

Lost Homeland Georgshausen

***German Title:
Verlorene Heimat Georgshausen***

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In memory of the dead
and
for the remembrance of the living.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Henry Fischer for undertaking the difficult task of translating this book. Unlike translating a typical German language book, this one also required a knowledge of the Danube Swabian customs and their dialect. As the editor I can truly appreciate Henry's dedication and knowledge of the Danube Swabian dialect that made it possible for us in the English-speaking world to read about the village of Georgshausen. I am also grateful to the author's daughter, Barbara Hebenstreit, nee Wüst, for her diligent work in proofreading the entire English text. This book provides a valuable history for anyone who is interested in Georgshausen.

The following individuals provided helpful information for answering the many questions that arose during the translation. Their help is truly appreciated. First, my relatives who lived in the Banat until the end of the Second World War: Adam Bajerle, Peter Hirsch, Elfriede Gutri, nee Hirsch, John Molter, Magdalena Prommer, nee Hirsch, Adam Sartschev, Magdalena Wimmer, nee Hirsch, Helga Wilson, nee Hirsch and her mother, Anna Hirsch Giesler, nee Glass. Also my other Danube Swabian friends and acquaintances: Helmut Birg, Georg Brennessel, Elizabeth Hugel, Cornelia Kassem, Alex Leeb, John Michels, Rosina Schmidt, Jacob Steigerwald and Nick Tullius. In addition, Conrad Weck independently translated the first seventy pages, which I used during proofreading.

My great grandmother, Maria Hirsch, was born in Georgshausen on June 4, 1865. She grew up in Georgshausen and married Peter Borschowa there on January 16, 1883. Peter was born November 12, 1859 in Werschetz, but was raised in Georgshausen. The Borschowa and Hirsch families were members of the early Georgshausen settlers from Zichydorf. My grandfather, Peter Borschowa, was born in Georgshausen on March 27, 1887. In 1901 my great grandparents and all of their children immigrated to Canada.

Soon after I began corresponding with Dr. Wüst I became interested in publishing his book in English, and he gladly granted permission for me to do so. Before he passed away in 2003 we had exchanged numerous emails and letters regarding the history of Georgshausen and my relatives who had lived there. We also had some telephone conversations with Jerry Lauzon translating. Fortunately, Dr Wüst and the former villagers undertook the monumental task of recording the history of this small village that was located in the former Austria-Hungary Empire and later in Yugoslavia. Today, the village known to our ancestors no longer exists: most of the buildings from the time before the Second World War are gone, the old cemetery is gone, the prayer house is gone and the culture is totally different; it is no longer a German village. However, through this book we have the opportunity to visit the old Georgshausen and get a glimpse into the life of our ancestors: their culture, customs, food, village politics, their livelihood and other interesting aspects of village. We will also learn how the events in the European Empires led to the founding of village and learn how the events of history later conspired to bring a tragic end to the village at the conclusion of the Second World War.

Ray Borschowa

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FOREWORD

Those of us who serve as the “Community Council” of Georgshausen are overjoyed to present this Book of Memories at the second gathering of the former villagers at Gomaringen near Reutlingen in May of 1991.

More than forty-five years have now passed over the land that was our ancestral homeland from which we were expelled. During these intervening years a new history has been written. But there are still living witnesses who experienced the history and the terrible events brought upon the inhabitants of Georgshausen at the end of the war and the first years thereafter.

Our Homeland Book now appears due to the excellent co-operation of the former inhabitants of the village who responded from far and wide to assist in its development so that it could be published so promptly and yet be fully comprehensive in its coverage and contents. For that reason, we take this opportunity to thank all of our fellow countrymen from Georgshausen who provided helpful information by sharing their own experiences and remembrances and those who sent photographs or made donations that made the publication of this book possible.

Above all, we commend and express our thanks to the author of the manuscript, our own Dr. Josef Wüst. With great effort and tremendous enthusiasm he set to work assembling the dates, the documentation with regard to the photographs and the numerous reports. As a result, he has become intimate with all of the aspects of our life together in Georgshausen. His text is an expression of the knowledge that he gained while pursuing his great love and sensitivity to all aspects of the relationships among the village’s inhabitants throughout their history. He is a Godsend for our community.

Georgshausen’s neat houses, tile roofs and workshops, the beautiful barnyards and the tilled fields and pastures were the result of a hundred year’s labor. We were denied our rights as human beings and driven out of our homes and property by night and under the cover of darkness. Death and misery were our companions. With nothing in our hands, but with a deep faith in our hearts, we began all over again. It was a slow process, but we followed an honorable path of hard work to find a new homeland.

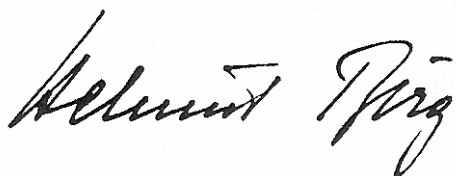
This book is presented as an historical document, it is free of hatred and a need for revenge.

We had to leave everything behind. This Homeland Book of Georgshausen is the only lasting assurance that we pass on to our children and their descendants about our old homeland and the people who lived their lives there.

The younger generation has quickly become absorbed and integrated into their new surroundings. They are very much unaware of the cohesion and continuity that bound their families together in their former homeland and the fate that their families endured. This book can help them learn more about the homeland of their parents and grandparents. In

addition, it should also give the younger generation a glimpse into the world of their ancestors and become an important contribution to their understanding of our beloved homeland.

May our Homeland Book find an honorable and welcome place with every family who once lived in Georgshausen and preserve the memory of our unforgettable and beloved village.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Helmut Birg". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Helmut" written in a slightly larger, more prominent hand than the last name "Birg".

Helmut Birg

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hans Loch". The script is cursive, with "Hans" written in a slightly larger, more prominent hand than "Loch".

Hans Loch

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Konrad Löchel". The script is cursive, with "Konrad" written in a slightly larger, more prominent hand than "Löchel".

Konrad Löchel

INTRODUCTION

Through the gathering and assembling of dates and facts about our village, the result was the gradual determination to organize these various materials whose original form was often word of mouth, references in letters and a multitude of photographs and pictures. This was accomplished over a period of two years of work. During this time it was also possible to identify an abundance of various other pertinent literature that was researched and studied. In this way, all of what is written and follows came together. And the result is not meager.

Above all, the reader will be surprised by the richness and diversity of life in our small village. He will be astonished when he learns about the utter helplessness of the inhabitants in the face of events of the time that were brought by outside forces beyond their control. And the reader will be disturbed over the systematic cold-bloodedness with which the destruction of the community was carried out.

To provide an easier orientation and introduction there is a need for clarification on the name and designation of the village. This is important because the many variations of similar village names create a lot of confusion. The German name of the village, "Georgshausen," can be found on maps of Baden-Württemberg, the Pfalz [Palatinate], Upper Bavaria, or the Innviertel in Upper Austria. The village we are speaking about and of which the following information follows is not to be found in any of these lands. Instead, it lies in a region in which today no German village names exist any more: in the Banat, a part of Vojvodina in present day Yugoslavia [now Serbia since the breakup of Yugoslavia].

Until the fall of 1944 this village was the home for at least 150 German families, the families of our own parents and grandparents. And that is why we can call it "our village." This little village in central Banat is thirty kilometers northwest of the city of Werschetz. During the years of its existence it had a variety of names that we want to acknowledge and bring to the reader's attention. Even though we are aware of the fact that there were human habitations on the village site in the Bronze Age, it was only in the 18th century when the first known names were applied to it. The first designation we can identify is Seldosch. It appears in a document in which the Emperor Franz I deeded the region to the Bishop of Agram [Zagreb, Croatia] as a gift. The bishop in turn divided the lands among Catholic nobles from Croatia. The Diocese of Tschanad exercised churchly jurisdiction over the area. On May 31, 1801, there was a celebratory event marking the union of the area with the Diocese and the first canonical visitation by the bishop took place. The Croatian nobles did not remain in the region for very long. It was in fact suggested that they accepted the gift from the bishop with hostility. They soon sold almost everything to Hungarian nobles who began a settlement and gave it the name of Joszefhaza. In the year of 1837 a total of 35 persons lived in Joszefhaza. By 1841 this had climbed to 310. In the unsettled times of the revolutionary year [1848-1849] the number of inhabitants sank to 217 persons. Whether or not there were any Germans inhabitants among the Hungarians in the small settlement cannot be verified or established for certain.

The Hungarians ended up as the losers in the Revolution of the years 1848 and 1849. During the battles around Jozsefhaza, in which the Serbs fought on the side of the Emperor, the village was destroyed and the fields were abandoned.

In the year 1849 the site was designated by a new name: Györgyháza [You-rik-ha-za]. This term was derived from the name of the estate owner, Georg von Prachetich, who transferred some German settlers from the neighboring village of Zichydorf to the new site. This name and designation remained until after the First World War when the Serbs arrived in the area. They immediately changed the name of the village to Djurdjevo Selo. In 1924 another name change took place. With the formation of the new state, later called Yugoslavia, the village was given the name: Velika Greda. The arrival of German troops in 1941 resulted in adopting the German name of Georgshausen¹ [Gay-orgs-how-zen] for the village. This lasted for only four years. After the takeover of the village by the Tito Partisans the name reverted back to Velika Greda. It remains so to this day. No German inhabitants live there today [see footnote on page 67].

At all times during their residence there, the Germans in the village always lovingly referred to it in their dialect as “Jorichhas.” None of the other numerous village names ever really won the hearts of its inhabitants as this name did.

As we recount the life, destiny and fate of the German inhabitants in what follows, the German name Georgshausen is being used even though it was the official village name for only four years of its history. Georgshausen is an attempt to provide a “High German” version or translation and approximation of its Hungarian name: Györgyháza² and the dialect designation of “Jorichhas.” Among many of the older inhabitants the designation “Greda” was also common. So it is important to say at the very beginning: “When someone says Greda he means Georgshausen.”

Just as changeable as the name of this small village was its history. The inhabitants were always serving new rulers. Yet from the earliest days as the German people built up their homes and community it went well for them on an upward spiral. Beautiful houses lined the straight streets, and all around the village workable fertile fields flourished, which became the economic backbone of the community. While in the village itself there were numerous tradesmen with special knowledge and skills. By using their abilities, coupled with their industriousness and thrift, the farmers and craftsmen exemplified their most distinguishing characteristics in the community and in the minds of their neighbors. This beautiful and hope filled development for the future ended in the midst of a political catastrophe that claimed the lives of over one-third of the resident German population.

More than forty-five years have already passed over the land since the great misfortune that began in the fall of 1944. They have been years in which the survivors found a new homeland and a new life in which to build a new existence for themselves. In the

¹ German names for the villages and cities are used throughout the book, today most of these places have a different name. Some current names are also used. The Appendix on page 268 has a cross reference of village names.

² Georgshausen and Györgyháza both mean Georg’s House.

meanwhile a whole new generation has grown up and there are often occasions when a grandchild asks their grandfather: “How did so many Germans ever end up in distant Hungary or what is now Yugoslavia? Whatever possessed your forebears to leave their old homeland in Germany and go off into the unknown?” Initially the plan was to address these questions in the historical portion of this book and to keep the history as short as possible. But that was not possible. We had to provide much more to our children and grandchildren in order to give an authentic answer to their compelling questions. They need an answer from us, their parents and grandparents and not the answers from others who attempt to hide the untruths told about us and the atrocities committed against us.

By drawing upon history we will not cut short the significance of life in our village, its establishment and the tragedy visited upon it and its inhabitants. All of these topics will form the essence of this book. The documentation with regard to the whereabouts of the former residents of the village has also been undertaken and addressed, even though now, some forty-five years later, it was a very difficult task, but of value to all of our former inhabitants.

What words cannot express we have attempted through pictures at the end of this book. Of the some 300 pictures submitted, we have chosen 128 and have identified them.

The many years since the great misfortune took place in the life of our village are not the only disadvantages. Between then and now, many Homeland Books have been written by individuals who played a role in the last phase of our life in our old homeland. They have addressed the course of events and widely influenced them. From among these publications, those of Dr. Sepp Janko and his deputy Dr. Josef Beer make many of the issues clearer for our understanding now. In the past these issues were beyond our comprehension and for that reason I mention their writings.³

The preparation of this manuscript took somewhat longer than originally planned because during the research other aspects often presented themselves and needed to be addressed.

In conclusion, I still have the task to express my thanks and appreciation to all of our countrymen who zealously assisted me in bringing together all of the material I worked with.

Without assistance I could not have written the book in its present form. It is a special joy for me, and it needs to be reiterated that out of this small village community in which some 150 German families once lived, they have maintained their ties with one another. It is a village fellowship of which all of us can be justly proud. And in spite of the great social and economic disparities in the village that have been documented, they in no way have diminished or destroyed the sense of belonging together and oneness.

Josef Wüst

³ The author was not in full agreement with the publications written by Dr. Sepp Janko and Dr. Josef Beer.

THE BANAT

Today it is understandable why our children and our grandchildren have no idea of what is meant by the term “Banat.” For that reason the following is a short description. In order to locate the Banat geographically we need to look for the Great Pannonian Lowlands and Plain on a map. This area stretches from Lake Balaton and the Buda Hills to the passes through the Carpathian Mountains in the east. In the south these lowlands pass between the Sava and Danube Rivers and are bordered by them.

The southeastern region of these lowlands bears the name “Banat.” To the north of the Banat region is the Maros River, in the west there is the Theiss River and in the south lies the Danube River. The eastern boundary runs alongside of the Banat Mountains, which form the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. The whole region known as the Banat encompasses some 30,000 square kilometers. Up until 1918 it was under Hungarian administration.

After the First World War the Banat was torn apart and divided into three pieces, and each part was annexed by three separate states. The smallest portion in the north, consisting of thirteen communities, remained as part of Hungary. The Banat Mountain region with its rich mineral deposits and the Banat Prairie fell to Romania. And the rest, about one-third of the entire area became a part of Yugoslavia. The name Banat had its origin from the name of highest ranking official who governed the area and was called the Ban, known as the Banus in Latin. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia was also divided into Bans. And the leading official was called the Banus. Our village was located in the Danube Ban. The population of the Yugoslavian Banat in 1941 was 571,306 persons. Of these there were: 245,000 Serbs (42.4%), 126,342 Germans (23.6%), 92,789 Hungarians (16%), 63,009 Romanians (10.8%), 16,870 Slovaks (2.8%), 14,990 Croats (2.5%), 2,373 other Slavs and 9,933 of other nationalities.

OUT OF THE WEST INTO THE SOUTHEAST:

AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE GERMAN SETTLEMENT OF THE BANAT

In the Government Census of March 31, 1931, there were 126,000 persons living in the Yugoslavian Banat who gave German as their Mother Tongue. In total there were 499,996 inhabitants, almost one half of a million who were designated as German origin and living in what was then Yugoslavia.

When these statistics are mentioned today our children and grandchildren immediately ask the question: “How on earth did so many German people come to live there of all places?” To answer this question there are countless literary sources available in many of the better libraries. That is why it would be possible to refrain from giving another explanation on how German populations left their homelands in what was then Western and Central Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries and headed out into the unknown with the conviction that they would find freedom in a new and better homeland in the distant Banat in southern Hungary.

But for a variety of reasons we have to write about it once more.

This must be said emphatically in light of what current historians and journalists in contemporary Yugoslavia use to justify the crimes their people perpetrated against the German populations who lived among them. They are making incredible attempts to falsify history before the world by suggesting that the Germans had always been a “foreign body” and aliens in this region.

These “historians” and “journalists” know only too well that there is no historical truth to what they have attempted to compile in its place. They count on the fact that few people in the world are aware of the true situations and conditions in this region during the last few centuries. This falsification of history expresses itself in the description of the relationship between the Serbs and Germans in this one simple example reported in the newspaper *Borba*. According to the article, the Germans were settled in the area in former times when there was no longer any more land available and nor was anyone certain of the ownership of the land. The Germans were settled on the best and most fertile land and as a result a vast number of Serbian families were turned into beggars because everything they had was taken away from them and given to the Germans. There are many more examples of such falsifications that have absolutely no relationship to historical fact and they all are undoubtedly based on a guilty conscience. This however is not the major focus of this book and this one example should suffice.

The following historical retrospective is necessary because knowledge of the resettlement of the Banat following the major Turkish wars in the 17th and 18th centuries leads to conclusions and implications regarding the later life and work of the German inhabitants in this region.

As a first step in understanding why our forebears left their ancestral homelands we need to take a look at a political map of Western and Central Europe in the 18th century. By doing so we will discover that it looks like a patchwork quilt. At the time there were countless principalities, earldoms, duchies and small kingdoms, all of who were subjects of an overlord. A model for all of these rulers was the French King, Louis XIV. His magnificence knew no boundaries and the glory of his palace at Versailles outside of Paris was a byword throughout the German speaking lands. The festivities of the court in Versailles were discussed in daily conversations in the courts of many smaller nobles who attempted to emulate and copy its extravagant life style, which cost enormous sums of money. Their subjects, as they were called at the time, were used to provide the cash. They had to finance the lavish life style of their rulers. The tax collectors were constantly about their tasks and took anything not hidden. In addition, the subjects in the truest sense of the word were the property of their noble. He could do whatever he wanted with them. We can think of the many young men from Hesse who were simply sold by their ruler to the English to fight in America during the Revolutionary War.

Louis XIV was not only a first class man of the world. He was also a proponent of realism in politics and loved to play at war. His aggressive tendencies were focused on his eastern borders in the German inhabited regions. In the War of the Palatine Succession (1688-1697) Louis pushed his eastern frontier further east where he took in large sections of German territory and annexed Strasbourg. Almost all of the cities along the right bank of the Rhine were destroyed by the French armies during this wretched war. The abused and pillaged peasantry was victimized and a fury against war raged within them. It is certainly understandable that in the western portion of the German principalities there was little reason for them to remain loyal to their ancestral homeland.

In comparison to the miserable situation in the western parts of the German lands, the peasants heard reports about the glorious victories of the Hapsburgs' Imperial Armies in the east and southeast. The military exploits of Prinz Eugen of Savoy were a part of the daily conversation. Agents began to recruit the oppressed population in their villages for immigration to distant lands and to serve foreign rulers; this awakened an unquenchable yearning within the peasants. The Czar of Russia, Peter I, promised farmers and craftsmen greater freedom and privileges if they came to Russia. The Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm I, began to recruit settlers for his eastern territories, and the King of England paid high prices for young men who were prepared to go to America and support British interests there. Added to this chorus of enticing promises, the Emperor in Vienna now joined in. This was possible because of the Emperor's great military victories in his war against the Turks. The Emperor was in need of people willing to work at settling the reclaimed land left behind by the Turks. He promised them greater freedom and guaranteed his protection to them. This was made known up and down the countryside.

It was soon obvious that the people were prepared to face the unknown rather than continue to live in misery at home. They wanted to trust the word of the Emperor in his invitation to immigrate to distant Hungary and test the results of what was promised to them, that there every man could have as much free land as he could manage to work.

But what was the actual situation in “distant Hungary,” this newly liberated land waiting to be settled by them. It was certainly not like what the agents of the Emperor had told them. The two hundred year occupation by the Turks had left its mark everywhere. From the writings of individuals who had traveled through the land after the great battles at Zenta, Belgrade and Temeswar we know that hardly any local populations existed any longer. During the long Turkish occupation the population consisted of nomadic cattle herdsman who lived in earthen dugouts or primitive huts. There was no longer any evidence of tilled fields or agricultural production. The Turks left the flatland prairies as they were for strategic reasons and let much of it revert to swamplands as additional protection and security for their fortified camps. There were no good roads, no villages, no signs of culture, and most of the rivers were not navigable because no one took the time or trouble to remove obstacles and silt. “Nowhere could you find drinkable water,” reported Carl of Lorraine, “and the stinking water from the swamps is not even something the cattle would drink. Bulrushes, weeds, scrub and bushes were so thick and so high that men on foot could not make their way through it.” Another traveler by the name of Grisellini, he was the Baedeker⁴ of his time, writes: “The famous Pontinian Marshes can hardly be compared with those in the Banat. Among the inhabitants there is the love of prowling about, sloth and idleness, banditry, robbery, treachery and cruelty. The humans we found were degraded to animal-like needs.”

This was certainly not the Paradise described in one of the emigrant songs:

This Hungary is the richest land,
Here grows much wine and grain,
That's what we heard in Günsburg,
And the ships stand ready and waiting.
There will be great numbers of cattle and fowl,
And all day long there is the hunt,
Whoever leaves now for Hungary,
For him awaits a Golden Time ahead.

The first German emigrants who came to the Banat came in an unorganized fashion. They were mainly craftsmen who had been hired by the military authorities to rebuild the fortifications. These men remained after the war ended in this region, but were without work. Many of them decided to build a new homeland for themselves in the Banat under the protection of the Emperor. Soldiers whose recruitment period ended often did the same. The letters these men wrote back home were always very positive and they created a climate that resulted in the first actual emigrants responding to the invitation of the Emperor's recruiters because of the uncertain situation back in the homeland. So they set off for Hungary, often under the leadership of their village priest or the village mayor. They traveled by way of Regensburg and Vienna on the Danube until they reached the Great Pannonian Lowlands where the officials of the Emperor assigned them to their places of settlement.

⁴ Baedeker is an old travel guide name.

History identifies this organized migration into the Banat as the First *Schwabenzug* [First Swabian Migration]. It took place between the years 1722 to 1726. Of the 60,000 people who came to Hungary during this time, approximately 8,000 of them were settled in the Banat. These first pioneers took on the hardest and greatest task of settlement. The new villages that they established had to be repopulated several times with new arrivals because the climate and swamp fever took a heavy toll on the hardworking people; not to mention the backbreaking labor.

The Second *Schwabenzug* took place during the reign of Empress Maria Theresia and lasted from 1763 to 1769. In the time between the First and Second and during this Second *Schwabenzug* some 70,000 Germans came to Hungary, of whom 42,000 came to the Banat. For these new arrivals from Germany there was a place of settlement to which they were assigned as well as prairie land. Their first task was to build their houses and the village, or if houses were already standing they had to make them livable and begin to plow the land. The first houses were small and simple. The walls were made of pounded clay and roofs were covered with reeds, which were all plentiful throughout the Banat. In the first years, while establishing the settlements, they were free from paying any taxes.

There was still a Third *Schwabenzug* to come. This took place during the reign of Emperor Josef II. In the years following 1780⁵ another 32,000 Germans came to Hungary. Half of them came to the Banat. During this time, descendants of the settlers from the First and Second *Schwabenzug* were involved in establishing new villages. For example, the large community of Zichydorf, which was in our neighborhood was established at that time. On the basis of the law, all those who were involved in the settlement of southern Hungary were dealt with by the authorities as subjects with clear written rights and obligations in comparison with those who were serfs.

Because of these rights they were independent of their nobles in terms of many freedoms. For example, the sons of the immigrants were allowed to learn a trade or craft without having to obtain permission from the noble landlord. In the *Kameral* communities, which the officially established settlements were called, the inhabitants had the right of self-government of their village and could exercise their rights at the lowest levels. The settlers possessed self-government in almost the modern sense in matters related to legal, economic, social, cultural and professional standards. Seen in this light, they were the first free peasants in Hungary, if not in all of Europe, long before the French Revolution broke out with its rallying call of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." During this time the Banat was not settled exclusively by Germans. There were also Serbs, Hungarians and Romanians who took advantage of the opportunity. In addition, there were smaller groups of Bulgarians, Croats, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Czechs, Italians, Spaniards and French. All of these settlers were treated equally. All of them received the same rights and all of them undertook the same obligations. In addition to the state sponsored initiative in settling the Banat, there were also private ones as well. This became possible when Emperor Josef II sold the *Kameral* estates to private landlords. The majority of these were Hungarian nobles as well as some Serbs who were invited to the Banat. There were Germans who

⁵ Various books give slightly different time spans for the First, Second and Third *Schwabenzug*.

also responded to the invitations of these estate owners, so the arrival of new German settlers to the Banat continued to the end of the 18th century.

In spite of major setbacks and economic hardships, the first German settlement of the Banat experienced a relatively quick development. But it must be emphasized that this was accomplished at great cost in the face of deprivation and it resulted in the loss of many lives, along with much suffering and misery. Some villages had to be settled a number of times because the original population often shrank to a minimum through wars and various sicknesses or by carrying out the unusually hard labor that often caused them to die an early death. Hunger was often a constant companion of the early settlers. Only after successful harvests and the digging of deeper wells was the life of the settlers eventually stabilized and some amenities provided.

The consolidation of the Settlement Plan for the Banat continued up to the beginning of the 19th century. Only after improved roads, regulated waterways and a functioning administrative system in place was there a sense of security and permanence. With those in place the increasingly fruitful harvests from year to year could be transported to the markets and benefit all concerned. As a result, money came into the land and with that more new villages were established. One of the driving forces for new villages was the high birth rate among the settlers. Because only one child, usually the oldest son, took over the holdings of their parents even though there were other siblings, the others had only one alternative. It was to search for remaining free land to make a living for themselves and their families. They were the majority of the young families. As long as such unsettled land existed, these young sons of farmers, often with the support of the home community, established one or more colony villages or so-called Daughter Settlements. This is the way our village of Georgshausen was settled by Germans, 130 years after the beginning of the organized settlement of the Banat.

THE YEARS OF THE REVOLUTION: FATEFUL YEARS

The years 1848 and 1849 were a fateful time for our village. These were difficult years because of the revolution and the ensuing battles that took place and yet they provided the preconditions for settling Germans in the neighborhood of Zichydorf. For that reason we offer the following detailed look at these revolutionary years and their outcomes.

