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# MARIBOR: IN SEARCH OF THE CITY'S IDENTITY AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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## Introduction

Socio-political changes after the First World War fundamentally influenced the development of Maribor. The town of Maribor lost its previous economic and traffic position in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. The ethnical structure of population also changed. Officials, who were mostly German, emigrated, which also changed the social structure of the urban population.

New immigrants came into the town, mostly from the Primorje region, partly from Carinthia and from other provinces of the new state. People from the Primorje region were economic, ethnical, political emigrants and they left a considerable mark on various fields of the social and cultural landscape of Maribor after the First World War. They significantly contributed to the formation of the town's new identity.

## Socio-Economic Conditions in Maribor before the First World War

Through the military and education system Maribor acquired various traffic, administrative and judicial offices in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The consequence of this was the change of the rural appearance of the town. Factors such as Maribor's natural position, rural hinterlands, industry growth, lively commerce, developing trade, transportation, postal services and especially the railway contributed to this change. The position of the town along the new railway connection from Vienna to Trieste contributed to the construction of the outbuildings in the town – among others, the Southern Railways workshops

in Studenci. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic tensions between the Slovenians and the Germans barely existed. Members of both nations were active in the social and cultural life of the town, although at that time, the Slovenians presented only around 20 % of the whole population. Slovenian intellectuals were also active in German cultural circles. They were members of the Kazino theatre society and the German choir. German was the official and colloquial language of the citizens. Most of bourgeoisie barely spoke Slovenian, they communicated in German. German was considered as the language of higher classes. It was the official and school language. For easier communication, Slovenian intellectuals preferred to use German as their language of communication. Moreover, they spoke German often because fellow citizen did not master Slovenian.<sup>1</sup>

The statistics suggest that the result of the integration into the German cultural circles and the German economic power was the increase of population which was considered German (according to the spoken language). These statistics, however, are not quite realistic. Instead of the criterion of nationality, the criterion of the colloquial language, the so-called Umgangssprache, was used). The criterion of spoken language allowed for the political and economic pressure to influence immigrants in towns. They assumed the language of the majority in the environment in which they lived, therefore, German. Even the citizens who spoke little German were regarded as German. The population count thus did not show the real situation in the ethnic structure of the citizens of Maribor. The last Austrian count in 1910 found that Maribor had 22.653 members of the German speaking population, 3.623 members of the Slovenian speaking population and 1.519 others.

According to the criteria used, the Austrian statistics showed more German population in Maribor, but the Slovenian majority population in rural areas enclosing the German stronghold of the town of Maribor could not be hidden. The census in 1910 also showed that 58.9 % of the Maribor population were Slovenian-born. The figure shows that more than half of the pre-war Maribor population was of Slovenian origin.

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<sup>1</sup> Ivan Kejžar, "Zgodovina Slovanske čitalnice v Mariboru," [A Short History of Slavic Reading Club in Maribor] *Tabor*, May 21, 1922.

In spite of the Slovenian envelopment, the share of the Slovenian population declined. In 1880, it amounted to 18 %, in 1890 to 16.5 %, in 1900 it increased to 21 % and in 1910 it fell back to less than 14 %.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the increased German immigration to the Slovenian ground, the number of Slovenians in the town, and generally in Lower Styria, fell in percentage, especially in Maribor. Because of the emergence of new the German factories, more and more German officials, traders and craftsmen moved into the town. While in the 1850s, the Slovenian and German citizens lived in ethnically tolerant, but unequal coexistence, in the 1860s, when the restoration of the constitutional life in Austria enabled its people more freedom, this seemingly harmonious coexistence became more fragile. In 1880, Austrian Germans gave an initiative for the establishment of the German school society *Schulverein* to defend the economic and cultural centers in Slovenian Styria and to prevent the progress of Slovenians. In 1889, the Germans in Graz founded the organization for economic consolidation of the Slovenian-Styrian German *Südmark*. The purpose of both German societies was to germanise the Slovenians and to gain access to the Adriatic sea.<sup>3</sup>

