

## ANOTHER FINAL SOLUTION: FRIEDRICH RAINER, CARINTHIAN SLOVENES, AND THE CARINTHIAN QUESTION

Maurice Williams

In October 1942 Friedrich Rainer, the Nazi *Gauleiter* of Carinthia, announced that within the year his administration would achieve the final solution to the Carinthian Question.<sup>1</sup> The Slovenes of his *Gau*, a province in the south with a tradition of mixed ethnicity, would at last be Germanized and the Third Reich would move another step toward becoming a nation without foreign minorities. It was a bold, boastful proclamation and, in retrospect, foolhardy. Yet in 1942 Rainer believed he had a genuine chance to succeed. His expectation that the war would end within months was the key to his imagined success. In those pre-Stalingrad days he calculated that a victory would generate great enthusiasm for the Third Reich. This fervor, combined with his own careful measures, would result in a final settlement. The Carinthian Question would disappear. Germans would triumph and Slovenes would assimilate.

Recent discoveries in the archives of Slovenia shed considerable light on this announcement and the subsequent campaign. In 1948 Rainer, then a prisoner of the Yugoslavs, recalled his strategy for the project. Writing at the behest of his captors he commented on his motivation, his plans, his expectations, and his accomplishments. These recollections provide valuable new information on the Nazi approach to the contentious Carinthian Question. They also furnish important insight into the personality of Rainer. A close analysis, for example, reveals that even in 1948, he did not think his project had been dubious or unattainable. But most important, these recollections and the events they describe constitute a revealing case study. By examining the Carinthian Question we add to our understanding of those twentieth-century tragedies referred to as final solutions, ethnic cleansings, and genocides.

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<sup>1</sup> The Vienna newspaper *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* of 6 November 1942 titled its account of the announcement, “Endgültige Lösung der Kärntner Frage” (“The Final Solution of the Carinthian Question”).

The Carinthian Question, of course, was not new, and Rainer was not the first to dream the dream nor plan the assimilation of his Slovene neighbors. Many before him had worked diligently to accomplish that task. But where the others had achieved partial success Rainer believed he would triumph completely, especially since he could build upon a favorable history and use several noteworthy traditions. He knew, for example, that Carinthia had been the focus of Slavic/German rivalry for centuries, but the Germans had slowly established a primacy, first when the aristocracy had germanized and then when the ruling groups had sought to incorporate their subjects by language assimilation. He knew that where Carinthia had once been primarily Slovene, their numbers had dropped to 25 per cent by 1900 and to just over 10 per cent by 1939.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, Rainer had a valuable tool. The Germans of this region had concocted a theory that Carinthia, Carniola, and Styria were settled by three groups, not two: Germans, Slovenes, and the *Windisch*. The Germans and Slovenes were nationalistic, but the *Windisch*, although using the Slovene language, were linked historically to the Germans in culture, tradition, and sentiment. They might not speak German, but they could show their willingness to assimilate by calling themselves *Windisch*. By Rainer's time the theory had developed a further use for many in the region. *Windisch* had also come to mean good-willing, patriotic, and loyal to Carinthia, whereas Slovene corresponded with dissident, treacherous, hostile, and striving for political union with Yugoslavia. For Rainer and others this tool proved

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<sup>2</sup> Helga Harriman, *Slovenia under Nazi Occupation, 1941–1945* (New York: Studia Slovenica, 1977) 10–11; Thomas Barker, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984), chap. 1; Tone Ferenc, "The Austrians and Slovenia during the Second World War," in ed. Fred Parkinson, *Conquering the Past: Austrian Nazism Yesterday & Today* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989) 207; C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918* (New York: Macmillan, 1969) 676; Dietmar Larcher, "The Slovenes in Austria," in *Razprave in Gradivo - Treatises and Documents* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja, 1986) 380.

For the Yugoslav view of the long history of the rivalry, see "On the History of Carinthian Slovenes," in *Memorandum of the Government of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia on Slovene Carinthia, the Slovene Frontier Areas of Styria and the Croats of Burgenland* (Belgrade: Ministarstvo inostranih poslova, 1947) Annex No. 4.

invaluable. They rationalized that those who claimed a *Windisch* heritage needed only encouragement to show their true German (and Carinthian) allegiance.<sup>3</sup>

Rainer's own background naturally reflected these inheritances and pseudo-theories. Born in Carinthia, he grew up in an intensely German environment. His father, a middle school teacher, was an enthusiastic nationalist. As a school boy his favorite teacher had been Martin Wutte, a historian who taught him about the so-called Germanic mission of Carinthia. At university he had joined a dueling fraternity, a traditional way to display German nationalism.<sup>4</sup> A National Socialist after 1923, he worked enthusiastically for the German cause. Between 1934 and 1938 he played a primary role in the illegal Nazi party and then in post-*Anschluss* Austria he became one of Hitler's key subordinates and an active proponent of the German only policy. As the *Führer's* representative he served first in Salzburg. In late 1941, however, he returned to Carinthia as *Gauleiter* and governor. Concurrently he assumed responsibility for the occupied territories in

