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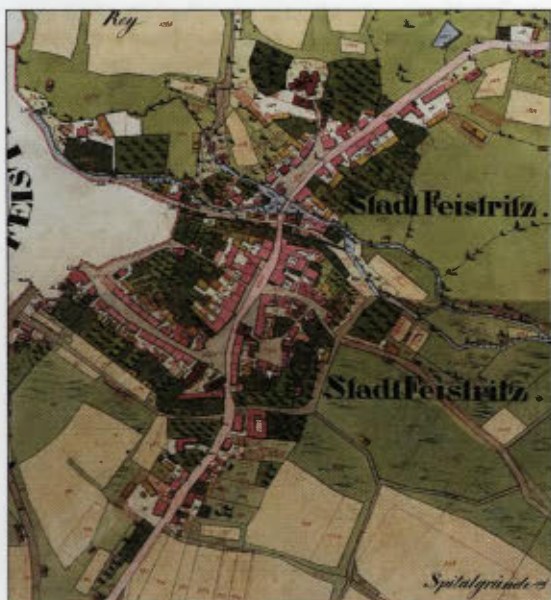
Slovenska Bistrica

Fuhstriz, Feustritz

Slovenska Bistrica developed out of four topographic centres, three of which were located south of the river Bistrica (the village Gradišče, the administrative court and castle Bistrica, and the borough settlement between them), and one north of it (the church complex). Gradišče, named after the nearby Roman ruins, was an oval defence village with 17 farms and the central village square. It emerged between the earlier Roman road from Celje to Ptuj and the younger mediaeval road from Konjice to Maribor. The latter curved around it, which proved that the settlement had existed prior to the road. The village originated from the post-Hungarian period at the end of the tenth century, and the road from

the beginning of the twelfth, when the Spanheims acquired the Podravinje region through the marriage of Engelbert I with Hedwiga of Eppenstein about the year 1065 and through the victory of Bernard I over the Asquines about 1105, and linked it with Maribor. The emergence of the court of Bistrica, named after the river, as the administrative centre of the 'parish of Pohorje' equally originated from the period of Bernard I. The transit road, the administrative court, the river crossing and the intersection of the haulage route were the factors that brought about the emergence of the borough settlement with about 30 plots. The settlement was granted fair deeds in 1227 (the magistrate was recorded in 1240), and the church of St. Bartholomew on an elevation north of the river approximately at that time as well. The church had soon become the seat of the vicariate and a vicariate parish before 1442.

Bistrica had become a town perhaps around 1297, and definitely about 1310. The elevation was brought about by the Counts of Tyrol-Gorizia, principals of Bistrica at that time, who were seeking a stronger post at this important traffic location, yet they had to submit it to the Habsburgs as Princes of the Province in 1311. The citizens and the new town lord subsequently supervised the construction of the town walls, so that one of the conditions for the existence of Bistrica as a town was fulfilled. The second, legal condition was fulfilled in 1339 when the town was granted deeds similar to those of other towns of the Prince



of the Province, and in 1360 equal to those of Radgona.

The course of the rhomboid town walls was such that it included the administrative court of the Prince of the Province, which was gradually transformed into a castle. The construction of the town walls also transformed the local traffic system, although four accesses into the town were preserved: the two main ones from the direction of the transit road, and the side ones from the directions of Zgornja Bistrica and Črešnjevci, respectively. The ground plan of the town was dictated by the traffic network. It formed two market-places along the transit road, and two smaller ones in front of the side gates. At the end of the Middle Ages both suburbs already existed: the northern one formed a rectangular market-place, and the southern one the lodgings for drivers and hauliers.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth cen-

turies numerous details of the town were recorded, among them the Messenberg tower, the church of St. Mary, the chapel of St. Anna, the spital with the church of the Holy Spirit, the town hall, and also disasters that befell the town: wars in 1446, 1469 and 1489, and fires in 1446, 1486, 1509 and 1532. On account of the growing Turkish menace the town and the castle included in the north-western corner of it were fortified in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, and over 6,000 florins of provincial money were spent on it. The four corner towers, the town walls, the gates and the moats were renovated and the castle strengthened. It passed over to the possession of the Dominican monastery in 1587. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the town had stagnated, and the Franz cadastre therefore still showed the mediaeval urban plan of the town.





It was a settlement with a rhomboid ground plan, and it was first recorded as Slovenska Bistrica in 1565. The road through the centre of the town formed a trapezoid square with a funnel-shaped conclusion. Two roads branched off from it, towards the east and west, and both formed minor market-places before leading out of the town through the side gates. The western part of the town was crossed by a narrow street linking the central market-place along the area of the castle with one in front of the western gate. The southern quarter of the eastern part of the town had two streets linking the central market-place and the eastern road with the central square of Gradišče and the south-eastern corner tower, while

the northern quarter was linked with the street leading from the eastern road towards the northern side of the town walls. The central market-place was surrounded by 9 houses on the western side, 14 houses with the town hall on the eastern side, and the church of Our Lady of Sorrows from the fourteenth century. It is evident that the town consisted of about 70 houses and some cottages with about 500 inhabitants at the beginning of the Modern Age.

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