovenes were never unified under the Habsburgs. They dwelt in separate Austrian crownlands: Styria (Steiermark, Štajerska, Styrie), Carniola (Krain, Kranjsko, Carniole) and Carinthia (Kärnten, Koroška, Carinthie). They were settled in the Julian March (Julijska Karjina), located at the headwaters of the Adriatic Sea near the Italian border. Slovene communities in this region were divided between the provinces of Görz and Gradiska (Gorizia, Gorica and Gradiška) and Istria (Istra). Furthermore, Slovenes in Prekmurje (Übermurgebiet, Muravidék, Outre-Mura) had for centuries been part of

the historic Hungarian crown of St. Stephen. (See Map I.)

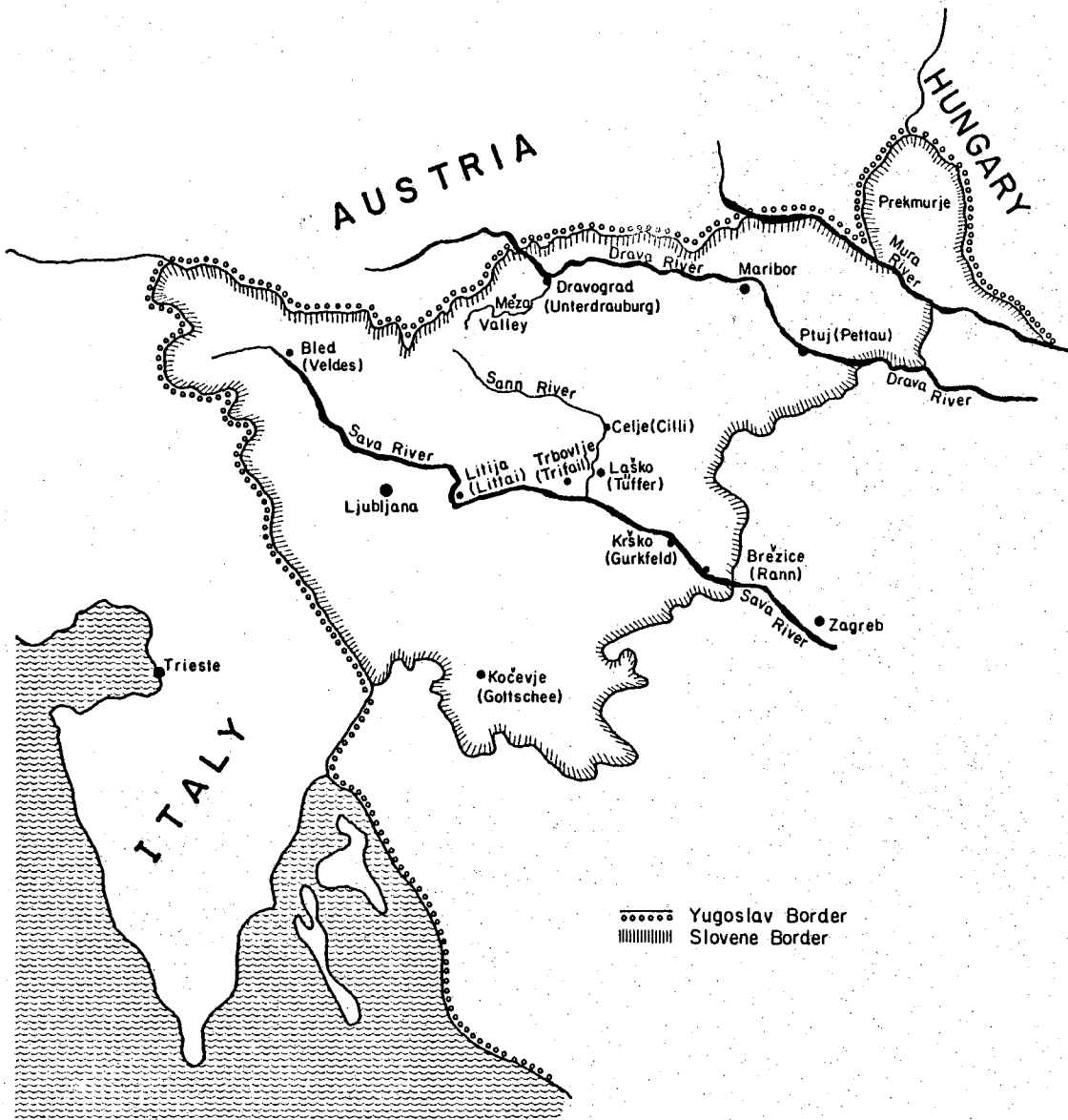
Although the Slovenes were among the last peoples of the Habsburg Empire to abandon hope for its reconstruction after World War I, they voluntarily entered into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. As late as May, 1917, their leaders had pleaded in Vienna for a trialistic solution to the problems of the monarchy. As devout Roman Catholics, the Slovenes wished to join the Roman Catholic Croats in the formation of an autonomous South Slav unit within the Empire. They largely ignored the Yugoslav movement fostered by the Greek Orthodox Serbs until the last months of the war, when it became obvious that South Slav demands would not be heeded and that the monarchy itself was soon to collapse. On October 29, 1918, the Slovenes under the leadership of Koroshets seceded from the Habsburg Empire. In December, they were formally received by their new ruling house, the Serbian Karageorgevich dynasty. Hard political reality dictated hasty action, since Kaisertreue had become irrelevant.

With the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, more Slovenes lived together in a single body politic than had done so for a millennium. Even so, they were a minority within the new kingdom. The Slovenes numbered a little over one million, compared to six million Serbs and between three and four million Croats. Their unification, moreover, was not complete. When the boundaries of Slovenia were finally settled, about a half million Slovenes were left in adjacent areas in Italy and Austria. (See Map II.)

By the Treaty of St. Germain of September 10, 1919, Slovenian possession of lands from the Cisleithanian half of the Habsburg Empire was formally acknowledged. Most of Carniola, the heart of Slovene settlement, with its capital city of Ljubljana (Laibach), was ceded by



Map I. Areas of Slovene Residence within the Habsburg Empire.



Map II. Slovenia within Yugoslavia, 1918-1941.

Austria, as were Lower Styria (Untersteiermark, Spodnja Štajerska, Basse-Styrie) and three small districts in the southeastern corner of Carinthia: the Meža Valley (Miesstal), the Commune of Jezersko (Seeland) and the area around Dravograd (Unterdrauburg). Provision was made in the treaty for a plebiscite in the Klagenfurt (Celovec)-Villach (Beljak) basin of southern Carinthia to determine whether the population wished to remain with Austria or to join the new Yugoslav state. The residents there voted on October 10, 1920, to be Austrian rather than Yugoslav subjects.

Because the cessions to Yugoslavia were hotly contested by the Austrians and were fundamental to Hitler's revisionist aims in southeastern Europe, it is illuminating to study the results of the 1910 census, the last taken in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The imperial censuses determined nationality on the principle of the language habitually spoken (Umgangssprache). A nationality count on this basis always under cuts a minority and favors the dominant people. Under conditions obtaining in the Monarchy, Slovenes were forced to speak German in daily intercourse. The German language, particularly in the schools, was pushed at the expense of Slovene by the Habsburg administration.

Although the 1910 population figures weighted nationality toward the German, the Slovenes showed remarkable strength. In Carniola, 520,000 Slovenes (94% of the population) and 28,000 Germans were counted. In Lower Styria, 411,000 South Slavs (84% of the population) and 76,000 Germans were enumerated. The designation "South Slav" is used here, because a few thousand Croats were settled among the Slovenes in Lower Styria. In the area of Carinthia where the plebiscite was conducted, 49,400 Slovenes (67% of the population) and 24,900 Germans were

reported. The Carinthian regions incorporated outright into Yugoslavia were more homogenous, however, with 11,900 Slovenes (79% of the population) and 3,200 Germans.<sup>1</sup> Even by the most conservative estimates, therefore, Slovene acquisitions from the Cisleithanian half of the Habsburg Empire were justified on ethnic grounds.

By the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920, Hungary ceded Prekmurje, which was included in Slovenia. This small district, extending north of the Mura (Mur) river, was occupied almost exclusively by 120,000 descendants of the old Pannonian Slovenes.<sup>2</sup> A Magyar minority of 25,000 had previously formed the ruling class as owners of large estates. Budapest claimed Prekmurje during the interwar years solely on an historic principle.<sup>3</sup>

The Slovenes lost out completely to the Italians in a struggle over the Julian March. Rome's territorial demands there were motivated largely by strategic considerations. The province of Gorz and Gradiska was awarded to Italy by the Treaty of St. Germain. In 1910 it had a population which was 62% Slovene. The Italians were permitted to extend the eastern limits of the area, which they renamed Venezia Giulia, to the crest of the Julian Alps. Consequently, Rome was granted a strip of western Carniola. The Italians pressed claims for Istria, where the population was reported as 58% Slovene-Croatian in 1910. In the Treaty of Rapallo of November 12, 1920, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Langer, The Austro-Yugoslav Problem (New York: Mimeographed report, 1951), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Baerlein, The Birth of Yugoslavia (2 vol., London: Leonard Parsons, 1922), Vol. II, p. 373.

<sup>3</sup>Fran Zwitter, "The Slovenes and the Habsburg Monarchy," Austrian History Yearbook, Vol. III, Pt. 2 (1967), p. 160.

and Slovenes ceded Istria. The aspirations of approximately 400,000 to 500,000 Slovenes were subordinated to the wishes of the Italian nation at the peace tables.

The Slovene lands were thus pieced together--or rent asunder, depending upon one's point of view--by the various treaties after World War I. They were governed by two separate organizational plans between the wars. From 1920 to 1929, Slovenia was divided into the Ljubljana and Maribor (Marburg) administrative districts.<sup>4</sup> In 1929, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was reorganized into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Nine provinces (banovinas) were established, and the Slovene lands were united into the Province of Drava (Dravska Banovina). Including 15,800 square kilometers out of the 247,500 in Yugoslavia as a whole, Drava was the smallest of the nine provinces.<sup>5</sup>

As a people, the Slovenes differed significantly from their South Slav compatriots. Their long subjugation to German domination rendered their culture less Slavic, and, at the same time, more westernized and more advanced. The German impact upon the Slovenes can be measured by comparing their province to the other eight Yugoslav provinces. It was the only one with a history of German rule. While Croatia had formed a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it had been governed directly by Budapest, not by Vienna. In the 1930's, literacy above the age of ten was 93% for Slovenia, while the average for Yugoslavia taken as a whole was 55%.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Anthony J. Klančar, "Slovenia and the Slovenes," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. VI (April, 1946), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup>Dudley Kirk, Europe's Population in the Interwar Years (Geneva: League of Nations, 1946), p. 275.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



The system of landholding in Slovenia could also be traced directly to German influence. The Slovenes did not cling to the ancient zadruga system, as did other branches of the South Slav peoples.<sup>7</sup> They did not, consequently, organize into loose family cooperatives, by which farm-lands were divided and subdivided until they became uneconomic dwarf plots. Instead, the Slovenes accepted the Germanic principle of primogeniture. Peasant farms remained of viable size. In 1931, the average farm in Slovenia was 8.27 hectares (roughly 20.5 acres). This exceeded the average acreage obtaining in any other Yugoslav province.<sup>8</sup> German influence was patently responsible for other advanced aspects of the Slovene economy. Cooperatives had been organized in the 1890's and were well established by the interwar period. Slovenia was industrialized before any other part of Yugoslavia and had progressed farthest in this direction.<sup>9</sup> In short, Slovenia exhibited characteristics more typical of Central Europe rather than those of a Balkan state.

As a consequence of the indelible imprint made by the Germans, Slovene nationalism was weak. The nobility had been either German or germanized for centuries. The absence of a large and economically independent middle class deterred the growth of national consciousness.<sup>10</sup> The small number of bourgeoisie in the towns got ahead by becoming germanized until the nineteenth century. Only within the peasantry, which

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<sup>7</sup> Jozo Tomasevich, Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 131.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>10</sup> Dinko Tomašić, "Nationality Problems and Partisan Yugoslavia," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. VI (July, 1946), p. 124.

formed the greatest part of the Slovene society, were carried the seeds of a national consciousness which resisted germanization and insured the ultimate survival of the Slovenes as a national group.<sup>11</sup> Those seeds were slow in developing. The word "Slovenian" had not even been introduced until the early nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Previously, the Slovenes had been known as Wends (Winds, Windischers). The latter term came from the old German word for Slavs<sup>13</sup> and carried a certain connotation of inferiority.<sup>14</sup>

What Slovene nationalism existed in the early modern period was dissipated by provincial particularism. Loyalty to a state or province was more important to Slovenes than a consciousness of nationality based upon ethnic factors.<sup>15</sup> They saw themselves as Carinthians or Styrians or Carniolans more than as members of a distinct South Slav group. This tendency explains in large measure the results of the 1920 plebiscite, in which Carinthian Slovenes voted to remain with Austria. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Austrians requested in vain another plebiscite in the Maribor region of Lower Styria on the basis of strong Styrian sentiment there. While not disputing the absolute majority of the Slovenes in the Maribor environs, the pro-Austrian delegates claimed

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<sup>11</sup>Robert A. Kann, The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918 (2 volumes, New York: 1950), Vol. I, p. 294.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas M. Barker, The Slovenes of Carinthia (Washington: League of CSA, 1958), p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Michael B. Petrovich, "The Rise of Modern Slovenian Historiography," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XXII (January, 1963), p. 446.

<sup>14</sup>Barker, The Slovenes of Carinthia, p. 173.

<sup>15</sup>Petrovich, "The Rise of Modern Slovenian Historiography," p. 441.

that many of these residents would prefer attachment to Austria rather than to Yugoslavia.<sup>16</sup> This lingering weakness of Slovene nationalism was to be exploited by German nationalists in the 1930's.

Despite a late start compared with other nationalities in the Habsburg Empire, the Slovenes began to assert themselves during the Napoleonic period. The brief period of French rule hastened a national awakening with Carniola and the University of Ljubljana at the core. In retaliation, German pressure increased in Styria and Carinthia, and many Slovenes succumbed to assimilation in these two provinces. By the end of the nineteenth century, the two major components of Slovenia exhibited a significant difference as a result of the nationality struggle. The urban population in Carniola became solidly Slovene, while in Lower Styria, the bourgeoisie continued to speak German in the towns.<sup>17</sup> The breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy found the Slovene leadership determined to consolidate national strength within the 1919-1920 boundaries of the country.<sup>18</sup>

The alteration in the position of the German minority after the establishment of Yugoslavia was reflected in population statistics. The German decline is illustrated by the following figures for Slovene cities with the heaviest German concentrations:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>United States Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Peace Conference, 1919 (13 volumes, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942-1947). Vol. VII, pp. 953-954

<sup>17</sup>Zwitter, "The Slovenes and the Habsburg Monarchy," pp. 171, 177.