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Priestly, "Denial of Ethnic Identity: The Political Manipulation of Beliefs about Language in Slovene Minority Areas of Austria and Hungary," *Slavic Review* 55.2 (Summer 1996): 369–89; Teodor Domej, "O ponemčevanju južne Koroške za časa nacizma in odmevi nanj (1938–1942)" in *Narodu in državi sovražni; Pregon koroških slovencev 1942; Volks- und staatsfeindlich; Die Vertreibung von Kärntner Slowenen 1942*, ed. Augustin Malle and Valtin Sima (Klagenfurt: Hermagoras, 1992); Maurice Williams, "Friedrich Rainer, National Socialism, and Postwar Europe: The Historical World of an Austrian Nazi," *Austrian History Yearbook* XX (1999): 112; Larcher, "The Slovenes in Austria" 379, 401; F. Rainer, "Über Kärnten," n.d., Arhiv Republike Slovenije (ARS), Ljubljana, Slovenia, Inv 761, 80–84, II–17, 1267–1273.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. jur. Friedrich Rainer, 8 Jan. 1942, Archiv für publizistische Arbeit, Arbeiterkammer für Wien (AKW); "Die Ahnenheimat unseres Gauleiters Dr. Rainer," *Wochenblatt der Landesbauernschaft Kärnten* (Klagenfurt), 22 Jul. 1944: 1, 61 Re1 Reichslandbund, Pressearchiv #356, Rainer, Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Potsdam; Vernehmungsniederschrift (Rainer's interrogation before his 1947 trial), ARS, Inv 761, 80–84, II–8, 549, 683–86; F. Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," n.d. (after January 1948), ARS, Inv 761, 80–84, II–18, 1376, 1378, 1389; F. Rainer, "Die Wehrturnbewegung in Kärnten," n.d., ARS, Inv 761, 80–84, 1204, 1209.

northern Slovenia.<sup>5</sup> By then he firmly believed the Third Reich should be, as he wrote, “a German nation-state, in which there is no foreign minority.”<sup>6</sup>

### The Germanization Campaign

For the new *Gauleiter*, the situation in late 1941 was promising for the resolution of the Carinthian Question. Until recent months the Nazis had followed a careful policy toward their Slovene minority, an approach which had not caused a great deal of opposition.<sup>7</sup> The low key manner was primarily because of Yugoslavia. The Germans did not want to offend the Yugoslavs as the Third Reich had important trade and commercial ties which it wished to preserve. They also had to consider the German minority who lived there, protecting them from possible reprisals. Further, the Germans hoped to draw Yugoslavia into the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo alliance. The restrained approach, which meant leaving cultural and economic associations intact and included promises to respect minority rights, brought immediate dividends for the Nazis. Carinthian Slovenes voted overwhelmingly for *Anschluss*, almost the same 100 per cent affirmation as their German neighbors.

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<sup>5</sup> Williams, “Friedrich Rainer,” 109–11.

<sup>6</sup> Rainer, “Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage,” 1405. For a more complete account of Rainer’s life and the mystery of his death see the author’s “Friedrich Rainer, National Socialism, and Postwar Europe: The Historical World of an Austrian Nazi,” *Austrian History Yearbook* (1999): 103–26. The mystery derives from his supposed execution in August 1947 when in fact he continued to live and work for the Yugoslavs until at least 1950. He was probably executed sometime after that date, but no evidence confirming when and how he died has yet surfaced.

<sup>7</sup> Valentin Sima, “Die Kärntner Slowenen unter nationalsozialistischer Herrschaft vom ‘Anschluss’ zur Aussiedlung,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich 1938–1945*, ed. E. Talos, et al. (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988) 361ff; Theodor Domej, “1938—Avstrija ali Nemčija? Po Schuschnigg za Hitlerja? (1938—Österreich oder Deutschland? Nach Schuschnigg für Hitler? [Zusammenfassung])” in *Problemfelder der Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung der Kärntner Slowenen; Problemska polja zgodovine in zgodovinopisja koroških slovencev* (Klagenfurt: Hermagoras, 1995) 101–102; Valentin Sima, “Die Vertreibung von Kärntner Slowenen 1942,” in *Narodu in državi sovražni* 138.)