### Relations between the Germans and Slovenians in Maribor and the Styrian Podravje region after the First World War

The Germans in Maribor did not remain still after Maister's defensive action. They demanded to join Maribor and its surroundings to Austria. Their demand was based on the assertion that Maribor mostly had a German population, whereas in the northern part of the Slovenian hills and in the Apače field there was an ethnically mixed population, which was influenced by the Styrian provincial patriotism. Moreover, they argued that there were economic reasons which dictated the integration of this territory to Austria, such as the transport connection

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<sup>2</sup> Dragan Potočnik, *Kulturno dogajanje v Mariboru 1918–1941* [Cultural Events in Maribor 1918–1941] (Maribor: Litera, 2003), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Dušan Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933–1941* [Nacism and Germans in Yugoslavia] (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1966), 94.

between Bruck, Villach, Maribor, Ptuj and Ormož and the electricity produced by the Drava power plants.<sup>4</sup>

Even the Südmark society and the *Deutscher Schulverein* did not remain inactive. They constantly pleaded for a plebiscite on the lost territory of Lower Styria. They tried to incite unrest among the population and convince the people of the region that the only thing waiting for them in the Yugoslav state was economic distress. Among many propaganda slogans there was also a call: "Do not sell our homeland and future to the Serbs!"<sup>5</sup>

After the annexation of the towns of Lower Styria to Austria, Graz became the centre of the German propaganda. There they printed a variety of propaganda literature. In 1919, the Academic senate of the University of Graz required the "Vitanje line" as the minimum state border, which went from Olševa through Smrekovec on Basališče by Vitanje and further east over the Konjiška mountain, the mountain Boč and the Rogaska mountain. The Austrian requests to carry out a plebiscite on the territory of the Slovenian Styria were rejected due to the opposition of the French delegation.<sup>6</sup>

The culmination of the anti-Yugoslav movement was reached on 27 of January 1919, when the American delegate Major Sherman Miles visited Maribor. The Germans who lived in Maribor tried to exploit this opportunity to show him the German character of the town. There was a tragic shooting that ended with the death of some demonstrators.

The St. Germain peace treaty with Austria on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1919 gave the town of Maribor and almost the entire territory of the former Dukedom of Styria, populated by the Slovenians, to the new state of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. As apparent from the article in the Marburger Zeitung on 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1919, some

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<sup>4</sup> Tone Ferenc, *Nacistična raznarodovalna politika v Sloveniji v letih 1941–1945* [Nazi Assimilation Policy in Slovenia in the years 1941–1945] (Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1968), 79.

<sup>5</sup> Historical Archives of Ptuj, Municipality of Ptuj 1919, box no. 240, file no. 14/131–919.

<sup>6</sup> Tone Zorn, "‘Deutsche Grenz wacht’ in razmejitev na Štajerskem v letih 1919–1922," [Deutsche Grenz wacht 'and demarcation of Styria in the years 1919–1922] *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 51 (1980): 165–180.

Germans in Maribor accepted the new political reality (some of them only temporarily), even though it was painful for them.<sup>7</sup>

Demands for a German Maribor became louder again with the rise of Nazism. In the article "*Unser deutsches Marburg*," which was published in the Viennese German national socialists "*Der Kampf*" in 1933, it was written that the Germans had not come to terms with the new situation in Lower Styria. The writer of the article wrote: "The Slovenians have occupied the town for fourteen years and the blossoming German society was forced into economic and cultural ruin."<sup>8</sup>

When the Slovenian government commissioner took over the authority in the town, they fired many German officials and replaced them with Slovenians. The need for local officials in the Slovenian government was filled by the immigrants who came from Slovenian Carinthia the Primorje region, which belonged to Italy and became a part of Austria after the plebiscite of 10th October 1920. In particular, the immigrants from the Primorje region made an indelible mark on the social events of this period.<sup>9</sup>

### Immigrants from the Primorje region and their contribution to the new identity of the town

The coastal emigration to Maribor began before the First world war for economic reasons. Some people from the Primorje region emigrated to Maribor also during the First world war. As a result of the military operations on the Soča River, they migrated into the hinterland of the Slovenian ethnic territory. The exact number of people from the Primorje region who came to Maribor in this period is unknown. In this first wave, they consisted of refugees from Gorizia and its surroundings. They settled into the hinterland of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, mostly in special camps.