<sup>18</sup>John A. Arnez, Slovenia in European Affairs (New York: League of CSA, 1958), p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Der Auslandsdeutsche, Vol. XX (1937), p. 764.

Ethnic German Population

	<u>1910</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>
Maribor ( <u>Marburg</u> )	22,653	6,512	2,741
Celje ( <u>Gilli</u> )	4,625	848	449
Ptuj ( <u>Pettau</u> )	3,672	969	559

Although many Germans chose to emigrate from Slovenia, the actual population losses between 1910 and 1921 were not as dramatic as pictured above. Many people who had been counted as Germans on the basis of Umgangssprache in the 1910 Habsburg census appeared on the 1921 and 1931 census rolls as Slovenes, since official Yugoslav nationality figures were based on the criterion of mother tongue. The German population loss was openly lamented in Der Auslandsdeutsche, a newsletter for persons of German origin living abroad, which was published by the German Foreign Institute.<sup>20</sup> By the beginning of World War II, there were only 25,000 Germans reported in Slovenia.

During the interwar period, most of these ethnic Germans lived in compact enclaves inside Slovenia. There was only one major German settlement in Carniola, the Kočevje (Gottschee) district near the Croatian frontier. The rural population there comprised one of the oldest German settlements abroad, having been founded fully six centuries before. A few Germans still resided in Ljubljana, which had been transformed throughout the nineteenth century from a German garrison town into a Slovene city of 75,000. Other German communities, comprised mainly of substantial citizens in market towns, radiated from the Austrian frontier throughout Lower Styria. The most important cities

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 764, 713.

with small German minorities--Maribor, Celje and Ptuj--were all in Lower Styria.

Since the social structure of Slovenia has been outlined, it would be pertinent to question how its citizens fared economically in the interwar years. Slovenia had 72.9 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1931. This made it the second most populous province in Yugoslavia.<sup>21</sup> Considerable progress had been made toward industrialization. In 1931, 22% of the Slovenes were engaged in industry, mining or handicrafts, while only 11% of the entire Yugoslav population was so occupied in that year.<sup>22</sup> Much of the Slovene industry was based on the timber and coal resources of its Alpine ranges to the North, but steel production was also considerable. Yet, despite this trend toward a more balanced economy, Slovenia remained poor and predominantly agricultural in the 1930's. There simply was not enough land, fertile though it was between the Drava and Sava rivers, to go around. Of the 1,144,300 inhabitants in Slovenia in 1931, approximately 60% were dependent upon agriculture.<sup>23</sup> Estimates on the surplus agricultural population differ, but it was decidedly more extensive than in other Yugoslav provinces.<sup>24</sup> These

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<sup>21</sup>S. D. Zagoroff, J. Vegh, A. D. Bilimovich, The Agricultural Economy of the Danubian Countries, 1935-1945 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 293.

<sup>22</sup>Tomasevich, Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia, p. 304.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Wilbert E. Moore, Economic Demography of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (Geneva: League of Nations, 1945), p. 64; Tomasevich, Peasants, Politics and Economic Change, p. 324. Moore gives the surplus agricultural population for Slovenia as 65.9%, for all of Yugoslavia as 61.5%. Tomasevich presents the figures of 58.5% for Slovenia and 44.4% for Yugoslavia as a whole. Tomasevich criticized Moore's calculations because he felt that Moore did not have enough data from Yugoslavia for his elaborate statistical procedure (p. 313).

statistics become more significant when it is recalled that Yugoslavia itself suffered from enormous problems of over-population.

The great world depression aggravated the already existing poverty. The production of meat and milk for marketing was an important feature of agricultural activity in Slovenia. Yet, in 1932, a Slovenian peasant received only two cents a pound for a calf.<sup>25</sup> The poverty of the extensive landless peasantry before World War II was particularly oppressive. In Lower Styria, for example, the situation of seasonal workers, day laborers, and toilers in the vineyards was miserable.<sup>26</sup>

In the late 1930's, the Yugoslav economy became increasingly dependent upon Germany, as the Nazis inaugurated a systematic penetration into the country's markets. By early 1938, trade volume between Yugoslavia and Germany had trebled its 1934 level.<sup>27</sup> In that year Yugoslavia sent to Germany half of its total exports, which represented only 2.6% of total German imports.<sup>28</sup> The South Slav state was rapidly becoming a virtual colony of its Teutonic neighbor, and the increasing power of Germany on the continent after 1938 enhanced German supremacy in Yugoslav markets even more.

The Germans penetrated Slovenian industry. With its sizeable Trbovlje (Trifail) mine, Slovenia was responsible for the largest output

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<sup>25</sup>Louis Adamic, The Native's Return (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), p. 82.

<sup>26</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 70.

<sup>27</sup>Brief for Hitler-Stojadinovich talks by Clodium, January 7, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 217-218.

<sup>28</sup>Stoyan Pribichevich, "Nazi Drive to the East," Foreign Policy Reports, Vol. XIV (1938), p. 176.

of coal in Yugoslavia. An aggressive Nazi policy toward the coal mining industry was initiated in 1937. By 1940, German investment in coal mining rose from 1% of all foreign capital, which represented 75% of the total investment, to 20%.<sup>29</sup> By such tactics, the Germans gained control of fully half of the industrial enterprises in Lower Styria before the war.<sup>30</sup>

The Slovenes faced not only a monumental struggle for economic survival, but one for more independence within Yugoslavia itself. They pressed against the centralistic tendencies in Belgrade for an autonomous position within the kingdom. Their cause went unheeded. The Serbian rulers disregarded the cultural and political aspirations and the economic interests of the Slovenes throughout the entire interwar period.<sup>31</sup> Although the Serbs were forced to grant autonomy to the Croats in 1939, they made no similar concessions to the Slovenes. By and large, the Slovenes remained outside the mainstream of the stormy Yugoslav politics, animated as it was by assassinations and by bitter rivalry between the Croats and Serbs.

The political structure of Slovenia in the interwar years was dominated by the Slovenian People's Party of Anton Koroshets. This clerical party, similar to the Christian Socialist Party in Austria, stood for Slovene nationalism, close ties with the Vatican, autonomy for Slovenia within the Yugoslav state, and anti-bolshevism. With the aid

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<sup>29</sup>R. L. Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 180.

<sup>30</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 71.

<sup>31</sup>Dinko Tomasić, "Struggle for Power in Yugoslavia," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. I (July, 1941), p. 155.

of local priests, the party garnered its enormous strength in the villages and experienced little competition from other parties. Its newspaper, Slovenec, was an important voice in Slovenia in the years under discussion. The Liberals, who supported a conservative, anti-clerical platform, were concentrated in the cities. The Social Democrats enjoyed support from the urban proletariat. Although its influence was slight, the Communist party was growing among young intellectual circles.

Koroshets began his political career in the Yugoslav state by allying himself with anti-Serb forces for a more de-centralized form of government. After 1927, he cooperated with the Belgrade centralists in order to win concessions for the Slovenes. As testimony to his success, the excessive number of Slovene bureaucrats in the national capital caused angry comment from both Serbs and Croats.<sup>32</sup> The Slovene leader aided King Alexander I, who ruled the country from 1918 until his assassination in 1934, in the establishment of a dictatorship in 1929. This accommodation did not prevent Alexander from banishing him to an island in the Adriatic from 1932 to 1934 for over-zealous appeals on behalf of the Slovenes, however.

Upon his return to active political life and until his death in December, 1940, Koroshets exerted a strong influence on Prince Regent Paul, who was named nominal head of Yugoslavia in 1934. Koroshets allied his forces with those of the reactionary Milan Stojadinovich, who became premier in 1935, and assumed the responsible and pivotal post of Minister of the Interior. Koroshets' influence became so extensive that, early in 1939, he was instrumental in the dismissal of

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<sup>32</sup>Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe between the Wars, 1918-1941 (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 233.



Stojadinovich and the appointment of Dragiša Cvetkovich as premier.<sup>33</sup>

Although his fortunes ebbed and waned in Belgrade, Koroshets emerged in the immediate prewar years as a powerful national figure.

The political philosophy of Koroshets was complex. It was characterized first and foremost by extreme Slovene nationalism. The German Foreign Office placed all blame for anti-German feelings in Slovenia in the late 1930's squarely upon Koroshets and his party.<sup>34</sup> Koroshets also believed sincerely in the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in the Orthodox Balkans.<sup>35</sup> His dread of bolshevism led him to take many anti-democratic stands, and he used his powers ruthlessly not only against communists but against liberals as well.<sup>36</sup> Like similar movements elsewhere, Slovene political Catholicism under Koroshets veered in the interwar years from democracy toward fascism.

The rising Nazi threat after 1938 posed a dilemma to Koroshets analogous to that faced by the clerical-fascist regimes of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg in Austria. He began to vacillate between policies of firm resistance to the Germans and appeasement of their demands. The Slovenes were violently opposed to the Anschluss, the union of Germany and Austria which took place on March 13, 1938. They feared for the Slovene minority in Carinthia and anticipated a German drive toward the Adriatic now that Germany and Yugoslavia had a common border.

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<sup>33</sup> J. B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 128-129.

<sup>34</sup> Unsigned Memorandum, December 31, 1937. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 212-213.

<sup>35</sup> Tomašić, "Struggle for Power in Yugoslavia," p. 162.

<sup>36</sup> Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe, p. 234; Louis Adamic, My Native Land (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 166.

Anti-German demonstrations were reported in Ljubljana at the time of the Anschluss.<sup>37</sup> The Yugoslav Minister to Berlin, Demitrije Cincar-Markovich, even suggested then that Hitler guarantee the integrity of the German-Yugoslav frontier to calm the situation in Yugoslavia.<sup>38</sup> Until his death, Koroshets continued to be recognized generally as an anti-German force in the country, particularly with his arrests of German agitators in the summer of 1938.<sup>39</sup> But a duality in his approach to Berlin can be detected as early as March 17, 1938, when the German Minister in Belgrade, Viktor von Heeren, reported that Koroshets was reconciled toward Anschluss.<sup>40</sup> In the last months of his career, Koroshets urged Prince Regent Paul to increase concessions to the Axis.

Father Fran Kulovec, who succeeded Koroshets as leader of the Slovene People's Party in December, 1940, also vacillated in his foreign policy. In early March, 1941, Hitler demanded that Yugoslavia sign the Tripartite Pact, which would orient Yugoslavia toward the Axis sphere. After the inept invasion of Greece by the Italians in October, 1940, Yugoslav neutrality had become extremely important to the Germans. A quick suppression of Greek resistance was an absolute necessity, if the German attack on Russia, planned for May, was to succeed. Hitler needed assurance of Yugoslav acquiescence toward the military moves.

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<sup>37</sup> Dispatch from von Heeren, March 17, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 260; Report from von Heeren, March 19, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 260.

<sup>38</sup> Report by Mackensen, March 17, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 259.

<sup>39</sup> The Economist, Vol. CXXXI (1938), p. 588.

<sup>40</sup> Dispatch from von Heeren, March 17, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 260.

Kulovec was the first member of the Cvetkovich government to agree to Hitler's demands. For him, safeguarding the integrity of Slovene soil against the German army was of greater importance than resisting fascist aggression.<sup>41</sup>

Two days after the pact was signed, on March 27, 1941, the people of Yugoslavia rose up against Cvetkovich's collaboration with Hitler. Immediately, Kulovec switched his allegiance and accepted a post in the revolutionary government of General Dushan Simovich, formed under the boy King Peter II.<sup>42</sup> In this act, Kulovec represented the majority of the Slovenes.<sup>43</sup> No less a commentator than Hitler himself had to admit that the Slovenes had never been pro-German.<sup>44</sup>

In a fury at the developments in Belgrade, Hitler held a conference in Berlin on the same day as the coup, during which he determined to smash Yugoslavia militarily and as a state.<sup>45</sup> A few days later, he recalled von Heeren.

In the tradition of the opportunistic policies of his party, Kulovec did not remain true to his stand against the Germans. He still hoped, even in the last hours before the end, to save the Slovenes by capitulating to Berlin. On April 5, Kulovec and his associate, Mikha Krek, tried to contact the Germans through an intermediary, the Slovak

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<sup>41</sup>Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis, 1934-1941, p. 219.

<sup>42</sup>Dragiša N. Ristić, Yugoslavia's Revolution of 1941 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), pp. 110-111.

<sup>43</sup>Nicholas Mirkovich, "Yugoslavia's Choice," Foreign Affairs, Vol. XX (1941), p. 141.

<sup>44</sup>Minutes of conference in Berlin by Christian, March 27, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 373.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

Chargé d'Affaires in Belgrade. There was only a skeletal staff left in the German Ministry in the Yugoslav capital. A Chargé d'Affaires reported to Berlin what the Slovak diplomat had told him. It was a sad entry in the German Foreign Ministry archives:

The Slovene leaders regarded the war as inevitable. It would bring about the end of Yugoslavia. If no separate solution could be found for Slovenia, the Slovenes, like the Croats, would have to die with the Serbs. Since, however, their country was more important to them than the Yugoslav State, they were seeking another way out. This had, in any case, to be found in the cooperation with Germany. There were two possibilities:

1. An independent Slovenia.
2. A state consisting of Slovenia and Croatia.

In Slovenia there was fear, however, that Germany had other plans, which would amount to a partition of Slovenia ...Unfortunately here in Belgrade the Slovene leaders, because of Serbian vigilance, had no opportunity to establish direct contact with officials of the Reich. If it became known here what they were contemplating, they would certainly be killed.<sup>46</sup>

The approach was unheeded by the Germans. Kulovec was killed in the Belgrade bombings the next day, by which Hitler began his war on Yugoslavia without warning. Krek subsequently became leader-in-exile of the Slovene People's Party.

There were enough ambiguities in Slovene nationalism and Slovene politics vis-à-vis Hitler's aggressive moves to lead the Nazis to suppose that, in some parts of Slovenia at any rate, they would be well received after their occupation of the country. Moreover, in the inter-war years, conditions had been ripe for the appearance of a demagogue in Slovenia; the promise of a new order was bound to have an appeal. Although there was ample evidence that German domination would be

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<sup>46</sup> Report by Feine, April 5, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 464.

unacceptable to the populace, a very real question in April, 1941, was how strong Slovene nationalism would prove in withstanding Hitler's onslaught.

### CHAPTER III

#### NAZI POLICY AND SLOVENIA: JANUARY, 1933 TO JULY, 1941

The position of Slovenia in Hitler's larger plans for Europe was unclear after his rise to power in Berlin on January 30, 1933, until the Simovich coup d'état in Belgrade on March 27, 1941. A review of German diplomacy toward Slovenia within that time span reveals an ambivalence between maintaining the integrity of the province or shattering it. Although Germany became intimately involved in Slovenian affairs through the instrument of the German minority there, Hitler consistently forestalled the Italians and Hungarians from border violations. After March 27 through the summer of 1941, he moved with lightning speed in an attempt, modified by the exigencies of existing power politics, to recreate the ancient crownlands of the Habsburg Empire on Slovene territory.