The tempered policy, however, did not mean the Nazis had been inactive or that they had abandoned Germanization. They just acted without fanfare. In southern Carinthia, for example, the authorities established new German speaking kindergartens so that children there would know German before entering school. At the beginning of the 1938–39 academic year, the use of Slovene in some schools had been eliminated. Meanwhile, certain restrictions had been placed on Slovene organizations while in May 1939 the Nazis had given great credence to the notion of *Windisch* by including it as a language for the census. Further, the Nazis had quietly established new Nazi organizations concerned with the Slovene question, offices like the Carinthian Border Office, and they had placed leading officials of three private but very active Germanization organizations on the provincial payroll.<sup>8</sup>

After the collapse of Yugoslavia in April 1941, however, there had been little need to act cautiously and the Nazis had escalated their program to germanize and assimilate. The Slovene language was now prohibited in public, in the workplace, at church, in pubs and taverns, and especially in schools. Slovene epitaphs disappeared from tombstones; family and place names were Germanized; the minor restrictions on Slovene clubs and organizations changed to outright prohibition and suppression. Cultural institutions such as libraries were

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<sup>8</sup> The three organizations were the Kärntner Heimatbund, the Deutscher Schulverein Südmark, and the Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland (*Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen*, ed. Valentin Kinzko [Klagenfurt: Hermagoras, 1988]) 102–103; Bogo Grafenauer, *The National Development of the Carinthian Slovenes* (Ljubljana: Research Institute, Section for Frontier Questions, 1946) 84; Tone Ferenc, ed. *Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Entnationalisierungspolitik in Slowenien 1941–1945* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1980) 344; First detailed interrogation report on SS Standartenführer Maier-Kaibitsch Alois, Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (CSDIC) Austria, 22 July 1945, 1 SC/CSDIC/SD/16, Public Record Office, W0204/12812; Ferenc, “The Slovene Austrians and Slovenia,” 208–209; “Participation of Austria in Hitler’s Aggression against and Occupation of Yugoslavia,” in *Memorandum of the Government of ... Yugoslavia*, Annex No. 1; Sima, “Die Kärntner Slowenen,” 138–39.

closed. And of course there were numerous arrests of Slovene leaders, especially the priests.<sup>9</sup>

Of special importance and interest was the now active involvement of Heinrich Himmler and his Reich Commission for the Consolidation of the German Ethnic Heritage (RKFDV). Created in 1939, the RKFDV had responsibilities to organize the return of Germans from other countries and to eliminate foreign minorities from the Reich. The Slovenes of Carinthia and the newly occupied territories were thus of great interest to Himmler, especially since Hitler had arranged with Mussolini to transfer German speakers from the South Tyrol to the Reich. Now was the time to begin that transfer, removing unwanted residents like the Slovenes of Carinthia and replacing them with the desired South Tyrolese.<sup>10</sup>

This was the situation, then, when Rainer arrived. He quickly made his own position public. At both his inauguration as *Gauleiter* and later as governor he promised to lead his new charge in the best Carinthian manner, a tradition he called purely German. He also promised, as Hitler had instructed, to make the newly returned lands south of the Karawanken mountains (Upper Carniola) once again pure

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<sup>9</sup> *Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen* 105; Tone Zorn, "A Contribution to the Problems Regarding the Nazi Denationalizing Policy in (Austrian) Carinthia and Occupied Upper Carniola from 1938 to 1943," in *The Third Reich and Yugoslavia 1933–1945* (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History and Narodna Knjiga, 1977) 437; Vermerk über die Besprechung im Reichsministerium des Innern betreffend die Auflösung der Organisationen der slowenischen Volksgruppen im Deutschen Reich, Berlin, 15 November 1941, in *Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Entnationalisierungspolitik in Slowenien* 343–45; Barker, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia*, 194; Avgustin Malle, "Koroški Slovenci in katoliška cerkev v času nacisma" ("Die Kärntner Slowenen und die katholische Kirche zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus [Zusammenfassung])," in *Narodu in državi sovražni* 131; Haltung des Gurker Ordinarius und seines Ordinariates in der Slowenischen Frage 1941–1946 (Amtliche Darstellung) in *Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen* 108.

<sup>10</sup> Harriman, *Slovenia under Nazi Occupation* 37–39; Sima, "Die Kärntner Slowenen," 150; Anordnung Nr. 46/I des Reichskommissars für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums über die Umsiedlung der Kanaltaler und die Aussiedlung von Slowenen aus Kärnten, Berlin, 25.8.41, in *Narodu in državi sovražni* 156–57.

German.<sup>11</sup> As he would soon write, “The land up to the Karawanken and south of the Karawanken is German and will be German.”<sup>12</sup>

Adding emphasis to his pronouncements, one of his close associates expanded on this intent to germanize. Speaking to key Nazis, Alois Maier-Kaibitsch, sketched out what was to come.<sup>13</sup> He observed that “the events of the last years ... have given us the possibility of putting an end to the so-called Slovene minority in the area north of the Karawanken.” In the future the only language of the people, the only language on flags, road signs, gravestones, and in public would be German. Only the *Windisch*, those who declared themselves to belong to the German nationality, would remain. As for the Slovenes, Maier-Kaibitsch said, “There is no place here [for them] any more.”<sup>14</sup>

The most visible expression of this Germanization scheme was the planned deportation of pronounced Slovenes who would not dissimulate and their replacement by ethnic Germans from South Tyrol and the neighboring Canale Valley. The plan, based on a Hitler

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<sup>11</sup> “Dr. Ley in Klagenfurt: ‘Der Führer hätte Kärnten keinen besseren Gauleiter geben können als Dr. Rainer,’” *Kärntner Grenzruf* 1 December 1941; “Amtseinführung des Gauleiters in Kärnten, Dr. Friedrich Rainer,” durch den Reichsleiter Dr. Robert Ley am 29. und 30. November 1942, NSDAP Hauptarchiv, Reel 6, Folder No 143– Kärnten; Wilhelm Frick, in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal* (42 vols; Nuremberg, 1947–49), XX: 363; Ansprache des Herrn Reichsministers Dr. Frick bei der Einführung des Reichsstatthalters Dr. Friedrich Rainer in Klagenfurt am 16. Dezember 1941, NSDAP, Hauptarchiv, Reel 6, Folder No. 143– Kärnten.

