

Under National-Socialist Rule (A Catholic Report)

Before and during the Balkan campaign, the German broadcasting station in Graz (southern Austria, capital of Styria) promised to the Slovenians [1] national and religious liberty. German troops occupied, on April 13, 1941, three fourths of the Slovenian territory, with a population of 820,000 Slovenians, who were considered "Volksdeutsche" (German Nationals in foreign countries.) 800 Jews were living in the territory. In May, 1941, the Nazis imposed a civilian administration which aims to annihilate Slovenian religious and national traditions. For 1,300 years the Slovenians have been living as national and religious units in the same territory. There are 2,200,000 Slovenians in the world. The figures for 1941 tell:

In Germany (by occupation)	970,000
In Hungary	45,000
In Italy	730,000
In United States	450,000

The Slovenians are one of the smallest, but most civilized nationalities in Europe; they supported a university in 1940, an Academy of Music with 200,000 students, several state theaters, an Academy of Science and Arts and 245 newspapers and magazines.

In May, 1941, Hitler`s orders to make South Styria as German as the other parts of Styria were carried out.

Catholicism, which played an important part in the resistance of the Slovenians against pressure and attacks on their national identity from the side of the Germans, the Italians and the Hungarians, was destined to annihilation by the Nazis.

The leader of the Heimatbund in Styria, Steindl [2], says:

"We have to pave the way in South Styria for a new mythical religion of blood and race, based on the old Germanic race."

There was never any question in the minds of the Nazis of the need of the destruction of both Catholics and Slovenian Nationalism. They questioned the method - but not the result. Should the Slovenians be annihilated, but of conversion of the Slovenians into "voluntary followers" of the Third Reich? They decided upon complete annihilation.

Occasionally the Germans try to change the minds of the Slovenians by propaganda, temptations or coercion; in general, they get rid of them through deportation and execution. They germanize not the population, but the soil. The German administration depopulates the region and settles Germans from the Reich. Only those Slovenians who show willingness to coordinate are left in the district. All remaining children and adolescents are put into nurseries and schools in order to separate them from the

influence of their parents.

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The major part of the population is sent to the Serbian part of Yugoslavia or to Germany proper and some, most likely, into eastern Europe. The deportation takes place in the border district of Northern Yugoslavia, 18 km wide, but it will be extended to about 50 km. Even the so-called "Volksdeutschen" are deported because the Nazis do not trust them because they have religious traditions and are tolerant.

In the beginning of the occupation, July 1941, almost all priests were imprisoned for weeks in camps. In the diocese of Maribor (Marburg) only 70 out of 270 churches were kept open, and 82 % of all priests had been driven away. In the diocese of Ljubljana (Laibach) out of 240 priests, only 9 old and sick ones were permitted to remain, but later also were imprisoned or deported. The ages of these priests were 90, 76 and 72 years. 210,000 people are without a priest. In both dioceses with a population of 750,000 and 618 priests, only 30 priests were permitted to stay. All church property has been confiscated. All religious orders, such as Capuchins, Minorites, Jesuits, Franciscans, Trappists, Salisians and Ursuline Sisters have been deported. All these deportations took place at night and with utter brutality. Because of mistreatment, some priests died, for example, the 76 years old Jesuit priest Zuzek [3]. In Maribor, a young Nazi beat a priest until he was willing to say: "I am a Slovenian "Pfaffe" (low word for a priest). Young Nazis frequently demanded a shoeshine from priests.

It is characteristic that Franciscan and Jesuit Brothers were forced to demolish the Serb-Orthodox churches. They had to do it in their garbs, which were ordinarily taken from them. The demolishing was filmed by the Nazis and then sent to Serbia in order to incite the Serbs against the Roman Catholic Slovenians. Frequently, priests had to join Communists and even criminals in cleaning latrines. Many priests were sent to Croatia. Some preached there, but later the Germans opposed such procedure.

In May, 1941, the following holy days were abolished: Epiphany, Ascension Day, Peter und Paul, Corpus Christi, Mary's Ascension, All-Saint's Day and Immaculate Conception. Sermons, prayers and hymns in the Slovenian language were suppressed. The Catholic libraries and organizations were robbed. Real estate belonging to the church was expropriated; also the property of the bishops and the monasteries (70). Relics and statues of saints were profaned. The Gestapo interrupted the holy mass; they came smoking and yelling into the church, stole blessed hosts and chalices and mocked at crucifixes. The monastery of the Trappists in Reichenburg was completely stripped in July. The chapel was transformed into a dancing hall, and another chapel dynamited. Baptisms and funerals could not be administered anymore by the church. There is a house to house search for prayer books; public adoration of the person of the "leader" takes place.

Mayors, teachers, professors, physicians, merchants, officials and many other respected citizens were imprisoned. All Slovenian schools, newspapers, signs were destroyed. People who are captured or deported are also expropriated. The well-to-do people suffered first. Some officials left signs stating: "expropriated as Slovenian national property", so legalizing the robbery. All deportees had to sign a paper in which they waived compensations. In case of objection, the husband was sent to Germany, the family to Serbia. Until harvest was in, the landowners were left on their farms. Then mass deportation started.

The life of laymen and priests in the concentration camps was martyrdom. Insults by Gestapo men and meager food were the order. Many victims died. In November, 1941, tens of thousands were driven from their homes. All intellectuals were evacuated regardless of age, health or pregnancy of a woman. Families were

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separated. Sometimes they were permitted to take ten marks; older persons are sent to Serbia or Croatia, younger people as labor slaves to Germany. Large transports started in Styria in April; in Carniola, in May and June. The Slovenians were left for days in sealed cars without food and water. There are testimonies of death because of starvation or of bleeding in cases of birth. The "Tagespost" [4] in Graz wrote, July 27, 1941: "All those who do not support a German victory and the German future have left the country voluntarily or involuntarily." An official order states that 30,000 intellectuals from Styria, and 4,000 from Carniola are to be deported to Serbia, and in addition, 65,000 peasants from Styria and 80,000 from Carinthia to Croatia, all together 180,000 persons as the first consignment.