The clarion call for, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” that originated during the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century began to increase throughout all of Europe after it was severely shaken by the forces of Napoleon. Although during the time of the *Vormärz*,⁶ after the time of Napoleon’s banishment, everything that originated in the west in the way of ideas about political reform was suppressed severely, but the movement itself could not be halted. The populace became increasingly vociferous, impulsive and intolerant day by day as they sought to force their demands upon the governing royal houses. Eventually it led to violence and the civilian population took up arms. This also occurred in Vienna

⁶ In Austrian History *Vormärz* is the time between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the beginning of the revolution in March of 1848.

where Prince Metternich, the most hated politician of the time, was at the head of a stringent regime in the name of a weak Emperor and suppressed everything with the slightest smell of liberty. Riots broke out in Vienna on March 13, 1848. This led to the immediate toppling of Prince Metternich from power.

In addition to the dismissal of Metternich, the Emperor was forced to promise a constitution to the people in order to quell the disturbances to a certain extent. This was also enacted for the Austrian hereditary provinces (except in Hungary, where in the meantime a constitution was developed and acted upon by the Hungarians) on April 25th of this turbulent year, but it was never put into effect. Already by early June the Emperor rescinded the proclamation. As a result, the revolution took on a more radical character.

The Czechs carried out an uprising in Prague and became the victims of bloody reprisals by the Austrian army. In Italy, Field Marshall Radetzky registered a victory at Custoza and as a result won back Lombardy, which had rebelled against the Emperor. But the fiercest and most vehement opposition came from Hungary where civil war broke out. The revolutionaries believed the time was ripe to break away from Habsburg rule. Their objective was a totally independent sovereign Hungary without any ties to the Habsburgs. But the Croats were opposed to these aspirations of the Hungarians. They were not prepared to become the lap dogs of the Hungarians. The Serbs also allied themselves with the Emperor and remained loyal to him. However, the German population was divided in its opinion. Many of them sympathized with the Hungarians. In September of 1848 the open break between the Hungarian parliament and the Imperial government in Vienna took place.

In October of that year the revolution reached its highpoint in Vienna. It was put down only after the Imperial forces from Bohemia arrived and stormed their way into the inner city on the 31st of October.

A new government was established with Prince F. Schwarzenberg at its head. Ferdinand I, the weak Emperor, abdicated in favor of his young nephew Franz Josef I. The first goal and objective of the new Emperor was to restore law and order in Hungary. On the basis of the power he was able to muster in the midst of the revolutionary conflict he faced on all sides, he was unable to achieve his objective. As a result, he called on an ally for assistance, the Czar of Russia.

Meanwhile, what was taking place in Hungary where the Germans were living in their well functioning villages in a secure environment? After the revolution broke out in Budapest on March 15th without any bloodshed, two days after it began in Vienna, a Hungarian government was established under the leadership of Count Batthyani. However, in a very short period of time this Hungarian regime faced a number of unsolvable problems. In the rural areas the peasants rebelled against their oppressors, the major landowning nobles who were members of the upper nobility. The Serbs and the Romanians who had always been held back by the Hungarians also rose up against them. They stormed the manors of their masters and set them on fire after plundering everything they could get their hands on. The Croats, who had been the first to declare their loyalty to

the Emperor, marched into the Hungarian heartland under the leadership of their commander, Governor Jellacic. Then the commander of the Hungarian revolutionaries, Lajos Kossuth, saw that his hour had come. Only by moving ahead could he achieve his goal. He called upon all Hungarians to join the fight for liberty against the Emperor in Vienna. In this fight, which was quickly becoming an all out war, the Hungarians achieved numerous victories, but they were followed by setbacks. With the help of the Russians, the armies of the Emperor began to advance. The Hungarian parliament fled from Budapest to Debrecen. In Debrecen on April 14, 1849, the parliament declared that Emperor Franz Josef I was deposed as the king of Hungary. Kossuth allowed the parliament to declare him as the Regent of Hungary. Now the destiny of Hungary was sealed.

On August 13, 1849, the Hungarian troops capitulated at Világos in the face of overwhelming odds. Criminal courts were quickly set up. Kossuth fled the country and the other leaders of the uprising, who were primarily the military commanders, were put on trial and sentenced to death. They were executed at Arad. It is interesting to note that of the thirteen condemned officers, six had Hungarian names, five were Germans and two were Serbs. Because of the failed uprising the Hungarian influence in government administration was greatly curtailed. A new Crownland was formed out of the former Batschka, Banat and Syrmia and designated as the Vojvodina of Serbia and the Banat of Temeswar. The city of Temeswar was identified as its capital and the government administration was located there.

And now a few words with regard to some of the battles associated with the Hungarian civil war. The first battles took place in the Banat. The Serbs, as mentioned previously, were on the side of the Emperor and laid siege to Werschetz from Alisbrunn on July 11, 1848. However, the Hungarians with many Germans fighting on their side were able to defend the city. It took until January 19, 1849, before the Serbs could finally enter and take the city. Werschetz was plundered by the Serbs and there were countless deaths among the German civilian population. Concurrently with the battle raging around Werschetz, the Hungarians who were living where our village would later be located, which was then known as Jozsefhaza, were driven out of the area with only what they could carry. Their houses were put to the torch and destroyed.

The good intentions behind establishing the new Crownland in which the Banat was given a degree of local power and authority did not last long. In spite of a petition presented to the Emperor in Vienna in October of 1849, in which the Archpriest Josef Novak and thirty village leaders from the northern Banat pointed out that the Germans in Hungary were not recognized on an equal status with other nations, it had no effect on the Emperor's decision to repeal the previous provisions. And already by 1861 the Banat was under its old Hungarian governance.

The difficulties of the Habsburgs gravitated to other parts of their realm. Otto von Bismarck reclaimed the leading role among the German states for Prussia, which meant a loss of face and authority for Austria on the European political scene. It led to war. It was a war between brothers. The fallout from this war along with the frightening losses of the Austrian armies at the battle of Königgrätz in 1866 were the following consequences:

Prussia, for all practical purposes took over the command of all German affairs in Europe and Austria once again focused on its interests in the southeast. If it was not possible for Austria to be the primary power among the German states, then it should at least become a reality in the Balkans. However, there still remained countless unresolved issues that existed since the Turkish retreat from the region.

THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN COMPROMISE

The number one issue now facing Austria became finding some kind of understanding with the Hungarians. They proceeded to negotiate a compromise with Hungary that would have momentous consequences for us Danube Swabians. The discussions began in haste and the conclusions that were drawn were quickly acted upon. The Hungarian special constitution of 1848 was put into effect. This established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. It consisted of two independent but equal states. They were united in the person of one monarch under whom the government institutions of foreign affairs, finance and defense were carried out. From then on, unofficially, one spoke of “the land above the Leitha” [Leitha River], which was Austria, and the “land below the Leitha,” which meant Hungary. Officially, the Austrians used the short form “*k. k.*”, which stood for “*kaiserlich-königlich*,” meaning “imperial-royal.” The Hungarians preferred the short form “*k. u. k.*”, which stood for “*kaiserlich und königlich*,” meaning “imperial and royal.” They did not want to give up the little word “and” because it was a very important symbol of political equality.

Although Emperor Franz Josef I let himself quickly be crowned as King of Hungary, the fact of the matter is that the Habsburgs only aroused anger and annoyance through implementing the Compromise with Hungary. It became obvious that the Viennese government was only partially prepared to carry out the agreement while the Hungarians already had everything in place. The inherent weaknesses, mistakes and ambiguities were only discovered later by Vienna when it was too late. It became obvious that the Hungarians had only one state in mind; their own. The advantages they achieved through their association with Vienna were considerable. The disadvantages were avoided with all kinds of excuses.

THE DWINDLING OF THE EMPEROR’S PROTECTION

For us Danube Swabians the importance of the Compromise between Austria and Hungary was nothing more or less than the fact that we were placed under the jurisdiction of Hungary and left exposed to their exuberant nationalistic aspirations. This was done in spite of the assurance given at the time when the Germans first settled there that they “were under the protection of the Habsburg Emperor,” which protection Vienna now conveniently forgot. This uncalled for change in the situation of our people has often been identified as “the beginning of the end” by many of our authors. Especially pertinent is the commentary of Josef Senz in this regard in an article in *Donauschwaben*. He writes: “Following the Compromise of 1867 the Danube Swabians lived under the pressure of the

influences of a foreign national state that clamped down on all other influences not compatible with their national objectives. They were forced to surrender their own sense of self-understanding based on their language and place of origin and adopt the nation state's identity and aspirations, grounded in the language, history and origins of the Magyars. Their children were expected to learn another language in school and prefer using it in place of their mother tongue.”

When we pursue this history further it is important to note first of all that the Habsburgs had absolutely no room to maneuver in this agreement with the Hungarians if they hoped to carry out their own interests in the southeast. Instead, the opposite would occur. The other nationalities in the Dual Monarchy saw the Compromise with the Hungarians as a slap in their faces when they far outnumbered them. This was especially true of the Slavic population. If one counted all of the Slavs living in the territory of the Monarchy at that time, the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Russians, Serbs, Croats and Slovenians would total two and one half times the number of Hungarians. They refused to remain silent and embraced a nationalism of their own and demanded what the Hungarians had achieved for themselves, an independent state of their own. The discussions and negotiations with Vienna in this regard were done only half-heartedly on the part of the Habsburg representatives and would have no results. The Germans in northern Europe were involved in a unifying process among themselves after the demise of Habsburg hegemony among the German states that resulted from the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Under the leadership of Prince Bismarck this effort made good progress. After Prussia achieved victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, nothing stood in the way of King Wilhelm I of Prussia to become the German Emperor. The palace at Versailles, which had served as the Prussian headquarters during the war with France, set the scene for his coronation on January 18, 1871. From that day onward the Germans had their Emperor in Berlin and the Austrians had theirs in Vienna. Both of these Empires, the German and Austrian, collapsed in the fall of 1918 after their defeat in the First World War. The period of time from then until the First World War was seen as an economically good time. As a result of the millions of Francs paid by the defeated French to victorious Prussia, the German economy bloomed, and one no longer referred to Prussia, Bavaria, Hesse etc., but to the German Empire. This economic upswing saw the emergence of new industries and countless inventions in the field of technology. During this rapid expansion both Austria and Hungary experienced various elements of it as well, and the Hungarians responded in a very cocky fashion. They could not bear the thought that anyone who lived in their beloved homeland would speak anything but Hungarian or not think in those categories. It was during this time when legal steps were taken to ban the teaching of or using German in the schools. Whoever wanted to become someone had to lie about their origins and claim to be a Hungarian. He could only speak Hungarian and had to know and adopt all things Hungarian in his lifestyle. This was the timeframe in which our parents were taught only Hungarian in our village school, resulting in a rather comical style of spelling that sometimes made us wonder when we read a letter from our mother or grandmother. This was also the time when names were reversed unlike their German usage, the surname was given first and the given name followed; i.e. Johann Schmidt was now Schmidt Johann.

After this short detour we will now return to the mainstream of world history. Bismarck initiated the Congress of Berlin to establish the new order in Europe. Since the situation in the west had been resolved by the brilliant Prussian victory over France, the Congress focused mainly on the issues concerning the Balkans. Above all, there was concern with regard to the growing influence of Russia in the region. It resulted in the mandate for Austria to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Russia could not afford to lose its power in the Balkans. Nor was Russia obligated to respect the decisions of the Congress of Berlin. The mutual defense pact between Germany and Austria in 1879 led to a split among the European Powers into two camps. Italy later allied itself with the two Central Powers and to a greater or lesser degree these two consolidations of power were in place when the First World War broke out. Destiny was on the march.

DEVASTATING RESULTS OF THE LOST WAR

The assassination of the hereditary prince on *Vidovdan*, June 28, 1914, unleashed the First World War.⁷ The armies of the Tripartite Union fought bravely and at the beginning were successful in achieving their objectives. The turning point in their fortunes came when Italy separated from the alliance. The troops of the German Empire and the armies of Austria-Hungary were under greater and greater pressure. The war was lost. In the following pages we must take a closer look at the results of the war because it brought us inhabitants of Georgshausen, called Györgyháza at the time, a new homeland: the future Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The First World War was ending. On October 28, 1918, the Allied troops made a breakthrough along the Piave River in northern Italy. The Austro-Hungarian armies pulled back in full retreat. Negotiations began immediately to establish a cease-fire. It came into effect on November 3, 1918. This war that had begun with such high hopes and fought so bravely was lost, and as a result the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary came to an end.

Their German ally also had to end the war. The German negotiators signed an armistice in the forest of Compiègne outside of Paris on November 11, 1918.

This brought an end to the war that had taken the lives of millions of the youth in Europe and half of the rest of the world. It resulted in the map of Europe taking on a totally different appearance.

Germany had to surrender Alsace and Lorraine to France once more, and pay huge indemnities and war reparations. Of much graver consequence were the results of the lost war to Austria-Hungary. This great nation state of many nationalities was totally shattered into pieces. The so-called successor states emerged from the dismembered empire. What remained of Austria, which was soon to become a republic, was so small that it could hardly sustain itself. The ruling house of Habsburg-Lorraine was declared deposed and all

⁷ Archduke of Austria, Franz Ferdinand, assassinated on the Serbian Orthodox religious holiday of *Vidovdan*.

members of the hereditary house who were not prepared to swear loyalty to the newly established republic were ordered to leave the country. All of the properties and estates of the royal house were confiscated by the state. The last Emperor, Karl I, died in exile on the Island of Madeira.

In terms of our situation, it must be pointed out that with the exile of the last Emperor and King of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine we lost the last vestige of the protection afforded to the Germans who settled in the Danube regions in the 18th and 19th centuries, the so-called, "Refuge and Defense of the Emperor." While on the other hand, we who were in the successor states could not expect any protection of our interests from the former German Empire either, their Emperor had also been exiled. The victorious Allies determined which lands and regions would belong to the new states they created. Neither the opinions nor the desires of the populations who inhabited the areas were taken into account. The delegates of the newly created republic of Austria accepted the Allied dictated Peace Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye on September 10, 1919. The treaty stipulated that the Austrians were responsible for the outbreak of the war and as a result they were to pay reparations to the so-called victorious states. Of major consequence in their payment of these indemnities was the separation of the following territories from Austria: Bohemia and Moravia became part of the newly created state of Czechoslovakia; Galicia was annexed by Poland; South Tyrol, plus some territory along the Adriatic and the Kanal Valley fell to Italy; South Styria and Carniola, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina were incorporated into the new present day state of Yugoslavia.

Just as Austria suffered these amputations as a result of losing the war, Hungary would endure losses of its own. Following the armistice of November 8, 1918, major disturbances broke out. Count Károlyi, who in the first hour of the lost war had assumed leadership in Hungary, was forced to resign from office in March of 1919. He turned the reins of government over to Béla Kun and his Social Democrat and Communist supporters who then established the Hungarian Soviet Republic. This terrorist regime only lasted until August of that same year. This made it quite clear to the population what they could anticipate if such a government became permanent. With the support of the Allied Powers, Béla Kun and his supporters were driven out of Hungary and Romanian troops occupied Budapest on August 3, 1919.

Under their protection a national assembly was elected at the beginning of 1920. The monarchy was to be re-instated, but they declared any claim to the throne by the Habsburgs as null and void. The former king who had reigned as Karl IV in Hungary was forbidden to set foot on the land again. Nikolaus Horthy was elected as the Regent of Hungary on March 1, 1920. He also forbade the former monarch from entering the land and assuming power.

In the Peace Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, Hungary's territory was reduced from 325,500 square kilometers prior to the First World War to 93,000 square kilometers after it. All of Croatia, Slovakia, Transylvania and the greater part of the Banat were taken out of Hungary's control and annexed by the successor states.

NEW RULERS IN THE BANAT

When the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was broken up the Serbs reached out with their powerful hands and grabbed some territory. Their Prince Regent, the future King Alexander I, proclaimed the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on December 1, 1918. This placed a new state on the map of Europe with whose future our own fate would be closely tied. Our homeland, the Banat was divided into three parts as a result of establishing the new states. A portion was given to Romania, a small portion remained as part of Hungary and the portion in which our village was located became a part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.⁸

Just setting up a new administration under the umbrella of the new rulers proved to be an unsolvable problem. The territory of the new state was six times the size of the territory of Serbia at the outbreak of the war. There was the opposition of the Croats who felt they had been deceived. All Croatian politicians said they were forced to become part of the new state by underhanded means. There had been no prior consultation with the political representatives of the Croats, nor the people themselves as to their desires. This opposition was centered and formed around Stjepan Radić. It gave birth to a movement that sought to enlist the population in an uprising with the goal of establishing an independent Croatian republic. The Serbs for their part were prepared to strangle these secret ambitions of the Croats with military might.

This reluctance of the Croats to go along with the Serbs and their objectives remained the central difficulty faced by the new state and would remain so up to the present, although Prince Regent Alexander was able to bring some order to the situation with his so-called *Vidovdaner* constitution. The Croats under the leadership of Stjepan Radić voted against this constitution in the newly formed *Skupština* (Parliament), but it was put into effect because the new voting rules called for only fifty per cent of the votes plus one and not a two-thirds majority.

It is also important to note that the German and Hungarian minorities were excluded from the election of 1921 that led to the ratification of this constitution.

The radicals among the representatives went so far as to advocate a violent end to the minority problem. With the enormous expansion of its territory, the new state inherited a colorful palette of new people who could not be integrated without problems. Above all, there was the matter of a half million new citizens whose mother tongue was German, and about whom radical and misleading assertions were made. With their removal it was said that the state could pocket the value of their property and kill two birds with one stone. In view of this tempting booty, many historians say that the expulsion of the German minority was a settled affair since 1918. But this dream of many of the radical Serbs could not be fulfilled because the so-called victorious powers would not allow or support the expulsion of the Germans from their villages and towns without compensation for their property. During the debate on agricultural reform, which was then planned and later implemented,

⁸ Abbreviated as SHS. Known as Yugoslavia after 1929.

the then Serbian prime minister, Pašić, declared: "If we had dealt with the question of the German population in 1918 we would not have this problem today."

Instead, the solution to the problem took on another form. The Germans would not be expelled, but rather populations of various Slavic backgrounds living in Bosnia, Herzegovina, Lika and Kosovo would be resettled among the Germans. These people received land grants from the government as part of the agricultural reform legislation. That is why most of these migrant populations were settled in new villages in the neighborhood of German villages. In the agricultural reform legislation of the new SHS state it was decreed that large-scale landowners were allowed to retain up to 500 *Joch* of land [1 *Joch* = 1.43 acres = .576 hectares = 5,755 sq meters]. The remainder belonged to the state. The former landholders, mostly Hungarian nobles, lost the greater portion of their estates. These large tracts and estates shrank in size and the inhabitants in the region who worked for them to earn bread for their families lost their means to exist. For many the only alternative was to emigrate overseas. In addition to all of these factors, the new state promulgated all kinds of laws and regulations to restrict all development of the minorities, including the Germans.

The period from the end of the First World War to the breakup of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the German military invasion in 1941 was not an easy time for the newly formed state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The structure of the state could only be maintained with tremendous effort, disregard for the laws and a constant escalation of force to suppress the minorities was necessary. From the beginning to the end the conflict with the Croats was like waving a red flag in front of a bull and it affected all of the internal politics in the country. Only by the assumption of power by the Serbs and their control of the functioning military were the Croats kept in their place and forced to remain within the newly formed state under King Alexander I.

During this period, two politically motivated murderous assaults took place. As the leader of the Croatian Peasants' Party, Stjepan Radić badgered the Serb representatives in parliament until they reached for their revolvers. In the midst of the sitting parliament he was gunned down by his political opponents. This event would be historically known as "Murder in the *Skupština*." In later years it became one of the most powerful motives in the mutual extermination efforts of the Serbs and Croats. Hundreds of thousands of people fell victim to the animosity between the two.

The after effects of the assassination demonstrated that not even this extreme measure on the part of the Serbs would achieve their hoped for "free hand" in terms of the internal political situation. Radić's successor, Vlatko Maček, was even more belligerent. He proceeded to attempt to carry out Radić's political agenda in parliament. Finally, the King saw no other alternative and carried out a radical intervention. He dissolved parliament, suspended the constitution and ruled by decree with the support of the loyalists in the army. This period of history now goes under the designation of "The Royal Dictatorship."

Radić was murdered on August 26, 1928. On October 3, 1929, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS) became the new state of Yugoslavia with its own new political

orientation. The new name was meant to signify the end of national differences and that the King would not tolerate any more escapades like the nation had endured since its inception. But it was obvious to all politicians that this was not going to be the case. The leaders of the Croats went into exile, including the future Fascist strongman, Ante Pavelić. During his time in exile, to name just one example, he began to establish his infamous *Ustaša*, which would earn a deplorable reputation after 1941. The King completely changed the administration of the new Yugoslavia. In place of the old administrative districts that reflected the ethnic character of the population, he established nine Banships [provinces] and named the majority of them after the most prominent river in their respective region. The Serbs formed an absolute majority in six of these Banships and as a result hoped that in the future the nation could be governed problem free. But then the second politically motivated murder followed. The Croats in exile created an image of King Alexander as both a dictator and their worst enemy. While making a state visit to France, on October 9, 1934, in the seaport city of Marseilles, he was shot to death by an agitator associated with the *Ustaša*. The murder of the King was the high point in the conflict between the Croats and Serbs.

Paul, the brother of King Alexander succeeded him as Prince Regent. He appointed the capable and clever Dr. Milan Stojadinović as Prime Minister and was successful in bringing some order to the land. In 1936, parliamentary elections were held once again. In this election the minorities were allowed to field their own candidates and vote in the election. Eventually, Stojadinović was able to work out a compromise with the Croats on August 26, 1939, primarily because of the pressures exerted on Yugoslavia as the Second World War loomed on the horizon. On the basis of this compromise the Croats were granted far ranging measures of independence in their province; called the "Save-Banship." These measures went beyond governance, they affected the legal system, cultural and economic activities and social policy.

While establishing a more ordered internal political climate the nation was rocked by turbulence with regard to its foreign affairs policies that resulted in war with Germany and brought dissolution to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

From the very beginning the foreign affairs policies of Yugoslavia were in disunion. During the First World War the Serbs had sympathies for England and France, but now economic factors forced them into political arrangements with Germany. Maintaining these contrasts would prove impossible. Both France and England had a source of raw materials from their colonies. They needed nothing from Yugoslavia, which mainly provided agricultural products. These two nations, which the Yugoslavian politicians held in high esteem, wanted customers who could pay cash for their industrial products. But Yugoslavia was too poor for cash; they had almost no foreign currency available.

Germany needed agricultural products in large quantities. It also had sufficient industrial products to trade. It is hardly any wonder why intensive trading soon developed between the two nations. The following arrangement quickly emerged: what was imported could be paid for by what was exported. Since the Germans were prepared to pay higher prices than the world market, the flow of goods in both directions became heavier. The last trade

treaty between Yugoslavia and Germany was signed on May 1, 1934. Because the Germans needed agricultural products from Yugoslavia, they were generous in terms of the prices they were willing to pay. They also had a political objective in mind by doing so. An economically stable and neutral land in the Balkans was the best defense against a military occupation of central Europe instigated from Salonika, as had been the case in the First World War. The Germans wanted to have their backs covered in case of any military setbacks elsewhere. This was certainly obvious to the politicians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. For that reason they did not break off relationships or contacts with the General Staff of their former allies from the First World War.

When this was brought to the attention of the German officials they lost their trust in the integrity of their Balkans trading partner. In order to assure themselves of loyalty they asked Yugoslavia to join the Tripartite Pact along with Germany, Italy and Japan.

The Yugoslavian Prime Minister Cvetković signed the treaty in Vienna on March 25, 1941. In Belgrade, two days later, Cvetković and his regime was toppled from power. The result was the outbreak of war between Germany and Yugoslavia on the 6th of April.

The war was over in less than twelve days. The cease-fire was already signed on April 17th and went into effect a day later. The King, government officials and leading politicians fled the country. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia no longer existed.

INDEPENDENT GERMAN ADMINISTRATION

In his preliminary instructions for the division of Yugoslavia, Adolf Hitler gave the following order:

1. The territories of the Styria, Carniola and Carinthia that had been incorporated into the state of Yugoslavia after the First World War were to be given to Germany.
2. The Übermur area [territory beyond the Mur River] was to be incorporated into Hungary and the Germans living there were to be resettled later.
3. The Batschka and Baranya were to be annexed to Hungary. The Yugoslavian Banat was to be placed under the protection of Germany and be administered by the German military.
4. Southern Serbia, what was populated by Bulgarian Macedonians would become part of Bulgaria.
5. Serbia itself would come under German military administration.
6. Croatia would become an independent state.
7. The political formation of the remaining territory, including Bosnia and Montenegro, would be left in the hands of the Italians.

The Banat, along with former Serbia was placed under the German military administration. But after negotiations the Banat was given “special status” in terms of its internal governmental affairs. The German population was given far reaching rights and privileges in the government, financial affairs, the courts and the legal system. General Nedić was permitted to establish a government in Serbia because the German armed forces

declined to create their own administration there. At the time, Germany had more pressing matters to deal with. The campaign in Russia required all of the strength and the concentration of all German army resources, so decreasing the occupation needs in Serbia was welcomed. This colossal miscalculation grew into a massive burden on German resources. It partially had its roots in the failed political policies of the German occupation authorities, but primarily it resulted from the struggle for power between the Croats and Serbian nationalists and later on the Communist Partisan units that emerged in the region. In carrying out their objectives these groups not only fought one another, but also the occupation forces. The Partisans especially understood the need to provide provocations and retributive actions to drive the population into their camp, so month by month they became stronger and stronger until they became the only force the German military was compelled to deal with. The political arm of the Communist Partisans, the “Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia” (AVNOJ), at its meeting on November 21, 1944, decreed state ownership of all properties owned by the enemy living in Yugoslavia. This was later elevated to the status of a law.