<sup>12</sup> “Die Aufgabe des Reichsgaues Kärnten,” *Kärntner Grenzruf* 30.04.1942.

<sup>13</sup> The *Gaugrenzlandamt* later became the *Gauhauptamt für Volkstumsfragen*. (Rundschreiben [von Mohrenschildt, SS-Hauptsturmführer] Gauhauptamt für Volkstumsfragen, 15.II.1943, Klagenfurt, Yugoslav Archives [YA], Dos br. 3077, 342-14.)

<sup>14</sup> Auszug aus dem Vortrage des Leiters des Gauamtes für Volkstumsfragen in Kärnten Alois Maier Kaibitsch über die endgültige Germanisierung Kärntens und Oberkrains, 10.7.1942, Klagenfurt, in *Quellen zur nationalsozialistischen Entnationalisierungspolitik im Slowenien* 452–61; “Kreisgrenzlandamter für Kärnten; Der Gauleiter bei der Tagung des Grenzlandamtes,” *Kärnten Zeitung* 11/12.07.1942: 5. See also Maier-Kaibitsch, CSDIC/SD/16.

promise to Mussolini, called for 50,000 *Volksdeutsche* to move from the south to the Reich. The first step in the project was removing some of the Slovenes, which was well advanced when Rainer assumed his Carinthian posts. The new *Gauleiter* quickly made it clear he endorsed the initiative. In his first meeting with Heinrich Himmler, the man who launched the project, Rainer assured him of his support for what he called "this necessary re-settlement."<sup>15</sup>

The initial date for step one of the operation was late December 1941, but delays postponed any action until spring. Then, in the early hours of 14 April special squads of Nazis swept into a number of unsuspecting Slovene villages. They evacuated some 170 families, all supposedly enemies of the state, sending them to collecting camps near Klagenfurt from whence they would move to the old Reich. Generally allowed to take a few possessions, they seem not to have been grossly mishandled.<sup>16</sup>

To their surprise, party officials discovered the operation did not receive the anticipated universal acclaim. In fact, as Rainer reports, there were protests, interventions, and excited conversations, especially since the deportations seemed to have included Slovene families loyal to the state. Rainer particularly recalled how the *Landrat* from Villach complained bitterly about the injustice of this action. Party officials from Klagenfurt and Völkermarkt personally got Maier-Kaibitsch to release from the camps people whom, they claimed, were supporters of Germany. Local military authorities, especially officers who had men with relatives among the deported families, intervened. Rainer had a particularly sharp telephone conversation with Hans Steinacher, a Carinthian and former head of Germany's *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland*. Steinacher telephoned from the Norwegian Front where many soldiers from this mixed language region were

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<sup>15</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1409; Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1296–1299.

Rainer later claimed that he did confirm with Maier-Kaibitsch and others that in each case there was a police file clearly indicating and designating the person as a state enemy. Maier-Kaibitsch assured Rainer that the potential deportees were all long time irredentists. (Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1411).

<sup>16</sup> Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1300; Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1413; Barker, *The Slovene Minority of Carinthia* 195–96.

serving in the armed forces. Three other party dignitaries, after failing to meet Rainer, had a stormy session with Maier-Kaibitsch. The most prominent critic, however, was from Bishop Andreas Rohrachner of Gurk. After sending protest letters to Hitler, five cabinet ministers, the head of the military, and Rainer, he made his protests public, as did the well-known Carinthian poet, Josef Perkonig. As one gendarme reported, the upset and fear came not just from ethnic Slovenes but also from native Germans and party members.<sup>17</sup>

With all the commotion, and especially because the military intervened, Rainer conducted his own investigation. He came to the conclusion that those who had planned the operation had not prepared with care. He ordered his own review through a commission of party, civil, Gestapo, and military personnel. This group met in May, examined each case, and restored about 10 per cent of the families to their homes.<sup>18</sup> In the end Rainer concluded that the entire action had been wrong. In fact, he said it was one of the greatest mistakes of his career not to have recognized the issues and sought to use his influence to stop the operation.<sup>19</sup> He quickly found Carinthian Slovenes extremely