Three years earlier, in a conference with Stojadinovich, Hitler had anticipated in a figure of speech this final diplomatic approach toward Slovenia. He had assured Stojadinovich at that time that he had discarded his "Viennese spectacles" in viewing Yugoslavia. This implied that he was not a champion of either Austrian or Hungarian revisionism and that he had no desire to partition Yugoslavia into the component parts of the defunct Habsburg Empire. His territorial aims, he averred, ended at the Austro-Yugoslav border as established by the

treaties of St. Germain and Trianon.<sup>1</sup> Hitler reaffirmed this resolve to the world on October 6, 1939, before the Reichstag:

Immediately after the Anschluss became an accomplished fact I informed Yugoslavia that the frontier in common with that country would henceforth be regarded as unalterable by Germany and that we wished only to live in peace and friendship with that country.<sup>2</sup>

If this was all that he had said in his voluminous speeches, the Slovenes would have rested easier.

Despite protestations to the contrary, Hitler seemed to put on and take off his "Viennese spectacles" at will. His Reichstag speech of April 28, 1939, for example, gave rise to much speculation that he considered himself heir to the Habsburg Empire.<sup>3</sup> In this address, he declared that the Ostmark of medieval days had developed into "the crownlands and nucleus of the five-century-old German Empire with Vienna as the capital of the German Reich of that period." Stressing the continuity between the first German Reich and that of his own formation, he underscored his goal to reestablish "the historic unity of German living space."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Hitler justified his advent to power in Austria by posing as a direct heir to the Habsburgs. What would prevent him from pressing his claims further into Slovenia, which had been at the core of the historic Austrian crownlands? Should he choose to do so, the

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes by von Heeren, January 17, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 228-229.

<sup>2</sup>Adolph Hitler, My New Order (edited by Raoul de Roussy de Sales, New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), p. 743.

<sup>3</sup>F. Elwin Jones, The Attack from Within (London, 1939), p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>Hitler, My New Order, pp. 635-636, 676.

reincorporation of Lower Styria into Reichsgau (Reich province) Styria and of the Me<sup>V</sup>za Valley, Dravograd and the Commune of Jezersko into Reichsgau Carinthia would be foregone conclusions. Certainly, Hitler's Hungarian allies could expect the return of Prekmurje, if any historic principle were invoked in Slovenia. Carniola would be impossible to absorb in the Reich completely, since Hitler's Italian allies already possessed a western strip of that crownland and would be sure to demand more of it. However these problems connected with a German extension into the former Habsburg territories in Yugoslavia would be resolved, suspicions that Hitler had revisionist ideas about Slovenia at least two years before the Yugoslav invasion had foundation.

The duality in the Nazi approach to Slovenia is evident not only in Hitler's pronouncements to leading statesmen and to the world at large, but also in his policies toward the German minority in the province. On the one hand, Berlin worked within legal international bounds for the benefit of the Germans in Slovenia; on the other, it used these people as a focal point for undercover aggression against constituted Yugoslav authorities. Whether this duality indicated that Hitler planned to attack Slovenia eventually, or that he wanted merely to include it in the German sphere of influence, is open to debate. The point of interest here is that he maintained a double-tracked policy regarding the Germans in Slovenia until March 27, 1941.

Hitler based much of his diplomacy with eastern European states upon the situation of the German minorities within their borders. The Führer posed as the champion of all Germans abroad. In his Reichstag speech of March 23, 1933, he said:

We have particularly at heart the fate of the Germans living beyond the frontiers of Germany who are allied with



us in speech, culture, and customs and have to make a hard fight to retain these values. The national Government is resolved to use all the means at its disposal to support the rights internationally guaranteed to the German minorities.<sup>5</sup>

His concern embraced both the Reichsdeutsche or Auslandsdeutsche (German national abroad) and the Volksdeutsche or Volkszugehörige (ethnic German, but non-citizen of Germany, residing abroad). In order to qualify as Volksdeutsch, a person had to have some German blood, not just knowledge of the German language and customs. Hitler's protection extended to a Volksdeutsche regardless of his citizenship status in another country and regardless of whether he traced his origins to Austria rather than to Germany proper, even before Anschluss.

To Hitler's good fortune, the German minority in Slovenia nursed many grievances against local authorities in the interwar years. According to the German view, the Yugoslav government placed unreasonable restrictions upon its German subjects, such as prohibiting them from owning property within fifty kilometers of the border. Members of the minority were incensed at the anti-German tone of the newspaper Slovenec, as well as "general chicaneries" practiced against them. They further demanded that classes in the German language with teachers of German origin and that unhampered German cooperative organizations and societies be permitted.<sup>6</sup>

The nature of the German grievances indicates that the Slovenian authorities were preoccupied with strengthening the Slavic elements in their land. Certainly there was some foundation to the charge that the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>6</sup> Unsigned Memorandum, December 31, 1937. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 213.

blatant disregard of German minority rights in Slovenia would result in "the entire pulverization of the German folk group in Slovenia."<sup>7</sup> As shall be pointed out later, however, some of the restrictions imposed upon the Germans were necessitated by consideration of Yugoslavian national security. In any case, the controls could hardly be called terroristic in character.

A Volksdeutsch organization which experienced poor relations with the Slovene authorities in the immediate prewar years was the Swabian-German Cultural Union (Schwäbisch-deutscher Kulturbund). Founded in 1920 in Novi Sad (Neusatz), the organization encompassed all ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia. Its name derived from the fact that Germans living along the Danube in Southeastern Europe were commonly called Swabians.<sup>8</sup> The Maribor and Ljubljana branches of the Kulturbund were dissolved by order of the provincial governor in 1935 and 1936 respectively for covert political activities. Because of such punitive actions, only a few groups were operative in Slovenia by 1937.<sup>9</sup> After Anschluss, concessions were made to the organization, and it promptly extended its organization into twenty-nine districts of Slovenia.<sup>10</sup>

Regulations which restricted German teachers and the German language in schools for children of the German minority aroused particular hostility. Because German teachers were usually transferred from

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<sup>7</sup>Der Auslandsdeutsche, Vol. XIX (1936), p. 855.

<sup>8</sup>G. C. Paikert, The Danube Swabians (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Der Auslandsdeutsche, Vol. XIX (1936), pp. 125, 348-349; Vol. XX (1937), p. 123.

<sup>10</sup>Paikert, The Danube Swabians, p. 270.

German to purely Slovenian communities, by 1936 hardly a dozen German teachers were left in the Kočevje area, which was 89% German, while the Slovenian teachers there numbered fifty.<sup>11</sup> The Slovene authorities clearly were following a course of Entdeutschungspolitik (de-germanization) among youthful Volksdeutschen.

The German Foreign Office vigorously espoused the cause of the Slovenian Germans while respecting the legal framework of the Yugoslav government. As German demands upon Belgrade became more substantial and more insistent after Anschluss, the situation of the German minority in Slovenia became more crucial to the betterment of German-Yugoslav relations in general. Right after he became premier, Cvetkovich promised the German minister in Belgrade that he would make redresses for violations in Slovenia. Von Heeren remarked:

It was to be plainly inferred from the content and form of the conversation that the Yugoslav Minister President is extremely anxious to dissipate any possible German mistrust for him personally and is even ready to make sacrifices to this end. The further development of the situation of the Germans in Slovenia will best show how far he is prepared to go.<sup>12</sup>

During talks between Prince Regent Paul and Hitler a few months later, the treatment of the Slovenian Germans was raised by the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.<sup>13</sup> That Slovenian problems received attention from the highest quarters underscores their importance in the diplomatic interchange of the immediate prewar period.

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<sup>11</sup>Der Auslandsdeutsche, Vol. XIX (1936), p. 855.

<sup>12</sup>Report by von Heeren, February 11, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, pp. 390-391.

<sup>13</sup>Memorandum by Ribbentrop, June 5, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 637.

Despite all the German protests on their behalf, the situation of the German minority in Slovenia steadily worsened. By the time World War II began, anti-German feeling in Yugoslavia had reached enormous proportions. Von Heeren asked permission in May, 1940, to return Reich nationals to Germany, because of the many outrages against them.<sup>14</sup> He also counseled that no more German cultural events be held in order to prevent anti-German incidents.<sup>15</sup>

Since the deep-seated problems of German minorities in Slavic states seemed insoluble through traditional means, Hitler toyed with a radical solution. In his Reichstag speech of October 6, 1939, he said:

The most important task (is) to establish a new order of ethnographic conditions, that is to say, resettlement of nationalities in such a manner that the process ultimately results in the obtaining of better dividing lines than is the case at present...The east and south of Europe are to a large extent filled with splinters of the German nationality, whose existence they cannot maintain.

In their very existence lie the reason and cause for continual international disturbances. In this age of the principle of nationalities and of racial ideals, it is utopian to believe that members of a highly developed people can be assimilated without trouble.

It is therefore essential for a far-sighted ordering of the life of Europe that a resettlement should be undertaken.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, Hitler advocated moving Germans from southeastern Europe into the Fatherland in the interest of peace. He had inaugurated his program of mass transfers of population.

Hitler's October 6 speech sent the Yugoslav German community into

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<sup>14</sup>Telegram from von Heeren, May 11, 1940. DGFP, Series D, Vol. IX, p. 357.

<sup>15</sup>Report from von Heeren, May 20, 1940. DGFP, Series D, Vol. IX, p. 384.

<sup>16</sup>Hitler, My New Order, pp. 737-738.

an uproar.<sup>17</sup> Ernst Freiherr von Weizsäcker, State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, hastily sought to reassure the Yugoslav Germans that no immediate population exchanges were imminent. Only voluntary repatriates were wanted in Germany, he explained, and minority problems in Yugoslavia were not acute enough at the present time to warrant resettlement.<sup>18</sup> It would be two more years before Hitler's words would directly affect the people of Slovenia.

German policy toward Slovenia did not remain solely within the realms of normal diplomatic channels. That the Nazis also used an undercover approach to infiltrate into the province is evident. The members of the German minority cooperated with the Nazi regime to promote German hegemony which was already proceeding rapidly through systematic German economic penetration of Yugoslavia. After Anschluss, German fifth column activities seemed to grow in intensity and sinister qualities.

To the world of rational international relations, Germany was an aggressor nation against Slovenia even before it violated any borders, and the Germans living in Slovenia were guilty of nothing less than high treason. However, Nazi ideology offered a justification for this attack from within. According to Nazi theoreticians, a state had Schutzrecht, or the right to protect its folk groups scattered throughout the world. Since this Schutzrecht knew no boundaries, a state could interfere in the internal affairs of other states on behalf of

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<sup>17</sup> Report from von Heeren, October 22, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 332.

<sup>18</sup> Weizsäcker to von Heeren, October 28, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VIII, p. 352.

its Volk.<sup>19</sup> Further, the Nazi concepts of Staatsangehörige and Volksangehörige made loyalty to the state in which one lived relatively unimportant. Staatsangehörige designated the citizen of a state. For Germans living outside the Reich, this was their secondary affiliation. Volksangehörige meant member of a nation. All Germans living outside the Reich, regardless of what passports they carried, were to consider this as their primary status.<sup>20</sup> The fifth column was given a cloak of respectability.

The Swabian German Cultural Union was a major subversive organization in Yugoslavia. After 1938, the previously moderate Kulturbund was thoroughly infiltrated with Nazi ideas through its merger with the Renovation Movement (Erneuerungsbewegung), a radical group led by Branimir Altgayer and Sepp Janko. During the years before the invasion, Kulturbund members in Slovenia spied for the Germans. They reported on the economy of the country, the administration, the armaments industry, the army and the police to German espionage headquarters in Graz (Gradec), Klagenfurt, Salzburg and Vienna.<sup>21</sup> Many of the illegal activities of the group were carried out under the guise of innocent sports or musical events.

Another important organization for subversion in the interwar period was the Liaison Office for Ethnic Germans or VOMI (Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle), a secret semi-party, semi-state agency run by SS officers

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph B. Schechtman, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, The Attack from Within, p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 52-53.

for coordinating activities relating to German minorities. It was directed by SS-Obergruppenführer Werner Lorenz from 1937 to 1945. From 1938 to 1940, VOMI held at position on national minority questions superior to all government agencies, including the Foreign Office.<sup>22</sup>

VOMI's involvement in Slovenia may be judged by the promise of one of its officials to cut down still further the local contacts between Styria and Lower Styria, when orders were issued to keep the German national group in Yugoslavia quiet in 1939.<sup>23</sup>

The German Foreign Institute played a decisive role in Volksdeutsch affairs during the Hitler era. Organized originally in 1917 by Theodor G. Wanner to promote the interests of Germans abroad, the DAI became a Nazi instrument by 1934 under the leadership of President Karl Strölin, the Nazi burgomaster of Stuttgart, and Secretary General Richard Csaki. It was widely regarded as a hotbed of Nazi propaganda. No student can have a complete view of Volksdeutsch patterns before and during World War II without bearing in mind the role and significance of the DAI.<sup>24</sup>

The DAI's monthly journal, Der Auslandsdeutsche, later renamed Deutschtum im Ausland, was undoubtedly of great moment to the Germans of Slovenia in the twenties and thirties. It was one of the plethora of German publications for the minorities of southeastern Europe under

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<sup>22</sup>MacAlister Brown, "The Third Reich's Mobilization of the German Fifth Column in Eastern Europe," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XIX (1959), pp. 129, 130-131, 133, 135, 148.

<sup>23</sup>Note by Deputy Director of the Cultural Policy Department, April 15, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 256.

<sup>24</sup>Paikert, The Danube Swabians, pp. 109-110, 112-113.

the supervision of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels.<sup>25</sup> Its articles were designed to increase the German consciousness of all Germans outside the Reich and to foster their association with the Fatherland. Stuttgart was heavily advertised as the city of Germandom outside the Reich ("die Stadt des Auslandsdeutschtums"). Such propaganda, although innocent enough on the surface, posed a distinct threat to the loyalty which Belgrade could expect from the German minority within the Yugoslav borders.

The German diplomatic missions were also involved in fifth-column activities. The extent of this problem in Slovenia can be judged by the events there in the summer of 1939. Cincar-Markovich, who had become Foreign Minister under Cvetkovich, complained to Ribbentrop during the talks between Prince Regent Paul and Hitler about the new German consul in Maribor named Stechele.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, Cincar-Markovich requested Stechele's removal because the consul was viewed with gravest mistrust by Slovene authorities. Stechele was transferred to Bulgaria in August.<sup>27</sup>

The German minister in Belgrade, as many other German career diplomats in southeastern Europe, exhibited uneasiness over the use of his ministry for indelicate intrusions into internal Yugoslav affairs. Between 1925 and 1937, von Heeren returned money and propaganda material received by diplomatic mail from the DAI and other agencies.<sup>28</sup> In 1939,

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<sup>25</sup> Brown, "The Third Reich's Mobilization of the German Fifth Column in Eastern Europe," p. 141.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum by Ribbentrop, June 5, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 637.