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<sup>7</sup> "Unser deutsches Marburg," *Marburger Zeitung*, September 11, 1919.

<sup>8</sup> "Unser deutsches Marburg," *Mariborski večernik Jutra*, May 20, 1933.

<sup>9</sup> Miroslava Grašič, "Začetki delovanja primorskega emigrantskega društva Nanos v predvojnem Mariboru," [The beginnings of the Primorje Nanos emigrant association in the pre-war Maribor] *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 61 (1990): 23–35.

With the Treaty of Rapallo, Slovenians from the Primorje region were separated from the nation of their origin and subjected to a foreign authority. Despite the Italian promises of respecting the rights of their ethnicity, they were soon subjected to hostility, particularly due to the emergence of fascism in Italy. In addition to the economic reasons, emigration from Slovenian Istria and Primorje soon acquired national and political character. After the rise of fascism in Italy, the position of Slovenians in the Primorje region got worse. The Kingdom of SHS became the destination of an increasing number of refugees who were often living in very uncertain living conditions.

Maribor was a logical destination for migrants from Primorje. Soon after the end of the First World War, most of the German population emigrated to Germany, which made it easier for emigrants from Primorje to find a new home and work in Maribor. They contributed to the increasing slovenisation of the town.

The settlement of emigrants from the Primorje region happened in two periods. The first wave of emigrants from this region to Maribor occurred due to the pressure from the Italian authorities. These emigrants consisted mainly of officials and intellectuals. They emigrated in search of finding a better life and better work possibilities. Maribor needed these professionals after the emigration of the Germans. Soon after the end of the First World War, many young people came to Maribor from Primorje. Under the leadership of General Rudolf Maister, they were included in the units which fought on the northern border and later for the inclusion of Carinthia. The number of soldiers, returnees and refugees from the occupied territories of the Primorje region grew day by day. From volunteers at the draft point in Tezno in Maribor, the military unit was assembled, from which arose the Trieste regiment.<sup>10</sup>

After the arrival of the first emigrants to Maribor, the living conditions and the prospects of employment were very favorable. There were lots of open positions for officials, intellectuals and cultural workers in Maribor. The immigrants from the Primorje region were Yugoslav-ori-

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<sup>10</sup> Dragan Potočnik, *Zgodovinske okoliščine delovanja generala Rudolfa Maistra na Štajerskem, Koroškem in v Prekmurju* [Historical Circumstances of the Operation of General Rudolf Maister in Styria, Carinthia and Prekmurje] (Ljubljana: Založba Koščak, 2008), 76.

ented with a strong Slovenian national consciousness, which opened the door to government offices and related departments. Many of them worked for the police force, they also became craftsmen and merchants in Maribor. They established themselves as lawyers and members of medical and other similar services. Some of the immigrants rose in the political and social structure. One such example is Rudolf Golouh. He was one of the first Slovenian journalists and an important organizer of the labour union movement. He was also the Deputy Mayor of Maribor in the years 1933–1935.

The following strong wave of immigration to Maribor occurred in 1923, when a lot of teachers came from the Primorje region. By the end of the 1920s, many people emigrated for political reasons. In the 1930s, more and more farmers and workers from the Primorje region began to emigrate. They settled in the surroundings of the town. After 1935, many people also emigrated because of the war in Ethiopia and the Spanish civil war.