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<sup>17</sup> Ferenc, *Quellen*, 555–56; Rainer, “Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage,” 1413; Vernehmungsniederschrift (Rainer), 566; Rainer, “Über Kärnten,” 1413; Sima, “Die Vertreibung von Kärntner Slowenen 1942,” 179–85, 369f; August Walzl, “Als erster Gau...;” *Entwicklung und Strukturen des Nationalsozialismus in Kärnten* (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag Carinthia, 1992) 166; Gendarmeriepostenberichte für den Bezirk Völkermarkt, Eisenkappel, 24 April 1942, in *Narodu in državi sovražni*, 452–53; Haltung des Gurker Ordinarius, in *Geschichte der Kärntner Slowenen* 109; Parkonig an Rainer, n.d., in ed. Herbert Stejskal, *Kärnten; Geschichte und Kultur in Bildern und Dokumenten* (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag Carinthia, 1985) 281.

<sup>18</sup> Rainer, “Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage,” 1413–1414; F. Rainer, “Meine Gespräche mit den Gestapo-Leitern in Klagenfurt,” ARS, Inv 761, 80–84, II–19, 1470; Vernehmungsniederschrift (Rainer), 566; Sima, “Die Vertreibung von Kärntner Slowenen 1942,” 179f; Aktenvermerk des SS-Ansiedlungsstabes “Altreich” über die Besprechung mit dem Gauleiter NSDAP in Kärnten betreffend die Aussiedlung von Slowenen, Berlin, 15 May 1942, in Ferenc, *Quellen*, 428–30.

<sup>19</sup> Rainer tempers this statement, however, by saying that had the war ended within the six months after the deportations the operation may have been

bitter and noted how even those who had supported the Third Reich became very anti-German. The Germanization campaign had stumbled badly.<sup>20</sup>

Other signs also disturbed Rainer and promised trouble. In the mixed language regions of southern Carinthia young men were avoiding military service by crossing the border and taking refuge with the partisans. Further, there was growing evidence of guerrilla activity in Carinthia, not just increased propaganda but also signs that the Slovene populace was working with the partisans. Rainer clearly had to do something.<sup>21</sup> The *Gauleiter* detected another alarming issue as well: he perceived a lessening of interest by Carinthian Germans in the Slovene question. On several visits to the south he noticed a shortage of manpower and materials. In schools, he saw that authorities had had to hire pensioners, people who did not have the will to deal with a mixed ethnicity and the problems of war. He observed that many officials, teachers, gendarmes, and others, after completing some service in the area, left the zone and its language issues. In addition, he discovered that not much government money was being spent on public services.<sup>22</sup>

Even in the party he could see a lessening of interest in the Slovene question. Officials working on propaganda or training issues did not address the special needs of the border region. Further, young people who had been active in the party's illegal struggles frequently saw the tradition of the 1920 plebiscite campaign (the *Abwehrkämpfe*) not as an actual event, but only as a distant historical memory. In addition, Rainer, who was strongly influenced by the events of 1920, saw noticeable friction between those who had fought in the *Abwehr*, but were not party members, and those who were strong Nazis. In some

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viewed a success. He bases this view on captured material from the partisans which said that a good number of their agents had been taken away, thus stopping an extension of the partisan movement over the Karawanken for nearly half a year. (Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1416; Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1302.)

<sup>20</sup> Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1301–1302; Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1415–1416.

<sup>21</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1418; "Über Kärnten," 1268; *Memorandum of the Government of ... Yugoslavia*, Annex No. 2; Maier-Kaibitsch, CSDIC/SD/16.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1419.

cases party officials viewed the *Abwehr* campaigners as political opponents from the conservative or socialist camps, not as fellow Germans. Finally, Rainer noticed that with one exception none of his chief regional officials were *Abwehrkämpfer*.<sup>23</sup>

### A New Approach

Both the increasing danger from Slovene opposition and a declining interest in the plebiscite issue led Rainer to initiate his own program to address the related concerns. His new plan had two major parts. First, he would make the Carinthian Question a central issue for the party, giving it his full attention. He would re-ignite the spirit of 1920 where Carinthian unity was the chief goal. He would tie the tradition of the *Abwehrkämpfer* to the tradition of the illegal fighter so that each received equal recognition. Second, he would win over the passive Slovene to the German way through a re-deployment of party and civil resources. He would inaugurate helpful economic measures, launch social improvements, and encourage propaganda. Central to this part of his plan was his expectation that the war would end within a few months. Rainer calculated that victory would bring a wave of enthusiasm, which in the border region would be similar to that of the *Anschluss*. The irredentists would be overwhelmed in the enthusiasm of victory while overall there would be a period of re-construction, building on the positive measures which he would already have introduced. The combination of economic resources, propaganda, and military victory would lessen any attraction to national Slovene endeavors.<sup>24</sup> "Then," as Rainer said, "I would have solved the Carinthian Question."<sup>25</sup> The Germanization process thus took another tack—not the hard approach of deportations but the soft touch of money and propaganda coupled with military success. The goal, of course, remained the same: the assimilation of Carinthian Slovenes.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1419–1422.