<sup>27</sup> Editors' Note, DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 637.

<sup>28</sup> Paikert, The Danube Swabians, p. 274.



he sent a strongly worded dispatch to Berlin against the disturbances perpetrated by leaders of the Renovation Movement and counselled that stirring up the Volksdeutschen was politically undesirable.<sup>29</sup>

German businessmen in Slovenia apparently collaborated with the Third Reich in the acquisition of strategically located land. Railway lines and roads running through the passes of Slovenia have traditionally had great geopolitical significance. Routes from Vienna to Maribor to Trieste or Rijeka (Fiume) were crucial in connecting Central Europe with the Adriatic Sea. It was widely reported in British circles in the mid-1930's that persons friendly to the Nazis were purchasing landed estates adjacent to the railroad right of way. In 1936, the Slovene authorities prohibited the transfer of such property to members of the German community. The following year, the law restricting German ownership of land within fifty kilometers of the Yugoslav border was passed.<sup>30</sup> Although the Germans indignantly protested these restrictions, they still found ingenious ways to circumvent them. In the summer of 1938, a poor Slovene peasant was reported to have purchased strategic property valued at 4,200 pounds as a cover for a German merchant.<sup>31</sup> It was speculated that funds for land transactions favorable to German interests in Slovenia originated with the Nazi party.

Pressures against Slovenia were not confined to Berlin's devious intrigues among the Slovenian Volksdeutschen and Reichsdeutschen. The German allies, Hungary and Italy, both coveted Slovene territory. Until

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<sup>29</sup>Dispatch from von Heeren, April 13, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 234-235.

<sup>30</sup>Der Auslandsdeutsche, Vol. XX (1937), p. 499.

<sup>31</sup>Jones, The Attack from Within, pp. 114-115.

the Simovich coup d'état, however, Hitler seemed steadfast in his resolve to keep Yugoslavia geographically intact, albeit as a German-dominated satellite in his new Europe.

Throughout the interwar period, the Hungarians persistently advanced revisionist claims, which included Prekmurje, against Yugoslavia. During 1937 and 1938, the Yugoslavs, in conjunction with their allies in the Little Entente, the Czechoslovakians and Rumanians, tried to ward off the Hungarian threat with a non-aggression pact. Budapest would not sign any agreement, however, unless concrete concessions were made by the Little Entente powers in favor of the Hungarian minorities within their borders. Bent upon the destruction of the Little Entente, Hitler urged the Hungarian and Yugoslav prime ministers to settle their differences directly, without reference to Bucharest and Prague. He even offered to back a Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty on the minority question with "an absolutely binding guarantee, which would also apply militarily in case Hungary should violate the Yugoslav border."<sup>32</sup> Though nothing more was heard about the proposed German guarantee after the collapse of the Little Entente in late 1938, a Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship was finally signed in December, 1940.

While he was trying to hold back the Hungarians, Hitler was also faced with the Italians, who were equally as desirous of splitting up the South Slav state. The Italian-Yugoslav pact of friendship of March, 1937, did not deter Rome from pressing its cause against Yugoslavia. The Italians used the German liquidation of Czechoslovakia in March,

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<sup>32</sup>Report by Meissner, November 25, 1937. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 201. Report by von Heeren, January 17, 1938. DGFP, Series D, Vol. V, p. 225.

1939, to blackmail Hitler. During the same month, the Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano met with the German Ambassador in Rome, Hans Georg von Mackensen. Ciano impressed upon Mackensen that, while Rome was disinterested in Czechoslovakia, it was deeply concerned with Yugoslavia. The Italians wanted the Germans to leave affairs on the Adriatic shores completely to them.<sup>33</sup> Capitulating to Mussolini, the Nazis circulated an order stating that "our attitude regarding all national community and minority problems in the Mediterranean countries must be adjusted to meet the wishes of the Italian government."<sup>34</sup>

For all their blustering, the Italians realized that they would be unable to move against Yugoslavia without German aid. Consequently, the general staff of the Italian army forwarded to the Germans two attack plans on Yugoslavia in August, 1940. The first plan was to be carried out solely by the Italians, but it involved the movement of Italian troops through German territory in Carinthia and Styria, as well as 5,000 German motor vehicles. The alternative plan included a German advance through Styria and Carinthia, along with an Italian attack.<sup>35</sup> The Germans were not interested in these Italian overtures.<sup>36</sup> Mussolini felt obliged to tell Hitler on August 24 that recent Italian military measures at the Yugoslav border were only precautionary and

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<sup>33</sup>Memorandum by Mackensen, March 17, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 15-16. Memorandum by Mackensen, March 20, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, pp. 48-49.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum by Ribbentrop, March 25, 1939. DGFP, Series D, Vol. VI, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup>Report by Rintelen, August 9, 1940. DGFP, Series D, Vol. X, p. 482.

<sup>36</sup>Editors' Note. DGFP, Series D, Vol. X, p. 483.

prompted by the fact that the country was hostile to the Axis.<sup>37</sup>

All of Hitler's diplomacy designed to bring a docile Yugoslavia within his orbit was jeopardized by the change in government in Belgrade on March 27, 1941. As has been discussed, he determined suddenly to smash Yugoslavia militarily and as a state during a conference in Berlin the same day as the coup. Later that day, Hitler received the Hungarian Minister to Berlin, Dóme Sztojay. The Führer promised to respect Hungarian revisionist desires and to permit Hungarian military measures in Yugoslavia. As far as he was concerned, he said, the German aspirations in the doomed country were only for parts of Carinthia and Styria lost by Austria in the Treaty of St. Germain.<sup>38</sup>

Axis military action against Slovenia swiftly followed the initial bombing of Belgrade on April 6. On April 9, the German army entered Maribor and proceeded to occupy the regions east of the Sava (Sau, Save) river. The Italian army took possession of Ljubljana and the rest of the province on April 11.

Hungarian participation in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia was delayed by the suicide of Premier Paul Teleki on April 2. As an honorable diplomat, Teleki despaired over the projected Hungarian abrogation of the Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship. On April 3, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, the Hungarian regent, sanctimoniously explained to Hitler that "the conflict of conscience confronting us...compels us to request that the German Army Command assign to our troops only such

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<sup>37</sup>Mussolini to Hitler, August 24, 1940. DGFP, Series D, Vol. X, p. 538.

<sup>38</sup>Memorandum by Hewel, March 27, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, pp. 369-370.

tasks as are reconcilable with our conscience."<sup>39</sup> Composure was quickly regained, however, and Horthy issued a manifesto on April 11 affirming his duty to reclaim former Hungarian territories in Yugoslavia in the interests of the Hungarians living there.<sup>40</sup> Between April 11 and 13, the Hungarian army took Prekmurje.

Slovene resistance to the Axis invasions, while more pronounced than elsewhere in Yugoslavia, was ineffectual and hindered by sabotage. The Slovenian National Council, established on April 6 under the leadership of the last governor or ban of Slovenia, Dr. Marko Natlačen, actually appealed to the Germans for aid, presumably in an attempt to save the province.<sup>41</sup> Slovenian Volksdeutschen heeded a secret directive from Hitler to evade the Yugoslav draft and gave open aid to the invaders, particularly in the Kočevje district.<sup>42</sup> About 150 German refugees from Lower Styria were recruited to serve as guides for the advancing German military machine.<sup>43</sup> When the Yugoslav armed forces capitulated unconditionally on April 17, Slovenia was completely subdued.

On April 12, 1941, six days after the German invasion of

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<sup>39</sup>Horthy to Hitler, April 3, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 447.

<sup>40</sup>Report from Ermannsdorff, April 11, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 510.

<sup>41</sup>Dusan Plenca, "Le Mouvement de Libération Nationale en Yougoslavie et les Allies," in European Resistance Movements, 1939-1945, (London: Pergamon, 1964), p. 495.

<sup>42</sup>Paikert, The Danube Swabians, pp. 276-277. Arnez, Slovenia in European Affairs, p. 16.

<sup>43</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 55.

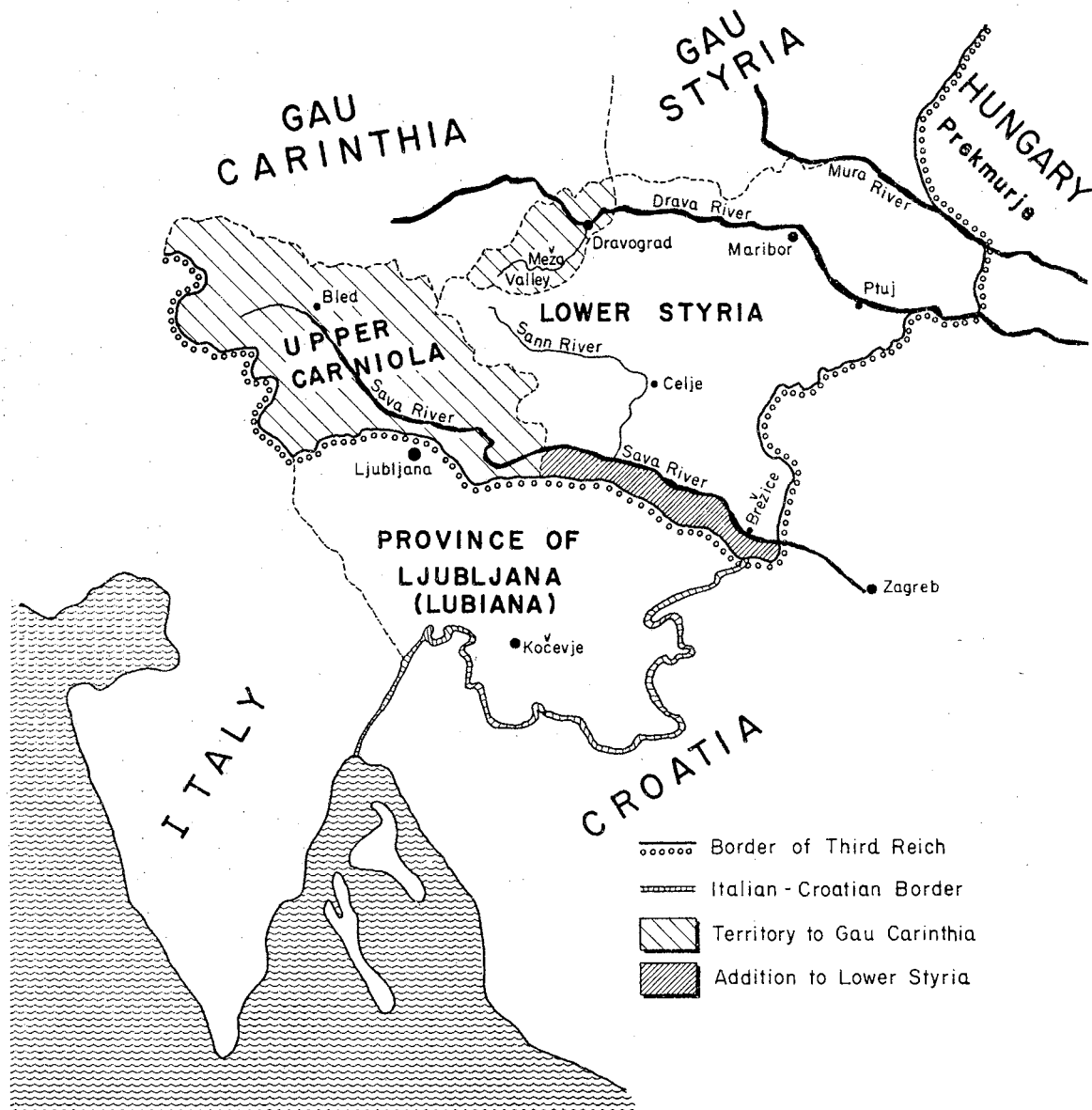
Yugoslavia, Hitler circulated a directive for splitting up the country.<sup>44</sup> Although negotiations to ratify clauses dealing with Slovenia were not completed until several months later, the directive was authoritative and definitive in establishing the Nazi policy for the occupation of Slovenia. Its provisions divided the province among Italy, Germany and Hungary roughly according to pre-1918 frontiers. (See Map III.)

German territorial gains in Slovenia were enlarged beyond Hitler's aspirations, as expressed on March 27, to include much of Carniola. Lower Styria, increased to the south by a strip of about ninety kilometers in breadth and ten to fifteen kilometers in depth, was reincorporated into Reichsgau Styria. The addition included the Krško polje (plain) in the southeastern corner of Lower Carniola (Unterkrain, Basse-Carniole). The parts of Carinthia lost in 1919 (the Meža Valley, Dravograd and the Commune of Jezersko) and Upper Carniola (Oberkrain, Haute-Carniole), were placed under the administrative control of Reichsgau Carinthia. Because the various Carinthian gains in 1941 were administered as a unit, for purposes of simplification the term Upper Carniola will henceforth include them, unless specified otherwise. The line delineating Upper Carniola from that part of Carniola awarded to Italy, called the Province of Ljubljana (Lubiana) by the Italians, ran to the south of the upper course of the Sava river, but north of Ljubljana.

The division of Carniola was a compromise between conflicting Italian and German interests there, with more weight accorded to the

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<sup>44</sup>Margaret Carlyle, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946. Vol. II, Hitler's Europe (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1954), pp. 329-331.



Map III. The Partition of Slovenia, 1941.

latter. Although Ljubljana fell inside the Italian zone of occupation, Berlin received the valuable coal fields of the Sava basin and the Ljubljana-Zidani Most-Zagreb (Agram) railway. Ribbentrop and Ciano met in Vienna on April 21 to discuss the border. Though dissatisfied with Rome's procurement of only the poorest sections of Carniola, Ciano was unable to obtain any noteworthy modifications of the April 12, line.<sup>45</sup> On July 8, 1941, an agreement was signed to settle the common German-Italian frontier in Slovenia.

Although Hitler accorded Yugoslav territory beyond the Mura river, that is to say, Prekmurje, to the Hungarians on April 12, Berlin qualified this bequest during the following month. Agreement was reached in early May that four German villages in the northwestern corner of the district would eventually be annexed to the Reich and that Volksdeutschen in the northeastern corner would be resettled within Germany at a later date. Neither provision was ever carried into effect, however. On May 30, Budapest also gave oil concessions in Prekmurje to the Germans.<sup>46</sup>

To complete the legal work involved in establishing the new borders of Germany on former Slovene territory, Berlin signed a treaty with the newly-created state of Croatia on May 13. The document stipulated that the German-Croatian frontier would correspond to the former administrative boundary between Styria and Croatia in the Habsburg Empire.

When all the negotiations were concluded, Slovenia as it had

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<sup>45</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 49.