Due to the economic crisis in Maribor at that time, the new emigrants from the Primorje region were often seen only as unwanted competitors for the few jobs left and little social support available. In contrast, during the first wave of immigration of refugees from Primorje, the immigrants did not have major problems to get a job.

After the first wave of migrations, the refugees from Primorje were employed as town officials. They took small businesses from the Germans who were forced to leave town (painters, carpenters, blacksmiths). Many of them were employed in the police commissariat in Maribor, many found employment in the railway transport, as penitentiary guards and in Maribor textile factories. Some of them continued the traditions of their places of original home. Each following wave of immigrants arriving in the Kingdom of SHS had more problems in settling down. Opportunities for employment were dwindling. Jobs in the town administration were already taken. Teachers also had a problem in getting work. Over time, the relations between the domestic populati-

on and immigrants from Primorje improved. People from the Primorje region quickly became an indispensable part of the town.<sup>11</sup>

### Slovenisation of Maribor after 1918

Before the St. Germain peace treaty with Austria, the town saw an emergence of the Slovenian judiciary and administration. The municipal advisory committee requisitioned the property of the former German institutions and organizations, theatre and the casino building, on the basis of the new legislation. The German printing house and the traditional local newspaper *Marburger Zeitung* came under the Slovenian control. The Slovenian municipal administration also supervised the slovenisation and renaming of the streets and inscriptions on the craft and trade premises. On the night of 28 October 1918, the following writing could be found on houses, banks and elsewhere in Maribor: "We don't want to see any German inscriptions in Yugoslavia! They remind us of our slavery. Remove them immediately!"<sup>12</sup>

The new Slovenian administration renamed the streets. The Maribor streets named after prominent Germans were renamed after Slovenian and Yugoslav citizens. The renaming was partly successful (e.g. Schiller – Gregorčič, Goethe – Prešeren, ...) but in some cases also accidental (e.g. Kaiserfeld – Jože Vošnjak, Kernstock – Princip).<sup>13</sup>

Maribor slowly and gradually replaced all the public inscriptions in German. The town magistrate issued an ordinance according to which all craftsmen had to provide a Slovenian or Serbo-Croatian inscriptions by 30<sup>th</sup> June 1919. From this day, German public inscriptions were forbidden.<sup>14</sup>

Many of public places, including restaurants and cafes in Maribor were renamed, e.g. the former Theresienhof cafe became Velika kavarna, the Mohr hotel became Pri Zamorcu hotel, and the Erzherzog Johann restaurant became the Union.

<sup>11</sup> Dragan Potočnik, "Primorski Slovenci v Mariboru 1918–1941," [The Littoral Slovenes in Maribor 1918–1941] *Annales* 21(2011): 58–63.

<sup>12</sup> Maribor University Library, *Scolding in Styria* (Maribor: Catalog of manuscripts), ms. 151.

<sup>13</sup> The Regional Archives Maribor, fond of Franjo Baš.

<sup>14</sup> "Slovenski napisi," [Slovenian Inscriptions] *Mariborski delavec*, December 7, 1918.



In light of the new situation, the Maribor citizens needed to learn the Slovenian language. After the First World War, most officials were fired due to their lack of knowledge of the Slovenian language. Individual officials were ordered to learn Slovene by the end of December 1919.<sup>15</sup> In some places, language courses were organized.<sup>16</sup> But the situation changed only slowly. Thus, a circular of town hall on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1920 said that no one had submitted a certificate of the knowledge of the Slovene language.<sup>17</sup> In some cases, language courses were very scarce. Thus the *Jutro* newspaper on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1920 they reported: "(...) rather than the exams of the Slovenian language, they were rather a workshop for women power in office."<sup>18</sup>

The Slovenian language was, thus, not pervasive in all spheres of life. Even 10 years after the First World War, there were cases where the officials of the town hall talked in German with each other. Also, certain permissions by the town hall were passed on to the citizens in German.<sup>19</sup>

In 1929, the police commissioner issued a decree according to which Slovenian was to be used in all public establishments. Only if guests of a café or restaurant did not understand Slovenian, they were allowed to be addressed in German. The decree was felt to be necessary, as there is evidence that the guests in various bars in Maribor communicated exclusively in German. Despite the decree, the germanization of the town continued.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, *Tabor* writes: "What's the use being served in Slovenian if these Germans fill their pockets with Slovenian profits and scorn us secretly."