<sup>24</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1417–1423; Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1268–1269, 1386.

<sup>25</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1423.

<sup>26</sup> Vernehmungsniederschrift (Rainer), 648.

Rainer gave his first public indication of the new direction in a major speech in Krain in late September 1942. He began with a lengthy treatise on the 1000-year link between Carniola and Carinthia. He cited numerous historical examples. He also observed that the past months had been trying, but those dark moments were now over. There was a new spirit, one which he stressed in two important proclamations. First, he declared that the deportations would cease. Second, he announced that all Carniolians who were members of the pro-German Carinthian Folk Union and who had shown themselves as loyal elements would receive German citizenship. These proclamations, while directed to the residents of Upper Carniola, had an important message for the Slovenes of Carinthia.<sup>27</sup>

The major occasion for indicating the changes, however, came on the public holiday marking the 10 October anniversary of the 1920 plebiscite. On this day Rainer did three important things: he launched his campaign to link the past more closely to National Socialism, he addressed the issue of German unity, and he announced the party goal for 1943. First, he raised the Nazi profile by laying wreathes at several plebiscite monuments on behalf of Hitler and the party. Then he arranged for joint parades, honor guards, and comradely contact between *Abwehr* campaigners and Nazi fighters from the illegal times.<sup>28</sup> Further he used the festivities to found several new institutions and organizations. Up to this time the Germanization rhetoric had come mainly from party officials and the Nazi press, but now he arranged for an independent scholarly voice to study and write about the German history of the region. He founded the Institute for Carinthian Research in Klagenfurt and established the Carinthian Scientific Society, an umbrella organization to oversee research questions and to appeal to men loyal to the area and loyal to the Reich.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Untitled report (in Italian) on F. Rainer's 27.9.1942 speech, Lubiana, 28 Settembre 1942, ARS, Inv 761, 80-4, II-9, 760; F Rainer, "Wir und Oberkrain," *Mitteilungen des Gauringes für nationalsozialistische Propaganda und Volksaufklärung*, I (November 1942); "Rede und Proklamation des Gauleiters und Reichsstatthalters Dr. Rainer gehalten bei der Grosskundgebung am 27. September 1942 in Krainburg," ARS, Inv 761, 80-84, II-9, 851a & b.

<sup>28</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1422-1423.

<sup>29</sup> "Die Eingliederung Oberkrains," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 12.10.1942, AKW; *Kärntens weg zur Freiheit, Festtage zum 10. Oktober 1942 in Klagenfurt*

Rainer re-constituted the long-established History Union and gave it a decidedly Nazi affiliation. It would now act as custodian of the new Museum of Nazi Carinthia. Finally, Rainer created the Scientific Prize and awarded it first to Martin Wutte for his work on the Reich borders.<sup>30</sup>

With his plebiscite comrades and his party colleagues marching together and with historical organizations safely charged with examining the German history of Carinthia, Rainer then chose a dramatic moment in the day's festivities to announce the party goal for 1943: within the year the Nazis would eliminate the so-called Carinthian Question.<sup>31</sup>

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(Klagenfurt: Buchdruckerei, 1942), NSDAP Hauptarchiv, Reel 6, Folder No.143 - Kärnten; *Kärntner Zeitung*, 12.10.1943, in Martin Fritzl, "Die 'Kärntner Wissenschaft', der Nationalsozialismus und die Slowenen," Mag. diss., U Wien, 1991, 61 and 160; "Rede des Gauleiters Dr. Friedrich Rainer zur Konstituierung der Kärntner Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft am 10. Oktober 1942 im Grossen Wappensaal des Landhauses zu Klagenfurt," *Carinthia I; Geschichtliche Beiträge zur Heimatkunde Kärntens*, CXXXIII, Nr. 1-3 (1943) 12–14.

<sup>30</sup> Gotbert Moro, "Zur Übergabe der Sammlungen des Geschichtsvereines für Kärnten in das Eigentum des Reichsgaues Kärnten (Gauselbstverwaltung) am 9. Oktober 1942," *Carinthia I; Geschichtliche Beiträge zur Heimatkunde Kärntens*, CXXXIII, Nr. 1–3 (1943), 3–9; "Die Eingliederung Oberkrains;" *Kärntens weg zur Freiheit*.

<sup>31</sup> "Ab 10. Oktober Parteiformationen in Oberkrain," *Kärntner Zeitung* 12.10.1942: 4; "Endgültige Lösung der Kärntner Frage," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* 6.11.42, AKW.

Years later Rainer tried to rationalize his position by saying that his goal in 1943 was not actually to bring about the disappearance of the sense of being Slovene or to forbid the private use of the Slovene language, but to bring a situation where one part of the population (the Slovenes) would support the Reich and live in peace. Then it would just be a matter of time until they were germanized. Rainer further rationalized and justified his position by observing that his approach was the same attitude as that of the Czech Communist Klement Gottwald. In 1945 Gottwald had said that the Sudeten Germans could stay in Czechoslovakia but they could no longer resist assimilating with the Czechs (Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1422–1423).