<sup>46</sup>Clodium to Ribbentrop, May 31, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 49.



existed within Yugoslavia, was radically partitioned. Its territory and population were assigned as follows: 10,261 square kilometers with 798,700 people to Germany; 4,551 square kilometers with 336,279 people to Italy; and 998 square kilometers with 102,867 people to Hungary.<sup>47</sup> Despite Hitler's pose as the restorer of ancient German lands, the new boundaries were determined more by considerations of power politics than by historic principle. Hitler never demanded all of Carniola, to which he had as much "historic right" as to Lower Styria and the small districts of Carinthia annexed to Yugoslavia in 1919. Forced to placate his Italian allies, who were extremely jealous of any German intrusion into Yugoslavia, he felt no apparent compunction about slicing up Carniola at will. For him, the province even ceased to have a past, for the Nazis often referred to Upper Carniola simply as South Carinthia (Südkärnten). Further, the German claim for the four villages in Prekmurje ignored the past integrity of that region. As far as Slovenia was concerned, "the historic unity of German living space" had very little meaning in the struggle over the spoils between March 27, and the summer of 1941.

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<sup>47</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 49.

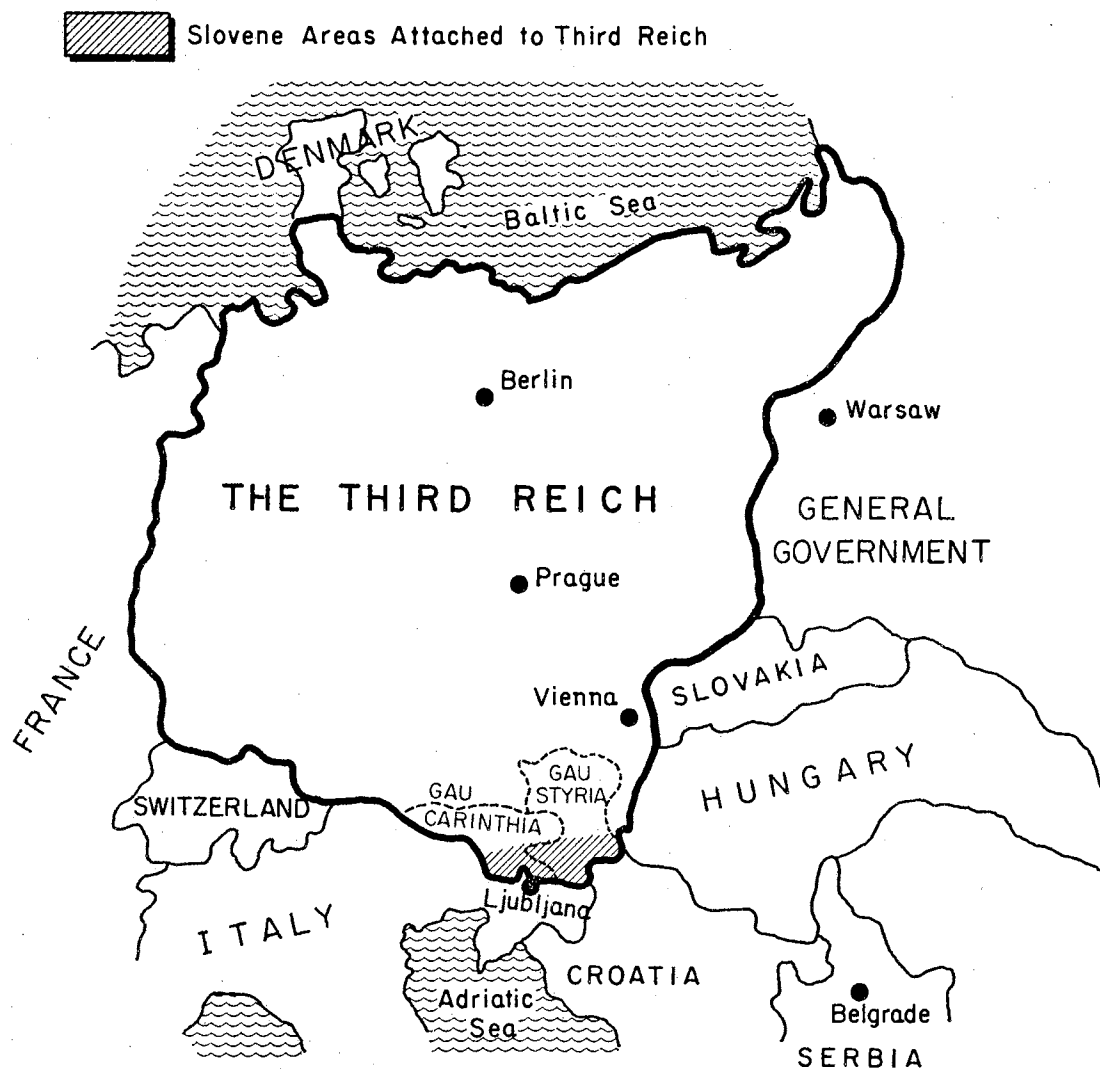
## CHAPTER IV

### THE GERMANIZATION OF SLOVENIA

The Nazi blueprint for a "New Order" in Europe was based on an extension of the frontiers of Germany to create a living space (Lebensraum) for the German people. From within the limits of this Greater German Reich, all non-German inhabitants were to be expelled. Their places were to be filled by Germans found outside the new boundaries--not only German nationals residing abroad, but also ethnic Germans whose forefathers had wandered from the Fatherland as much as centuries before. Through a radical readjustment of the geographic as well as the demographic map of Europe, German blood was to be consolidated.

The Slovene territory occupied by Germany in April, 1941, was scheduled to be included legally in the Greater German Reich. It was the last of several additions to the German Lebensraum carried to various stages of incorporation under Hitler: Austria, fully amalgamated in 1938; Bohemia and Moravia, included as a Protectorate in 1939; the western section of Poland, incorporated in 1939; and Alsace, Lorraine and Luxembourg, occupied in 1940 and scheduled for incorporation. As central Europe was thus consolidated, Upper Carniola within Gau Carinthia and Lower Styria within Gau Styria became frontier zones at the southernmost extension of Greater Germany. (See Map IV.)

Immediately upon their conquest of Yugoslavia, the Nazis began a program of germanization (Eindeutschung) in Slovenia to carry out the



Map IV. Slovenia as an Outpost of the Third Reich.

Führer's directive that the land be made German once again. How the Nazis adapted their resettlement (Umsiedlung) program to Slovenia and the Slovenes will be the major consideration of this chapter, since resettlement was the most far-reaching as well as most dramatic aspect of germanization. Among questions to be investigated are the following: What was the administrative organization of the Nazi occupation? How were the Nazis able to justify the acceptance of some Slovenes as Germans? What were the original plans for the transformation of Slovenia into a German land? What actions were actually carried out?

Although Upper Carniola was attached to Carinthia, and Lower Styria to Styria, the Slovene provinces were to be administered as separate units until they were actually incorporated into the Reich. The supreme command in each territory was exercised by a Chief of Civil Administration (Chef der Zivilverwaltung). Only in matters pertaining to the post, telegraph, railways and customs was there central direction from competent ministries in Berlin. For all else, each Chief of Civil Administration was responsible directly to Hitler through Hans Lammers, Chief of the Reich Chancellory. He was given an independent budget with the widest scope of power, in order to carry out the task of preparing the land for reattachment to the Fatherland.<sup>1</sup>

The special status of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria, as opposed to the rest of the Reich, was underscored by the fact that Reich Germans were separated from occupied Slovene territories by internal frontiers. Special travel permits into the area were required not only for private

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<sup>1</sup>Clifton J. Child, "Political Structure of Hitler's Europe," in Arnold and Veronica M. Toynbee, eds., Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1945: Hitler's Europe (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) pp. 99-100.

citizens but for Nazi party members as well.<sup>2</sup>

The Chief of Civil Administration in both Lower Styria and Upper Carniola was also Gauleiter and Reichstatthalter (provincial leader of the NSDAP and governor; only the first title was generally used) of Styria and Carinthia respectively. The Gauleiter of Styria, Dr. Siegfried Ueberreither, entered into his duties as Chief of the Civil Administration for Lower Styria on April 14, 1941. Franz Kutschera, acting Gauleiter of Carinthia at the time, took over as Chief of the Civil Administration for Upper Carniola between April 15 and 30 of the same year. On November 30, 1941, he was succeeded by the incoming Gauleiter of Carinthia, Dr. Friedrich Rainer, who had previously been Gauleiter of Salzburg.

The decision on when to incorporate Slovene regions into the Reich hinged upon the consummation of the germanization effort. Shortly after the occupation, a five-man commission toured Lower Styria and Upper Carniola to take an inventory on the new German acquisitions. The commission reported 615,000 people in Lower Styria and in the former Carinthian districts with the density of the Slovene population ranging from 78 to 100% in separate sections. In Upper Carniola, the population of 209,500 people was classed as 100% Slovenian. The German population of Maribor, the important German center, was set at 10% of the total.<sup>3</sup> Since the Nazi figures corroborated earlier studies which showed

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>"Zusammenfassender Bericht der Kommission die mit der Bestandsaufnahme in den Gebieten der Untersteiermark und Südkärnten beauftragt war," September 15, 1941, United States National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microcopy T-81, Records of the National Socialist German Labor Party (NSDAP), Roll 284, Frames 2407072-95. (Hereafter cited as T-81/284/2407072-95).

Slovenia as overwhelming South Slav, the job of making Slovenia a German land presented formidable problems.

In order to resolve this difficulty, Nazi pseudo-anthropology went to work. Although Slovenes were technically non-German, Nazi theorists had come up during the inter-war period with a unique theory by which a portion of them could be saved for Germandom. Many Slovenes, according to this train of thought, must be counted as a part of the whole German ethnic body because they were indifferent to their Slavic blood and had a "German outlook." These Slovenes formed a distinct race, for which the term Windisch was resurrected and given new status. The pro-German or half-germanized Wends might be viewed as members of a dying Slavic nation. Martin Wutte had first brought the distinction among Germans, Wends, and Slovenes to the attention of the world in 1929. Throughout the thirties, German nationalist propoganda was filled with references to the Wends and their eligibility for inclusion in the German realm.<sup>4</sup>

If it was difficult to separate Germans from Slovenes, as in the census of 1910, it was even more troublesome to separate Wends from Slovenes, for both spoke the same tongue. Helmut Carstanjen, a Nazi expert on race who wrote under the name Gerhard Werner, suggested in 1935 that the population of Lower Styria contained 400,000 Wends and 182,000 Slovenes. Later scholars subsequently repudiated the Windisch race theory as presumptuous. "One cannot objectively talk about any so-called 'Wends'...for the Wends never existed as a definite ethnic group," Fran Zwitter wrote. Even the Nazis gave up the term Windisch

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<sup>4</sup>Arnez, Slovenia in European Affairs, p. 87; Barker, The Slovenes of Carinthia, pp. 2-3, 41, 173, 275.

shortly after their advent to power in Slovenia.<sup>5</sup>

However untenable a differentiation between Wends and Slovenes may have been, the Nazis operated throughout their occupation on the assumption that some Slovenes were acceptable in the Reich and others were not. They referred often to "germanizable" (eindeutschungsfähig) and "non-germanizable" (nichteindeutschungsfähig) Slovenes. The criteria for judging the non-germanizable people seems to have degenerated into a process of isolating those who guarded their Slovene national consciousness, who didn't "look German", or who exhibited hostility toward the German occupation forces.

Recognizing that undesirable foreign elements were present in German-occupied Slovenia to disrupt the germanization process, the Nazis moved quickly to plan their removal. Ueberreither chaired a meeting in Maribor on May 6, 1941, at which it was decided to deport an estimated 220,000-260,000 Slovenes, nearly one-third of the total population, to Old Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Because transportation and other problems arose, Hitler was asked to reconsider his directive against deporting Slovenes to Croatia and to approve sending some Slovene evacuees there.<sup>7</sup> He complied with the request.<sup>8</sup>

As a consequence of these developments, a conference was held in Zagreb on June 4 under the chairmanship of SA-Obergruppenführer

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<sup>5</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 51-52; Zwitter, "The Slovenes and the Habsburg Monarchy," p. 171.

<sup>6</sup>Memorandum by Benzler, May 6, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, pp. 725-726.

<sup>7</sup>Ribbentrop to Hitler, May 16, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, pp. 830-831.

<sup>8</sup>Editor's footnote, DGFP. Series D, Vol. XII, p. 831.

Siegfried Kasche, German Minister in Croatia, with Ueberreither in attendance. Agreement was reached to deport a total of 175,000 Slovenes in three waves. About 5,000 "politically tainted" persons, principally members of the intelligentsia and the priesthood, who were acknowledged by the Nazis as prime agitators for Slovene nationalism, were to be sent to Old Serbia by July 5. Some 25,000 settlers, who had immigrated into Upper Carniola and Lower Styria after 1914, were to go to Croatia by August 30. Many of these people had come from the Italian littoral. Presumably they were more sophisticated in political warfare than was convenient for the Nazis. Finally, 145,000 peasants residing by the new southernmost frontier of Greater Germany, were to be cleared to Croatia by October 31. Although people falling into the third wave were not necessarily non-germanizable, the Nazis wanted a totally reliable population in this strategic zone. In order to make room for the incoming Slovenes within Croatia, a corresponding number of Serbs were to be deported from Croatia to Old Serbia.<sup>9</sup>

Kasche drew up a draft for a German-Croatian treaty on this transfer of population, but Berlin advised him that it was not necessary. The resettlement of the Slovenes was regarded as a war measure, for which speed was of the essence.<sup>10</sup> Property losses of the evacuees consequently would not be taken into consideration. Although the number of Slovenes to be deported was revised downward by 45,000-85,000 between May 6 and June 4, the Nazis still envisioned a massive action to clear

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<sup>9</sup> Report on Conference in Zagreb by Kasche, June 4, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 957.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum from Luther, July 17, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, pp. 157-158.



Upper Carniola and Lower Styria of Slavic influence.

With Slavs removed, Germans would take their place. The importation of Germans to fill the vacant Slovene hearths was expedited by the fact that Hitler's resettlement program, as introduced in his October 6, 1939, speech, was already in motion. For more than a year before the Yugoslav invasion, extensive resettlement had been undertaken in the annexed Polish areas of the East. A wholesale clearing of the non-German population had been accomplished there, and confiscated property was being distributed to people of German blood brought into the Reich from the Baltic states, Italy, Russia and the Balkins. Volksdeutschen and Reichsdeutschen being prepared for the East were still in sorting camps located all over inner Germany.