Following this measure was the total expropriation and deprivation of rights of the German population. It was the instrument used to charge the Germans in Yugoslavia with collective guilt that resulted in collective punishment.

The Germans were deprived of their rights of citizenship, all of their property and possessions were confiscated by the state and they were declared outlaws. They lived outside of the law in Yugoslavia. Anyone was free to do anything they wanted to them without any consequences, even killing them without having to worry about being punished for doing so.

OUR VILLAGE

It was the smallest village in comparison to the other communities in the neighborhood. It was located in the Banat, thirty kilometers northwest of Werschetz. We would call this little village, “our village,” not only because we lived there, but because three generations of our forebears had preceded us and together we developed it into what it had become. In that sense, the village had belonged to us for ninety-five years, from 1849 to 1944.

The written name of the village was Georgshausen, but in our local dialect it was “Jorichhas.” Some Hungarian families still lived in the village and they called it Györgyháza. The Serbs, who established a colony next to our village in 1920, used the geographical name for the area around our village and named it Velika Greda, which continues to be the village name to the present day. Before we Germans settled there a variety of different people and nationalities lived in the region. It is now difficult to determine with any degree of certainty how long any of them remained. However, the first settlement on the site called Velika Greda by the Serbs, who migrated into the area during the Turkish occupation, dates back to prehistoric times.

A Bronze Age archeological map representing Vojvodina indicates that there were human habitations on the sites of present day Heideschütz, Zichydorf, and Georgshausen. That would mean about 3,500 years ago, or in other words 1,500 years before the birth of Christ.

But for our purposes we do not want to go back that far in human history. Only the facts of the ethnic situation in this region after the Turks were driven from the area at the beginning of the 18th century shall be considered. We now find ourselves at the end of the 20th century. That leaves only the short period of three hundred years for our consideration.

After the Turks were expelled it is certain, with the exception of the Velika Greda (an area of land several meters higher than the surrounding countryside, which also accounts for the name), that the majority of the region was uncultivated and lay in ruins. This can be substantiated on the basis of the journals of travelers who passed through the area after the Turkish occupation had ended.

It appeared impractical to consider developing the region agriculturally so there was no need for settlers. Only after extensive measures had been taken in draining the entire area of Banat was the development of the region looked upon with more interest. In order to better understand what follows there are a few historical dates associated with the area that need to be taken into consideration. Above all there is the question of how did the Habsburgs become the legitimate occupiers of Hungary.

In the memorable Battle of Mohacs (1526) the young Hungarian King Lajos II was defeated and lost his own life. This resulted in Habsburg Ferdinand I legally inheriting all of Hungary. The map of the area was revised in this way: Western Hungary, with Pressburg [Bratislava] as its capital city became an Austrian province, Transylvania maintained its independence as a vassal of the Turkish sultan and the remainder of

Hungary became a Turkish occupied territory, which was plundered, depopulated and devastated during the almost two hundred years of occupation. This was also true of the Banat.

The Serbs arrived with the Turks as a part of their retinue. It was during this period that the Serbs achieved their greatest ethnic expansion. They were able to push their area of settlement to the north and the west, deep into the great Pannonian Plains, and were able to sustain their hold on the territory even during the Turkish occupation. The retreat of the Turks and the great military victories of the Austrians followed the last attempt by the Turks to take Vienna. After a two month siege of the Imperial capital and residence of the Habsburg Emperor, Kara Mustafa the Turkish Grand Vizier gave up. He retreated back into Hungary where he met his fate at the end of a silken noose. His troops still faced the Austrian army in a series of other battles, but they lost most of them and soon had to abandon all of the conquered territory in Hungary. One can say that after their defeat at the gates of Vienna in 1683 the Turkish fortunes in Europe went downhill. A second stream of Serbian migration into the great Pannonian Plains followed the first Serbian uprising against the Turks (1804-1806). After the failure of the uprising, Serbian prince Karadjordje led over 100,000 Serbian refugees fleeing the Turks across the Danube and the Sava River into the Banat, the Batschka and into the regions of southern Hungary.

The next important year is 1778. In that year Empress Maria Theresia transferred the Crownland of the Banat and its Imperial Administration to Hungary. She did this in appreciation for the assistance the Hungarians had given her in the war against Prussia over the control of Silesia. As a result, the Banat was placed under Hungarian governance and administration. The territory of the Banat consisted of three counties: Temes, Torontál and Karos [later Krassó-Szörény]. The area in which our village was later developed belonged to Torontál County.

Two years after this event, Maria Theresia died and her son Josef became Emperor Josef II the sole Regent of the entire Empire. He had inherited a large empire with great difficulties attached to the inheritance. Among many of them was the war against the Turks and the great financial cost associated with it. In order to replenish his state treasury, Josef II sold a large portion of the Banat to private landowners. These transactions did not bring in all that much money, but they did lead to a massive migration of Hungarian settlers into the Banat. The purchasers of these large tracts of land were overwhelmingly members of the Hungarian nobility who spent modest amounts of money for the generous sections of land. In order to cultivate these lands there was a need for people and villages had to be built to accommodate them. Of course, Hungarians were settled on the site where our village would later be located. On the slightly higher elevations of the Velika Greda the following estates were established: Botka, Daniel, Liptay, Orcy, Karascony and Csavossy. Later the Torontál Bank took over a portion of the Csavossy estate and then established the Bank-*Puszt*a.⁹

This short excursion into our local history was necessary to explain how the Serbs and Hungarians came into the Banat because it was with these two nationalities that the

⁹ As used here a *puszta* is a large farm where hired hands lived and worked.

German inhabitants would have to coexist with. Our forebears first leased the land on the Velika Greda and then later purchased it outright from members of the Hungarian nobility, as well as from some of the Slavic nobles. This fact is of utmost importance because in later years it would be stubbornly maintained by the non-German nationalities that the Swabians (the Germans) had received the land on which they lived as an outright gift at no cost to them.

THE FIRST GERMAN INHABITANTS

The next question that is in search of an answer deals with the inhabitants of this village. Where did they come from, who were they, how did they establish themselves in the village and shape their lives in response to their environment? As has been mentioned previously, the German speaking settlers of our village came from older established villages where their parents resided, they saw no economic future for themselves if they remained there because there was no more land available to provide them with a viable existence.

The largest and most compact group of settlers came from the neighboring village of Zichydorf. This village was established during the Third *Schwabenzug* [Third Swabian Migration] under the direction and leadership of Josef II. In the winter of 1787-1788 and the following spring the first houses were built, 123 in all. The colonists for whom the houses were built did not originate in the western part of the Habsburg Empire. They came from previously established villages, such as Grabatz, Hatzfeld, Grossjetscha, Kleinjetscha and Ostern, which were the result of the previous *Schwabenzug*.

The initiator of this settlement project was Count Karl Zichy de Vasonkeö and the new settlement was named after him. For us, some of the names of these settlers from the five previously mentioned villages are of special interest. On the basis of existing evidence the following family names have been identified: Arnusch, Aweder [Awender], Bajerle, Borschowa,¹⁰ Brücker, Busch, Faul, Frass, Froh, Heinermann, Herold, Kresch, Lach, Merle, Niedermayer, Oberle, Remilong, Storch, Wingert and Wiest [Wüst]. All of these names were common among the families residing in our village. Literature indicates that there was a large group of people from Zichydorf who resettled on the Velika Greda. In the Homeland Book of Zichydorf [*Geschichte der Gemeinde Zichydorf*] there is a striking article by Felix Milleker who lived in Werschetz. On page nine we can read the following: "In the year of 1849, Georg von Prachetich founded Györgyháza with Germans from Zichydorf and Morawitza on the Velika Greda, on the site of the Hungarian colony of Jozsefhaza whose Hungarian inhabitants had been driven off in 1848." Morawitza was founded at the same time as Zichydorf, during the Third *Schwabenzug* with people who had already been settled in the Banat for some time.

We should also mention that the Hungarian Count Bela Botka, who owned a large estate in the Velika Greda area, recruited German settlers and established them on his land

¹⁰ The Borschowa family originally came from Triebswetter, which is near the five previously mentioned villages.

holdings that were on the boundary of our village. The Botka settlers built their houses approximately where Friedl Birg later established his estate. One family, who left their imprint forever on the village, came to the Velika Greda in response to an invitation from Baron Csavossy. This was the Birg family who migrated from Karlsdorf right after the Revolution of 1848-1849. As one researches to better understand where the remaining inhabitants of our village came from, one always runs into the villages of: Kathreinfeld, Ernsthäusen, Marienfeld, Detta, Sankt Hubert and Stefansfeld. And in addition, the neighboring villages of Heideschütz, Setschanfeld, Gross Gaj and Alt Letz. There were also additional families from Zerne [Deutsch-Zerne] in northern Banat. We simply have to think of the Bauer family who were known by the nickname: Zerneer. There were both arriving immigrants and departing emigrants practically up to the end of our life together. In this regard we mention the Oberle family from Zichydorf and the Seger, Maurer and Illi families who were known as the Brestowatzer [from Brestowatz]. Johann Frass left Zichydorf in 1912 and first settled in Elemer [Deutsch-Elemer]. Shortly afterwards he was apparently not satisfied with living there and bought land in our village. From then on he cultivated the land that had belonged to the Csavossy family. The Muhr family, who were the innkeepers, first arrived in the village in the 1920s.

The emigrants from our village mostly left for distant places. They went to South and North America and very few of them returned. The overseas emigration took place in two waves in separate time frames. The first took place at the threshold of the 20th century. At that time agents from North America passed through our village and attempted to recruit able-bodied workers for the emerging industries and factories in the USA.¹¹ As a result, some of the villagers tried their luck in far off America. Nothing was heard from many of these emigrants afterwards. The second wave was set in motion in the 1920s. Many large estates were abolished and divided up through the agricultural reform laws passed by the Yugoslavian government. This forced the people who earned their living by working on these estates to lose their jobs and source of income. They had no land, nor did they own any property and because they were Germans they were not eligible to receive any land from the government. They had no alternative other than seek an opportunity elsewhere, even if it meant far away. The favorite destination of this last stream of emigrants was Canada. Most of them did well there. The great majority of them became farmers. Also, after the violent expulsion of our villagers following the Second World War, some of the families found a new home in Canada and the United States.

A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ZICHYDORF

At the beginning of the history of the new settlement of Györgyháza, as our village was then known, it was closely tied to the neighboring community of Zichydorf. A well functioning community life already existed in Zichydorf in the 1860s. For example, the only hospital serving the communities of Margita, Sent-Janosch [Sankt-Johann], Ürményháza [Ürmenhausen], Heideschütz and our own village was located in Zichydorf. Unfortunately, this hospital, where at least fifteen patients were accommodated in 1859, was closed when the Hungarian government once again took over the Banat in 1861. From

¹¹ The Canadian Pacific Railway was also recruiting in the region at this time.

this time onward there was always a physician in Zichydorf, later in fact, there were two who were also available on a demand basis to patients from our village. In 1864 a druggist established himself in Zichydorf.

No doctor or pharmacist ever resided in our village or set up a practice there at any time. Our dependency in this regard was simply a fact of life, at first, as previously mentioned, on the doctors in Zichydorf and later the district physician in Heideschütz. In terms of serious illness, accidents or the outbreak of epidemics the lack of a local doctor always made the situation acute. This was especially difficult during the winter months when there was a heavy snowfall and there was a need for the immediate services of a doctor. Two good horses had to be harnessed to a sleigh and either the sick person had to be taken to the doctor or the doctor was brought to the patient.

THE PRAYER HOUSE AND THE SCHOOL ARE BUILT

Because there was no resident priest in the village, an organization was established to work closely with the resident priest in Zichydorf and assist in the development of the religious life of the community. But it often had to function with little support. Following the settlement of the village it was some time before religious life was established because there was no possibility for ongoing regular worship services. This was not only due to the fact that there was no priest, there was also no church. After long deliberations it was decided to combine worship services and schooling in the Kupa house. This occurred in 1852, about two years after the first German settlers arrived. At that time there were 322 inhabitants in the village. The Kupa house was among the oldest dwellings in the village. It stood on the Lower Street¹² [*Untere Gasse*]. (In the last years Hans Arnusch and his family lived in the front section of the house, while Mrs. Storch and her children lived in the rear portion.) During the week the children assembled there and were taught to read and write. On Sundays and holy days an altar was set up and worship was held there.

In those days the priest from Ürmenyháza came only once a month or even less often. This situation only changed with the opening of the railway line with the connection between Betschkerek and Werschetz in 1891. In that year our village became an affiliated church of the Zichydorf parish. The major reason of course was the better connections between the neighboring communities that the railway made possible. Both villages had a railway station, while Ürmenyháza was some distance from the railway line.

Our church, the prayer house as we still remember it, was constructed at the turn of the century. The Hungarian government gave directions as to the nature and design of the building. The front section served as a school and as a church on Sundays and holy days

¹² Georgshausen street names: With the exception of the main street or *Haupt Strasse*, which was Kaiser Wilhelm Street before the First World War, the Georgshausen streets did not have official names. It was not necessary because everyone knew who lived where. The street names used in this book are general names and are intended to give the reader a reference when referring to the village map. In some cases the author uses more than one general name for the same street. For example, the Cross Street is also referred to as the School Street, and Main Street is also referred to as the Upper Street.

and a section in the rear served as the living quarters for the teacher. Several years later, the Hungarian government built a new school with a beautiful playground and a sacristan house that was last occupied by *Vetter*¹³ Wastl [Sebastian Schag].

Once the school had a building of its own the village was in a better position to improve the prayer house for worship purposes. But this resulted in a difference of opinion among the villagers. One group of villagers immediately wanted a proper church with a tower, bells and a clock. Another group wanted to install a new side altar dedicated to St. Bernadette of Lourdes next to the high altar. Both groups began to collect funds. Nikolaus Herold and old Franz Wüst were the strongest advocates for building the church. They sold what they called “building stones” in the village and they also went to neighboring villages to sell them there as well. The undertaking was apparently well received and they could have achieved their goal had the other group led by Elisabeth Amon of the Rosary Society supported them. However, Elisabeth Amon wanted the Lourdes altar and refused to surrender the Rosary Society funds. This difference of opinions resulted in suspending the efforts to build a church and the money raised through the selling of the “building stones” was to be returned to the donors, but nor would there be an altar dedicated to St. Bernadette of Lourdes. The prayer house was a relatively good worship atmosphere because of the generosity of the elder Peter Birg who furnished it with a harmonium [reed organ], confessional and bells.

The last desire to build a beautiful church surfaced again in the 1930s. The elderly Peter Birg considered building a new village center with a church as its centerpiece. This center was to be located between the Adam Birg house and the post office on the site of the Illiewich house. But the old man set a condition: In the new church they had to allow him to build a burial crypt in which he and his wife, Susan, would have their final resting place.

This golden opportunity was rejected. The church officials refused to support building a crypt in the church. Others among our older people used to say that the opposition also came from the village itself because the church along with the crypt would be located on the way to the railway station. On their way to catch the train all of the people would have to pass by the grave of old Peter Birg. The very idea of doing that frightened many people. So again, there was to be no proper church for the village. There is an old proverb that says, “Where the houses are small the church is always large.” In our case it was reversed, “The houses in our village became larger and more pompous, but the church remained small.”

THE CHURCH LIFE OF THE VILLAGE

The last priests who served in Zichydorf and therefore, also in our village, are still well remembered. Jakob Endress had his origins in Temeswar where he was ordained as a priest in 1891. Shortly before the First World War broke out in 1914 he was transferred to Zichydorf after having served as the parish priest in Gross Gaj and Ernsthausen. He

¹³ *Vetter* is an honorary title in the Swabian dialect, it is used to address an uncle or an older man not related to you.

remained in Zichydorf for about ten years. These were not easy times, for during this period of time not only a frightening war was raging all over Europe, but in its aftermath the Banat was transferred from Hungary to the new state of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In 1924 he received the honor of being assigned to Werschetz where he remained as the parish priest until his death in 1941. In the decade of his ministry spent in our village he had much to do with the intensification of our religious life. He came once a month, held mass, performed baptisms and marriages and was concerned about the upkeep and care of the prayer house. His most earnest wish was to see a proper church built in our village. During his pastorate the greatest activities in this respect took place. But as we have discussed previously, neither he nor his successors were able to accomplish this project.

Josef Kornaut followed Jakob Endress. He came to Zichydorf from Gross Gaj. From there he also served our village. His major emphasis was the strict adherence to all regulations related to church life. Through his good nature in this regard he won over many friends. A comment voiced by many of the villagers was that the parishioners would walk through fire for him. He too came to the village once a month. Each time one of the farmers picked him up by wagon at the rectory in Zichydorf and after mass in our village the farmer would take him back home (read also on page 129). In 1942 Josef Kornaut returned to Gross Gaj where he died in 1945. Supposedly the Partisans locked him up in a chicken coop until he starved to death.

The last priest in Zichydorf, who also functioned in our village, was Josef Steinkamp. His ministry took place during our difficult times when we endured the persecution by the Partisans. The priest was tolerated by the Partisans at first and was allowed to carry out his religious obligations to the Catholic Hungarians in both Zichydorf and in our village. Later, like all of the other Germans, he was imprisoned in an internment camp from where he eventually escaped and made his way to Germany. He died in Munich.

From among the residents of the village who played a leading role in the life of the church, of first importance was Nikolaus Herold who was lovingly known throughout the village as *Vetter* Klos. On the three Sundays of the month and holy days when the priest in Zichydorf was not available, *Vetter* Klos provided the leadership for worship in the prayer house. He was responsible for the prayers, the readings from the holy books and the words of the hymns. Petri, who was the teacher, played the organ or in place of him it was played by Karola Birg.

At times the activities of *Vetter* Klos went as far as occasionally conducting funerals when the family members were not in a position to get the priest in Zichydorf because they could not afford to pay him. Other individuals who were also very much involved in the village church life were Elisabeth Amon and Karola Birg. Liss Amon, as she was called with the greatest of respect, was in charge of the Marian Maidens¹⁴ who marched at the head of processions in their white dresses. She taught them prayers and songs and the

¹⁴ An organization for young girls.

simple tenets of their faith. Karola *Neni*¹⁵ was the wife of Georg Birg, she concerned herself with the youth as well as helping with the arrangement of the religious and cultural life in the village. When it was necessary to have a representative from the village for official occasions, she was often the first choice. For instance, when the bishop came to confirm the youth in the village, which happened every four years, he would be the guest at Karola *Neni*'s house. He received all of his meals there and when necessary he also stayed there overnight.

Karola *Neni* must also be credited for other beneficial events in the village. Through her initiative, missionaries often came to the village, particularly in the month of May. These missionaries were procured from the Raphael House in Belgrade. They came to the village with a prepared educational program. They were in charge of the services and they made it possible for all of the inhabitants of the village to go to confession and receive communion. They often sat in the confessional for hours listening to the faithful. Following the services they often showed films in one of the assembly halls of the local inns. The themes of the films were always of a religious nature and the village inhabitants enjoyed them. These missionaries were without a doubt a good influence on the religious life of the village. From among the youth, two need to be especially recognized, Hans Bogner and Karola Birg junior. Nothing was ever too much for them when they were asked to support *Vetter* Klos in his many activities. Hans knew all of the hymns and prayers from memory. He was a good replacement when *Vetter* Klos was sick or otherwise unable to carry out all of his functions. Until this day, Hans remembers the afternoons and evenings in which *Vetter* Klos joined with the village youth in the yard of his house and sang hymns so that everything would go well during the Sunday worship.

THE BUILDING OF THE RAILWAY: BETSCHKEREK – WERSCHETZ

During the period of Hungarian government administration, which we already learned was re-instated in 1861 and remained in power until the end of the First World War in 1918, the village developed well, especially in terms of its economy. Because of increased industrialization in the cities, more and better implements and machinery became available. Consequently, agricultural production and the produce it yielded from the already well cultivated fields increased considerably. The local brickyards also experienced a major increase in the demand and production of bricks and tiles. Construction was taking place everywhere and the primary need was bricks for the walls and tiles for the roofs. It was during this time that the large excavations were dug around the perimeter of the village for the raw material to make bricks and tiles. The extent to which this business had grown was evident by the size and depth of the excavations. This development was helped along by the construction of the railway line from Betschkerek to Werschetz. When agents of the local Torontál Railway Company promoted and offered shares for the proposed railway line there were fortunately enough farsighted men in the village who invested in financing the construction of the railway. Enough shares were purchased locally to give the village

¹⁵ *Neni* is the Hungarian word for auntie. In the Swabian dialect it is used as an honorary title when addressing an aunt or a familiar elder woman. When written as Karola *Neni* it is in Hungarian naming convention; the title *Neni* follows the person's name.

its own railroad station. The construction of the railway line began in 1885. By 1889 work had progressed to such an extent that on May 4th the stretch from Betschkerek, Setschan and Margita was in operation. Two years later on July 14, 1891, regular train service began on the completed rail line all the way to Werschetz. From that day onward our village had access to the rail network to all of Europe by way of Werschetz or Betschkerek. The Monarchy of Austria-Hungary was a large market area for all of the products we produced. All of these factors made it easy for our farmers to sell their grain crops and livestock. This resulted in money coming into the village economy that in turn led to an upswing and blossoming of local manufacturing by the craftsmen and skilled tradesmen. As was the custom in those days, the young fellows who completed their apprenticeship training went on tour as traveling journeymen. Some went as far as Budapest, others, like the shoemaker Krämer reached Vienna. Most of them later returned to the village and brought their “know how” and experience with them. The contribution they now made to the economy was as important as the improvement in agricultural production.

GOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE PURCHASE OF THE RAROSCH

The time came to give consideration to the possibility of enlarging and expanding the village. There was a need for laborers both in agricultural production and the brickyards, as well as in the newly constructed steam powered mill. But the village lacked sufficient accommodations for all these laborers. The community governing council was of the opinion that there was a need for lots on which to build new houses in order to keep the laborers in the village. On the site of what had earlier been a communal pasture for cattle and livestock, the future New Street [*Neue Gasse*] would be developed. The purchase of the Rarosch provided a new and larger communal pasture, so the old pasture was divided into lots and made available to those people who wanted to build a house there. As a result, the New Street came into being. With this enlargement, the village achieved its largest expansion in terms of the land surface it covered [the German village].

Another word about the purchase of the Rarosch is warranted. Through the utilization of two-edged plows, the use of binder machines for harvesting cereal crops and the purchase of several steam driven threshing machines, more agricultural land could be put under cultivation. That was the good news. On the other hand, the sale of land was a rarity. But at the time it was known that the large estate owner, the Hungarian nobleman, Count Eugene von Karascony, who had his administration office and castle in Partosch [Partos], was favorably disposed to selling his land on the Rarosch. This news set things in motion in the village. On the one hand they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity, but on the other hand there was the matter of a lack of ready cash. The village community council again took the lead under the leadership of Franz Wüst, a master shoemaker, who was the mayor at the time. They began to negotiate an agreement with the emissaries of the Count to purchase the Rarosch on the basis of payment by installments. For this privilege they agreed to annually deliver to the Count a predetermined portion of wheat per *Joch* of purchased land. The whole transaction was carried out under the auspices of a bank in Budapest. The bank provided an infusion of cash to the Count, who was in dire straits

financially, and accepted his share of the annual wheat crops for the purchase of the land as the interest on his loan.

In this way the size of the village land base was greatly enlarged. It was now approximately 7,500 *Joch* [about 10,700 acres or 4,300 hectares]. With the purchase of the Rarosch the forward thinking of some of the villagers surfaced once again. Additionally, in 1898 they gained a remarkable influence on the money markets when they joined the Zichydorf Credit Union, a member of the Central National Credit Union. This action resulted in the formation of the “Credit Union of Zichydorf and Györgyháza.”

It was during this time that the Hungarian government built the prayer house and the school. Also at this time two young teachers by the name of Karl Petri and Eva Krug came to the village. This was certainly a major gain for the small village because now more emphasis could be given to the cultural life of the community. The youthful teaching staff was energetic and enterprising. There was soon a men’s singing association under the direction of the young teacher Karl Petri and it performed so well that it won some awards at singing competitions. Soon there were also several pubs and restaurants with appropriate dance halls. The youth wanted to have their own events and activities so they put together a musical group to play at the dances in the new dance halls. Especially beloved at the time was the one run by the Dittrich family, which was in the house we younger people later knew as the Muhr *Wirtshaus*.

[***Wirtshaus*, plural *Wirtshäuser*:** In the English speaking world, particularly in North America, there is not a good equivalent name that describes the *Wirtshaus*. The *Wirtshaus* was a restaurant, pub, inn, bowling alley and dance hall, all as one business. Georgshausen had more than one *Wirtshaus*, they will be described in a later chapter. The terms *Wirtshaus* and *Wirtshäuser* are used throughout the book.]

This wonderful development of the life of our village and its people was unfortunately overshadowed by the nationalistic strivings of the Hungarians. Their slogan was, “Whoever lives in Hungary must also speak and think Hungarian.” Placing the schools under the control of the state was the method they chose to accomplish their number one overarching ambition. All education in the schools was to be in the Hungarian language. Even the prayers taught to the children were in Hungarian. The pressures exerted by the Hungarian authorities became greater, year after year. It reached its highpoint when the First World War broke out. This was the time when the members of the Birg family adopted Hungarian given names. Since their sons and daughters were sent to high schools after completing schooling in the village, it was obvious that when teaching would be in Hungarian, only the Hungarian form of their names would be acceptable. Thus, Nikolaus became Miklos, Johann was now Jani, Michael was Mischi and Franz became Feri. These given names among the Birgs would last to the present.