For a long time after the end of the First World War, German was used in publications. In 1933, the *Jutro* newspaper reads: "If we banned

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<sup>15</sup> "Mariborski meščani se učijo slovenski," [The Citizens of Maribor Learn Slovenian] *Mariborski delavec*, December 5, 1918.

<sup>16</sup> *The Regional Archives Maribor*, fond Municipality of Maribor, box no. 516, file no. 283/20.

<sup>17</sup> *The Regional Archives Maribor*, fond Municipality of Maribor, Tips Town Hall from May 30, 1920.

<sup>18</sup> "Slovenski kurzi v mariborski delavnici," [Slovenian courses in Maribor's workshops] *Jutro*, December 29, 1920.

<sup>19</sup> *The Regional Archives Maribor*, fond Municipality of Maribor, box no. 310, file no. 33074.

<sup>20</sup> "Nemškutarjenje v Mariboru," [Playing German in Maribor] *Tabor*, August 29, 1920.

German and bilingual signs, then we must also ban publications in German!”<sup>21</sup>

Slovenian language was marginalized not only as a national and state language. The letters delivered to Maribor were still signed with “*Marburg an der Drau*.” The former German names of the streets, roads and squares were not all replaced. In German newspapers which were published in Slovenia, German names for Slovenian towns, mountaintops and other geographical places were still used. There were several reasons for this situation.<sup>22</sup>

An important reason was the German pressure on a socially fragile population. This pressure on Slovenians was reflected in different ways. Some industrial plants in the town forced the Slovenian workers to speak German with the German factory owners. Therefore, many workers began learning German when they started to work.<sup>23</sup> Many of them even forgot their native language and talked in German to each other.<sup>24</sup>

During the period after 1918, there was also a well-organized boycott on the German side. Not only in the economic sphere, but also in cultural and charity events. Due to a handful of German deputies, national conflicts were increased in the National Parliament. Political offensives organized by the German minority, demanded an establishment of a German publishing house in Maribor as a reward for its parliament support, in addition the other concessions from the government of Nikolaj Pašič.<sup>25</sup>

A German publishing house would issue a German newspaper and other publications and thus help to strengthen the position of the Germans in Maribor.<sup>26</sup> Relations between Slovenians and Germans were an open wound that would not heal and would start to hurt and bleed

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<sup>21</sup> “Nemške tiskovine in nemški listi,” [German Publications and German Papers] *Mariborski večernik jutra*, April 12, 1933.

<sup>22</sup> “Nemško ustmeno uradovanje – Nemška krajevna imena – Proti stari z novo mentaliteto,” [German Oral administration - German Place Names - Against the Old with the new Mentality] *Mariborski večernik jutra*, January 22, 1930.

<sup>23</sup> “Varujmo naše delavstvo pred ponemčevanjem,” [Protect our Workers from Germanisation] *Slovenec*, February 24, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> “Narodni problemi,” [National Problems] *Tabor*, September 13, 1924.

<sup>25</sup> “Vstajenje štajercijanstva,” [The Rise of Styrianism] *Tabor*, February 24, 1923.