By the spring of 1941, many members of former German minority groups abroad were available in the Reich for settlement on Slovene territory. Among them were: South Tyroleans who had been attached to Italy in 1919 (by the German-Italian treaty of October 21, 1939); Bessarabians and North Bukovinans (by the Soviet-German treaty of September 5, 1940); and South Bukovinans and residents of Northern Dobruja (by the Rumanian-German treaty of October 22, 1940). The Nazis further anticipated that the Kočevje Germans would be moved from the Italian-held province of Ljubljana into German-occupied Slovenia.<sup>11</sup>

For the massive rearrangement of human material envisioned in the transformation of Slovenia, an enormous administrative network was required. It was standing ready in the Reich Commission for the Consolidation of the German Folkdom or RKFDV (Reichs Kommissariat für die

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<sup>11</sup>Memorandum by Benzler, May 6, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XII, p. 726.

Festigung deutschen Volkstums). Created by decree on October 7, 1939, the day after Hitler's world-electrifying proclamation on resettlement, the Commission was entrusted to Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. Himmler was charged with the triple responsibility of organizing the return to Germany of Reichsdeutschen and Volksdeutschen from various European countries, of eliminating harmful foreign national splinter groups within the Reich and of creating new German colonies by resettlement. His RKFDV system came to have unlimited authority in designating areas of resettlement and in screening populations to determine who might be German, who might be reeducated to Germandom, and who would be relegated to the status of "helots."<sup>12</sup> The future composition of Upper Carniola and Lower Styria was completely in the hands of the SS from the beginning.

The organizational lines of the RKFDV gradually emerged as SS officers were assigned by Himmler to carry out the provisions of the October 7 decree. On June 11, 1941, the Main Staff Office (Stabshauptamt) was formally constituted in Berlin under the leadership of SS-Obergruppenführer Ulrich Greifelt. Greifelt became in effect Himmler's executive officer for the whole proliferating RKFDV system. His office on the Kurfürstendamm was divided into six main departments (Hauptabteilung): (I) Planning or Human Allocation (Menscheneinsatz), (II) Administration of Resettler Installation, (III) Indemnity Payments, (IV) Finances, (V) Central Land Office and (VI) Colonization Activities.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Robert L. Koehl, RKFDV, German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 31-33, 247-249.

<sup>13</sup>Schechtman, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945, p. 272.

Many organizations cooperated with the RKFDV in resettlement work with the understanding that Himmler was the final authority on all Volkstum questions. Falling from its previous position of superiority, VOMI became an outright SS apparatus after 1940 for carrying out orders of the Reichsführer-SS.<sup>14</sup> The Central Immigration Office or EWZ (Einwandererzentralstelle) was a multi-agency processing organization for incoming resettlers. Its special train (Sonderzug) for carrying out the extensive paper work involved in mass population transfers was in effect a transportable office. Other branches of the SS playing prominent roles in the resettlement program, especially on the negative side involving deportation of undesirable foreign elements, were the Race and Settlement Main Office, or RuSHA (Rasse-und Siedlungshauptamt); the Security Service, or SD (Sicherheitsdienst); and the Reich Security Main Office, or RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt).<sup>15</sup> The German Resettlement Trustee Company, or DUT (Deutsche Umsiedlungs-Treuhandgesellschaft) was a bank formed by Himmler to provide resettlers coming into the Reich with property equivalent to that left behind.

The RKFDV made itself evident in German-occupied Slovenia immediately after the Yugoslav invasion. In both Upper Carniola and Lower Styria, the Chief of Civil Administration was designated as a representative of the Reichsführer-SS as Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Folkdom. Indeed, there are indications that Himmler himself was the author of the deportation plans. Already on April 18, he issued orders for the deportation of 260,000 to 280,000 Slovenes,

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<sup>14</sup>Brown, "The Third Reich's Mobilization of the German Fifth Column in Eastern Europe," p. 135.

<sup>15</sup>Child, "Political Structure of Hitler's Europe," p. 82.

figures approximating those used by Ueberreither on May 6. The expulsions were to be carried out in three waves corresponding to those decided upon on June 4.<sup>16</sup> RKFDV branch offices were opened in Bled (Veldes) and Maribor to handle affairs in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria respectively. The innumerable organizations affiliated with RKFDV all operated in Slovenia.

Immediately prior to initiating the Slovene deportation actions however, the Nazis decided to salvage those who were racially acceptable for re-germanization (Wiedereindeutschung). Instead of being sent to Croatia or Serbia, these people would be sent to VOMI camps within the Old Reich or within German boundaries as of 1937 (Altreich) for indoctrination and observation. A person was eligible for re-germanization if any German blood could be detected in him.<sup>17</sup> Himmler outlined the procedure to be used on June 4. Selection of re-germanizable people was to be made by representatives of RuSHA. The RKFDV offices in Maribor and Bled were charged with responsibility for their induction. All re-germanizables were to carry along necessary clothes, particularly work clothes and shoes, bedding and linens. They would be given cards bearing the notation "Citizenship Unclear (German?)" and stating that they had been racially examined by RuSHA.<sup>18</sup> Under this order, some 2,500 Slovenes were sent to Schelkingen near Ulm by the end of 1941.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>Child, "Political Structure of Hitler's Europe," p. 87.

<sup>18</sup>Anordnung 34/I: "Wiedereindeutschung von Personen fremder Nationalität aus Südkärnten und Untersteiermark," Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, June 4, 1941, T-81/279/2400646-7.

<sup>19</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation en Slovénie," p. 64.

While the expulsions were commenced during the second half of 1941, difficulties cropped up. Between June 6 and July 10, 1941, 6,720 Slovenes from both Upper Carniola and Lower Styria were sent to Serbia and 397 priests to Croatia, in what was presumably the first wave.<sup>20</sup> Trouble resulted almost immediately in Upper Carniola. Armed uprisings organized by the Partisan Liberation Front broke out there at the end of July and the first of August. The Nazis must have been aware of the popular unrest which the wholesale deportations were causing, because already on July 7 Greifelt modified the guidelines for evacuating undesirable elements from Upper Carniola upon the advice of Kutschera. Racially worthy members of the intelligentsia were to be sent to the Altreich for re-germanization. Settlers immigrating into Slovenia after 1914 needed not to be deported, unless they were active against the Germans. If they were not active against the Germans, but inconvenienced the germinization process nonetheless, they could be sent into the Altreich. Further, Slovenes within twenty kilometers of the Italian border could stay in their homes, if they posed no problems for germanization. Greifelt emphasized that these modifications did not in any way countermand the order to complete a combing out of undesirable foreign elements in Upper Carniola.<sup>21</sup> That the evacuation pace slackened during the second wave can be seen by the fact that only 10,200 Slovenes, apparently from Lower Styria alone, were sent to Croatia

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "Richtlinien für die Aussiedlung fremdvölkischer Elemente aus Südkärnten," SS-Brigadeführer Ulrich Greifelt, July 7, 1941, T-81/279/2400648.

between July 11 and September 27, 1941.<sup>22</sup>

Himmler drastically curtailed the third wave of the evacuation program on August 2. Only Slovenes residing on the frontier zone along the banks of the Sava and Sotla (Sattelbach) rivers, plus resident near Celje, would be deported, he ordered. About 65,000 rather than 145,000 Slovenes now comprised the third wave into Croatia: 45,000 from Lower Styria and 20,000 from Upper Carniola.<sup>23</sup>

Domestic unrest was not the only factor in hindering the large-scale ethnic rearrangement of Slovenia; active resistance in Croatia had reached such proportions that the government there was unwilling to accept any more Slovenes. In a report of September 22, Kasche expressed grave misgivings concerning the resettlement program. "Certainly, the resettlement creates unrest among the population in the Reich and in Croatia which in the long run will give new impetus and new strength to the disturbances," he wrote.<sup>24</sup> Although SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, who was in charge of RSHA, urged that the Croatian government be forced to accept the 45,000 Slovenes from Lower Styria, his demand was never imposed upon Zagreb.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the third wave of deportations into Croatia was never even partially implemented.

Although the resettlement action in the southeast was fraught with severe difficulties, the Nazis resolved to carry through the removal of

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<sup>22</sup>Ference, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 64.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 64, 80. Unsigned Minutes of Conference in Zagreb, September 22, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, p. 552.

<sup>24</sup>Memorandum by Kasche, September 22, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, p. 552.

<sup>25</sup>Heydrich to Ribbentrop, September 26, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, pp. 570-571. Telegram from Luther, October 13, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, p. 571.

Germans from the Italian province of Ljubljana into Greater Germany. Hitler's decision of August 2 to halt the return of the German minority from the southeast until the end of the war did not affect this particular action.<sup>26</sup> On August 31, an Italian-German treaty was signed for the relocation of Volksdeutschen from the province of Ljubljana. The German population in the province included 12,400 people in the Kočevje district, 1,500 people in Ljubljana and its environs and about 500 people in other scattered communities.<sup>27</sup>

In the fall, the Italians permitted the EWZ Sonderzug to enter their territory for registration of these prospective resettlers.<sup>28</sup> Of the 11,756 Kočevje residents recorded as opting for resettlement within the Reich, 11,113 were given a "ST" (Steiermark) classification, indicating that they were to move into the frontier zone of Lower Styria where they were to be fully compensated for their property left behind. This action was to be completed between October 23 and December 3, 1941. Less reliable settlers, who numbered 562, were classified "A" for transport into the Altreich. They were to be given employment and Reich bonds for any lost possessions. Only 81 Germans of Kočevje received the "S" classification for "special case" (Sonderfall), which meant that there were doubts about their loyalty, race or nationality and that they were unacceptable to the Reich.

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<sup>26</sup>Memorandum by Official of the Department for German Internal Affairs, August 7, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, p. 295.

<sup>27</sup>"Einteilung des Gebietes Gottschee Ortsbezirke," October 20, 1941, T-81/306/2433960.

<sup>28</sup>"Abschlussbericht "über die Erfassung der Deutschen in der Gottschee und im Gebiet der Stadt Laibach durch die Einwandererzentralstelle," December, 1941, T-81/306/2433592-680.

The EWZ registered a total of 1,280 German resettlers in the Ljubljana area and other scattered communities. Of these individuals, 819 were given a "K" (Kärnten) classification for settlement primarily in Upper Carniola. Another 395 were classified "A", while only 41 were given the "S" rating.

Since Slovenes could no longer be deported to Croatia, the Nazis were faced with the urgent problem of how to make room on the Lower Styrian frontier for the Kočevje immigrants. On October 18, Himmler ordered that the Styrians on the Sava-Sotla border be sent to VOMI camps in the Altreich for possible re-germanization. He urged that these Slovenes be treated well, since the majority of them were probably re-germanizable. Aware that the Kočevje detachments were soon to arrive, Himmler urged speed.<sup>29</sup> Although he called them Styrians, many of the evacuees were actually Carniolans, for the Sava-Sotla frontier zone was largely the ninety-kilometer strip added to Lower Styria from Lower Carniola in April, 1941.

Two days after Himmler's order, placards were placed in the area to announce the coming deportations. Slovenes were told that they might take along clothes, bedding, money and valuables. If they did not resist the action and if they fulfilled their obligations in their new locations, they would be compensated for property left in Slovenia.<sup>30</sup>

Between October 23, 1941, and June, 1942, about 35,000 Slovenes

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<sup>29</sup>Anordnung 53/I: "Absiedlung der Untersteiermärker aus dem Save-Sotla-Streifen," Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, October 18, 1941, T-81/279/2400650-2.

<sup>30</sup>Text des Plakates, mit dem die Aussiedlung der Slowenen im Ranner Gebiet angekündigt wurde," October 20, 1941, T-81/306/2434232-3.



were transferred into inner Germany, where they were never compensated for their property losses.<sup>31</sup> Most of these people were from the Lower Styrian frontier, since the number of Slovenes cleared from Carinthia, after the deportations into Serbia and Croatia ceased, did not reach beyond 300 families. Carinthian reports reveal that 947 Slovenes had been sent to the Altreich in April, 1942, the month when at least two-thirds of the deportations occurred, and that the police action clearing Upper Carniola was completed within the following three months.<sup>32</sup> The population transfers under Carinthian authorities, in addition to being on a much smaller scale than those in Lower Styria, were also more humane, in that families were kept together.

The difference in the extent of the resettlement program in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola can be attributed to the difference in resistance in the two regions. Guerrilla forces in Upper Carniola, already in operation in the summer of 1941, gained real strength after the spring of 1942 and harassed the Nazi occupiers constantly. In Lower Styria, the first general resistance materialized only in the spring of 1943. The more effective Nazi rule in Lower Styria can be explained by the facts that the Germans coveted the territory more, that they were better organized to intimidate the population there, and that they had a more unified and larger German minority upon which to base their

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<sup>31</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," p. 65.

<sup>32</sup>Barker, The Slovenes of Carinthia, pp. 230-232. SS-Standartenführer Alois Maier-Kaibitsch to SS-Oberführer Kreuz, July 15, 1942, T-81/279/2400405-6. SS-Gruppenführer und General-leutnant der Polizei to SS-Gruppenführer Ulrich Greifelt, August 7, 1942, T-81/279/2400538.

occupation.<sup>33</sup> Patently, the difference in the intensity of the nationality struggle in Lower Styria and Carniola, evident in Habsburg days, was still operative in more modern times.

In view of the popular unrest, the expulsion of the Slovenes for purposes of ethnic reconstruction terminated as a viable program during the summer of 1942. Several thousand Slovenes were sent into the Altreich from that time until liberation, but these actions were taken largely as reprisal measures upon relatives of known partisans or executed hostages. The last vestiges of resettlement for germanization manifested itself in the pathetic collection of racially acceptable children of partisans. Those under three years of age, numbering between 600 and 900, were taken into inner Germany for adoption into German families.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the return of some 6,000 Croats in Slovenia to Croatia was negotiated in 1943.<sup>35</sup> Whether this agreement was carried into effect is questionable. But there was no more talk of dumping significant sectors of the Slovene population outside the Slovene homeland to make room for incoming Germans.

Considerable confusion exists concerning the total number of Slovenes forced from their homes by the Nazis. Many fled on their own into the province of Ljubljana and Croatia to escape the harsh Nazi rule. In September, 1941, German officials estimated that about 17,000 Slovenes had entered Croatia voluntarily, but admitted that such figures

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<sup>33</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 76-77, 79-80, 89.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 106. Koehl, RKFDV, German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945, p. 220.

<sup>35</sup>Schechtmann, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945, pp. 441-442.

could not be determined with anything approaching accuracy.<sup>36</sup> Without doubt, unregulated evacuation from Slovenia clouded even further unconfirmed reports on actual deportations from the troubled land. Many discrepancies among reported figures exist, some of which reach as high as 160,000.<sup>37</sup> Most figures cited for this study come from the official Yugoslav report on the Nazi occupation in Slovenia by Ferenc, and his assertion that 35,000 Slovenes were transported to the Altreich between October 23, 1941, and June, 1942, is corroborated in the captured Nazi documents. A report on resettlers from Lower Styria as of June 12, 1942, showed the reception of 30,839 Slovenes in resettlement camps.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Unsigned Minutes of Conference in Zagreb, September 22, 1941. DGFP, Series D, Vol. XIII, p. 553.