To help carry out this design Rainer called on his chief party colleagues and civil administrators to develop one-year implementation plans. The resultant schemes were extensive and covered many categories. The Nazis intended to begin with a strong propaganda campaign about Carinthian unity. There would be exhibitions, lectures, talks, hand-outs, special fairs and markets, folk festivals, a greater use of films, and a wider distribution of party literature. The Nazis planned a major poster campaign, stressing the slogan, "Carinthians, speak German." In addition, names which had been Slovenized and tombstones which priests had otherwise inscribed would be changed to German at no cost. Schools, closed because of a lack of materials and teacher shortages, would re-open and receive proper support. The party would assume a greater responsibility for care facilities. It would establish more kindergartens and health centers for mothers and children.<sup>32</sup>

The Nazis under Rainer's direction also anticipated major improvements in commerce, agriculture, and government. They planned significant financial investments in projects such as rural electrification, road construction, new agricultural and trade schools, and more help for farmers at planting and harvest time. Rainer directed that the former plebiscite zone should have first call on construction materials. He also planned to fill gaps in the civil service, even before addressing vacancies in the purely German regions.<sup>33</sup> Finally, Rainer's program called for improved recreational possibilities. To help strengthen the tourist trade the Nazis planned to assist hotels and inns, improve railroad and bus schedules, and build swimming pools, sport centers, and hunting stands. Further, they would encourage programs about travel, erect new cultural facilities, and emphasize traditional customs, songs, and folklore. The plans were extensive.

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<sup>32</sup> Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1269; Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1424–1425.

Rainer gave the *Gaugrenzlandamt*, soon renamed the *Gauhauptamt für Volkstumsfrage*, the overall leadership for collecting and overseeing these plans. He further ordered Maier-Kaibitsch to report directly to him. (Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1424; Maier-Kaibitsch, CSDIC/SD/16; "Endgültige Lösung der Kärntner Frage").

<sup>33</sup> Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1269; Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1424–1425.

The first step in implementing the campaign centered on propaganda. Everywhere Rainer spoke in the next months he pushed the theme that the solution to the Carinthian Question would mean a free and undivided Carinthia. He made a special appeal to the *Windisch*. There is no difference, he proclaimed, between them and other Germans since they sprang from German as well as Slovene roots. He argued that their common link could be seen in the distant and recent past. The *Windisch* had always fought for Carinthia and Germany. Now they could support the Reich.<sup>34</sup>

After the war Rainer told the Yugoslavs that many of his measures had been carried out and he had had some success. When examining the propaganda campaign and the creation of secondary organizations, there is some truth to his claim. He traveled extensively throughout his *Gau* and the occupied territories. He established the first agricultural school in Upper Carniola and extended important social services to the residents there. These measures, aside from helping local inhabitants, served to show Carinthian Slovenes that he cared for all Slovenes. Further, he relaxed the travel restrictions between Upper Carniola and Carinthia so that families from both sides of the Karawanken could meet, and especially so those south of the mountains could visit Carinthia. He announced the building of a tunnel under the Loibl Pass, not only linking Carinthia to Upper Carniola but also providing an important commercial outlet to the south and the Adriatic.<sup>35</sup> In addition, he opened a large gymnastic camp for all the youth of Carinthia. He expanded (or founded, depending on locality) the Village Culture Circles, local organizations to work for a single Carinthia. In his announcement calling on each community to have a branch, Rainer

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<sup>34</sup> Rainer, "Grenzgau Kärnten, Träger einer stolzen Reichstradition," *Mitteilungen des Gauringes für nationalsozialistische Propaganda u. Volksaufklärung* I, Nr. 2 (Dezember 1942), ARS, F3-3-3; "Kärntens Parole: Stets in den Reihen der Besten," *Kärntner Zeitung* 01.12.42: 3; "Gauleiter Rainer zur Kärntner Frage," *Kleine Kärntner Zeitung* 27.02.1943: 7.

<sup>35</sup> "Mittelpunkt deutschen bäuerlichen Lebens; Die erste Landwirtschaftsschule in Oberkrain," *Kärntner Zeitung* 11.01.1943: 4; "Die Heimkehr Oberkrains," *Kärntner Zeitung* 14.04.1943: 1-2; Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1424-1425; "Mitten durch die Karawaken," *Kärnten Zeitung* 20.11.1942: 4.

stressed that there were not separate cultures for the Hitler Youth, the Brown Shirts, or music societies, only a Carinthian culture.<sup>36</sup>

These measures, while useful in the campaign, were usually small scale and lacked a major impact however. The primary goal of solving the Carinthian Question was not achieved. Rainer did not meet his desired objectives. He failed to resolve the Slovene issue in part because he could not procure his most important precondition: there was no victorious conclusion to the war in 1943. Instead, the military situation worsened; partisan propaganda spread noticeably from Upper Carniola into Carinthia proper; guerrilla activity intensified in his *Gau*; and the suppression of resistance became a task of increasing brutality.<sup>37</sup>