The increase in the number of inhabitants in the village is another sign of the splendid development of the village during this period. In 1880 there were 519 inhabitants. Ten years later it reached 1,069. And shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, a total of 1,135 persons were counted in 1910.

The statistics with regard to the nationality of the inhabitants is also of interest to us. Of the 1,135 inhabitants there were 657 Germans, 298 Hungarians, 95 Romanians, 53 Slovaks and 32 of other nationalities. There were a total of 136 houses. The landholdings of the inhabitants were given as 7,500 *Joch*. This is the maximum size the village achieved when it belonged to Hungary and was governed by the Hungarian authorities. The headquarters of the County Administration was in Banlak [Banlok] in present day Romania. Eventually, politics also began to play a role in our village. The first elections in the Zichydorf electoral district took place in the revolutionary year of 1848. However, only persons who could produce a receipt that they had paid taxes were allowed to vote. We need to remind ourselves, as stated previously, the Hungarians were determined to establish an independent state free from the control of Vienna. For that reason the vote was held in June of 1848. It was for the purpose of voting for representatives to serve in the Hungarian parliament. This parliament was to assemble in Budapest on July 2nd of that momentous year. Elected as the local representative was the well known Paul von Daniel. The reference to this election is noteworthy because when studying the years leading up to the First World War we always encounter only two names when it comes to describing the political situation: the name of “von Daniel” and the name of the Counts “von Karascony.”

The elections in the Hungary of those days compared to elections in our own time were an absolute farce. Whoever invested the most money in the election won it. Election day had all of the elements of a folk festival. The supporters of the various parties rented a *Wirtshaus* where free beer, goulash, cigars and cigarettes were available at no cost. The *Wirtshaus* owner had the time of his life as a businessman. In 1901 there was an election scandal. At that time the party of Ladislaus von Daniel contested the election of Count Karascony. There was talk of large sums of money being used to bribe voters. At the official court case resulting from these charges they wanted to interview over two hundred witnesses, which would have taken at least three hundred days. But as always the investigation came to nothing. When the next election rolled around it was determined by money again, but this time the party of the Daniel family was successful.

PROBLEMS WITH DRINKING WATER: THE FIRST ARTESIAN WELL

In spite of the prosperous economic development of the village there were also some setbacks that need to be noted.

Matters related to health proved to be an ongoing serious problem. The blame for much of it was the lack of safe drinking water. The wells that had been dug in this low-lying plain with its many swampy areas throughout the region could not guarantee drinkable water. The inhabitants had to boil the water before they could drink it. How bothersome this was needs no elaboration. Often when men and women were working in the fields they drank the water directly from hand dug wells that were only a few meters deep. The results were often devastating. There were frequent cholera epidemics with countless inhabitants falling victim to them. There were also uncontrollable attacks of fevers caused by the bad water that forced many to pay a terrible price in terms of the after effects.

Improvement to the health of the population began with the drilling of the first artesian wells in the village. These wells were more than fifty meters deep and delivered up impeccable water. The positive results were almost immediate. The first artesian well in the region was brought in during the year of 1886 in Zichydorf. The results were amazing. The news of the good quality of the water spread around quickly and the drilling companies, which were sprouting up everywhere, were soon working at full capacity.

The first public artesian well in our village, the one which was located in front of the Muhr *Wirtshaus*, was drilled on behalf of the community in 1892 by the firm of Josef Rösslein from Zichydorf. From that time on it was available for use by all of the residents of the village. The custom of “fetching water” began at that time and became the origin of old romantic stories that abounded in our village folklore. The drilling technique used for artesian wells was developed at the machinery works of the firm operated by the sons of Valentin Neukomm from Werschetz. This technical achievement was one of the most beneficial in the history of the Banat.

In the future many more artesian wells came into existence in the village, for example, to name a few places: Nikolaus Birg, Konrad Birg and Josef Faul. The artesian well located at the community cattle and livestock pasture was drilled promptly after the community acquired the property.

The organization of various associations in the village took time. The men’s singing association has already been mentioned. It was followed by the founding of the Rosary Association in terms of the church life of the community. At the turn of the century a volunteer fire brigade was formed. At that time a fire pump was obtained and remained in use until the end of our stay there. To our great fortune it was seldom required or used. There were no dramatic fires. Occasionally an out house burned down accidentally due to children playing with matches (which according to the Wüst family was the case in 1925). Also the threshing machines, especially the steam driven ones with their flying sparks were always a fire hazard.

THE VILLAGE DURING WORLD WAR ONE AND SHORTLY AFTER

The murder of the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary on June 28, 1914, shocked the inhabitants of our village out of their contemplative life. The daily and difficult hard work of mowing the barley and wheat had just begun and now it was suddenly brought to a grinding halt. In the few newspapers that came to the village from Werschetz and Weisskirchen, the headlines on page one consisted of one simple word: War! The majority of the young men in the village had completed their military service in the Royal Imperial Army. The men sensed that they would have to report immediately to the barracks where they had received their military training and would have to abandon the work associated with the harvest. The mobilization order of the Emperor was prompt in coming and as a result the gravity of the situation was recognized by the entire village. Now it was not a matter of reporting for military training, it meant going off to war. The military campaign against Serbia began on the 28th of July, one month after the murder in Sarajevo. At this

time the people of the village lived with a great deal of stress because all the able bodied men were serving with their units. The hard work of bringing in the harvest was left to the women and older men. Many of the children also had to take a hand in it. The most difficult work during this harvest, bringing in the corn crop and the sowing of the seeds for the winter crops created numerous difficulties, yet it was all accomplished by the time of the *Kirchweih*¹⁶ celebration (the first Sunday after St. Martin's Day) and it was celebrated in 1914 in spite of the war. The major theme of conversation around the *Wirtshaus* tables was the course of the war, but at home mothers worried about their sons and young married women feared for their husbands. When the first letters arrived from the front it became obvious to the readers that the war situation was much more precarious than they had first assumed when it began. The war would last much longer than had been originally believed and as a result the women began to knit and prepare warm clothing for their men at the front in the face of the approaching winter.

Not only were the reports from the front intensely read in the newspapers, but also the longer and longer casualty lists with names of those who had fallen in action or were missing upset the aroused population. Eventually the news came to our village that one of our young fellow citizens had given his life for "Emperor, God and Fatherland." The first of those who died in action from our village was Josef Wüst, the oldest son of our then current village mayor; he was twenty-three years old. He fell on the Russian front. Shortly afterwards the name of Nikolaus Jakob was on the list of those killed in action. This was especially tragic because he was married and left a wife and three small sons behind. These children were Adam Jakob who is eighty years old and lives in Bavaria today, and in addition, there were his brothers Jakob and Peter.

With regard to the mood of the village during the war years, Lorenz Wingert (a master tailor) living in America wrote me and said: "I was eleven years old at the time. In order to put some money in the family coffers we went to work for the Birgs, uprooting and cutting down thistles. As small boys we were already day laborers. When we went from one field to another we were rather boisterous and jolly. We were always singing patriotic songs. The mother of Bies the barber, known as Dasch Marian, was our lead singer. On the shaft of the implement we used to uproot and cut up the thistles we attached handkerchiefs and aprons. These were our flags! On most occasions, in our work group there were twenty to twenty-five people from every stage of life. This group of thistle cutters was a rather jolly fellowship. In spite of the war years we were happy to be doing what we were doing.

But much less joyous were the occasions when representatives of the military authorities put in an appearance in our village and took all of the grain they could lay their hands on. Those requisitions they made of us always became greater and greater so we had to resort to all kinds of cunning on our part in order to have at least our daily bread. I can still remember how my mother would assemble several dozens of eggs and take them with her to the mill in order to get the ration card returned to her. In this way we were able to get a double measure of flour.

¹⁶ *Kirchweihfest/Kirchweih/Kerwei* was the annual celebration to commemorate the dedication of the village church. It will be cover in detail in a later chapter.

My father was taken prisoner right after the great Russian offensive. Every evening the women gathered together and prayed for an early end to the war. But these prayers were not heard; the war dragged on and with every day our needs grew greater. There was always less and less to eat, and eventually our village faced starvation...”

Our large village bell was also lost to us through confiscation by the military. The bell was taken from the tower and delivered to a firm to be made into artillery shells.

Before the war broke out, 1,135 persons lived in the village. The largest contingent of the population consisted of the 657 Germans and was followed by the Hungarians with 298 persons. The Slovaks numbered 53 persons and the Romanians counted 95 persons. There was not a single Serb living in our village before the war. After the war the village still had 906 inhabitants and from among them there was one Serb, 624 Germans and 234 Hungarians. Both the Slovaks and Romanians had left the village. They migrated to their recently established national states.

Various military units passed through the village when the war ended in the fall of 1918. The first to do so were German soldiers who retreated back to Germany from the disintegrating front in Salonika. They were followed by North Africans in French uniforms and then to our surprise units of the Serbian Army were quartered in Gross Gaj next door.

The rumors we had been hearing now became reality. Our village was no longer a part of the great Austro-Hungarian Empire. New rulers, to whom we had absolutely no relationship, now installed themselves. Our former enemies in warfare were suddenly our national rulers to whom we were to be loyal and obedient in all things.

THE NEW RULERS AFTER 1918

The so-called, “Defense and Protection of the Emperor,” under whose auspices the Banat had been settled was no more, and now every individual inhabitant of the village would experience that in drastic ways.

The major concern of the population at this time was the fate of the men who had gone off to war. They had served on all fronts: As the Emperor’s Mountain Troops on the southern front in Italy, as cavalymen on the Salonika Front in the southeast and as infantrymen on the eastern front. One of the villagers, Schwob Franz, served in the Emperor’s Imperial Navy. The majority of the men returned home eventually, but many were missing forever. Especially difficult was the lot of those men in Russian captivity. It was years before many of them came home.

The new ruler of the land, the Serbian king had the great task of consolidating the patched together territories that were six times the size of the former Serbia when the war broke out, and he had to secure the new borders. The war continued in some areas, for instance in Lower Carinthia where the Serbs attempted to extend their power as far north as

Klagenfurt. As we know, the population of Carinthia successfully thwarted this expansion and it remained as a part of the much reduced Austria.

Under our new rulers our village experienced a considerable loss in property value. For example, none of the war provisions that the village was forced to provide and for which they had received governmental receipts were not worth the price of the paper they were printed on. All claims filed with regard to requisitions of grain, horses and livestock might have as well gone up in smoke in our chimneys.

The first consequence of the change in rulers was felt in the village when the Agricultural Reform legislation of the new state government led to the confiscation of the landholdings of the large estate owners. Of course that did not affect a single inhabitant of our village directly. The large estate owners at the time did not live on their domains around the village, they lived in their mansions that were located in towns and cities, which in some cases now belonged to foreign countries, such as the cities of Budapest and Temeswar. Countless inhabitants of the village were dragged into the affair because many of them lost their jobs on the large abolished estates. They and their families were faced with considerable problems. Emigration to America was only one of the alternatives. Those who did not want to leave their homeland could become day laborers or become workers in the mills in order to earn their bread. The factories where bricks were burned also provided work for some of them. More significant than the temporary unemployment was the arrival of strangers and their families at the outskirts of the village across from the cemetery where the *Bank-Puszt*a was establishing a new village. This new village was called "The Colony" from then on. It was practically a complete new village with very straight streets and a large open space in the center. A church and school were supposed to be built there later. But until then The Colony caused all kinds of problems for the old village. Of first importance was the language problem. The colonists spoke only Serbian. Up until then the Serbian language had never been used in the village because there were no Serbs living there. In addition, the self-confident demeanor of the colonists, who had been the victors in the war, readily generated displeasure with the German population. Until the houses of the colonists were built to completion, the Serbs helped themselves to the facilities in the old village. They lacked practically everything. They understood little or nothing about land cultivation and they did not possess the implements to carry it out. The livestock and fowl given to them to stock their farms and raise future herds and flocks of their own were either sold or butchered and eaten. Shortly after settling in The Colony they were in dire straits. Only through the help and assistance of their German neighbors were the new settlers able to exist in the face of all of the problems they had created for themselves. From this time forward the colonists had the feeling of being the weaker element in the population. The colonists felt that the improvement of their economic situation depended on their independence from their "rich" German neighbors. From then on The Colony continued to be the major problem of the village.

Following the Serbian occupation of our village and its incorporation into the new state of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, it belonged to the Heideschutz Administrative District for government purposes. That is where the notary and vice-notary were located and from there they preformed whatever government actions they were called upon to make; like the

assessment of taxes. In our community center there was only an affiliate office of the main administration office in Heideschütz. The notary had to be picked up at his office in Heideschütz and taken to our village one day a week and then returned again. It was only after the arrival of the colonists that our village was officially recognized with a government administration of its own.

Following some discussions, the following items were agreed upon by all concerned: The notary and vice-notary had to be Serbs and a German would always hold the position of mayor. These stipulations remained in force until 1944. The last German mayor in the Yugoslavian period was Adi Faul, his predecessor was Peter Hirsch senior. Hans Schneider and Moor the shoemaker also held the office of mayor. They were in office during the time when the notary was still based in Heideschütz. The teacher, Petri, also played an important role in the life of the village. Before the First World War he had taken several courses in the Serbian language, so it was not difficult for him to thoroughly learn the government approved language. After it was decided that both the notary and vice-notary had to be Serbs, neither of whom spoke a word of German, there was a great need for an interpreter and translator. This is where Petri the teacher stepped in. A second man who had quickly learned the Serbian language also made himself available at the community center when his assistance would be helpful in dealing with important matters. That man was Wilhelm (Wilmosch) Birg, the oldest son of Friedrich Birg. Wilmosch had graduated from high school with proficiency in the Serbian language. He then studied mechanical engineering in Mannheim, Germany. His farm work did not always fully occupy him so he was more than happy to help out in the community center offices whenever possible. By doing so he was able overcome the language barrier and protect the rights of the German population.

There were also several problems in the school. The new state guaranteed that instruction could continue in the Mother tongue in the village school, as long as the official language of the state was also taught. And then along came the colonists who of course didn't speak a word of German. The school age children of the colonists had to go to the school in the German village. These children wanted to be instructed in the Serbian language. This was at the time when the German and Serbian children sat beside one another in the classroom. There were no benefits from this attempt at assimilating the two groups. During this time the relationships that developed among the students had the outward appearance of being friendly, but as we will later learn, some of them would become the worst tormentors of their former schoolmates. In fact, Petri the teacher was murdered by one of his former students from The Colony.

Of the twenty-three years in which our village was under Serbian administration until the entry of the German troops into the Banat in 1941, the first ten years were among the most difficult. The source of the difficulties was not only the matter of the language issue and the problems it caused, it was also the mentality of the newly arrived colonists and the Serbian officials. The word, "corruption," of which we hardly ever heard of in the past, now took center stage in the unfolding affairs of the new rulers.

Even though the German population, like all of the inhabitants of the new Yugoslavian state had the same rights as others on paper, such as participating in the political process and having a few of their own German deputies sitting in parliament in Belgrade, their actual political influence and effectiveness was minimal and in most cases non-existent. There was no respect for the Germans in the course of political events and they always faced the challenge of a clenched fist from their opponents. There were instances when the Serbs physically beat the German representatives in parliament when there was a difference of opinion on issues. This mentality also found expression in our village. Here is an example: The Serbian deputy Grigin held an election rally in the village. As he began his speech he tore apart the German parliamentary deputies and made all kinds of unfounded and unwarranted charges against them. To Grigin's surprise he was interrupted by the master shoemaker Jakob Krämer who challenged him to prove his allegations. This interruption was interpreted as heckling and had its consequences. The Superior Court Justice Vladimir Rokić from Werschetz was sent to our village and he summoned Jakob Krämer to the community center and had him beaten so badly that he was hospitalized until his wounds were healed. This was the political reality that confronted the inhabitants of the village.

The excessive taxes levied year after year by the financially strapped state could barely be raised. It came to the point where we had to sell our total harvested crop as quickly as possible so the new tax increases could be met. This meant selling right after the harvest was brought in. However, agricultural products received a lower price at that time because the dealers who bought them knew that the Treasury Department would be collecting the taxes immediately. It was understood by all that the dealers and the Finance Ministry were in bed together to the detriment of the farmers who were forced to sell to the dealers' advantage and not in their own best interests.

Once the export business with Germany took on greater importance during the 1930s the farmers received a better price for their products. In return, the better prices enabled them to purchase modern agricultural machinery and equipment from Germany. By this time the colonists had learned the basics with regard to agricultural production. It resulted in their former poverty as a thing of the past and they were in a position to improve their lot some more. Several community projects were considered and implemented. Through the financial support of the state a new school was built in the Serbian village and an Orthodox Church was built for the believers. These projects were carried out on the basis of local initiative and self help. The German inhabitants provided additional assistance by hauling the building materials to the sites with their horse teams. There were also many of the tradesmen and craftsmen who employed their skills in providing the colonists with their school and church.

Naturally, the able-bodied young men were required to provide military service to the new state and were conscripted into the military. The Germans invariably served in remote and distant garrisons such as Prizren, Pristina, Skopje and Bitolj. Many of them came home sick from these places. They could not handle the climate and were exposed to frequent outbreaks of epidemics of which malaria was the most feared. The young men were mustered at the age of twenty years and they served from nine to eighteen months,

depending on the branch of the service. The sons of farmers most often served in the cavalry. After they returned home from their release in the military they were obligated to keep a horse and its equipment (in terms of a saddle, blanket, horseshoes for reserve, etc.) appropriately and ready to go.

Serving in the Serbian garrisons also had its good side. It was there where the recruits learned their first Serbian words, so that upon release from their enlistment their contacts and interactions with the people in The Colony were greatly improved.

The educational system in the new state was not as fanatically nationalistic as it had been under the Hungarian government. In the public school, which consisted of six grades, the language of instruction was the Mother tongue of the students. Naturally, German was taught in our school. However, the report cards were written in Serbian. It often happened that parents were unable to determine how well their children were doing because of their lack of knowledge of the Serbian language. In order to participate in higher education, in high school, college and teacher training institutes, knowledge of the Serbian language was compulsory because only the Serbian language was used in those institutions.

Learning the Serbian language often began like following: A father who was forward looking in terms of further education for his son would buy him a soccer ball and send him over to play in the Serbian Colony during the holidays. There he would quickly learn the most important swear words of which they are fearsomely many in that language. Gradually, through playing soccer he would learn a sentence or two for appropriate general conversation. With this basic knowledge of Serbian he would then go to the high school in the nearest city. For our village it happened to be about thirty kilometers away in Werschetz. If he was fortunate, he would have a teacher who had an understanding of what the German student was dealing with and if in the first half of the school year he learned enough to be able to read his textbooks without any difficulty. By the end of the school year, a student like him would have no further difficulties. He would finish high school, write his final examination and then if he wanted to proceed further with his education he could apply to the university in Belgrade or Zagreb. There were also those who went to Austria or Germany to continue their university studies there. In most cases these students studied either medicine or engineering.

Attending institutions of higher learning was not only problematic in terms of the issues around language. The financial component played a major role as well. There were tuition fees to be paid and the student had to reside in the city where the school was located because the railway connections were not such that the student could travel back and forth on the same day. The student was in need of a place where he could receive "room and board." It was more to the family's advantage to have the student live in a private home rather than the students' residence because they could pay with flour, lard, bacon, ham, honey and so on, but there was still the need for cash on a monthly basis. However, this was in short supply in a farming village in Yugoslavia. Attendance at schools of higher learning was therefore a very difficult undertaking that the head of family could only seldom agree to. This accounts for the fact that few boys and girls from our village attended institutions of higher learning with the exception of the children from the Birg

family. It was not a matter of the shortage of a desire for learning, it was the lack of money to do so. But without a higher education in the Serbian language, as it had also been under the Hungarian government, there was little opportunity for advancement in society. For that reason a lot of talent would remain hidden and buried.

The new state monopoly legislation became a new reality that our village had to face. As acknowledged previously there was chronic shortage of available cash and many of the daily necessities and goods were now declared by the new government to be within the state monopoly. The prices for these items became considerably more expensive. For example, the following are some of the items that were included in the state monopoly: sugar, salt, wooden matches, tobacco products, brandy, petroleum products and much more. The observance of the regulations associated with the state monopoly was strictly enforced and any infractions were met with severe punishment. The outcomes of these measures were sometimes devastating. For example, to provide light in the stables, kerosene lanterns were replaced by the old open flame ones that used lard on the wicks, but they proved very dangerous and were the cause of frequent fires. In many cases the state monopoly of products brought retrogression instead of improvement. Sugar for instance was much more expensive than bee honey. Of considerable aggravation was how this impacted tobacco products. Prior to the monopoly, tobacco growing was common in the regions surrounding our village. Understandably, this tobacco was also smoked locally. It was not possible anymore. After several of the tobacco farmers were caught with their own tobacco in their pouch and punished severely, tobacco growing in our community came to a complete halt. The use of lighters took on outrageous forms when a special tax had to be paid in order to own one. Whoever failed to pay the tax was not allowed to have a lighter. The sale of flint was done secretly and was a dangerous undertaking.

The murder of King Alexander I in the autumn of 1934 cast its shadow as far as our village. As the news of the assassination became known, the first response was the tolling of all of our bells by us schoolboys. The tolling of the bells had to take place every hour for the next eight days. No sooner had the period of national mourning been over when the government authorities indicated that it would enhance the reputation of the village if a memorial to the dead king was built. At this time Adi Faul was already the mayor. He immediately recognized that building such a memorial would be an opportunity to demonstrate the loyalty of the German village to the state of Yugoslavia. Of course, only the German villagers raised the money, and then discussions were held to determine the appearance and character of the memorial. The total amount collected was just enough for a bronze plaque bearing the face of the dead king. So they ordered it. When the plaque was completed it found its place on the front of the community center adjacent to the entrance. It remained covered so that no one could see what had been achieved with the donations until the day of the unveiling.

On the day of the unveiling, prominent personages put in an appearance in the village. Serbian authorities from Werschetz and even from Belgrade came to participate in the unveiling. They were dressed in magnificent military uniforms and they were understandably guests of the village. Fortunately, Adi Faul had a large modern house where these high placed dignitaries were quartered. They were also entertained by the

mayor in his own home. It was certainly the greatest celebration in the life of the village since the day it belonged to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Fortunately as well, there was no friction among the villagers since the vast majority of them were satisfied with the bronze plaque. This unveiling of the memorial was the only large assembly in the village in which large numbers of the inhabitants from The Colony participated. In fact the *Wirtshaus* celebrations became quite brotherly with our Serbian neighbors. It seemed as if this investment on the part of the village had created the possibility for better relations between the various peoples living among one another. But the harmony would be short lived. The growing politicization of daily life from year to year again created two different camps among the village inhabitants. Following the entry of the German troops on Good Friday in 1941, the bronze plaque with the image of King Alexander was taken down and tossed into the garbage as rubbish. It was too bad in light of how much it had cost.

That earth shattering events were going on in the outside world was obvious almost daily, but understood by only a few in the village. The Serbian authorities were nervous, the police from Zichydorf were often in the village, and the attitude and behavior of the inhabitants in The Colony became more and more unfriendly. Everywhere the same question was always being asked: Will all of this lead to war?

The Serbs in The Colony were of the opinion that it could not go on much longer without war breaking out because the Germans who were so rich that they could buy all of the grain in Yugoslavia had to be put in their proper place. The work of the English and French secret service also reached as far as our village. Reserve officers of German origin in the Yugoslavian army were considered to be an unreliable element and were suspended from the command of their units; as a result, everyone knew that hard times were ahead.

Symptomatic of the situation was the numbers of students from Germany who came during the summer months and stayed in the German villages to help with the harvest. These students told the villagers about the rapid advances being made in Germany, the great achievements in the economy and the industrial surpluses that were also lately finding their way to the Banat. But these students were never actually seen working in the fields to help bring in the harvest. Instead they were involved in other activities unrelated with the harvest and it caused a great deal of mistrust on the part of the Yugoslav authorities. They examined the luggage of these young German gentlemen and made a real find. They found hand drawn maps showing every tree, every ditch and every house in the villages where they had resided.

Then they declared: "As you can see! The Germans are preparing for a war against us. Why else would they need such detailed maps?"

In addition to all of this, one further reason for mistrust on the part of the other nationalities then came to forefront. The sons of German parents from the Banat who studied at the universities in Germany also added to the uncertainty and insecurity felt by the Serbs. These students came home for the holidays and began to establish organizations replicated after what was in Germany. They told us young boys and girls in the Serbian high schools that we were being oppressed by the Serbs and we needed to resist them. The

best way for us to do this was to join a German youth organization, but of course we were to do that secretly so no one would become aware of it. Suddenly we were getting up early in the morning at six o'clock and running up the mountain in Werschetz in order to take part in military training. We no longer wanted to drink the fine Werschetz wine because a true German youth who was as strong as iron made by the Krupps, quick like a greyhound and tough as deer leather would not drink alcohol or smoke tobacco. All at once we were wearing black corduroys and over a white shirt we wore a wide belt with a shoulder strap across the chest. For Christmas in 1940 in Werschetz we did not have a Christmas tree, but rather a Winter Tree instead with a portrait of Adolf Hitler as the only decoration. We did not celebrate Christmas. We celebrated Yuletide.

It went on like this until the war broke out in 1941, then a completely new situation evolved. Still today we ask the question: Who staged all of this? For as we discovered in the foregoing chapter the official German foreign policy with regard to Yugoslavia was entirely different, one of tolerance and neutrality.