<sup>26</sup> *Marburger Zeitung*, January 4, 1924.

at the slightest touch. That was the time of the rise of Nazism in Germany.<sup>27</sup> With the rise of Nazism there were more and more of similar developments, and in this period Maribor appeared as a German town. Thus, on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1934, the *Slovenec* newspaper published the German national socialist statement from the *Geopolitic* scientific journal, that Maribor was a German town.<sup>28</sup>

The result of this pressure was that the germanisation of the Slovenian Styria continued after 1918. During the first months of the Slovenian authority after the end of the war, General Rudolf Maister and the National Council of Education left the German education system intact. They were aware that this was a very sensitive area where the German impact was strongest. There was a great need for good, nationally conscious, hard-working teachers, since there were only five Slovenian teachers in elementary and middle schools in Maribor at that time.

On 27<sup>th</sup> January, the Higher Education Council in Ljubljana issued the ordinance which eliminated the German language as a compulsory subject in primary and middle schools. At a conference on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1919, they discussed the suggestion for the replacement of German teachers with Slovenian teachers. According to this proposal, German headmasters would be replaced with Slovenian headmasters. At the same time, all the German teachers and students who participated in demonstrations against the state of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1919 would be dismissed.<sup>29</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1919, radical changes transformed the school system. Slovenian teachers took over almost all positions in elementary and middle schools. Most German teachers were fired. Despite that, classes in all schools remained to be taught in German until the end of the school-year. The curriculum had only three hours a week of compulsory Slovenian language. In the next school year, the German section enrolled only those children for whom it had been proven that both parents were of the German origin. They had the right to have classes in their native language, but even in these classes there were compulsory hours

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<sup>27</sup> *The Regional Archives Maribor*, fond Municipality of Maribor, box no. 460, file no. 16639.

<sup>28</sup> "Kljukasti križ nad Mariborom," [Swastika over Maribor] *Slovenec*, January 9, 1935.

<sup>29</sup> *Marburger Zeitung*, February 26, 1919.

of the Slovene language. German sections had been reduced, and by 1923, the only school which remained completely German was only the girls' public school, which was to receive Slovenian classes already in the following year. A similar situation unfolded with technical and secondary schools. As soon as in 1918, the Slovenian National Gymnasium was introduced and it was named the National Classical Gymnasium. The majority of its students and professors were Slovenian. The school kept the German classes, but they were canceled within a few years due to a small number of students. The Realschule had the highest proportion of German students. The school remained mostly German until the school year 1924/25, when the Slovenian classes prevailed and the school was renamed the National Real Gymnasium.<sup>30</sup>

The number of people in Maribor according to the census  
in 1921 and 1931

In the new state Kingdom of SHS, Maribor as the town of the border area lost its previous economic and traffic position. The ethnic structure of the population had changed. The criterion for nationality was the native language. According to the census in 1921, Maribor had 73 % of Slovene population and only 22 % of German population due to the emigration of the German officials. The social structure of the urban population also changed. New immigrants came into the town, mostly from The Primorje region, parts of Carinthia and from the Kranjska region but also from other provinces of the new state. The emigrants who came from the Primorje region as economic, ethnic and political emigrants were very active in different spheres, such as choir singing, as well as educational, social and national-defense organizations. As a result, they were an important part of the social and cultural life of Maribor in the period between the two world wars.

According to the census of 1931 (which, in addition to the native language, considered the nationality), the town had 81 % of Slovenians

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<sup>30</sup> Potočnik, *Kulturno dogajanje v Mariboru 1918–1941* [Cultural Events in Maribor 1918–1941] 64, 65.

and only 8 % of Germans. In the decade between 1921 to 1931, the number of Germans fell again, mainly due to emigration.

The new statistical data reveal that the germanizing efforts in the Habsburg Monarchy were not so successful. The last Austrian count was misleading. The number of Germans in 1921 was much lower, although after 1918, some German craftsmen, traders and officials left the town, most of them emigrated to Austria. The number of the people who left cannot be determined exactly, but according to estimates it amounted to about 5.000 to 6.000 people.<sup>31</sup>

Instead of them, around 2.000 Slovenian officials, entrepreneurs and others settled in Maribor with their families, replacing the Germans who had left. In 1924, around 5.000 people asked for Yugoslav citizenship, and so did all their families. Later, around 250 to 300 Slovenians asked for Yugoslav citizenship. Most of these applicants were from Gorizia, Trieste, Istria, Slovenian Carinthia and partly from the today's Austria and the Czech territory. Population count in 1921 showed a transformed ethnical structure of the town.