Rainer continued as best he could, however, to present a positive image. The anniversary of 10 October in 1943 was also a festive occasion with numerous activities, speeches, and prizes. The *Gauleiter* still maintained that settling the Carinthian Question was a chief goal of the party. But the difficult war situation lay like a shadow over everything. Ethnic assimilation gave way to protecting against air raids, to erecting a militia for rapid response to the partisans, and to constructing a defensive wall. Rainer had to turn his attention from the positive activities of money and propaganda to the negative aspect (as he called it) of defending his *Gau* and stopping everything which might partition Carinthia and bring union with Yugoslavia. Also Rainer's own attention shifted. In the fall of 1943 he received another responsibility when Hitler created, from Mussolini's collapsed Italy, the Operation Zone Adriatic Coastland and made Rainer High Commissioner. With these measures and realities the scheme for a final solution became

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<sup>36</sup> "Das Land der Freiheit grüsst die germanische Jugend; Eröffnung des Wehrtüchtigungslagers für die grossgermanische Jugend im Gau Kärnten durch Gauleiter Dr. Rainer," *Kärntner Zeitung* 22.03.1943: 3; "Zur Gründung von Dorfkulturringen des NS.-Volkskulturwerkes," *Mitteilungen des Gauringes für nationalsozialistische Propaganda und Volksaufklärung* 1.1 (November 1942): 16–17.

<sup>37</sup> Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1425; Rainer, "Über Kärnten," 1270.

little more than an unfulfilled slogan, occasionally mentioned, sometimes discussed, but never close to actuality.<sup>38</sup>

### Conclusion

Did this German ethnic achieve anything then with his campaign? Rainer did have some success in linking National Socialism to the 1920 plebiscite. He did use his sense of the past to promote his vision for the future. He did show himself as a pragmatic politician, shifting from a hard approach to softer tactics. He did preserve the geographical unity of Carinthia since in May 1945 he passed the province intact to a successor government. But as for the party's chief goal in and after 1943, there was no final elimination of the Carinthian Question. Rainer did not become the great Germanic hero, solver of minority issues. Nor did he bring Germany any closer to a nation-state which had no foreign minority. Maybe if the war had ended favorably for Germany in 1943 there would have been a wave of enthusiasm which would have helped Rainer and his campaign. Maybe a victory would have made his proclamation not quite so hollow. But more likely, Rainer was naive to think the enthusiasm of a military triumph would overcome growing Slovene nationalism. He overlooked the fact that despite the centuries of German rule, the Slovenes, even if indifferent to their nationality, had never been German.<sup>39</sup> Any differences would not now suddenly disappear. The steady growth of a Slovene consciousness since 1848 would ensure that fact.

The unrealistic appraisals, then, along with the miscalculations, the deteriorating military situation, and the heightened partisan campaigns meant Rainer's scheme for a final solution collapsed. It disappeared along with National Socialism. But did it vanish? Did not Rainer's successors continue to dream? Were not the *Windisch* still counted? Were there not persistent, if subtle pressures to speak and be German? Arguably, Rainer's particular scheme

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<sup>38</sup> "Der Grosse Generalappell der NSDAP in Kärnten am 10. Oktober," *Kärntner Zeitung* 11.10.43: AKW (Rainer, F); Rainer, "Über die Kärntner Slowenen-Frage," 1426; Maier-Kaibitsch, CSDIC/SD/16.

<sup>39</sup> Harriman 52.

disappeared, but other contrivances to force Slovene assimilation remained. For many the Carinthian Question still needed a resolution.

Okanagan University College

## POVZETEK

### ŠE ENA DOKONČNA REŠITEV: FRIEDRICH RAINER, KOROŠKI SLOVENCİ IN KOROŠKO VPRAŠANJE

*L. 1942 je Friedrich Rainer, koroški nacistični gavljater, objavil neizbežno rešitev koroškega vprašanja: Slovenci na Koroškem bi bili ponemčeni in tretji rajh bi se tako približal državi brez narodnih manjšin. Rainer je bil prepričan, da je imel resnične možnosti za uresnišitev tega cilja v enem letu. Pričakoval je, da se bo vojna končala čez nekaj mesecev, kar naj bi vzbudilo veliko navdušenje za rajh. Temu je dodal še natančno premišljeno lastno propagando ter ekonomske, izobraževalne in vladne ukrepe, kar vse naj bi vodilo k uresničitvi njegovega cilja. Vendar pa se vojna ni končala; namesto tega se je situacija poslabšala. Rainer ni uspel s svojimi natančno izdelani načrti; imeli so le omejen vpliv. Namesto da bi si prizadeval za miroljubna sredstva, si je zadal novo prednostno nalogo: spopad z okrepljenim partizanskim vojskovanjem. Nič čudnega torej ni, da je Rainerjev načrt za dokončno rešitev propadel. Razprava temelji na novem gradivu in na novoodkritem Rainerjevem pisanju.*