THE GERMANS ARRIVE

The tension among the people reached its temporary high point with the uprising carried out by Yugoslavian Air Force General Simović on March 27, 1941. Many of those living in the village felt that it could not go on like this much longer. The educated Serbs, especially the teachers in the Serbian schools and the Serbian officials in the community center offices believed that war was coming. In a few days the victorious Yugoslavian Army would be in Berlin and bring about a new order in Europe. These people behaved accordingly. In the *Wirtshäuser* there was only one theme to all of their conversations. They would show Hitler how he would suffer his first great defeat at their hands. The German population was threatened with being driven out of the country and their property and possessions would be divided among the Serbs.

Only a day after the uprising, on the 28th of March, the Germans received the news with fear and terror when the village was informed that the new authorities in Belgrade had declared martial law for the entire country.

The schools were closed and the pupils were sent home. Those boys and girls from the families of the German inhabitants who were at the high school in Werschetz also came home. The school directors did not want to take responsibility for the safety of the pupils. For the inhabitants of the village this was another clear signal that something was brewing in the world.

Once the war was staring the population in the face, the next inevitable step was the mobilization order. All able-bodied men who had completed their military service in the Yugoslavian Army were told to report to their units immediately. Those born in 1919 had been called up earlier to do their normal military service and training. The already mustered youth of the village born in 1920 were also prepared to report to their units for normal military service and training.

The men in the German village and understandably those in the Serbian Colony responded to the mobilization order. The disorientation and confusion in the Yugoslavian military command was so great that only a minority of those who reported could find their way to their units. Getting them into uniform and arming them was simply outside of their ability. In actuality, in terms of the military campaigns during the war, only those young men from our village who were born in 1919 and who were doing their normal military service saw action. The war broke out on Palm Sunday, April 6, 1941. At breakfast time the radio reported that the victorious march on Berlin was immediately pending. Of course no one believed it. Not even the Serbs and nor did the few soldiers of the Northern Army of Yugoslavia who were stationed in our village. In a few days they began to mine the bridges over the canal. They said they did not want to leave anything of use to fall into the hands of the enemy. With utter amazement the inhabitants of the village noted that the Serbs with the biggest bragging mouths, the teachers and the officials in the village, began to abandon Georgshausen. Apparently they didn't believe in the victorious march on Berlin either.

In the early morning hours of Palm Sunday the droning sound of countless aircraft coming from Romania flew overhead in the direction of Belgrade. After about an hour the aircraft returned. The boys of the village walked along with one another trying to count the number of planes. Each one of them wanted to be the best informed on the numbers of how many had flown to Belgrade and how many had returned. This occupied them most of the day. Meanwhile we learned what these aircraft had done over Belgrade. From the news reports we were told that the city lay in ruins and ashes.

This was another piece of news that heightened the fear of the German population. There was only one question now: Will the Serbs make their threats of the last few days a reality and arrest and intern the German population? After the war we heard that such actions actually happened in other places. Many of the well-known and leading German citizens were arrested and incarcerated as hostages at the fortress in Peterwardein.

With the exception of the men who had to report in response to the mobilization order, no other men were taken from our village, arrested or dragged off somewhere. The days from Palm Sunday to Good Friday were almost unbearable. One rumor chased another. Eventually some men who had been called up to the military came home because they were unable to find their Yugoslavian Army units. The young recruits born in 1920 also returned home because no one had any idea of what to do with them. All of this confusion in the official circles of the professed superior army, which sometimes dismissed ethnic German officers from the reserve because they were considered unworthy to serve, showed that it was a mismanaged mess, rife with corruption, egotism and self-protection of personal interests. An incompetent bunch not made of the stuff to either lead an army or win a war.

During the morning hours on Good Friday, the 11th of April, we suddenly heard nearby shooting. Then there was quiet again. At around nine o'clock several shells landed in the village. But they fell in the open fields near the brickyards so there was no real damage. Again repeated gunfire flared up and then the railway bridge across the canal went up in

the air in a terrific explosion. We could see the soldiers of the Yugoslavian Army marching double time to retreat as quickly as they could. It looked like the war was over. It actually was. Somewhat later, the German soldiers entered our village and met no further resistance. The housewives had just finished coloring the Easter eggs and baking their cakes. The German soldiers who entered the village were greeted by them as liberators and welcomed with their Easter delicacies. Most of the soldiers, who were still very well dressed, in fact their trousers bore the marks of well pressed pleats, were astonished that rather than meeting the enemy in their first encounter they were confronted by a friendly German speaking population who were beside themselves to welcome them. The badges sown on the shoulders of their uniforms contained a design that looked like the number 44. We thought it meant they were members of Regiment 44. Later we learned it was not Regiment 44, but a unit of the *Waffen-SS* heading for Belgrade.

None of these soldiers wanted to remain in the village. “We have to get going!” they insisted. As the unit of troops who had come through our village moved on, we saw a whole column of advancing German soldiers by the canal. They passed through the Serbian village. Then a shot was fired. Later we were told that a young Serbian boy had sneaked a look from around the corner of a house. When a soldier called out “Halt” to him, the boy began to run. The soldier fired a shot and hit him in the leg. Thus, our village had one casualty to complain about.

After this full day of exciting events, disillusionment came in the evening. The German soldiers had all moved on. None stayed behind to provide protection to the German population if the Serbs started carrying out the threats they had made during the past week. Without delay, an assembly of the village leading citizens met at the community center. The decision was made to organize a provisional civilian defense force and arm it with the weapons thrown away by the retreating Yugoslavian Army. This was intended to protect the village from any attacks in the next few days. It soon became apparent that this measure was not necessary. No one bothered to worry about the unfulfilled threats and the local Serbian population was peaceful. Their greatest concern was to find a physician to tend the boy with the gunshot wound. Eventually this problem was solved. The doctor from Heideschütz, who also served our village, looked after the boy. As far as we know the boy survived his wounds so it can be said that no Serb suffered serious injury when the German troops entered our village. The only exception was the boy who was wounded by a German soldier. But on the part of the German civilian population not one hair on the head of a single Serb was harmed.

During the first days following the arrival of the German troops, the men of the village attempted to recover their horses, bicycles and wagons that had been confiscated at the last moment by the retreating soldiers of the Yugoslavian Army. Everything was recovered. The war lasted for only twelve days, from the 6th to the 18th of April. The once boastful and glorified Yugoslavian army demonstrated itself to be totally incompetent in conducting a war against a modern army. Life in the village returned to its normal routine. A new community council was established, but it was not elected as we had expected it would be. These men of the first hour sought to bring about order as best as they could and at the beginning it seemed like they would succeed. The German men who had served in the

Yugoslavian Army eventually returned home, some of them indirectly after having been in prisoner of war camps in Germany. It took a little time for some of the civil authorities and apparently the headquarters of the German Army to grasp the fact that there were German inhabitants of occupied Yugoslavia, and who as Yugoslavian citizens had been obligated to serve in the Yugoslavian Army.

The first disappointment occurred when the news arrived that a resident of the village, Peter Remilong, was killed in action fighting against the German troops. He was one of those born in 1919 and doing his military service in the Yugoslavian Army. The war cost our village the life of one young resident after all. But it was not the life of a Serb, instead it was the life of a young German. The opportunity to get to know the German soldiers who had been victorious in winning the war in such a short time presented itself a few days later, actually two days after the capitulation of the Yugoslavian Army. Adolf Hitler's birthday was celebrated on the 20th of April. This day was also honored by the German Army. The new community council decided that this occasion would also be celebrated in our village. Invited to participate as our guests were the members of an artillery battery unit who were stationed with their guns and vehicles about nine kilometers away in Ilandscha. The soldiers who made up the battery unit consisted of about 180 men, plus officers; they came to our village on April 20, 1941. In order to make the birthday celebration as festive as possible, the soldiers brought along their regimental band, which played in both of the *Wirtshäuser* during the day and the whole night. It was quite a time. You have to imagine what it would be like when 250 soldiers came to celebrate in a village with more than 650 inhabitants.

Four to ten men were quartered in each house. They were mostly energetic young men who all belonged to a unit of the *Waffen-SS*. Some of them wanted to ride the horses of their farmer hosts, others simply wanted a comfortable bed and desired nothing more than to sleep, but most of them wanted to dance and celebrate. The day passed rather quickly. It must be emphasized that these soldiers left an excellent impression on the village and its inhabitants. In the following weeks many of the youth of our village journeyed to Ilandscha to see what a modern army looked like. We could not get over our astonishment at the countless numbers of vehicles and large guns, all of which were on carriages with large rubber tires, plus the field kitchens used for cooking and serving food to the soldiers, and from which we were allowed to taste for ourselves. In this way we learned what the soldiers got to eat and drink.

It was not long before we heard that this or that youth from our village had voluntarily enlisted and was taken into the unit with the large cannons located in Ilandscha. All of the attempts on the part of their parents to talk them out of it were unsuccessful because the life of a soldier seemed enormously attractive at the time. Fortunately, at that time the German military units were quite particular about who they accepted. They took only the best. The recruit had to be at least 1.80 meters tall, be in good physical condition and willing to sign up and serve for the duration of the war.

So shortly after the arrival of the German troops in our village the first of our young men became German soldiers themselves. Only a few of them would survive this search for adventure.

After a few weeks, the war was over. After twenty-two years the Kingdom of Yugoslavia ceased to exist and life returned back to normal in our village. The people went about their regular work and any signs of damage created by the war were soon repaired. It took somewhat longer to rebuild the blown up railway bridge across the canal. The lack of this bridge stood in the way of resuming rail traffic between Werschetz and Betschkerek. The new community authorities promised that the bridge would be usable by the fall in order to transport the anticipated large crop harvest. I can recall that those of us who were students and went to the high school in Werschetz had to go there by bicycle or horse and wagon. The teaching done in the schools (elementary school, high school and teacher's college) was no longer done in Serbian as it had been before the war. The classes that we had begun in the previous fall and were interrupted by the war, were now continued and taught in German. The report cards issued in June were now filled out in German. The so-called Junior Leaving Examination of the Serbs was done away with. In the village itself the changes taking place were obvious. There was suddenly a Farmer *Führer* [Farmer Leader], a *Führerin* of the Women's Organization, a youth *Führer*, a *Führerin* for the girls and there was a German sports team for the men of the village who were interested. With the exception of the farmer's organization, the others all soon had a uniform, a common attire recognizable to others so that they could identify what group a person belonged to. We also began to hear the words "National Socialism." There was hardly anyone in the village familiar with the words, but the term was here to stay and it seemed to replace the designation: German. Up until this time we had a special relationship with Germans, they were considered our brothers in the Motherland who were our examples and mentors whom we honored and respected and of whom we spoke about with a great deal of affection and sympathy. But now we were sometimes asked the question, "Are you also a National Socialist?"

At the beginning none of this was taken very seriously. No one had the time to deal with things like this, the fields were ripe for the harvest and there was always so much work to do, plus we often heard, "...for the prosecution of this war we need every single grain of wheat."

The whole village was so busy with the required work that few if any took notice of the news when suddenly it was said that Russia would soon be invaded by the ever victorious German Army. Nevertheless, the consequence of this event would soon have great repercussions on the life of our village. But there was still no difficulty with the Serbian and Hungarian inhabitants. Many of the men from the Serbian village remained as prisoners of war in Germany. The situation of their wives in struggling to provide for their families became more difficult with each new day. Individually some of the wives came to the community council and asked for its intervention in the release of their breadwinners from captivity. But by far and large very little was done or attempted. We heard only on a very few occasions that one or another family father came home to his family in The

Colony. The fact was that the men who were prisoners of war were greatly needed in the Serbian village and the families of these men became more and more needy.

UNREST AND RESISTANCE

The fact of the matter is that unrest began brewing in the village. After months of activities by the new village officials, local dissatisfaction was obvious. The regimentation of all aspects of our lives led to a great deal of uneasiness. The so-called *Führer* principle that held sway in the life of the village did not have the support of the people. The village was accustomed to at least electing their mayor. There was no longer any talk of that kind of thing being allowed, it was strictly a matter of nominating and appointing. Whoever spoke out against this was an enemy of the “new order.” From this time on the slogan was: “In the future, those who give orders will be obeyed.”

In July of 1941, shortly after the wheat harvest, the differences of opinion in the village reached a highpoint. A very simple order of the community authorities brought the barrel to overflowing (the straw that broke the camel’s back). Under the leadership of Arnold Heim, twelve men from the village conferred together and went to the community center. They ordered the men who acted as the new administration of the village to leave the premises immediately. Arnold Heim was then chosen to be the provisional mayor and took over the office. As soon as possible the election of a new mayor would be held. It was announced that the inhabitants should then trust and obey this newly elected man.

For the first time the village now received a real intuitive lesson in understanding what the term “National Socialism” meant. One of the men who had been put out of office quickly telephoned the district leadership in Werschetz and reported what had happened in our village. Shortly before noon on the next day a truck carrying twenty heavily armed policemen in black uniforms pulled up in front of the community center. In response to a sharp command the community center was stormed and all persons seated at any of the desks were arrested. On the spot they carried out a harsh interrogation to identify the “conspirators” who were missing. The missing men were also arrested; some were actually taken from their fields where they were working. All twelve men had to climb up on the truck and were taken to Werschetz. Four of the police remained behind in the village. The former local *Führer* and his men were reinstated in their old offices and positions.

In Werschetz the arrested men were immediately imprisoned. One at a time they were taken for interrogation. One of the arrested men who is still living told me, “On this occasion with the help of a thrashing with an ox hide whip we learned the true meaning of the terms, *Führer* principle and National Socialism.” The men remained in prison for twelve days.

In between the time of their arrest and release, other events took place in our village that affected all of us, which today are described by the chief actor in the affair, except his description does not agree with the facts. On page 153 in his book, *Donauschwäbische Zeitgeschichte aus erster Hand* [Danube Swabian Contemporary History At First Hand],

Dr. Josef Beer writes falsehoods about the events that took place in our village. There he says: "In the comparatively small community of Greda the inhabitants stormed the community center and by using threats of violence they demanded compliance to their orders. It was apparently the result of some kind of dissatisfaction that no longer comes to my memory, except that it had to do with some kind of economic or financial problem. My unpleasant task was to investigate the incident in the village itself and decide on what required corrective measures needed to be taken. As an office holder and deputy of the Folk Group *Führer* [Folk Group Leader], and even with the highest authority from within the Folk Group, it was not possible for me to punish those at fault either legally or practically. I had no other option but to calm and pacify the people and persuade them not to seek their local officials from their own ranks, but instead from the appointed higher authorities and to work with them in an agreeable fashion... Within the *Führer* principle there is undoubtedly the danger of excesses and abuse. But to my knowledge this never occurred in the Banat."

So much for Dr. Beer and his book. What actually happened? The twelve "rebellious" persons, who asked for nothing more than an election of the members of the community council, were arrested, imprisoned, and as we have already read, they were thrashed with ox hide whips. Dr. Josef Beer arrived in the village three days after the "storming" of the community center. He had to be brought by horse and wagon because the railway line was still impassable. Dr. Beer wore a black uniform, just like the new *Führer* in our village. He met with the officials who had been driven from office in the community center. At a noon hour meal, following a meeting at the Muhr *Wirtshaus*, he allowed himself to be informed on what had happened. Then on the evening of the same day, an assembly of all of the inhabitants was scheduled in front of the community center and everyone was ordered to attend. Dr. Beer made a speech and explained the meaning of the *Führer* principle and "obedience." He also indicated that from then on there would be no more privileges for the village. The Magyar lovers among them he said, alluding to members of the Birg family, who were in the league with the ringleaders of the uprising, would no longer have anything to say about local affairs. They too needed to obey the *Führer* principle and do exactly what the new *Führer* of the village requested of them. Everything that had happened here in the village had to be categorized as a crime. This kind of crime was absolutely heinous because it was directed against those who were fighting the difficult battle of all of the German people to live out their destiny. His speech ended with a vigorous: "Sieg Heil [Hail to Victory]!"

The investigation carried out by Dr. Beer consisted of the following: To express it in more humane terms, the culprits, who were given no opportunity to explain their motives, were arrested, imprisoned, chastised and lectured. There was no consideration given to hearing the other side of the story, which Dr. Beer as a jurist should have insisted upon. Apparently the deputy of the Folk Group *Führer* was afraid to hear the other side of the story from the inhabitants because some rather unpleasant things might be said and brought out into the open. These unpleasant matters do not have to be tallied up now after forty-five years, but we know for certain they took place. There were obviously serious matters involved here, otherwise the twelve men would not have been dealt with in the way they

were. It took twelve days and the intervention of a large number of lawyers for the “rebels” to finally be set free.

When Dr. Beer states in his book that according to his knowledge there was no abuse of the *Führer* principle in the Banat, I for my part declare that statement does not stand up in court! Because in the “comparatively small community of Greda,” almost right after the entry of the German troops, a revolt against the excesses of this principle broke out. Then, as now, he will not own up to the truth. All of this begs the question: What kind of “contemporary history at first hand” is this when it contains such spurious scholarship where so-called insignificant events are completely turned around to suit the writer’s prejudices?

Further on page 153 of this already mentioned book, Dr. Beer proposes another interesting thesis. In the last paragraph he writes: “It could be so misconstrued that the *Führer* principle could be seen as a dictatorship in a totalitarian state. It would be completely false to present the Folk Group *Führer* as a dictator and the Folk Group itself as totalitarian by nature, or would conspire to such. The most outstanding characteristic of a dictator is absolute power and this power is the very thing not possessed by the Folk Group leadership because they were always dependent upon the voluntary accompaniment and support of their countrymen in all of their endeavors.” In light of his proposed argument, there is still this question to be answered: Who signed the order for the conscription of our men into the SS-Division “Prinz Eugen”? As far as my memory goes, it was Johann Keks who from 1927 to 1939 was the chairman of the Swabian German Cultural Association. It was the organization that the Folk Group replaced. In his role as chief of the registration and replacements office, he signed the first summons for “volunteers” to serve in the *Waffen-SS*. It was only later when Johann Keks was the Chief of the SS-Reserve Commando Unit and as such was the sender of the conscription notices to every man to serve in the *Waffen-SS*, or in other words, in the name of the SS leadership.

Ordering the use of ox hide whips on respectable citizens of our village, as has been noted previously, is also another incidence of the abuse of power. It is understandable that Dr. Beer does not mean these “lesser powers” when he speaks of the absolute power of a dictator. There is no one I know of who claimed that the leading “bosses” of the Folk Group were dictators, but it is more than obvious that they had wished they could have been. Unfortunately, the position had already been filled by someone else. It was by one of the greatest dictators and disdainers of humanity in our century. So it left our rulers in the Folk Group only one alternative, to simply be content with being the compliant and loyal henchmen of the Dictator. They were also not idealists as they now claim, but simply opportunists as we will see later. One more word with regard to the term “volunteer.” The way this term was explained and applied is best described in this example from our small village: When Emil Birg, the son of Georg Birg, received his conscription order to report to the Prinz Eugen Division, he decided not obey it. He did so on the basis of the fact that the Division was a “Volunteer Division” and he was not prepared to volunteer under any circumstances. As a result, the Military Police arrived with fixed bayonets and forcibly took him to the Division training camp. This was the reality of Dr. Beer’s “voluntary compliance.”

In this regard it should be emphasized that with only a few exceptions, there were no residents of our village who were fanatic followers of National Socialism and its ideas. Among all levels of the population there was a healthy respect for justice, paired with decency, industriousness and a boundless trust in the power of their own working hands. These were the primary characteristics in our community. If these principles were violated the population was prepared to respond with appropriate measures to rectify the situation.

The dismissal of the community authorities must be seen in this light. The resistance of Emil Birg against what were not the true facts of the matter was the result of this basic cornerstone of the life of our village. To the best of my knowledge, no other village in all of the Banat actively resisted the system like our village did. Although there were certainly people in other villages who knew immediately that there was something rotten going on. The reality they perceived was not in keeping with what they were being told.

Regardless of the fine motives of those involved, the whole experience demonstrated that expelling the Folk Group appointees benefited no one in the end. As we saw in the example of our own village, the German authorities crushed every sign of protest, and the Communists, even though they were aware of our resistance to this system, ignored the role we played because it did not fit into their concept that everything German had to be destroyed and exterminated.

Because of all of this, there was ongoing unrest in the village. It was difficult for the people to grasp that their economic well-being was totally integrated in the war economy of the German Reich. They were no longer permitted to butcher a pig when their cupboard and larder were bare. The newly founded organizations of the Folk Group were more and more active, even though the populace had not asked for their presence among us. On Sundays the youth were assigned to participate in the flag raising at the same time the worship service began in church. They marched, did physical exercises and for every occasion they sang Nazi songs. Even the girls of the village were now involved in marching and gymnastics. They also had their own special clothes, which were a variation of the Swabian folk costume. But the most troublesome thing for the girls was that they had to wear a white vest and black shorts for doing gymnastics. In spite of pressure from their *Führerin*, they insisted on wearing the uniform down to their knees. They were not prepared to show anything more than that.

There were also recruitment drives for workers to go to Germany. Around twenty young people, both men and women did so. They were promised good wages with good working conditions, a guaranteed vacation and much more. The young girls who left the village during this time were employed in households with large families and the boys worked for farmers. In the letters they wrote home from Germany they reported only good things. As a result, another group of young people followed the call to work in Germany.¹⁷

¹⁷ As a result of this recruitment, the editor's cousin Adam Borschowa, born February 13, 1911 in Georgshausen, went to Hanover, Germany in 1942. He had been working on a farm south of Georgshausen at the time. Adam was accompanied by his wife, Katharina Pleli. In 1948 they immigrated to Canada.

The atmosphere in the village slowly calmed down, mostly due to the news of ongoing victories on the Eastern front. I remember only too well the results of the special radio announcements. In mathematics class we had to keep track and add up the numbers of reported Russian prisoners of war. Our teacher, a Russian immigrant after the First World War, remarked that on the basis of the impressive numbers we had been given the war could only last a few more weeks before Russia capitulates.

Meanwhile we became accustomed to the new order. The hard work of harvest time in the fields pushed our worries to the background. Harvesting the corn and finishing the winter seeding was more important. The *Kirchweih* celebration in the fall of 1941 was the last one celebrated with joy and exuberance. Like they had in former years, the young boys brought their hats to their girl friends who decorated them with ribbons. Music played in both *Wirtshäuser* and during these three autumn days we could forget the raging war where thousands of young men lost their lives daily on the eastern battlefields. As already mentioned, at this point in time several young men from our village had already lost their lives.

THE MEN BECAME SOLDIERS

As had been mentioned previously with the arrival of German troops, heavy responsibilities were imposed on the Banat, but they were initially focused on the economy of the region. However, about half a year after the military occupation, the fighting potential of our men toward the war effort became a major consideration. The leadership of the Folk Group was given the responsibility to carry out a military recruitment of all German men from the age of seventeen to fifty years, it had been decided that these men would constitute an entire new division. This decree came from the highest echelons at SS headquarters and had the following consequences in the village. The town drummer, Mischko Brücker, informed the village inhabitants that all men from seventeen to fifty years of age were to report for enlistment into the military on Day X.

Almost all of the men from our village were found to be fit for service. The first call-ups occurred in the spring of 1942. The notice these men received instructed them to report on a specific date to the training unit of the 7th Voluntary SS Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen" in Werschetz, which the men proceeded to do. With one fell swoop the village was robbed of its best men and the vast amount of work in the fields had to be undertaken by the women, adolescent children and old men.

It was a sad day in the history of our village. I can still see the packed crowds of people at the railway station as the men prepared to leave while waiting for the train to take them to Werschetz. The youth among them were jolly and sang songs and shouted for joy because finally they had the chance to fight alongside of others and participate in the "Final Victory." The fathers among the men looked worried and anxious. They held the hands of their children and tried to comfort their wives saying, "Things are only half as bad as they seem." The wives cried and prophesied that they would never see their husbands again. It was a sad and also a cloudy gloomy day. As the train pulled into the station the quick and

hurried farewells took place as it began to pour in sheets of rain. It was as if Heaven itself was weeping over the injustice that had its beginnings here at the railway station of our small village and would not end until there was no longer a single German left in the village. Heaven wept for all of the dead, those expelled, the martyred and those who died of a broken heart. This day, on which the men had to enlist in the *Waffen-SS* totally changed the life of our community. Worry about a good harvest was not at the forefront of our thoughts; in its place was an overwhelming fear. What will happen to our husbands and our sons? How will they ever get home again? How on earth will they be able to survive this murderous war? These questions haunted all of our thoughts. They were just always there even if they were not expressed out loud.

With a great deal of fervor, the remaining inhabitants of the village threw themselves at the work waiting to be done in the fields. They brought in a plentiful harvest and demonstrated their economic resourcefulness. Everyone pitched in with enthusiasm everywhere because now they also had to provide their own men with the most necessary things. No one stood on the sidelines any longer. Since the call up of our men, we were all in this together. The hard work out in the fields was only interrupted when there was an impending special radio announcement. The announcement would follow shortly after and once again it informed the inhabitants of another glorious victory for the German soldiers in far off Russia. Men came home individually on furlough. They spoke of the tough training they had gone through, along with the mocking and deriding of the older men by the young officers and the non-commissioned officers who were all from the German Reich. These officers had absolutely no understanding of the worries and concerns of our men. They used all kinds of derogatory terms when addressing them, such as “Booty Germans,” “Bacon Eaters” and “Spineless Pigtales.” Then we heard that soon our now fully trained men would be involved in their first military engagements. People only began to understand how serious the actual case was when the news arrived that in the first engagement of one of the units, the platoon leader and five men died in battle. The platoon leader came from our village; his name was Joschi Birg. His death in battle unleashed a great deal of dismay in the village. From the day this terrible news became known there was only depression and despondency among the people. The sympathy for the young widow and her two small children knew no boundaries.