Up to November, 1941, 95 % of all Slovenian priests, 84 % of all Slovenian engineers, 66 % of all professors, 45 % of all physicians and pharmacists, 20 % of all teachers, officials and attorneys have been deported.

The German people do not know about these procedures. The German papers wonder why the Slovenians should leave their fertile soil and go to Serbia. Germans who are settled at the evacuated farms, do not know that their predecessors have been forced to leave. Among the Slovenian peasants, many committed suicide with their whole families. Some lost their minds. In Serbia and Croatia, the deportees suffered from the lack of food and clothing. Many died. These people had been driven out, not only because of their nationality and because the Germans have no ability for colonization, but because of their faith. There are indications that many of these people have been deported to Poland and to Russia and also to Western Germany. Witnesses tell that Slovenian girls were tattooed with the mark "FM" (Freimaedchen) for free girl, meaning prostitute.

The first evacuations caused revenge acts and sabotage on the side of the remaining population. Only those who cooperated with the Germans were the target. The Germans answered with mass executions. In Carniola, more than 300 such murders took place. Whole villages have been set on fire. Women also have been assassinated. Gestapo men played with their victims before killing them in threatening them for hours with their pistols. The population was forced to witness these brutalities. Similar acts are reported from Serbia and Croatia. In Kraljevo and Kragujevac, in Serbia, 60 % of the male population have been massacred.

Re-Germanization

(Spiritual misery of Germans from the Baltic States)

The former Baltic territories [5] are combined into a Protectorate and General Gouvernement under the name of "Ostland" (Eastland). The German minority living there were settled in Poland as peasants and artisans. They were "modernized" and streamlined. They are sent to Poland as settlers and artisans. Those who were adaptable and young found themselves soon as "full Germans" in the army or in the Storm-Staffel (SS). The older people were first put into camps and minded by the SS. It is difficult to

prove the rumor that the SS was very much occupied with robbing the food provisions of the settlers. But food was not inferior. The main complaint concerned the attempt of the Nazis to spiritually coordinate these people who had been pioneers of Germanism in the East for centuries. The SS adheres spiritually to the Rosenberg **[6]** German faith. They are ordered to indoctrinate these people in what they call 100 % laicitate, by which they mean the

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acceptance of the "German Reichskirche", well known as the promotion of the adoration of the Fuehrer where the bible is substituted by "Mein Kampf". The Baltic peasants and artisans, who had preserved the ancient traditions of Lutherism in the form of Pietism and who had lived in an oldfashioned biblical way, were radically separated from their church. They were not permitted to baptize their children - a SS man performed a Nazi ceremony instead. Some, therefore, have smuggled their babies hidden among dirty laundry out of the camp to the next minister, who baptized them secretly.

Marriages were also performed by SS men under German rites, using "Mein Kampf" instead of the bible. No minister was admitted to funerals. A SS man made a speech, stating that this deceased person, sprung from German blood and soil, now returned to the German soil. Permanent lecturing was used in order to bring them up to the standard of the "Vordermann" (front man), the "Vordermann" being the SS man as the ideal whose attitude should be acquired by everybody. Whoever has been graduated from this training is then settled in Poland. One day they are brought to a Polish farm and put in as owners. The same vehicle which brought them there takes away the former Polish owner to an unknown destiny. The Poles are permitted only to take one day's provisions. The deeply religious Baltic peasants are opposed to these methods because they consider them unjust. They also are afraid of revenge. When I left my Baltic friends, they were homesick and could not understand why they were not given back their homes which the Russians took from them.

Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - *Fußnote iom Original: „Slavic minority in northern Yugoslavia and southern Austrian provinces of Styria, Carniola and Carinthia.“*
- 2 - *Franz Steindl (1911-1945), Stabschef der 9. SA-Brigade (1935), Organisationsleiter der NSDAP in der Gauleitung Steiermark (1938-1941), Führer des „Steierischen Heimatbundes“ (1941-1945), Führer der Wehrmannschaft Untersteiermark (1942-1945), Sonderstabschef des Volkssturms in der Untersteiermark (1944-1945).*
- 3 - *Alojzj (auch Aloysius) Zuzek (1865-1941), slowenischer jesuitischer Priester, Opfer des Nationalsozialismus (1941).*
- 4 - *„Tagespost“, in Graz herausgegebene, seit 1856 nachgewiesene Tageszeitung, während der NS-Zeit parteiamtliches Organ des Gaues Steiermark der NSDAP,*

erschien bis 1945.

5 - Fußnote im Original: "Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania."

6 - Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), Politiker und Ideologe des Nationalsozialismus, Hauptschriftleiter des „Völkischen Beobachters“ und Teilnehmer am Hitlerputsch (1923), Herausgeber der „Nationalsozialistischen Monatshefte“ und Veröffentlichung seines Buchs „Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts“ (1930), MdR (1930), Reichsleiter der NSDAP und Leiter des „Außenpolitischen Amtes“ der Partei (ab 1933), Beauftragter des Führers für die Überwachung der weltanschaulichen Schulung und Erziehung der NSDAP (ab 1934), Reichsminister für die besetzten Ostgebiete (1941-1945), beim Nürnberger Kriegsverbrechertribunal „als Urheber des Rassenhasses“ zum Tode verurteilt (1946).