<sup>37</sup>Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time, p. 204, claims that 60,000 women and children were put on freight cars and dumped in Serbia. A. E. Moodie, "Italo-Yugoslav Boundary," Geographical Journal, Vol. CI (1943), p. 54, reports that over 160,000 Slovenes were deported to Germany and former Poland. Eugene Michel Kulischer, Displacement of Population in Europe (Montreal: International Labour Office, 1943), p. 79, says that 56,000 Slovenes were sent to Croatia and Serbia. Bernard Newman, The New Europe (New York: MacMillan, 1943), p. 323, claims that 150,000 Slovenes were deported to Serbia. Schechtman, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945, p. 244, writes that 120,000 Slovenes were deported or fled to Serbia, Germany or Italian Slovenia. Lilian F. Gray, "The Martyrdom of the Slovenes," Contemporary Review, Vol. CLXIII (1943) pp. 110-111, gives a confirmed report that 85,000 Slovenes had been deported into Germany and a Red Cross report that 31,000 people were sent to Serbia. Louis Adamic, Inside Yugoslavia (Ridgefield, Conn.: Acorn, 1942), p. 4, claims 100,000 Slovenes were shipped to Serbia and Croatia. Arnez, Slovenia in European Affairs, pp. 88-91, acknowledges that the statistical reports conflict.

<sup>38</sup>"Umsiedler aus der Untersteiermark in Lagern," Scherzer, June 12, 1942, T-81/270/2390029. The Slovenes were sent to various parts of Germany as follows:

Baden - 4,540	Lower Silesia - 7,869
Bavarian Ostmark - 769	Saxony - 5,678
Brandenburg - 1,799	Thuringen - 2,830
Franconia - 1,015	Wuerttemberg - 6,339

Total: 30,839

In sum total, then, the Germans cleared systematically about 55,000 Slovenes from their area of occupation.

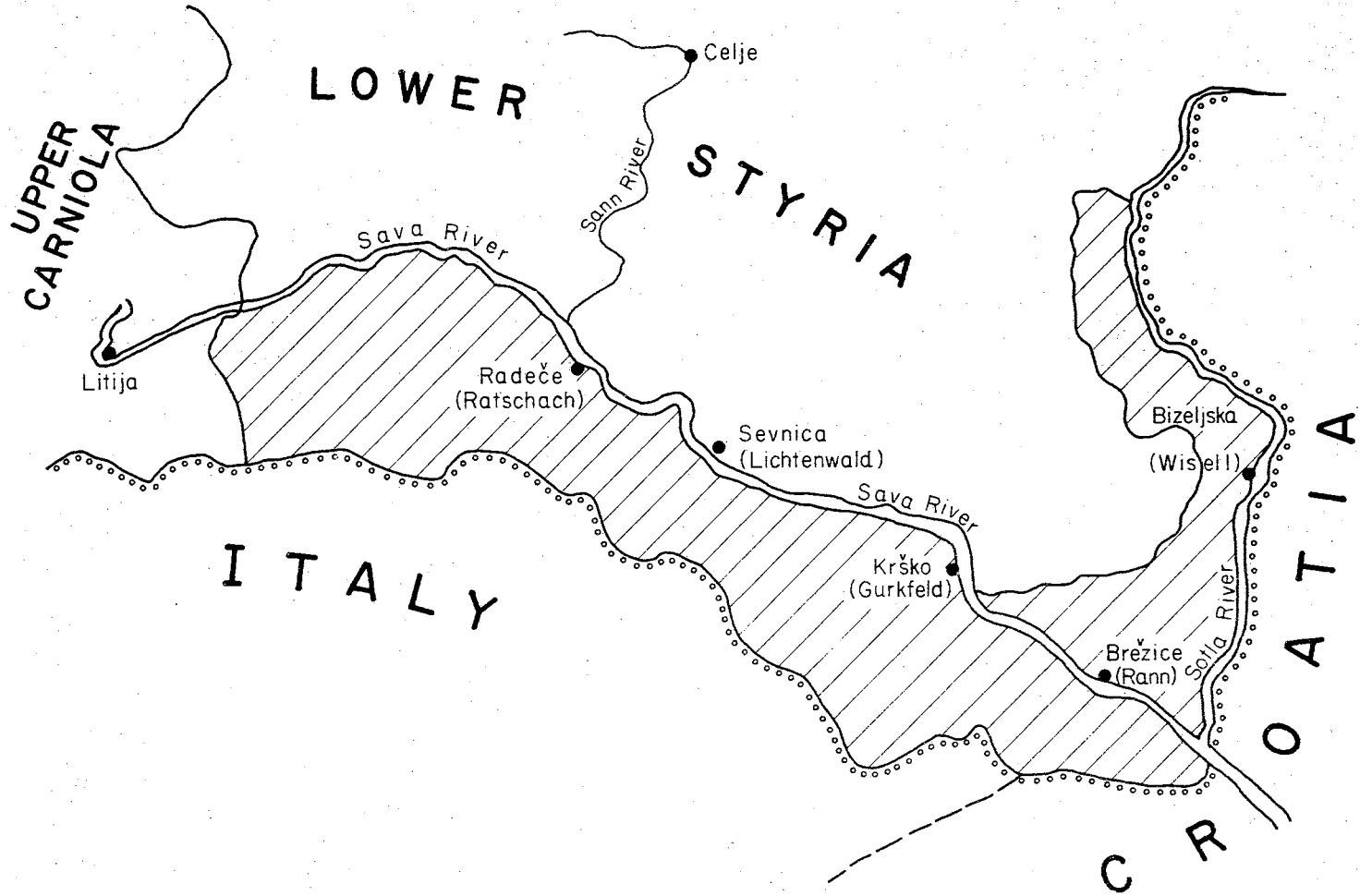
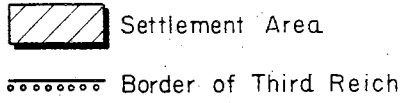
German migration into cleared homesteads followed hard on the heels of the deportations. Although the early Nazi plan for the transplantation of 145,000 Slovenes with strong German elements along the frontier went awry, the RKFDV in Lower Styria worked diligently to create a model border settlement zone along the Sava-Sotla strip. It came to be called by the Nazi bureaucracy "Settlement Area A." (See Map V.) Between November, 1941, and July, 1942, nearly 13,000 Kočevje settlers were moved into the region in twenty-five detachments which were designated with typical Nazi bombast as Stürme to denote their quasi-military role as vanguards of the German race.<sup>39</sup> These vanguards had been created by local chiefs of the Kočevje Kulturbund, after the organization had been dominated by the Nazis in 1938. The vanguards were divided on a geographical basis, and each was subdivided into various groupings for men, women and children. For example, a political organization, called the Mannschaft or team, was formed in each vanguard for men from 21 to 50 years of age.<sup>40</sup>

The Nazis attempted to simulate conditions of their former homeland for the incoming settlers along the Sava-Sotla border. Since the Kočevje Germans were spared a waiting period in resettlement camps, their first assignments were temporary. Necessary adjustments would be forthcoming later. The 1003 immigrants from the industrial sector of

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<sup>39</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation en Slovénie," p. 66. "Erläuterungen zum Besiedlungsplan des Siedungsgebietes A in der Untersteiermark," SS-Sturmbannführer Laforce, May 10, 1942, T-81/284/2406856-944.

<sup>40</sup>"EWZ Abschlussbericht," T-81/306/2433592-680.



Map V. Settlement Area A.

the town of Kočevje (Sturm I) were accordingly sent to Brežice (Rann), Krško (Gurkfeld), Radeče (Ratschach) and Sevnica (Lichtenwald) to be tradesmen. Since the rest of the Kočevje repatriates were peasants, they were given agricultural property all over Settlement Area A.<sup>41</sup> Three former Slovene homesteads were combined to make one new German farm in an effort to correct uneconomical fragmentation of the land.<sup>42</sup>

Among the new residents were established small enclaves of ethnic Germans from South Bukovina, Bessarabia, the Dobruja and South Tyrol. The Bessarabian Volksdeutschen, made up of wine growing families from a region by the Black Sea, were settled near Bizeljsko (Wisell). Numbering 507 people, they were deemed suitable as protectors of a border zone because of long experience against a French majority in their former home. Unfortunately, their heavy accents made their German incomprehensible in Lower Styria. The Volksdeutschen from the Dobruja, comprising 410 members of wine growing families, were given land near Buče (Fautsch). About 80 South Tyrolean families, experienced as fruit and wine growers, were settled near Sevnica. Finally, a few expert hand workers from South Bukovina were also included in the new German community.<sup>43</sup> All told, over a thousand additional ethnic Germans joined the Kočevje group in Settlement Area A.

The Nazis were quite solicitous of the Volksdeutsch settlers in many ways. Women welfare workers met Kočevje immigrants as they arrived via train in their new location. One such woman, stationed in Krško in

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<sup>41</sup>"Besiedlungsplan des Siedlungsgebietes A," T-81/284/2406856-944.

<sup>42</sup>Schechtman, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945, p. 244.

<sup>43</sup>"Besiedlungsplan des Siedlungsgebietes A," T-81/284/2406856-944.

the winter of 1941-42, reported that some of the resettlers she escorted to their homesteads, which she called winter quarters, were appalled at how bleak and spartan they were. They were cheered, however, with a kind word and decided to make the best of things.<sup>44</sup> Another welfare worker visited the Bessarabians in the same period and found them disgruntled about their property compensations.<sup>45</sup>

The RKFDV Main Staff Office in Berlin tried to protect the German residents of the Sava-Sotla strip from unpleasant contacts with former owners of the property they now occupied. A rule was issued that members of the uprooted Styrian border population were absolutely forbidden to return to the area.<sup>46</sup> Further, special courses in maternal and child care were provided for the Kočevje women.<sup>47</sup> The health and happiness of the German vanguards on the border was of utmost concern to Hitler's lieutenants.

With ludicrous detail, Nazi bureaucrats occupied themselves with projecting elaborate schemes for the absorption of the Volksdeutsch population. SS-Sturmbannführer Laforce, who was associated with the RKFDV system in Lower Styria, submitted a plan for the reorganization of

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<sup>44</sup>"Bericht über die Betreuungsarbeit bei der Umsiedlung der Gottscheer Volksgruppe," Ansiedlerbetreuerin Martha Weizenhöfer, no date, T-81/284/2406851-2.

<sup>45</sup>"Tätigkeitsbericht über die Gottscheer Umsiedlung," Ansiedlerbetreuerin Emilie Tribusch, no date, T-81/284/2406853-4.

<sup>46</sup>Dr. Stier to Pg. See, February 3, 1942, T-81/279/2400529-31. Dr. Stier to Gauleiter Uiberreither, June 1, 1942, T-81/279/2400544-6.

<sup>47</sup>"Tätigkeitsberichte über die Mütterschulungsarbeit von Ende Juli bis Ende September 1942 im Ansiedlungsgebiet der Untersteiermark," Schwester Marga Sessner, September 20, 1942, T-81/284/2406841-2.

Settlement Area A in May, 1942.<sup>48</sup> Analyzing the Kocevje settlers vanguard by vanguard, with many maps and charts, Laforce tried to perfect the simulation of conditions in their new homes to those they had left behind. For the peasant population, he took into consideration such factors as general landscape features, fertility of the soil, crops raised, home industrial skills, location of neighboring communities and transportation facilities to towns or cities. For the small urban group, he correlated vocational ability with job opportunities in the Reich.

On the basis of his study, Laforce recommended that 60% of the Kocevje settlers stay where they were and that the remainder be transferred to new locations more comparable to their previous homes. Admitting that Sturm II, which had formerly possessed rich land, simply could not be given comparable soil in Settlement Area A, he nonetheless decided that they should remain in the quarters initially assigned to them. Laforce suggested that Sturm XVIII be broken up and its members scattered all over the settlement area, because there had been too much inbreeding in the group in the past. When the reorganization of the Sava-Sotla strip would be complete, the Kocevje settlers would have 47% of their old neighbors. From March, 1942, to November, 1943, twenty-one meetings of the RKFDV settlement office in Maribor were held, usually under the chairmanship of Ueberreither, to carry into effect many of Laforce's recommendations.<sup>49</sup> The case of Settlement Area A is interesting in illuminating the Nazi "scientific" approach to population

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<sup>48</sup>"Besiedlungsplan des Siedlungsgebietes A," T-81/284/2406856-944.

<sup>49</sup>"Berichte I-XXI über die Sitzung des Ansiedlungsstabes," March 19, 1942-November 17, 1943, T-81/285/2407726-882.



manipulation.

Since the evacuation operation in Upper Carniola was so small, the RKDFV officers in Bled were hampered in carrying out a resettlement program. They felt frustrated they had been allotted such a small scope for action. One wrote a strongly worded memorandum to the effect that the germanization of Upper Carniola could not be accomplished in terms of importing a hundred German families but in terms of a thousand such families. He recognized that much blood would be shed in the process, but deemed that one should get on with the task regardless. Proposing that 500 families should be settled in Upper Carniola by the end of 1942, he counseled that the tempo of resettlement be quickened in the next year.<sup>50</sup>

Recognizing that ethnic Germans immigrating into former Yugoslav territory in South Carinthia would be put under great strain, RKFDV officers carefully scrutinized populations to find appropriate material for the area. The Bled office reported to Rainer in July, 1942, that the following settlers were available: about 5,000 Volksdeutschen from Bukovina; 20,000 Bosnian Germans who were not at all reliable politically; between 10,000-20,000 settlers from Lorraine, of whom only a few would be suitable; about 1,000 Kočevje Germans, for whom there was no room in Lower Styria; and 670 South Tyroleans. Berlin acknowledged that these groups would not provide enough political leadership for Upper Carniola and that the ideal solution would be the importation of

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<sup>50</sup>"Grundsätzliche Gedanken und Vorschläge für die Durchführung der Aufgabe des RKF," Dipl. Ing. Nimpfer, August 1, 1942, T-81/279/2400519-22.

trustworthy Germans from Carinthia proper.<sup>51</sup> After perusing the list of prospective settlers, Rainer approved the Bukovinans, Kočevje Germans and South Tyroleans, expressed skepticism about the Bosnians, and showed interest only in industrial workers from Lorraine.<sup>52</sup>

The RKFDV bureaucrats in Carinthia, as their counterparts in Lower Styria, engaged in methodological population planning. During the summer of 1942, they were preparing a master plan to reorganize the "folk politics" (Volkspolitik) of Upper Carniola, so that the land would become German again in the best way possible. Rural and industrial areas were being identified as key points of accelerated germanization.<sup>53</sup> Many statistical studies on the order of that by Laforce were undertaken. For example, an attempt was made to indicate where South Bukovinan Volksdeutschen should be placed so that their new surroundings would be similar to those in their homeland.<sup>54</sup>

All told, very few ethnic Germans were established on Slovene soil attached to Carinthia. In June, 1942, 592 Volksdeutschen from the province of Ljubljana were reported in both Carinthia and Upper Carniola. The rest of the 1,280 Germans registered by the EWZ were scattered in Styria and other parts of the Reich.<sup>55</sup> Upon arrival in Upper Carniola, many of the Ljubljana immigrants were located in "resettler homes" such

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<sup>51</sup>Dr. Friedl to Gauleiter Rainer, July 20, 1941, T-81/279/2400534-5.