There was no entertainment or amusement in the village that autumn. There was no dancing at the *Kirchweih* festival, instead there was mourning and worry that became more pronounced because the first war casualty was soon followed by others. In addition, the special announcements on the radio were gradually being replaced by bad news. The successes of the German Army in Russia became less and less frequent until finally we were informed about the first major retreats that eventually led to the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

Although things remained peaceful and quiet in our village, in other communities the bad news on the Eastern Front became the impetus for the outbreak of underground activities by the Communist Partisans. On more and more occasions, trains were unable to operate on schedule because the railway tracks were destroyed. An act of sabotage of this kind occurred at the outskirts of our village. The locomotive of the early train from Betschkerek

to Werschetz ended up in a ditch alongside of the track bed because during the night the Partisans loosened the tracks from the ties. In addition, whole fields of grain crops went up in flames.

Because of all of this, more men received their call up order to serve as policemen, border guards and later the so-called Special Duty troops who were under the command of the Folk Group leadership. The older men, those who were past the age of fifty, served as policemen and border guards. It was the young teen-age boys, as well as the students in high school and university who were assigned to the Special Duty forces. With the conscription and recruitment of these last groups able to respond to the call to arms, the villages, including our own, were completely without any men to provide them with protection. In addition, there was also no work force to carry on adequately. But at the same time the authorities demanded that more grain had to be delivered to alleviate the food shortages on the war front and the homeland itself was suffering greatly. What followed was a sorrowful time for all of the inhabitants of our village. Along with the anxiety and worry about the men in the various units of the German Army was the demanding labor now fully placed on the shoulders of the women and older children. Plus, nobody could ignore the Serbs' implied threats that were spreading fear among the villagers. The tormenting question of what would happen if and when the Partisans attacked the village was on everyone's mind. What could be done in order to prevent such a disaster from happening? One word sporadically found its way into our conversation: "Flight." In most of the backyards of the farmhouses there was a packed covered wagon. The teams of horses were outfitted with new shoes and harnesses. Housewives went through their beloved home always finding something new that they needed to take with them. The mood of the village got worse by the hour and at any moment the order to leave could be given. Many of the women described it later as a very stressful situation because they were without their men and had to make difficult decisions alone.

But the order to evacuate never came. There were no more special announcements on the radio. There was only talk about stabilizing the frontlines and orderly retreat. The most important part of the radio newscasts were slogans like: "Hold out to the end!" While in the newspapers, alongside the long columns of names listing those killed or missing in action, there were reports of "new secret weapons" that would turn the tide of the war. But when these "new weapons" would become available was never indicated. As enemy aircraft flew over the villages and strafed the people working in the fields there was no longer any doubt about the serious and alarming situation in which they found themselves. There was malice in the air and it was about to overcome us.

THE VILLAGE FACES TRAGEDIES

NOVEMBER 1, 1944: THE MEN GOT ARRESTED

The sky was overcast with dark rain clouds. The rumbling of heavy motors could be heard from a distance. Shots could be heard, some of them muffled and rolling and the others clattering. Bursts and flashes of bright light on the eastern horizon accompanied the cacophony of sounds around us. The men over fifty years of age who were still in the village and had been frontline soldiers during the First World War knew exactly what these growling sounds and noises along with the bright light in the night were all about! “It’s the frontlines and they are coming closer and closer by the hour,” they said. These observations proved to be true. The attack launched by the Red Army came from Romania towards Gross Gaj, which was situated on the border, and moved in the direction of Werschetz. Our village was spared from the ensuing battles. It was “liberated” by the Partisans who were the first forces to enter the village. At least that is the word they used to describe it. Great fear and insecurity spread among the populace. This was during Sunday night and Monday morning, the 1st and 2nd days of October 1944.

Early the next day the village drummer, Mischko Brücker, notified the inhabitants that all of them were to assemble down at the community center. Once they gathered together, Miloš Kovačević,* a Serb who was a native of The Colony gave a speech to the effect that: “Since yesterday the village has been freed from the German occupation. No one needs to be afraid. Nothing will happen to any of you if you keep the peace and just go about your daily work. For in truth all of us are brothers. You Germans protected us Serbs and now we wish to return the favor and defend you. But of course all of the inhabitants of the village must strictly obey the authorities and the new forthcoming regulations that will go into effect.”

Most of the residents who had their fully loaded wagons prepared for flight were now relieved that no order to evacuate had been given in light of what they had just heard. This sense of security was heightened when the commander of the German Home Defense League, a paramilitary organization given the responsibility of providing protection for the village, stipulated that no military weaponry had been stationed in the village. Days before, such weapons had been removed from Muhr’s *Wirtshaus* and the community center and taken by wagon to the Serbian village. The commander of the German Home Defense League was Nikolaus Birg, who was known to all of the residents simply as Miklosch. He was a well-respected man who had served as an officer in the First World War.

(*Footnote on Miloš Kovačević: He spoke German well. He had trained as a chimney sweep in Zichydorf and knew all of the inhabitants of the village. It was also known that he was a Partisan sympathizer and he always remained a convinced Communist who made his views well known in the local *Wirtshaus*. Miloš Kovačević was the first representative of the new Communist regime. He set up his residence at Muhr’s *Wirtshaus* where he celebrated the victory with his comrades. His idealism buckled under when he saw how the consequences of the liberation and victory were carried out in practical terms. It was

later reported that after he expressed his indignation about the situation, the authorities liquidated him in the spring of 1946.)

During this relatively peaceful period, actually on the next day, which was the 4th of October, the drummer announced that all guns, bicycles, sewing machines, radios and any uniforms were to be delivered to the community center. But what produced much anxiety in the people was the final clause of the order, "...and whoever does not immediately obey will be shot." It is no small wonder that the new authorities were very busy in the next few days. Above all, the registration of the surrendered items created a lot of work for the new officials, they wanted to provide an orderly accounting of everything, but most of them lacked penmanship skills equal to the task.

In the meanwhile the village was filled with Partisans. They settled in at the recently completed villa of Wilhelm Birg and established their quarters there. Then they continually roved through the village. Many young women and men from The Colony sewed a five-pointed red star on their caps and attached themselves to the Partisans. At the head of the new village government stood the already identified chimney sweep, Miloš Kovačević.

The farther the front lines moved away from the village, the more disrespectful the Partisans became. It seemed like they were given a free hand by the Russians. The Russians were seldom seen. They only came to the village when they needed something like nice horses, valuables, jewelry, watches and sometimes baking from the kitchens of the German housewives. Later the Partisans always brought a few Russians to the village just to show the inhabitants that the Russians would be there to help them in case they ran into any difficulties. The Partisans also offered women to the Russians so the highest level of alarm was invoked when word was passed that Russians were coming to the village. The young women dressed in rags and hurried to prepared hideouts in straw stacks. After about a week the first plundering of homes took place. Inhabitants from The Colony along with Partisans entered the houses on the pretext of searching for husbands and sons who had returned home from the war. Whatever caught their fancy they took with them, especially when it came to clothing. It was not long before people saw more and more Serbs and Partisans dressed in clothes taken from German homes. There were also some individual cases where people were beaten and thrashed. Fear was on the increase among the German population. No one knew when there would be a knock at the door.

The Partisan unit stationed in the village lived off the village resources. They took cattle from the stables of the Germans and butchered them at the meat cutter Löchel's establishment. German women had to cook for them. The inhabitants of the German village also became responsible for cleaning and maintaining the community center and providing wood for heating. Far into the second week of the "liberation," the Serbs and the Partisans stationed in the village were still celebrating with no end in sight. All of the stock in the two *Wirtshäuser* was set aside for them. When all of them were drunk the already mentioned attacks on individuals took place. The Serbs took great delight in humiliating the Germans and making them feel vulnerable, and whenever the opportunity presented itself they would rob and plunder their homes.

While the Partisans awaited further orders from the higher superiors, the Germans went about their work in the fields. The corn crop had not yet been brought in, the sunflowers stood in the fields and the plowing for the winter seeding had not yet begun. The unrest and anxiety in the village increased day by day. Furthermore, according to sporadic reports, something was about to happen to the remaining German men in the village. Supposedly, they were going to be taken to other communities to ensure that the autumn work was completed before the coming of winter.

That the situation of the Germans was about to worsen was made quite clear in the announcements made by the village drummer, Mischko Brücker. He had to explain the following in German: "All persons whose Mother Tongue is German are to remain in their houses. It is forbidden for them to seek the services of a doctor or purchase medicine from a pharmacist. Shopping in any store in the village is also forbidden to them. Their Yugoslavian citizenship was taken away from them. All rights of citizenship were abrogated. Germans no longer have any legal rights. Everyone has the right to do whatever he wants to them. On the other hand, they had to strictly obey every and any order of the authorities. Whoever disobeyed could count on being shot for their misdeeds." Passing along this information and the regulations involved were the last official act of the villager drummer, Mischko Brücker. His position was taken over by the Hungarian, Pischta Nemet because he supposedly spoke German. For our beloved Mischko Brücker this was the first step towards his programmed death in Rudolfsgnad.

The fact that the Partisans had received new instructions from their headquarters was soon obvious by their behavior. Their activities in the village became progressively more autocratic and the assaults they made on the German inhabitants took on an increasing brutal character. All of a sudden they forgot we were all brothers and that the Serbs would protect the Germans. Murder, brutality and beating people to death took the place of brotherhood. In the last days of October, the Serbs who lived in the part of the village beyond the cemetery, that is The Colony, went on a rampage. Johann Jakob (Tailor Hans), a sixty-three year old man was killed and buried in the field between the cemetery and the German village. Karl Petri who had served as the teacher in the village for many years was murdered by one of his former pupils and his body was tossed into the pond between Adam Birg's place and the post office. A few days later his body was retrieved from the water and buried somewhere in a field. The Hungarian Joschka Kaludjer, a simple and industrious man who had worked as a hired hand for all of his life was brought to the *Loch Wirtshaus* and taken to a private room where the Serbs tortured and abused him to the point where he was unable to walk afterwards. Several days later in Werschetz, a Partisan released him from his sufferings with a pistol bullet in the back of his head. These are only some of the men victims who will be personally mentioned. They represent all of the others who also lost their lives during these last days of October in 1944.

The Partisans now felt secure. The front lines were far removed from the Banat. There was no longer any need to fear that the German troops would be returning. By this time the situation of the Germans had changed drastically. Nothing now stood in the way of the extermination of the German population in the Banat and the Partisans showed their true colors in carrying out this endeavor.

The first blow was directed at the remaining men in the village. On November 1, 1944, (All Saints' Day) the arrest of twenty persons was carried out. They were all men over the age of fifty years, all of them civilians and none belonged to any military formation. On that day most of them were out working in their fields when they were apprehended by heavily armed Partisans and were brought to the courtyard of the community center. When all twenty of them were assembled, the Partisans bound their hands behind their backs with wire and forced them to walk to the railway station. They were loaded on board a cattle car and taken by train to Werschetz. While boarding the train shots were heard, interspersed with the groans of those injured by blows of rifle butts to their heads or wounds inflicted by bayonets.

Upon their arrival in Werschetz, the Partisans force-marched the twenty men from our village, along with other men from neighboring villages who had also been brought with them on the same train. Their first stop was at a house across the street from the palace of the Serbian bishop. It served as the headquarters of the Secret Police and was used to interrogate delinquents (that apparently was meant to describe the men from our village). All night long the men were brutally beaten and tormented in this building. The next day it took their last ounce of physical and inner strength to make their way to Camp Stojkowitsch near the railway station. Several of them were already dead after this night, such as Joschka Kaludjer who was taken with them to Werschetz. During that night the men suffered and endured broken arms and legs, concussions to their skulls, broken ribs, had their eyes put out and their genitals crushed. These were only some of the injuries inflicted upon them.

Our fellow villager, Helmut Birg, who was brought to Camp Stojkowitsch in the second transport on the 3rd of November, met his father along with the other men from the first transport and describes what he saw and heard as follows: "I was in Camp Stojkowitsch twice. On November 1, 1944, twenty German men from our village were taken away to an unknown destination. On November 3rd I found myself in the same position. We were put on an overnight train to Werschetz and from there we were taken to Camp Stojkowitsch. With beatings and kicks from our guards along the way we were driven into a pitch dark barrack. Here I found my badly abused father and the other survivors from our village. After daylight I could see that all of them were barefooted and were dressed in rags and were unable to walk. They informed me that two of the men died during the beatings and torture (Joschka Kaludjer and Johann Seger). While I was there others were taken out of our barrack and led away, such as members who served in the SS-Division "Prinz Eugen," those who had served as police or were members of the German Home Defense League and other groups. The only ones not taken were those of us who were young and those who were very old. I was only fifteen at the time. My father was one of those who was taken. During the night we heard motor vehicle noises and ongoing shooting.

On the 10th of November, early in the morning, we had to leave the barrack and stand out in the courtyard. A Partisan carrying a machine pistol approached one of the older men who appeared rather well fed, and then began to complain about the way the old man had treated him in the past. The old man said he didn't even know him. "Then you will learn to know me now!" the Partisan said along with cursing and swearing, and ordered him to

step forward. The old man took a few steps and the Partisan shot him in the back with a full magazine of ammunition from his machine pistol. The man slumped to the ground and the Partisan shot another round into the lifeless body. One of his superiors scolded him for using the machine pistol because people outside of the camp could be endangered. Next, a Partisan who had been watching and waiting close by pulled out his pistol and walked towards our column of prisoners. He stopped in front of a man who also looked well fed and said he must have abused Serbs to have done so well for himself and for that reason needed to be punished. He ordered him to step forward and turn around, then he extended his arm and aimed his pistol at the back of the man's neck and fired. It was almost twilight when two men with spades passed by us, and following them were two others carrying a stretcher with my father on it. Close to where we were standing in the courtyard they dug a hole and buried the three dead men.

On March 25, 1945, when I was sixteen years old, I was sent a second time to Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz, along with me were other friends from our village and also some youth from Werschetz who had been brought to our village in the winter of 1944-1945. The camp had undergone great changes in the meantime. We were each given our own space, a barber shaved our heads for hygienic reasons and we were introduced to the camp rules and regulations. To my great surprise I found large numbers of middle-aged men there, which was contrary to my previous experience in the camp when they would not have been allowed to live. In conversations with them and from rumors I learned that these men were anti-Fascists who had just recently been brought to the camp. Not even they were spared because they were Germans. This time I was only in the camp four weeks and then that was followed by other work assignments until I managed to escape to Romania in August of 1946.”

As Helmut has already stated there was a second wave of arrests on the 3rd of November. All men in the village up to the age of sixty who still resided in the village were forced together in the schoolyard, along with the fifteen and sixteen year old boys of the village. The Hungarian men of the village were also arrested that day. Konrad Löchel who was part of the group wrote the following about it: “In the afternoon of November 3, 1944, we were driven like cattle from the assembly yard of the school by many heavily armed Partisans. We walked through knee-deep mud and deep water puddles in the middle of the road to the railway station. Understandably, our armed escorts walked along on the brick sidewalks in front of the houses. On this hostage march to the railway station a heartbreaking, unforgettable scene met our eyes. The forsaken, abandoned grandmothers and mothers with small children in their arms watching from their windows, behind pillars or standing in their doorways. They wept and raised their voices and complained about what was happening. They were forbidden to give us food and clothing as we passed by our homes. This was our sorrowful farewell from our beloved home village.

At the railway station we were immediately driven into the waiting cattle cars with rifle butts in our backs, while being pushed, shoved and kicked to hurry us along. In the cattle car we were packed so tightly together that we all had to stand. Late in the evening we arrived by train in Werschetz. Shots were fired as we were being unloaded at the railway station and it was clear to us that we had a hard time ahead of us. Armed and blood thirsty

Partisans were continually shouting and screaming while they drove us forward into the so-called Stojkowitsch Barracks (also known as the Barracks of Death). The barracks were close to the railway station. For many German men this would be the last “station” in their lives. Our guards were openly joyful with the arrival of a new crop of prisoners. The Partisans were all drunk and proceeded to celebrate all night long because the robbing, plundering, beatings, torturing and shootings could continue once more.

We were driven into the barracks where we were confronted with a rather gruesome picture. On the bit of straw that stretched out along the walls of the barracks there were men with despairing faces who were lying down, kneeling or standing about. Several among them groaned with pain from beatings inflicted upon them by their Partisan torturers, their limbs were broken, almost beaten to death, they were just lying there. But we were not allowed to help these poor suffering men. As a result of this kind of mistreatment, over the next few days many of the men from our village died. We, the newcomers, had to stand in a row and empty our pockets and give up anything we had. Shoes and good clothes were taken from us immediately. I too had to take off my good shoes and give them to a Partisan. In exchange I received a bad pair of ragged sandals. During the body search that followed they found a concealed bank note on me and I was thrashed and beaten on the spot because of it. The survival of men in these barracks was a matter of pure luck. Whenever the Partisans felt like it they had some men brought out to the yard and on most occasions murdered them with a shot in the back of the head. Each day a group of prisoners was assembled to dig mass graves under heavy guard by Partisans, because as we discovered, they were always needed. I remember one case in particular in which 240 persons were to be shot. In the large group assembled, who were forced to stand there and wait for their execution, were the following young boys from our village. There was Nikolaus Friedlein, Franz Treib, Hans Siller and myself. We stood there. In front of us were the Partisans with their machine guns and behind us an open mass grave. At the very last minute an order came that “only” 120 persons were to be shot. As a result, all of us sixteen year olds were spared from certain death. We were taken out of the group. Then the Partisans shot 120 innocent men, including my uncle from Heideschütz. I can recall with certainty the following men from our village who lost their lives as part of this group. They were Wilhelm Remilong, Georg Siller and Jakob Bies (the barber).

The men in the barracks were subject to the arbitrary actions of the Partisans day and night. They came in groups and had their fun beating and torturing the defenseless men. They, the so-called victors, found it entertaining to hear us frightened victims wail, whine and writhe in pain. With great delight they focused their attention on our countrymen who had broken limbs from previous beatings and tortures. They treated them roughly with kicks to every part of their bodies until the victims were howling from the pain. Life in the barracks was hell. Fear, hunger and cold were not the worst. The most wicked and evil of all was the uncertainty: Will I be the next one they come for? Our lives were worth nothing.” These are the words of Konrad Löchel about his experiences in Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz.

After a few days, the Hungarian men were sent home from Werschetz. Through them the fate of the men taken to Werschetz was spread throughout the village. In reality, from

among the men and youth who were taken to Werschetz, few survived, only the boys who were sixteen and under, a group of eight men who were deported to the Soviet Union, the shoemaker Jakob Krämer, the one time village mayor Peter Hirsch and Friedl Birg, both who were over sixty years of age. All of the other men were murdered in Camp Stojkowitsch. Their names are listed here:

b. = year born

Bajerle Franz (Schwob Franz)	b. 1885	Hügel Adam	b. 1893
Bajerle Jakob (Jakschi)	b. 1885	Hügel Josef (Tailor)	b. 1885
Bajerle Matthias (Schwob Matz)		Illiewich Josef	b. 1893
Birg Adam	b. 1892	Kiefer Hans	b. 1883
Birg Konrad	b. 1897	Kirchner Kaspar	b. 1887
Birg Matthias	b. 1900	Kirchner Konrad	b. 1889
Birg Wilhelm	b. 1906	Kirchner Peter	b. 1895
Bogner Michael	b. 1895	Müller Andreas	b. 1893
Borschowa Adam senior	b. 1892	Moor Heinrich	b. 1881
Brenner Franz		Muhr Karl senior	b. 1895
Brenner Peter		Niedermayer Johann	b. 1899
Bies Jakob (Barber)	b. 1894	Ölberg Johann	b. 1898
Bies Jakob (Dragan Shoemaker)	b. 1900	Paul Matthias	b. 1904
Bies Johann (Dragan ¹⁸ Hans)	b. 1883	Reiter Franz senior	b. 1893
Bies Phillip	b. 1906	Reiter Nikolaus	b. 1912
Dian Michael	b. 1901	Reiter Franz junior	b. 1921
Eisler Anton	b. 1900	Remilong Wilhelm	b. 1894
Engst Franz	b. 1895	Seger Johann	b. 1913
Faul Josef	b. 1901	Siller Georg	b. 1890
Filips Franz	b. 1892	Storch Franz	b. 1910
Halmaschan Theodor (Todor)		Wingert Andreas	b. 1899
Heim Arnold		Winter Johann	
Holzmüller Peter	b. 1906	Wüst Michael	b. 1894

There are forty-six men listed here. The list however cannot be fully verified. Only those men are listed whose fate has been made known to me. Among the names are also men who were older than sixty years. The widely circulated regulation that men over sixty years were exempt, is in fact not the truth at all. Nor was it simply the “rich” men who were involved as some have suggested. Very poor men were also among the victims, those who had neither their own house or some land. However, they all had one thing in common. They had German names and were Germans. Their Mother Tongue was

¹⁸ Dragan is a Serbian name, used here as a nickname.

German, their children went to German public school, and all men of military age, those from seventeen to fifty years had to serve in units of the German Army and participate in the war. They were forced to do so.

As soldiers, the following men from our village lost their lives (subject to error):

In the Royal Yugoslavian Army:			
Remilong Peter	b. 1919		
In Units of the German Army:			
Arnusch Nikolaus	b. 1921	Hirsch Hans	b. 1907
Armbruster Kaspar	b. 1904 (MIA)	Hirsch Peter junior	b. 1912
Berkowich Nikolaus	b. 1921	Jakob Franz	b. 1910
Birg Josef	b. 1909	Kirchner Konrad	b. 1923
Birg Michael	b. 1911 (MIA)	Loch Melchior	b. 1917
Birg Anton	b. 1909	Löchel Konrad	b. 1901 (MIA)
Bockmüller Josef	b. 1914	Merle Fritz	b. 1915
Bogner Peter	b. 1924	Müller Hans	b. 1926
Brücker Christof	b. 1910	Niedermayer Peter	b. 1904
Enderle Stefan	b. 1918	Reiter Heinrich	b. 1923
Engst Hans	b. 1921	Reiter Josef (Babilon)	b. 1926 (MIA)
Faul Adam	b. 1901	Remilong Hans	b. 1925
Gerger Johann	b. 1905	Remilong Wilhelm	b. 1922
Filips Anton (Busch Toni)	b. 1923	Sauer Michael	b. 1908
Friedlein Johann	b. 1903	Seim Peter	b. 1918
Hirsch Christof	b. 1894	Stemper Hans	b. 1909

The arrest of the men from the village, their removal to Werschetz, and the torture they endured soon became known to all and sent a shock wave through those left behind: the very old men, the women and the children. There was no longer any talk of protection on the part of the Serbs. The Serbs themselves who were known to be loyal to the king suffered the same fate as the German men. A boundless fear spread among the people. For the German women who remained in the village, fears were heightened by the highhanded attitude and the actions of the Partisans and their helpers from The Colony. They went into every house and took whatever they wanted. And if they did not find what they were looking for they frightened them with threats. They especially looked for valuables that the women had hidden or buried. They punished the people as long as it would take to get the last wedding ring, the last knife, fork and spoon or the last of the china dishes.

But most unbearable was the psychological pressure generated by intentionally spreading well directed rumors. A woman was summoned to the community center and informed by

the officials that on the previous night her husband had been captured by soldiers on his way home and was immediately executed. Or in another case a son was recognized in Werschetz, then arrested and immediately hanged. Rumors like these were spread almost every day. But they were not the truth. The deception was intended to make the people compliant, terrified and insecure. In the midst of all of these rumors was the news that soon all of the young women of the village would be taken away to work, but its importance did not achieve the attention it should have at the time. For this time we were not dealing with a rumor, but with an indiscretion voiced by one of the Serbs working in the community center who was telling the truth. This announcement was the second difficult trial to be endured by the women still residing in the village.

THE DEPORTATION TO THE SOVIET UNION

Theresia Salfner, nee Milowan, writes in her biography about the mood in the village at this time: "We just had the saddest Christmas behind us. The whole village was still under the influence of the terrifying day on which the men were arrested and taken to Werschetz. According to rumors spread by the Partisans, none of the men were still alive and that weighed heavily on our souls. It was said that soon all of the able-bodied inhabitants of the village would have to work far away from here. Since the Partisans spread new rumors every day, no one wanted to believe it, but in this case they were serious. On the second day of Christmas all women between the ages of eighteen to forty years were ordered to report to the community center. They were told to take warm clothing and some food with them. At the community center they informed us that we would be leaving shortly and be away for a long time. Everything then proceeded very quickly. About thirty young married and single women were marched out of the community center. No consideration was given with regard to the mothers with small children who were still very much in need of them. The children had to remain behind. The wailing of the mothers for their children was awful. But it did not touch the heart of a single Partisan. Towards evening we were taken to Zichydorf. There we were formed into columns along with the women and older teenage girls from Zichydorf and a few young men. During the same night we went on foot to Werschetz. It was a walk of at least thirty kilometers in the bitter cold and at times we could hardly go on. When we arrived in Werschetz it was still dark. We were brought to a house close to the railway station, in this house we could lie down on the floor and catch some sleep. We remained in Werschetz until the 4th of January.

During that time we were examined by a Russian commission with regard to the status of our health. A great deal was made of this. All of us from our village were considered to be healthy and detailed into a group for transportation purposes. On the 4th of January we began boarding cattle cars. These cars were arranged in such way that some of the people lay on the floor and a second level of bunks above them accommodated others. In our cattle car there were fifty persons, all of them women. The train was very long and later we were able to count fifty cattle cars in all, which meant a total of at least two thousand people. The people on this train came from Heideschütz, Setschanfeld, Alt Letz, Zichydorf, Karlsdorf, Werschetz and our own village."