The percentage of the German population between the wars was also a consequence of the efforts of the past Germanization. The census showed individual citizens who indicated German as their native language, even though they were born in Slovenian towns and their parents were of Slovenian descent. There were also cases that some of them referred to their "*German upbringing*", thus declaring themselves to be German.

### The domination of the industry by the German capital continues

A large part of the industry in Maribor had been built with domestic capital, mostly German. There is no specific information about the structure and power of the German capital in Maribor between the two world wars. Some data shows, however, that the Germans had an important role in the town's economy. Just before the occupation, the

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<sup>31</sup> Potočnik, *Zgodovinske okoliščine delovanja generala Rudolfa Maistra* [Historical Circumstances of General Rudolf Maister's Activities] 152–154.

German and Austrian capital was pervasive in 45 major industrial businesses in the town. The German capital was strongest, dominating the textile and metal industry.

The situation was similar even in the wider region of the Slovenian Styria. According to the data collected by the German intelligence service in the early forties, the German population in Slovenian Styria included 25.9 % craftsmen, 21.7 % traders, 17.9 % freelancers, 13.2 % workers, 5.6 % civil servants and senior citizens and 1.6 % industrialists. According to these data, 144 industrial companies were in German possession and only 131 in Slovenian possession.<sup>32</sup>

Only smaller companies, many of which did not belong to big industry, belonged to Slovenian citizens. Therefore, the Germans were still the major employers to the Slovenian people. Only few among the managerial staff were fluent in Slovenian. Most of them were foreigners who did not understand Slovene. Slovenian names were given to companies, but behind these names there were foreigners who did not contribute much to the Slovenian national and cultural progress. Therefore, most of the profits were shipped abroad and the Germans in Maribor retained their strong economic position from the period before 1918.

The municipality, administrative authorities and various societies in the town made an effort to resist the dominance of the German capital. Czech societies tried to attract Czech entrepreneurs with propaganda in order to reduce the risk of aggressive germanisation, but were not particularly successful.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

When general Rudolf Maister took control of the town and the entire lower Styria in November 1918 and after the Treaty of St. Germain determined the northern Slovenian border, a large part of the German population left Maribor. As a consequence, the town on the

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<sup>32</sup> Biber, *Nacizem in Nemci v Jugoslaviji 1933–1941* [Nazism and Germans in Yugoslavia 1933–1941], 27.

<sup>33</sup> Potočnik, *Kulturno dogajanje v Mariboru 1918–1941*, 72–75.

Drava River experienced a major economic and cultural transformation. Although Maribor had no more than 20 % of Slovenian population before the fall of the monarchy, they took the initiative for the cultural transformation of the town. They successfully laid the foundation for the development of Slovenian culture and science in the town before the First World War. Despite of the small number of Slovenian intellectuals before 1914 and the small Slovenian cultural scene, individual figures played an important role in the gradual transformation of the town. The determined actions by Bishop Anton Martin Slomšek established the northern boundary of the renewed Lavant diocese. General Maister with his volunteers secured the Slovenian territory and defined a valid border according to this boundary. The resolute actions by General Maister, with the help of Karl Verstovšek and other members of the National Council for Styria, created the conditions for integrating Maribor into the State of SHS.

Afterwards, Maribor was able to offer a new home to many Slovenians who had to leave their home as a consequence of pressures causing the political, economic and cultural tragedy in Gorizia and Klagenfurt. With the help of Slovenians from the Primorje region, Maribor was able to transform its social and cultural landscape considerably. The town assumed a new role in the Kingdom of SHS and, as the second most important town of the region, become an important centre of trade and culture, at times even overshadowing the capital itself.

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