<sup>52</sup>Dr. Friedl to Dr. Stier, July 23, 1942, T-81/279/2400536-7.

<sup>53</sup>SS-Gruppenführer und General-leutnant der Polizei to SS-Gruppenführer Ulrich Greifelt, August 7, 1942, T-81/279/2400538.

<sup>54</sup>"Erklärungen zu den Ortsbereichen der Südbuchenländer," Dr. Kurbisch, August 20, 1942, T-81/279/2400476-7.

<sup>55</sup>"Übersichtlicher Bericht über die Umsiedlung aus der Provinz Laibach," June 30, 1942, T-81/306/2433892-3.

as resort hotels, where they were very uneasy.<sup>56</sup> In addition, 412 South Tyrolean artisans were reported settled in "liberated" Slovene homesteads in Upper Carniola.<sup>57</sup>

The germanization of Slovenia took courses other than that of re-settlement. Slovenes had to be convinced that they were members of the great German national community. Indeed, the Nazis told the Lower Styrians that they were not Slovenes at all, but "Styrian patriots."<sup>58</sup> Efforts to erase Slavic consciousness in the population included measures to prohibit use of the Slovene language and to impose German, the control of the educational system, and the establishment of local organizations to assimilate natives into the Reich.

The German linguistic offensive took many forms. German was declared the only official language after the occupation began. Despite this decree, the use of Slovene in the mass was not immediately prohibited for "psychological reasons." Signs were changed from Slovene to German, names and surnames rendered in their German forms, and about two million Slovene books confiscated. Slovenes were forced to take short courses in the German language. Between 1941 and 1943, over 300,000 people were registered in such courses in Lower Styria, and some 90,000 in Upper Carniola.<sup>59</sup> Despite all these efforts, the Slovenes still spoke their own tongue in both provinces.

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<sup>56</sup>"Lage in den Oberkrainer Umsiedlerheimen der Laibacher Umsiedler," April 8, 1942, T-81/279/2400281-2.

<sup>57</sup>Schechtmann, European Population Transfers, 1939-1945, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup>Rafal Lemkin, Axis Rule in Occupied Europe (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), p. 245.

<sup>59</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 66-67, 76, 94-95, 97.

The Slovene educational system was placed completely under German direction. After the invasion, 1,235 German elementary teachers arrived in Lower Styria and 260 in Upper Carniola to organize German schools. The principal subjects taught to Slovene pupils were the German language, the biography of Hitler, singing, and physical education. Organizations were closely connected with these schools to indoctrinate with Nazi ideas the youth of both sexes between the ages of 14 and 20.<sup>60</sup> Because the Slovene intelligentsia was so nationalistic and dangerous to German aims, the Nazis restricted higher education for Slovenes severely. University students from Upper Carniola, for instance, were permitted to study only in the Reich and only with clearance through the RKFDV. They were closely checked for their political views and their progress toward germanization.<sup>61</sup>

Two separate organizations were established in May, 1941, in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola for the adult populace of Slovenia acceptable to the Germans. The Styrian Homeland Union (Steierische Heimatbund) was led by SA-Oberführer Franz Steindl. All 10,818 members of the Kulturbund in Lower Styria were inducted into the new group, and command posts went to former Kulturbund members. Dissention arose among the Nazi chiefs about the composition of the Carinthian Folk Union (Kärntner Volksbund). With the agreement of Rainer, it was formally subordinated to the NSDAP in December. A local militia (Wehrmannschaft) was associated with both organizations.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-76.

<sup>61</sup> "Hochschulstudium der Oberkrainer," September 23, 1942, T-81/279/2400548-52.

<sup>62</sup> Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 67-69, 73-74, 77.

Belonging to the Heimatbund or Volksbund was considered a prerequisite for German citizenship. Definitive members were automatically granted full citizenship (deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit), while temporary members were given a qualified citizenship status (deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit auf Widerruf). The distinction between these two categories was based on the degree of German nationality exhibited by various members. With the bestowal of some form of citizenship, Slovenes were liable to serve in the German Army. Military conscription was introduced in Lower Styria in March, 1942, and in Upper Carniola in July.<sup>63</sup>

Following the pattern noted earlier, the Nazis were more successful in Lower Styria than in Upper Carniola regarding these organizations. In order to pacify his territory in the fall of 1942, Rainer decided to grant temporary membership in the Volksbund to the widest possible extent. He urged that a last political examination be made of the populace in Upper Carniola to insure the reception of only reliable elements into its ranks.<sup>64</sup> Membership in the Volksbund reached 97% of those eligible, actually two percent more than that in the Heimatbund. Such statistics are deceptive, however, because many Slovenes were motivated to join the organization solely out of fear. The effectiveness of their military affiliates forms a sounder base for comparison between the Volksbund and the Heimatbund. The Wehrmannschaft in Upper Carniola had disintegrated by early 1942, while the same group in Lower Styria was operative and formidable until the spring of 1944.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 72, 84.

<sup>64</sup>"Richtlinien für die Ausfolgung der vorläufigen Mitgliedskarten," Gauleiter Rainer, September 21, 1942, T-81/279/2400511-2.

<sup>65</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 69, 90, 93.

Since the Nazis had been unable to carry through their plans to deport large numbers of undesirable Slovenes, they had to absorb many within their system of occupation. All those people who were not acceptable to the Heimatbund or Volksbund were designated as wards of the German Reich (Schutzangehörige des Deutschen Reiches). With complete control over their lives, the government placed them in hard labor. The 80,000 wards in Lower Styria presented such enormous problems that the Nazi authorities at one point considered their sterilization. Work camps, not unlike concentration camps in many respects, were opened all over the province to accommodate them. The wards were less troublesome in Upper Carniola only because the Nazi overlords in this region were never able to distinguish them from citizens with temporary title.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to the germanization program within Slovenia, a re-germanization effort was instituted in VOMI camps in the Altreich for Slovene inmates. As the Slovenes were first brought into the camps in late 1941, an order was issued by the Propaganda Office in Berlin to treat them like Volksdeutschen.<sup>67</sup> However, a differentiation was gradually made between re-germanizable and non-germanizable Slovenes. Members of the former group carried the "A" classification on their cards and were able to live outside the camps under supervision of the police. Non-germanizable Slovenes, who were classed as foreigners, had to live in the camps, although they were issued passes for work outside.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 72-73.

<sup>67</sup> Pomplun to Reichspropagandaamt Bayerische Ostmark, November 22, 1941, T-81/270/2389996.

<sup>68</sup> "Arbeitseinsatz von Slowenen," October 23, 1941, SS-Standartenführer Kreuz, T-81/279/2400708-9.

Slovenes were judged the most difficult of all the inmates in VOMI camps. Some were hanged for running away. Of the 35,000 taken into the Altreich only 16,000 were finally judged re-germanizable.<sup>69</sup>

The resettlements carried out in 1941 and 1942, upon which the germanization of Slovenia was primarily founded, developed on a day-to-day, emergency basis. Although the Nazis put a "scientific" veneer on this endeavor, they were unable to proceed on rational lines. Beginning with the assumption that one-third of the Slovene population was unworthy for inclusion in their Lebensraum, they eventually granted some form of German citizenship to much of this group. Further, they accepted as possible Germans the very people originally scheduled for deportation outside the Reich. Almost overnight, Slovenes seemed to be elevated from Slavic rejects into Volksdeutschen. With an unstable and truncated resettlement program, other facets of germanization in Slovenia could hardly make much of an imprint.

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<sup>69</sup>Koehl, RKFDV, German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945, p. 219.

## CHAPTER V

### A POSTSCRIPT ON THE NAZI PLAN FOR SLOVENIA

On August 12, 1942, Gauleiter Ueberreither made a public announcement that the resettlement activities in the border zone of Lower Styria, as ordered in October, 1941, were ended.<sup>1</sup> This date can be taken as a termination of the entire resettlement program for Slovenia, because the Sava-Sotla strip was the major site of the program in the first place and no others were developed. Quite prematurely, the Nazis had to close out the most crucial aspect of the conversion of Slovenia into an impregnable frontier zone for the German race. After fifteen months of German rule, it was clear that Slovenia would not become the outpost of the Third Reich that Nazi planners had envisioned.

Without the introduction of large numbers of reliable Germans, the germanization effort depended largely upon the temper of the Slovene populace. Neither in Upper Carniola nor in Lower Styria were the Nazis satisfied with the fruits of their labors. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Nazi occupation of Upper Carniola, Gauleiter Rainer reported that Slovenes still insulted Reich Germans there. Steindl, speaking at about the same time as head of the Styrian Heimatbund, indicated that the political enthusiasm of the people of Lower Styria had

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<sup>1</sup>"Kundmachung über die Beendigung der Um-und-Aussiedlung in der Untersteiermark," Štajerski Gospodar, August 15, 1942, T-81/306/2434211.



declined significantly.<sup>2</sup> More revealing than individual commentaries is the fact that neither Upper Carniola nor Lower Styria had yet been incorporated into the Reich. Orders to incorporate on October 1, then on November 1, 1941, were cancelled "for technical reasons of legislation," which was probably an euphemistic reference to the disturbances then current among the Slovenes.<sup>3</sup> Further, the incorporations never materialized. Officials in Bled and Maribor were fully aware early in the occupation that the major part of the Slovene population had been thoroughly alienated against German rule.

Another assessment of the initial germanization effort in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria may be garnered by an evaluation of the Nazi rule in the province of Ljubljana which was instituted late in 1943. The Nazis never attempted to change the ethnic composition of the population there. Perhaps this approach was mainly determined by the strong anti-German sentiment in the region and the unfavorable course of the war. Nonetheless, the overtones of the failures in Upper Carniola and Lower Styria must have had some bearing on the nature of this later occupation.

In September, 1943, after the fall of Mussolini made it militarily necessary, the Nazis took over the province of Ljubljana and included the area in the Adriatic Littoral Zone of Operations (Operationszone Adriatische Küstenland), along with Trieste, Istria and a portion of Venetia. Rainer, who received command of the zone as Supreme Commissioner (Oberster Kommissar), was charged with the important task of

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<sup>2</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 107-108.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-83.

keeping the enemy out and preventing a political vacuum to develop.<sup>4</sup>

Within the Adriatic Littoral Zone of Operation, former Yugoslav territory had been the scene of extensive anti-fascist resistance between 1941 and 1943. Under Italian administration, the province of Ljubljana had been governed in a relatively mild manner.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, harassment by Partisan forces had become so audacious that the Partisans even succeeded in assassinating Natlačen for his alleged collaboration with the enemy.<sup>6</sup> When the Germans took over, they found the Partisans in control of most of the region around Ljubljana.

Naming General Leo Rupnik, former mayor of Ljubljana, as head of the province, Rainer then proceeded to consolidate German strength in the area. Anti-communist Slovenes were enlisted in a Home Guard (Domobranci) under covert Nazi supervision to fight the Partisans. While exploiting the political divisions of the Slovenes in the province, the Germans never attempted to extirpate their Slavic consciousness. Slovenes were appointed to administrative positions, and the Nazis even entertained suggestions not only to reunify the territory of Carniola, but to enclose eventually all Slovenes in a Slovene province (Gau Slowenien) within the Reich.<sup>7</sup> The issue so crucial in Nazi-occupied Slovenia as of 1941-1942--whether a Slovene was germanizable or non-germanizable or re-germanizable--had no relevance in the enlarged Nazi-occupied Slovenia as of 1943-1945. Now it mattered only whether a

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<sup>4</sup>Child, "Political Structure of Hitler's Europe," p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Arnez, Slovenia in European Affairs, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup>Elisabeth Wiskemann, "Partitioned Yugoslavia," in Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1945: Hitler's Europe, p. 670.

<sup>7</sup>Ferenc, "Le Système d'Occupation des Nazis en Slovénie," pp. 112, 117.

Slovene was communist or anti-communist.

In assessing the reasons for Nazi failures in Slovene policies, a number of features are quite clear. In the first place, Berlin did not distinguish adequately among the nationalistic sentiments of the Slovene people as found in various regions. As the census of 1910 and the inventory of 1941 showed so clearly, German influence was unevenly distributed within their Slovene acquisitions. Why the Nazis expected to drag Upper Carniola with its strong Slavic orientation into the Lebensraum is difficult to understand. Significantly, they pretended that its residents were not Carniolans at all, but South Carinthians or Styrians. This irrational aspect of the Nazi approach to Slovenia was marked by the substantive difference between Nazi successes in Lower Styria and Upper Carniola.

The Nazis had required of the Slovenes far more than a mere acquiescence to foreign rule. Had they imposed only language decrees, school teachers, and organizations upon their subjects, their rule could have been accepted as conventional enough in the Eastern European experience. Indeed, the treatment of the Kočevje Germans by Slovene authorities in the interwar period had given ample material to the Nazi propaganda machine. But the heartless uprooting of thousands of innocents had never before been carried to such lengths. The question of whether Slovenia could be reconstructed or not extended beyond the realms of passivity or hostility to German rule. It had become one of general human compassion.

Harsh and irrational as the German occupation of Slovenia may have been, it was also undertaken under a military regime during a fierce world-wide war. In Lower Styria, where the Nazis had their greatest

strength among the Slovenes, German data on reprisals during the occupation is sobering: 14,216 civilians shot; 27,208 people tortured; 27,408 people arrested; and 21,069 people interned.<sup>8</sup> If a population's loyalty to the German ideal was wavering at best, such acts would hardly serve to bring its members into the fold.

In the last analysis, Slovene national conscience proved stronger than the Nazis supposed, but for reasons beyond provincial differences and humanitarian considerations. During their thousand years under German rule, the Slovenes may have been indifferent Slavs, but they never became Germans. Further, in spite of all the German fifth column activities, the disaffection of Slovenes within the borders of Yugoslavia, the vacillations of the Slovene leaders' approach toward Hitler, there was nothing in the recent past to indicate that the Slovenes would desert their Slavic heritage. They might possibly have accepted German rule as Slovenes, as they once did under the Habsburgs, but not as Germans. Hitler's dream of Slovenia as an outpost of the Third Reich must finally be judged as a colossal misreading of history.

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<sup>8</sup>"Information on the People's Liberation War in Yugoslavia," in Les Systèmes d'Occupation en Yougoslavie, 1941-1945, pp. 31-32.

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