Alongside of this report of Resi Milowan [Theresia Milowan Salfner] there is something else that needs to be added because it affected other people from our village. Konrad Löchel has the following to report:

“At the beginning of December 1944, a labor group of around fifty men was formed at Camp Stojkowitsch. They said we would be taken to Kudritz to cut wood for heating the camp. We were content with that as long as it took us out of the “murder” barracks we were in. We had to form four columns. All of those from our village remained together. In one row there was Nikolaus Friedlein, Hans Siller, Franz Engst (the older) and I. In the row behind us was Franz Treib, Franz Reiter (the older), Hansi Oberle and another man. We were guarded and driven from our camp by the Partisans. These men had learned in the camp how to deal with the Swabians so marching to Kudritz was hardly an afternoon’s stroll. From the very beginning we received beatings and were kicked by our guards. This continued all the way to Kudritz. Two men in our group could not go on. They were tossed in a ditch alongside of the road, then shot and left lying there. This chain gang march almost lasted six hours. In Kudritz we spent the night in the school. The next day we were force-marched towards the forest near Zolschitza [Sotschitza] where we were divided up into work groups. With the worst tools imaginable, each of us had to cut one cubic meter of wood and have it neatly stacked by evening. If a man failed to meet his quota he was thrashed. Old Franz Engst died of such a beating. Because I had no shoes and the first snow had already fallen, I hacked out a pair of soles from linden wood and fastened them with some bast twines on the rags that were wrapped around my feet. If we did not have to work late into the evening because of a punishment, at dusk we were allowed to walk to a nearby sheep stall and spend the night in it. We were always under strict surveillance, but compared to the barracks in Werschetz it was far less life threatening. Here we only had to deal with hard labor, hunger and cold. In Zolschitza we also met our fellow villagers Peter Hemmert, Adam Borschowa [junior, Adam Borschowa Sarcev] and Adam Wingert.

One day we were brought back to Kudritz where a Russian major was to evaluate if we were fit for work in the Soviet Union. He sent us all back to the camp as unsuitable because we were either too young or too old. We hoped that we would be spared from going to the Soviet Union. But in the beginning of January a troop of Partisans from Werschetz came for us and we ended up in the last cattle car of the train preparing to leave, but was still standing at the station in Werschetz. Supposedly there was room for ten more persons in the cattle car and someone remembered us young fellows. So we also went to the Soviet Union to do slave labor just like the young women from our village.”

As far as the chronicler knew, the following women from our village were deported to the Soviet Union:

Armbruster Resi	Kiefer Elisabeth
Bäcker Anna	Kirchner Susanne
Bajerle Magdalena (Hirsch Lentschi)	Löchel Magdalena
Bajerle Rosina and her daughter Gertraud	Milowan Theresia

Brenner Elisabeth	Müller Maria
Brenner Magdalena	Niedermayer Magdalena
Eisler Maria	Oberle Elisabeth
Enzmann Magdalena (Schwob Leni)	Paul Barbara (Kundi Wawi)
Faul Anni	Siller Barbara
Filips Elisabeth	Storch Barbara
Gerger Anna	Wingert Anna
Gerger Maria	And the following men and youth:
[Glass (Hirsch) Anna]	Borschowa Adam [junior]
Hirsch Magdalena	Enzmann Hans
Hirsch (Arnusch) Rosalia	Friedlein Nikolaus
Hügel Anna	Löchel Konrad
Herold Katharina	Hemmert Peter
Illi Elisabeth	Siller Hans
Jakob Elisabeth	Treib Franz
Jakob Theresia	Wingert Adam
Jakob (Hügel) Anna	

The following persons lost their lives in the Soviet Union, on their way home or died shortly after their arrival home:

Anna Gerger died shortly after her return, Hans Enzmann and Peter Hemmert died in the Soviet Union, Franz Treib was killed in a coal mining accident in the Soviet Union, Adam Borschowa [Sarcev]¹⁹ died after his return and Adam Wingert died at the railway station on his return.

Konrad Löchel reports on the journey to the Soviet Union, the work they did there and their life in the camp as follows:

“With our deportation to slave labor in the Soviet Union we began a new epoch in our lives. For some it was an escape from the clutches of the bloodthirsty murderous Partisans and for all of the others it was a journey into the unknown.

The journey lasted twenty-seven long days packed in cattle cars. Sometimes the train stopped on a siding for days or remained standing on the main line, but no one opened the doors. We received warm soup twice. Once at Ploesti [in Romania] and the second time in Odessa [in the Ukraine]. Some of our companions saved us from starvation by sharing part of the food they had brought with them. There was a hole in the center of the car for us to use to relieve ourselves. After about two-thirds of the women were unloaded in

¹⁹ Adam Borschowa Sarcev died in the mid 1950s from an illness that resulted from his work in the Russian coal mines.

Artioma and Kadjevka, all of the men and remaining women arrived in Camp No. 1224, Brianka, USSR on January 31, 1945. It was minus forty degrees Celsius and the snow was deep. Our great hunger and poor clothing made us very conscious of what we now faced ahead of us. When our train arrived at its destination, the doors of our cattle cars were unlocked from the outside and the half-starved and half-frozen to death passengers managed to crawl out. Whoever hoped that here, at our destination, we would at least have some warm soup or a warm room would be terribly disappointed. Several Russians met us with the news that we had arrived too early. Nothing had been prepared for us. Eventually, a human chain slowly plodded forward, one person supported the next one until we reached Camp Brianka, six kilometers from the railway station where we had arrived.

For the men's accommodations there was just a large house with some partly missing windows and doors and no heat. The women who had arrived with us were quartered in a similar house nearby. The Russians sought to help us, but where there is nothing there is little help possible. We simply received old used winter clothing of soldiers from the First World War. Our situation at the start was appalling. We were given three days rest before we were assigned to work. Besides working, we fixed up our quarters as well as we could so at least we found shelter from the bitter cold during the night. Many of us did not survive this first winter. The dead were simply laid out in the snow next to our house where they froze to one another. In the spring after the snow melted they were dumped into a mass grave where all of them found their eternal rest. After this hostile winter, which had caused the death of so many victims, we believed that we had lived through the worst. But it was only the beginning of the work for which we had been brought to the Soviet Union as slave laborers. We had to assist in the reconstruction of a damaged and ruined nation that was recovering from the results of war. In the region where we found ourselves there were countless coal mines that were destroyed by the retreating German troops. The coal deposits in the ruined shafts were essential for the reconstruction and the restoration of the Russian economy. That is why every ton of coal needed to be extracted as quickly as possible. At first the task was to clear out the rubble and begin the reconstruction along the surface. Even during the coldest weather the foundations of new facilities and buildings had to be poured. This required stone in the form of gravel. But since there was not enough of it the men worked in two shifts,²⁰ both day and night, lugging the chipped rocks from a distance of four to six kilometers on a stretcher like transport called a *Nosilka*. There were no wheelbarrows or other means of transportation. The women also worked in two shifts in temperatures from minus thirty to minus forty degrees Celsius. They sat with a hammer and pounded the rock chips into smaller pieces so they could be used for making concrete. This was worse than slave labor or a punishment detail and it also had to be done at night when it was coldest.

Many of our women who had to do this work were sick for the rest of their lives or they could not cope with the demands made of them and died. Others had to dismantle the remnants of blown up mineshafts. For that purpose they were provided with only the most elementary tools: hammers and chisels. Knocking out the large rivets with these tools often led to unfortunate accidents. Because the entire entrances to the coal mines were

²⁰ Twelve hour shifts.

destroyed, they could not be accessed by rail and the coal had to be brought out by other ways. The Russians remembered some old abandoned mineshafts. There was no track leading inside of them and they were entered from the surface on foot, down a steep incline and then there were ladders to the coal bearing seams below; some eight hundred to fifteen hundred meters underground. The individual coal seams were sixty to one hundred centimeters thick so the coal needed to be extracted with small picks and shovels by men lying or in a kneeling position. Since we did not cost any money, prisoners like us were expendable for taking on this life threatening work. When one or more persons did not return from their shift, all you had to do is draw a line through their name on the list of workers. That was all. Since the tunnel ceilings were buttressed with rotten and brittle timber, there was always the danger of cave-ins. There was also the hazard of methane gas. Added to all of this, the old mines were damp from water seeping through the shafts and tunnels. There was always a steady stream of water drops from overhead. In a mine like this at Artioma, our fellow villager Franz Treib was killed instantly in February of 1946 when the mineshaft caved in. He was buried by his friends Hans Siller and Nikolaus Friedlein.

Now back to life in the camp. After the severe winter and the catastrophic beginning of our time in the Soviet Union there was a period of normalization. A barbed wire fence was built around the camp and armed sentries stood along the fence perimeter. We were escorted by guards both coming and going to work. Almost on a daily basis we had to assemble in the camp yard to be counted.

Our greatest pain was our inability to rid ourselves of hunger. The standard meal was sauerkraut with hot water poured over it with one or two tablespoons of barley and if we were lucky, a few potatoes, beans or peas. The distribution of the bread ration was the most important event of the day. Each person received five hundred grams a day of soggy heavy black bread. Those working in the coal mines received eight hundred to one thousand grams of this soggy bread. With this meager nutrition we had carry out our hard labor. By using only shovels for tools, about six tons of coal delivered in rolling cars on tracks usually had to be unloaded by six to eight men in four to five hours. Demanding quotas had to be met in the coke plant, the coal mines and the sawmill where enormous logs were processed.

Added to our constant hunger and constant exhaustion were the attacks of hordes of lice. They were our constant companions. We could not get rid of them. Regarding sanitary facilities in the camp, one could simply say there were none. We dug a deep pit in the yard of the camp and installed a beam on the edge of it for the residents to relieve themselves there. It was called the *Donnerbalken* [the beam was a crude toilet seat, sometimes more than one person used it at the same time]. At the entrance to this place a smart fellow put up a sign that said, "Caution, Dangerous Slide Ahead!" This served a worthwhile purpose because whoever lost their balance there did not have to worry about a separate burial.

Occasionally, both the men and women had to have their hair shorn. On those occasions their clothing was also disinfected. A bodily cleansing followed in the "bathing stalls." Following such a "hygienic" treatment, the women were embarrassed and ashamed to walk

around bald headed. Malnutrition, no sanitation and the daily hard labor were the causes of sicknesses that often led to death. Dysentery was the most prevalent. Except for charcoal that we made ourselves, there was no other remedy. But regardless of being ill, one still had to go to work. According to the Russians we were only sick if we had a high fever. There was almost no care by a physician.

Our fellow villagers were imprisoned and given work assignments in the following camps and regions in the following time frames: January 1945 until July 1945 in Camp No. 1224 Brianka (women and men); July 1945 until February 1947 in Artioma in the District of Woroschilowgrad (women and men); February 1947 until April 1948 in Kadjevka (women and men); April 1948 to May 1949 in Artioma again (women and men); May 1949 until December 1949 in Stalino Camp No. 1046 (women and men).

The conditions in the camps were the same everywhere. If we had to compare the treatment we received in the barracks of Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz with the camps in the Soviet Union, it is obvious that the Russians were more humane and not filled with hatred like the Serbs were. In the Soviet Union we certainly had to work hard, and there was little to eat, but we didn't have to worry about being taken out of our barracks and shot the way the Partisans did on a daily basis." Here ends Konrad Löchel's account.

The following is another account of the camps in the Soviet Union provided by Resi Milowan: "There were often severe punishments meted out for which there were no known reasons. One time I myself had to spend three days standing in a bunker with water up to my waist. Food rations were also cut. The grounds for my torture were the fact that the camp commander once saw me wear my glasses. Because I could read and write by wearing glasses, he declared I must be a Fascist. For eight months I worked in a rock quarry pounding rocks into small stones with heavy work equipment. In October of 1945 I became sick. I was in bed for five months. During three of those months I was often unconscious. To my good fortune two of my cousins from Heideschütz were in our camp. They looked after me alongside of doing their exhausting work. With the passing of time I began to recover. In 1946 I was transferred to another camp where the work was not much easier. When a transport of sick people was assembled in February 1947 I was among them. We were sent to East Germany where I remained until the end of August. Finally, I escaped one night all by myself and made my way by train to Cologne where I live to this day."

The suffering endured by the men and women who were deported to the Soviet Union, which also included inhabitants from our village, as we have been informed, has been fully researched and documented by scholars. As a result of their work the following can be ascertained: The deportation of German women and men from regions occupied by the Red Army was a result of demands by the Soviet Union for war reparations in the form of forced laborers to rebuild those areas and regions devastated during the war. These demands were met with eager compliance by the Partisan regime in Yugoslavia as a favor to their Big Brother the Soviet Union. It provided them with an additional opportunity to add another facet to the radical extermination of the German population in the country.

In the period from shortly before Christmas of 1944 to the beginning of January 1945, approximately 27,000 to 30,000 persons were deported from Yugoslavia to the Soviet Union. Specific age groups from among the German population were considered able bodied and were designated for deportation as follows: Men from the ages of sixteen to forty-five years and women from the age range of eighteen to forty years. According to official reports the persons affected in the individual villages and towns were assembled and taken on foot to cities on the major rail lines where they were loaded into box cars. The train journey lasted from fifteen to twenty-five days. The trains at the time were escorted and guarded by Russian troops. The destination of all of the trains was the industrial region in the Donets Basin.²¹ The deportees were quartered in labor camps that were located in the cities and villages between Charkov and Rostov. The long journey in ice-cold winter was form of martyrdom. The provision of food and water on the trains was totally insufficient. Sickness and deaths during the journey were commonplace. At their destination, both men and women were indiscriminately assigned to work projects. The most fit were sent to work in the coal mines below ground where they had to meet the required quota before being released from work. The others carried out clean up operations outside or worked within the framework of reconstruction on buildings, railway stations and industrial projects, or in agriculture. Anyone who did not achieve their high daily quota of work lost a portion of their food rations. Life became intolerable due to the constant hunger, the cold, the dampness and the various insect infestations in the barracks.²² The first of the severely sick and disabled persons were released in the summer of 1945. Additional return transports of sick deportees took place in the years 1946, 1947 and 1948. They arrived in the Russian Zone of Germany after crossing the border at Frankfurt-an-der-Oder [Frankfurt on the Oder River]. The clearing and closing of the camps took place in the fall of 1949. The vast majority of the surviving deportees were sent to East Germany. Smaller transports landed up in Romania and from there they were to go to Yugoslavia. The trainloads of deportees were shunted back and forth or stood at the border for weeks because the Yugoslavian authorities refused to accept them. Finally the deportees began to escape and made their way elsewhere, also a portion was transferred to Austria by the Hungarian officials.

Today we can realistically state that sixteen per cent of those deported to the Soviet Union died there. Many of the survivors were in bad physical shape for the rest of their lives.

These presented facts regarding the tragedy of the German women and men of Yugoslavia are in the Documentation on the Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern and Central Europe; published by the German Federal Government.

²¹ In the Ukraine.

²² Magdalena Prommer, nee Hirsch, says the insects were unbearable, particularly at night when one needed to sleep. During her second year in the Soviet Union the bed bugs were so bad that she could not get adequate rest for the demanding labor. It forced her into a downward spiral to the point where her health gave out and she could no longer work. As a result, the Russians sent her to Germany in December of her second year in the Soviet Union.

As best as we can determine, thirty-one women and eight men from our village had to endure this difficult fate. Six of them lost their lives in the process; five men and one woman.

DRIVEN OUT OF OUR HOMES

The train with the deportees had not yet reached its destination in the Soviet Union when a new terror was unleashed on the village. A few old men and the grandmothers with the abandoned children left behind, along with a few women who had escaped the deportation due to physical illness, made up the population of the village. In addition to them were some men who had been tolerated simply because they performed necessary functions and could not be replaced at the mill, the brickyards and the drilling derrick in the community pasture. Some houses already stood empty, while others were only partially inhabited. This led to billeting and quartering of new residents. That was the case with the Adam Birg family where an engineer was billeted. The engineer was in charge of the work associated with the drilling derrick. He was a Serb from Belgrade and proved to be a good source of information. This was brought out by the fact that one morning at breakfast he informed his hostess: "Nothing around here belongs to you Germans at all, not even a thread and needle. Difficult times are ahead for you. Everything will be taken away from you and then you will be imprisoned until not a single one of you is left alive. Then finally the problem you Germans pose will be dealt with for all time."

At the time of the last announcements made by the village drummer, Mischko Brücker, it had been said that all of the Germans no longer had any rights and could appeal to no one to protect them and for all intents and purposes they were outside of the law. At the time, no one wanted to believe it. Many believed that everything would turn out for the better after time passed by. But now the last and most horrific blow was about to occur. It was to be directed against the aged defenseless men and women as well as the innocent children and it came like a black shadow cast over the village. One day in January of 1945, a group of Germans consisting of women and old men along with a large number of children were brought to our village and were billeted in all houses where there was room for them. They were the first of those who had been thrown out of their homes and places of residence. All of them came from Werschetz where the operation for cleaning out the Germans from their homes had already begun. This was to make room for the new settlers arriving from Serbia, Bosnia and especially Slovenia. With the exception of a few personal effects, they were unable to take anything with them because all things now belonged to the state and all of the German property and goods were to be left behind as gifts for the new settlers.

Added to the worry about the arrested men and the women deported to the Soviet Union was the concern about keeping a roof over one's head in the middle of winter, for the months of January and February were always the coldest and with the most snow.

For the time being, the people who had been brought from Werschetz were provided for from the food supplies of the inhabitants of the village. However, it did not take long before the remaining residents of the village suffered the same fate that the German

population of Werschetz had experienced about a month before. Our houses now had to be abandoned. This was followed by resettlement in a camp. The camp consisted of the houses along the Lower Street from the Dormuths and Wüsts up to the Holzmüllers and Schwob Leopold [Leopold Bajerle]. This section of the village was surrounded and cordoned off by the Partisans and closely guarded. The camp kitchen was located in the wagon sheds of the Wüst family and simple meals cooked in kettles were served from there. The rest of the houses on the street were packed with people. Those people in the camp who were still capable of working and had a degree of good health were taken out to work. From local village camps like ours, government offices, supply depots and Serbs who still had land could request these workers for their purposes. In some situations a whole group of people were sent to work at another locality, while on other occasions individuals were assigned to carry out work projects in the village itself. For example, the removal and packing of all the furniture and household goods from the houses that were uninhabited due to the internment of the former residents. Everything remaining in these houses was taken out, registered, sorted and then declared to be state property. It hardly needs to be mentioned that anything of the slightest value and saleable had already been stolen by the Serbs who lived in The Colony. Whatever was left over was stored away for the new settlers. They were not only given the houses of the interned Germans, they also got supplied with the most necessary things out of the stored items so they could immediately begin their new lives in what had been our village.

Even though there was no great material need to complain about in this first phase of the internment because there was still enough food to go around and clothing was in good condition, there were still some deaths in the camp. There was the seven year old child, Hans Brücker, village drummer Michael [Mischko] Brücker and the two old grandmothers: Anna Brenner and Magdalena Wagner.

Just as they had before, the Partisan sentries and guards at the camp amused themselves in tormenting, humiliating, coercing and often physically abusing the German prisoners. The successful outcome of the final offensive by the Partisan Army in the beginning of April in 1945 resulted in their freedom to act with impulsive vehemence against their German population. They no longer had to fear any intervention on the part of German troops, it was then quite clear that the Second World War in Europe was quickly approaching its end, and that the Germans had lost the war. Now a new wave of terror against the German civilian population was set in motion. Affected most were women, children and elderly men who had escaped the deportations to the Soviet Union and up until now had survived the fury and rage of the Partisans.

One day in April of 1945, all of the inmates of the camp on the Lower Street were forced together at the cattle pasture by the canal bridge and divided up into groups. Those who were fit for work were taken back to the village camp. The old women and men along with the children, in effect everyone unable to work, were sent out on foot to the village camps in Setschanfeld and Heideschütz.²³ For these people the way of sorrows and suffering began, which in many instances ended in their death. On this day many of the inhabitants

²³ Peter Hirsch, born in 1937, says his aunt told him that this march began on April 26, 1945. Peter was included on this march.

of the village saw their homeland for the last time in their lives. Earlier, already in the month of February 1945, the teenage boys were taken and driven on foot to Werschetz where they were incarcerated in the infamous Camp Stojkowitsch. By that time the mass executions of German men had ended. Of the estimated 4,500 men who were taken there from the villages around Werschetz, only about 300 survived. With the surviving men and the newly arrived teenage boys, new labor units were established and sent to work stations in Werschetz and in the nearby vicinity. Johann Wingert, a son of Adam Wingert, was fifteen years old at the time and reported this about the labor units:

“...In early spring deep cracks and fissures in the earth emerged where the mass graves had been dug and filled in during the previous fall and winter. The horrible stench seeping from the ground was unbearable. We had to pour lime into the cracks on the grounds of Camp Stojkowitsch and at the hangman’s yard near the starch factory. In this way the whole area was decontaminated.”

Bernhard Dian, who had just turned fifteen, also ended up in Camp Stojkowitsch and he also spoke about these mass graves in the vicinity of the starch factory. He and Dittmar Birg had to work in one of these labor units along with other boys from our village.

Added to the torment and humiliation by the Partisans in the village camps, other difficulties emerged and at the center of it all was hunger. After all of the food supplies at their disposal ran out, the inmates received nothing more than “camp soup” and stone-hard corn bread. When and if there would be something for them to eat was decided by the Partisans. If they ordered that the inmates were not to be fed, such orders could last several days and everyone in the camp suffered from excruciating hunger, until finally some rations were handed out. It is no wonder that death walked about and claimed its victims in these camps. In the camp at Setschanfeld the following persons from our village perished: Anna Heinermann, Magdalena Kirchner, Katharina Brenner and the child Magdalena Hirsch.²⁴ In the camp at Heideschütz, Katalin Siller lost her life.

The able bodied who remained in our village camp were soon transferred to what were called Central Labor Camps, so already by spring there was no longer a single German inhabitant in Georgshausen.²⁵ At the end of May in 1945, the new settlers arrived, mostly people from Slovenia. They moved into the houses of the Germans, and along with the inhabitants of The Colony, they began to remodel and enlarge the houses. Many houses were torn down for building material to supply other projects. Anyone who comes to the village now will not be able to recognize it anymore. It is no longer the homeland village where we and our forefathers once lived.

²⁴ Born in 1934.

²⁵ Probably unknown to the author, Peter Hirsch, born in 1884, remained in the village and worked under the close supervision of the Serbs in the community office. Later a few German inhabitants from Georgshausen did return. The Georg Mess family from house no. 130 returned after a short stay in a labor camp. Apollonia Sarcev, nee Mess, and her children remained in the village until 1972 when they moved to Germany. Theresia and Stefan Reiter from house no. 135 also returned. Theresia married a Serb and still lives there today. Susanne Arnusch also married a Serb and was still living in the village when Magdalena Prommer, nee Hirsch, visited there in 1990. Magdalena, born in Georgshausen in 1925, was a resident there until 1945. She said she did not recognize many of the village buildings in 1990.

Now back to the so-called Labor Camps. From the report of Konrad Löchel we have already learned something about them. He was only sixteen years old when he was forced into slave labor. Bernhard Dian was a year younger; we will learn more about his experiences in such a camp. This treatment of children of German parents by the new authorities in Yugoslavia is among the darkest deeds and crimes perpetrated against humanity during this time and against the most innocent of all. One might seek to put some blame on the adults, that is the parents. But surely one cannot put any blame on the children. They had only one flaw. They were the children of German parents and therefore they needed to be exterminated along with their parents, or at least driven out of the country. With regard to the sorrowful fate of the children, we will address it in more detail later with the description of the conditions and situation in the concentration camp at Rudolfsgnad.

Let us hear once more from Bernhard Dian about his experiences as a fifteen year old in a labor camp:

“...We spent the winter in Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz. We lived there in constant fear of death. One day, as spring approached we heard that we would be taken to work in the vineyards. A breath of fresh air breezed through our barracks because we hoped to finally get away from this gruesome place where violent death was a daily happening. But our new work station did not prove to be much better. Hunger was our constant companion. At six, early in the morning, we received a tin cup of soup. It was some kind of creamy soup. Then immediately we were sent out into the vineyard. Later in the day each of us got three cooked potatoes and twenty decagrams of corn bread. That was the total nourishment we received for the whole day. It was barely enough to keep us alive, but enough to keep us from dying. In the vineyards where we had to cut the tendrils off the vines we sometimes discovered the stalk of a cabbage or a buried onion that had been left behind. We devoured everything we could lay our hands on. Like cattle, we foraged for all the remains left from the fall. One day after I had become quite weak, as we entered our quarters after our day's work, I suddenly felt bad and then simply passed out. When I came to later, I found myself lying in what was called the “ambulance.” That is what a small room in our barrack was called. There was no medical care or treatment of any kind available there. Several women who also had to work in the vineyard eventually managed to save my life. Whatever they could find outside that was in some way edible they sneaked into the camp for me. Often it was no more than two or three small green apples. But the main thing was I had something in my stomach. Because of these unselfish women I survived and managed to recover. If the women had been discovered bringing me something to eat from the outside they would have been brutally mistreated. Yet they took the risk and helped me. To this day I am grateful and thankful for what they did for me. But I have no idea if they are still alive or whatever became of any of them. The day came when some of us were transferred to the so-called Swiss Cellar in Werschetz. This whole complex belonged to a huge winery. A small dungeon in the basement is where we were lodged. Each day we had to leave from here to go to our work place. We were assigned in groups of ten men and were placed under an overseer who was called a *Desetar*. They were often quite young fellows, from seventeen to twenty years old. They tormented us all day long while we worked.

Whenever a day came along on which we did not have to go to work, we spent our time in the yard of the Swiss Cellar complex and attempted to get rid of the vermin in our clothes. When we laid a piece of clothing in the sun it seemed to move because there were so many lice in it. But no matter what we tried it proved to be useless, our quarters in the basement were so badly infested that there was no way for us to be free of these parasites. When one of us became ill and weak and could not go to work, our life was threatened by the vicious lice. Something like this actually happened in the room next to ours. A man who had become so weak that he could no longer stand up was lying on the floor of the room and the lice literally ate him up around his mouth, eyes and nose. He perished miserably. No one could help him nor were they allowed to. This is just an example. There were hundreds like it. Even today I get a chill up and down my spine when I remember things like this.

In a corner of the Swiss Cellar yard we stacked some bricks together. This was our stove where we warmed water to soften our hard corn bread. I can still remember the day when Dittmar Birg, who was also in our camp, had managed to get a piece of smoked bacon from the outside into the camp. He shared it with us. Each of us received enough to grease our tin plates with the bacon. We put the greased plates on the stove and as it began to fry we put our corn bread in it. Eating it afterwards was like a festive celebration. Unfortunately, we could not do this very often.

I was taken from Werschetz and ended up in Wladimierowatz [Vladimirovac] where there was an ammunition dump in the forest. The heavy wooden crates filled with munitions had to be loaded on small rail cars, then transported further into the forest and stacked up there. We young boys worked alongside of German prisoners of war. This was very heavy work for us undernourished boys. There was even less to eat here than in the vineyards because there was nothing edible in the forest. We got the opportunity to drink water only when our guard was in a good mood. The water was dirty and the majority of us got sick. We were all so weak, none of us could carry on. But somehow we kept going, using our very last ounce of strength we managed to get up because of our fear that the guards would shoot us if we could no longer work. The German prisoners of war kept telling us that we had to pull ourselves together, we simply had to do it to survive. But we were too exhausted. Because none of us could work anymore, we were loaded on wagons and taken back to the camp in Werschetz.

Some time in August of 1945, I was detailed to work with the threshing machine crew. The threshing took place close to the starch factory and our quarters were in the factory. The humid sweltering August nights were unbearable due to the stench. Close by to where we were staying was the “offal garden,” as it was called; we had heard that many of the German men who had been shot by the Partisans were buried there. Because the corpses had been only lightly covered with earth the smell of the decomposing bodies seeped through the soil or rose from the deep furrows and cracks...” We leave Bernhard Dian’s story at this point.

Heinrich, Bernhard’s younger brother was not yet fourteen at the time, but was forced to work as a stable-hand in our village foaling stables. Once children reached the age of

thirteen they were assigned heavy work without exception, whether they were capable of the task or not. Even if it was difficult for the children to do, they were glad to get out of the camp because there was the possibility of finding some way to get more food.

In the village camps, as well as in the Central Labor Camps, many women and children and remaining aged men quickly sickened and became unfit for work. In the summer of 1945 the death rate rose in all of the camps. There was a need to find a solution to the problem. The discussions by the authorities on how to deal with the matter resulted in the establishment of large concentration camps for the aged, those unfit for work and the many children, most of whom were without parents because the fathers were in the military or had been shot by the Partisans and the mothers were in some slave labor camp in the Soviet Union. Once the old people died off, especially the grandmothers who had cared for the children, the problem with regard to the children became an urgent one. The new authorities began to implement a solution in the usual manner, which in many cases meant a miserable death.

THE HIGHPOINT OF MISERY: RUDOLFSGNAD

Many of the former residents of our village would meet their final destiny in the concentration camp at Rudolfsgnad. It was a German village with a little over three thousand inhabitants in its best days, but now it functioned as a concentration camp for the elderly and all of those who were unfit for work from among the remaining German population. The village was strategically located for the new intended purpose. Its west boundary was the Theiss River with a bridge to Titel, which lay across from it, and in the north there was a deep water canal. On the east side of the village was the railway line from Belgrade to Betschkerek. Because of the constant threat of floods in this region, the railway line ran on top of a high dike that was intended to protect the village from water. At some distance to the south lay the Danube. It too had a series of high dikes that could not be easily crossed and were quite visible from Rudolfsgnad.

About twenty thousand people were packed and crammed into this village. There were always more and more people, also from our village, who arrived in Rudolfsgnad from the labor camps because they were sick and too weak to continue working. And along with them were almost all of the children from the village. Philipp Wenzel wrote to me about what things were like in the fall of 1945 when he and his mother along with his six siblings landed up in Rudolfsgnad. At the time Philipp was almost seven years old. He reports:

“...One day we were driven out of our homes and robbed of everything that was even half valuable. Then it was said that we would be put in a camp. All of us children along with our mothers or other relatives who were looking after them, mostly grandmothers, were driven across the fields like a herd of cattle. Our first stop was in Setschanfeld. We were allowed to rest there. How long the rest lasted I am no longer certain. Nor can I say for certain how long it took us before we arrived in the camp at Rudolfsgnad. We went on foot so it must have taken some time and it was very strenuous, especially for my mother who had three young children, plus us older ones. When we arrived in Rudolfsgnad we

had to camp out on the street and wait until our shelter was ready for us. The cold nights made sleeping out in the open under the sky very unpleasant. Eventually we were allowed to move into the barrack. It was a very simple building with many cracks and gaps that we had to stuff with straw to protect us from the bitter cold. The first to die was my nine year old sister Anna. She was greatly undernourished and had scurvy.

My other sisters also died in this barrack. Following Anna, it was Lenka and then Maria. My brother Jakob became sick in 1946 and died shortly afterwards. Then my mother became ill as well as my brother Franz. My mother died in the summer of 1946, and a few weeks later my brother Franz also died. The gypsies came for the dead and buried them in a mass grave. Then I was separated from my oldest sister Resi. My sister was put in the barracks where parentless children were kept and those who were not able to work. I was transported to the children's camp in Batschka Topola..."

What young Philipp experienced and endured as reported above was in accordance with the methodology developed by the authorities at the assembly of the representatives for the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Department of the Interior's section for camps. The arrival of the first inmates in the camp at Rudolfsgnad took place in the beginning of October 1945. This included people from our village, plus German inhabitants from villages and towns throughout the Banat, such as Werschetz, Weisskirchen, Karlsdorf, Ernsthausen, Sankt Georgen a.d. Bega, Banater Brestowatz, Glogau, Elemer, Apfeldorf, Modosch, Kathreinfeld, Klek, Kubin, Franzfeld, Lazarfeld, Zichydorf, Sigmundfeld, Alt Letz, Setschanfeld, Pantschowa and some other smaller villages. On the basis of the "Documentation" mentioned earlier, there were 19,237 persons in the camp at Rudolfsgnad by the end of December 1945. Following their arrival the people were assigned to different rooms in the houses, with twenty to thirty persons in each room. Prior to their being delivered to Rudolfsgnad, most of the people had been plundered of their possessions several times. The clothes they wore were hardly fit for use any longer and they were not allowed to bring any food with them. From the very first day there was only misery, hunger and distress. The whole vicinity was declared a restricted area. No one was allowed to come close to the camp and everyone was forbidden to go outside of the camp. Whoever disobeyed this order would be shot, a threat that was often carried out. The guards were armed militia. They consisted of a Commander who resided in one of the houses in the center of the village and was assisted by two corporals and seventy-seven police officers.

The camp administration did not function very well right from the start. It often took days, if not an entire week, for the newly arrived inmates to be assigned to their quarters and have their names added to the food ration list. We must also remember that it was winter. The people were starved and froze to the bone. Some of our people who came to Rudolfsgnad in this early period said there was practically nothing to eat in these cold winter months. At the very beginning they were given watery and lean food rations served from large kettles. Later even this meager ration was discontinued.

The nourishment consisted of a soup made from coarse ground corn, mush, corn bread and tea. They received very little of each, not even the most modest needs could be

satisfied. This first winter in Rudolfsgnad was the most frightful. The totally undernourished people in their cold quarters were soon so weak that they could no longer move about. It was the beginning of a quick end for many. Because of the overcrowding in the houses the hygienic situation was an open door for vermin to spread quickly and add to the pain and suffering of the victims.

In this early period the camp inmates were often controlled, even during the night they had their sleep disturbed, they were constantly threatened and often mistreated for no reason. They were sworn and cursed at and constantly threatened with execution by shooting. The people became helpless and apathetic. Soon their physical and emotional deterioration became obvious. In late fall an influenza epidemic broke out to add to all of the anxiety and despair and no one could escape it. The result was a massive number of deaths, especially among the very young children and the elderly. Early every day corpses were collected at the front of every house and taken by wagon to the mass grave for burial.

In the midst of all of this misery was the news, "Typhus has broken out!" The epidemic spread quickly from house to house. The guards and the Commander himself became frightened. They called for assistance and were immediately heard by their superiors. They were concerned because the epidemic could spread beyond the boundaries of the camp and become a threat to the general population of the whole region. Commissioners from Belgrade soon came to the camp, doctors were also sent, and then a plan was developed to control the epidemic. Above all, the nourishment provided to the prisoners had to be improved. But it took a long time for that promise to be fulfilled. The people continued to die and their quarters were then available for the new arrivals in the camp. The death rate reached its highest peak in February of 1946. According to official statistics, in January of 1946 there were 1,265 deaths, while in February the total reached 1,346 persons.

The battle against typhus lasted until April 1946. The misery was great and those who were unable to find any help or gave in to their despair were faced with a slow and ongoing breakdown, both physical and emotional. The signs of their lack of nourishment and the results of the typhus epidemic became more and more evident. The people were swollen and puffy and dysentery resulted from a lack of vitamins. Scurvy, shingles, cardiac problems and night blindness spread among the children.

What was promised by the authorities to the camp administration in order to avert another catastrophic epidemic, namely the improvement of nourishment for the camp inmates, never materialized. Instead there was another outcome. In place of the large numbers who had perished, new inmates arrived from the labor camps who were in such terrible condition that they could no longer work. The misery was simply prolonged. With the coming of the warm months the situation improved for those few who were still able to work when it became possible for them to be assigned to work in the nearby fields. For this they received additional rations and were able to recover their strength. But the emotional and spiritual needs cut deeply as ever. The humiliations and beatings did not diminish in the least. The women in particular suffered greatly at the hands of the insatiable demands of the guards. An episode that took place during these days, which is

representative of many others, deals with the fate of a man from our village and was described in the following way. It is a true story reported by trustworthy people who survived Rudolfsgnad: One morning a whispered rumor was passed along the street where most of the people from our village were lodged. A great misfortune had occurred. A man in wet clothing was lying on the bank of the Theiss River. According to the rumor he was dead. When this was investigated it was possible to ascertain that it dealt with our fellow citizen Hans Froh. Either he went into the water himself because he could no longer stand living in the camp and was in deep despair, or as was also suggested, the Partisans might have had a hand in it. Our fellow citizen Hans Froh, who we will meet in other portions of this book, was a musically gifted man and as a musician brought so much joy and happiness to others, but unfortunately he met such a terrible end.

With regard to the fate of the children in Rudolfsgnad, the following excerpt from the book, *In den Fängen des roten Drachen* [English edition: *In the Claws of the Red Dragon*], the author, Father Wendelin Gruber, wrote:

“...Today I visited the children’s hospital again, which could also be called a children’s home or orphanage. Several hundred very neglected children are quartered in the former school and sleep on some scattered straw on the floors. I no longer have any medicine and the promise of food rations has not yet been fulfilled. What on earth am I supposed to do here? A woman who is providing care for the children takes me from room to room, section by section. Living skeletons, bodies with open wounds from scurvy just lie there on the straw and out of the sunken deep sockets their eyes stare vacantly into space. In some way the children are divided into groups. Not depending on their sickness, but on how long it will take them to die. The care provider whispers in my ear: “Those who have regained their strength will be transferred to a state operated children’s home in a few days.” This indicates that the children here in Rudolfsgnad are being handled in the same manner as those I already saw in the camps in the Batschka where similar actions were implemented by the authorities.”

The following children from our village were transferred to State Serbian Children’s Homes and survived the nightmare:

Bauer Margarethe	b. 1934	Hirsch Helga	b. 1940
Bajerle Mariechen	b. 1934	[Hirsch Jakob]	b. 1939
[Bajerle Peter]	b. 1937	Jakob Eva	b. 1938
Enzmann Anni	b. 1937	Milowan Maria	b. 1934
[Hirsch Elisabeth]	b. 1942	Wenzel Theresia	b. 1933
[Hirsch Erika]	b. 1942	Wenzel Philipp	b. 1938

The list is not complete. All of them, with the exception of Theresia Wenzel were located and found by relatives through the International Red Cross. Today they live in Germany or overseas. Theresia Wenzel, who not only lost five siblings, but also her mother in the camp at Rudolfsgnad and her father in Werschetz, still lives in Yugoslavia at the time of this writing.

Anna Schiefer, nee Wingert, who was born in 1927 has told us of her coming to Camp Rudolfsgnad at the end of 1946 after the labor camp where she worked was closed. She knew that her mother and her younger siblings had been sent to Rudolfsgnad. But she was unable to save her mother who died the same year. "When night fell," she reports, "no one was allowed to leave the house. However, we sneaked out and went to the houses where deaths had occurred among the people from our village and prayed for them. In the early hours of the morning the corpses that we had sewed up in old tablecloths or blankets were picked up and taken away."

The vacancies created by inmate deaths in the camp were quickly filled by others from the villages and labor camps. It was said that things would have to improve after the typhus epidemic. However, the fact was the Partisans were dealing with people that nobody wanted nor cared about. The old routine was soon again in effect even though there was new camp leadership. To illustrate the situation at the end of 1946 we offer this official report from the camp administration and submitted to their superiors. It is dated October 13, 1946 and reads:

"On the basis of Order Number 1436 on February 11, 1946, the ten day examination of the health and hygienic conditions in the assembly camp at Rudolfsgnad is hereby submitted. During this month a large renewed outbreak of scabies occurred. This was caused by the fact that the inmates have no soap nor have the possibility of securing warm water and the bath facilities are not yet completed. Malaria has subsided with the colder weather. Cardiac problems and oedema occur often because of poor nutrition and the lack of medication. The lack of vitamins in their diet is the cause of fifty-four cases of severe scurvy. There are some cases of tuberculosis, but there are no cases of infectious diseases. The lack of vitamins has also resulted in a huge number with conjunctivitis, inflammation of the cornea and some with both diseases.

The nutrition provided is not balanced, with the exception of peas and barley the inmates are not provided with any other nourishment, except for those who belong to the category of workers doing heavy labor receive more, but at the highest only ten per cent of the camp inmates qualify to receive it. The majority of the sick suffer from dysentery, which can be traced back to the lack of proper nutrition. Delousing is carried out with DDT and is quite successful. Not enough toilets have been installed because of a lack of materials. There are almost no medicines available so it is urgent that the required medications be delivered. With regard to the cold days it should be noted that the camp inmates need to receive three warm meals a day..."

The signatories of this report are the camp commander and the camp doctor. It is taken from "Documentation of the Expulsion..." that was published by the ministry of the banished as previously mentioned.

Leaving the camp without permission was strictly forbidden. Many of the camp inmates who sneaked out at night to beg for food for their weak and starving children often had to pay for doing so with their lives. If they were caught, the sentries shot them. There were cases where women sneaked out of the camp to beg for something edible for their children

and then died on their way back. That is what happened to our Maria Wenzel. She had lost four of her seven children and now her little three year old Franz was sick. In spite of her own broken health and her physical weakness she made her way into the night to beg for some milk for her sick child. She never returned. She was found dead in a hut close to the camp. She died of exhaustion as well as a broken heart. One week after this tragedy her little boy Franz died.

Also among the children who died in the fall of 1946 were the three children of Adam Jakob and his wife Elisabeth. At the time their father was a prisoner of war and their mother was one of the deportees to the Donets Basin slave labor camps in the Soviet Union. The boy, Nikolaus was eleven, his sister Katharina was nine and little Elisabeth was just five years old when they lost their lives in Rudolfsgnad. Let us leave these two examples to represent all of the others who like them met such a tragic end and even today still touches us deeply. It is hard to accept that these children were simply left to starve to death and were guilty of nothing except for being German.

A funeral in terms of the customs and traditions we knew did not exist in Rudolfsgnad. It was more like a burying of corpses, without even one relative or friend allowed to be present. The corpses were loaded on an ordinary farmer's wagon. It was set up in such a way so that as many bodies as possible could be piled on and taken to the mass grave. When someone died their body would just lay at the front of the house or on the entry walkway until the wagon came by to pick up the body and take it to the mass grave. Later, when the number of inmates decreased greatly, a small room in the house was reserved for the bodies of the dead before they were taken for burial. During the typhus epidemic the bodies were barely clothed. It was only later when they were sewn into old covers or sacks and buried. At the beginning, which was from the fall of 1945 up to February of 1946, the mass graves were dug in the village cemetery. That is where 3,160 Germans who had died in the camp in such a short period of time found their final resting place. However, from February on the ground water level had risen and this created problems for the burial of any others there. A new place for the mass graves was reserved on the higher terrain of the Teletschka. It was about two kilometers south of the camp. From then on until the day of the camp closing in the end of March 1948, the wagons bearing dead went up there. According to the "Documentation" a total of 6,343 Germans who died in the camp at Rudolfsgnad were buried at the Teletschka. Of the more than 9,000 persons who died at Rudolfsgnad, about seventy of them were from our village. When one reflects on the numbers of those who lost their lives as soldiers, as victims of the massacres in Werschetz, those deported to the Soviet Union, as well as those who died in the various village and labor camps, the numbers are enormous when one considers that our small village had about 650 inhabitants [650 German inhabitants].

What follows are the names of the persons who died in the concentration camp at Rudolfsgnad and the various camps. Whenever possible the birth year of the person is included in order to determine whether the person was a child, an adult or an elderly person. It was not possible to list or identify all of the victims since some families were totally wiped out and there is no survivor to ask for the dates or the information.

Additionally, other families did not desire to be included and respectfully have forbidden it because they have sought to bury the painful memories for their own personal reasons.

Deaths in the Setschanfeld Camp			
Brenner Katharina	b. 1877	Hirsch Magdalena	b. 1934
Heinermann Anna	b. 1886	Schag Sebastian	b. 1898
Deaths in the Georgshausen Camp			
Brenner Anna	b. 1886	Brücker Michael [Mischko]	b. 1874
Brücker Hans	b. 1937	Wagner Magdalena	
Death in the Heideschütz Camp			
Siller Katalin	b. 1869		
Death in Karlsdorf “Old People’s Home”			
Niedermayer Anna	b. 1872		
Deaths in the Rudolfsgnad Camp			
Armbruster Elisabeth	b. 1872	Jakob Nikolaus	b. 1934
Arnusch Maria		Kiefer Anna	b. 1934
Arnusch Theresia	b. 1939	Kiefer Maria	b. 1898
Bauer Magdalena	b. 1908	Kirchner Apollonia	b. 1896
Bies Maria	b. 1876	Lefor Barbara	b. 1922
Bies Theresia	b. 1897	Loch Anna	b. 1885
Birg Anna	b. 1883	Merle Barbara	b. 1892
Birg Friedrich (Friedl)	b. 1883	Mess Anna	
Birg Peter	b. 1881	Mess Eva	b. 1909
Bockmüller Anna	b. 1887	Mess Josef (Tailor)	b. 1872
Borschowa (Sarčev) Theresia	b. 1881 *	Mess Sabine	b. 1872
Brenner Michael		Milowan Barbara	b. 1901
Brücker Johann	b. 1944	Oberle Stephan	b. 1889
Brücker Katharina	b. 1886	Paul Johann senior	b. 1879
Deutsch Lene	b. 1945	Paul Elisabeth	b. 1883
Dormuth Adam	b. 1879	Peter (Brenner) Regina	
Dormuth Maria	b. 1881	Reiter Katharina	b. 1880
Ebner Heinrich senior	b. 1879	Schwan Franziska	
Engst Magdalena	b. 1888	Schreiner Franz	b. 1943
Filips Anna	b. 1901	Schütz Anton	b. 1870
Froh Hans		Schütz Susanne	b. 1875
Froh Gretl		Wenzel (Seger) Maria	b. 1911

Halmaschan Ladislaus		Wenzel Anna	b. 1934
Halmaschan Magdalena		Wenzel Lenka	b. 1937
Heim Margarethe		Wenzel Maria	b. 1939
Herold Nikolaus	b. 1883	Wenzel Jakob	b. 1941
Hirsch Katharina	b. 1886	Wenzel Franz	b. 1943
Hirsch Susanne		Wersching Franz (Blind Franz)	
Hügel Anna		Wingert Anna	b. 1874
Jakob Klaus	b. 1942	Wingert Barbara	b. 1905
Jakob Katharina	b. 1937	Wingert Eva	b. 1872
Jakob Elisabeth	b. 1940	Winter Maria	

[* Borschowa (Sarčev) Theresia was born about 1881]

Some of our villagers survived the camp in Rudolfsgnad. They were those who were able to escape from the camp after 1947 when it became easier because the Partisans simply wanted to be free of them. On the other hand, there were those who enjoyed a robust physical makeup and maintained their health by being among the ones who had to work outside of the camp. They received additional rations or were able to find other food sources. Those inmates remained in the camp until the authorities closed it in the spring of 1948. On the surface one could assume that the way of sorrows and the misery of the inmates had finally ended with the closing of the camp in Rudolfsgnad, but unfortunately that was not true. In fact it resulted in an even greater degree of suffering, only in another manner. Under the guise of requiring the signatures of the inmates on their camp release form, they in fact signed a contract to provide three years of labor on a state agricultural project or to work in the mines. As a result of the years of intimidation on the part of the camp administration and the guards, no one hesitated to sign or asked what was written on the paper set before them. One simply had no alternative so they signed the form without reading or understanding it. In addition, many of the inmates, and especially the older women whose education had been in the Hungarian language, would not have understood what they were signing. Most importantly, they could not have read it because it was written in Cyrillic script. Some of the inmates were simply told to sign the form and they would be released from the camp. It was only a matter of days before they could leave for the land of their choice, either Germany or Austria.

But as a matter of fact, during the next days they began to assemble inmates into groups for transportation out of the camp and then the transports began to depart from Rudolfsgnad. What follows are some short reports from individuals from our home village who lived through the closure of the Rudolfsgnad camp. Maria Niedermayer, the wife of Hans Isele wrote me: "We had been in the starvation camp Rudolfsgnad for three years. Myself and the three year old daughter of Lentschi. What we went through in order to survive I cannot commit to paper because it was so awful that it goes beyond words. There I experienced what many of our villagers endured, especially the children who died from the infectious diseases or simply starved to death. Almost every day a wagon stood at the

front of our house to pick up the bodies of those who had died during the night. We sewed the bodies in old sacks and covers as best as we could. Then they were transported to the mass graves. Shortly before the camp was closed in February of 1948 a man named Stoffel, who was a prisoner of war and worked in the Bor copper mines, had us taken out of the camp at Rudolfsgnad and brought us to Montenegro where we spent a terrible year in very difficult circumstances. Eventually, after the many years of fear and privation, Stoffel took us to Bor where we were given an old barrack to live in. We survived there through thick and thin until 1950 when Lentschi returned from the Soviet Union. Her little girl was now eight years old. Following our resettlement in Germany we finally were able to live normal lives free of fear and terror. Of course we had to work hard and struggle until we could build a new life for ourselves in our new homeland. Now we seldom even think of those hard times that we had to go through.”

Margarethe Bies, the wife of Dragan Shoemaker [Jakob Bies], in a letter writes: “When the camp was closed in February of 1948, myself and my three children whom I had managed to keep alive against all odds, were sent by transport to the Baranya to work on an agricultural project. But we were not free there as we had been promised at our release. Instead, we were no better off than slave labor. The nutrition we received was sparse and our freedom of movement was limited. We were not allowed to leave the premises. Day after day we had to do heavy work in the fields. For this work we received a very small wage. But part of it was held back in payment for our upkeep. There was hardly anything left over. When we protested about being treated like prisoners the man in charge asked: “Well what did you expect? After all you signed up to do three years of labor here when you were released from the camp in Rudolfsgnad.” This was the first we had heard of it and discovered that we had been taken again. We were very discouraged, but it made no difference, for the next three years we had to work practically as slaves. Only then were we able to arrange for our resettlement in West Germany where we have found a new life and homeland after much effort on our part.”

FLIGHT FOR SURVIVAL

As has been previously indicated, not all of the inhabitants of the village were immediately transferred to the starvation and extermination camp in Rudolfsgnad. Those fit for work remained in the so-called village labor camps. There they did heavy physical work until they became too sick or so weak that they could no longer work; then they were transferred to Rudolfsgnad.

In these village labor camps one could venture to escape and flee at the risk of their life. This was especially true of the camps located near the Romanian border. Not all of those who tried to flee were successful because the border guards had orders to shoot to kill. The sentries in the watchtowers shot at any sign of movement along the frontier unless they were bribed, which sometimes happened to be the case. In most cases flight was more successful in the autumn months when the cornfields provided thick cover for the escapees. Many women with children went across the border into Romania. Teenage boys who had grown older in the camps also dared to find a way across the border. There are several

reports about adventures like these. The following one is typical of most. It identifies the difficulties and terrible consequences that they faced if they wanted to escape the suffering they endured in Yugoslavia at the time.

Bernhard Dian, who was then seventeen years old, describes his flight in the following way, which I have taken the liberty to shorten:

“...I was working in the horse stables at the *Orcy-Pusztá* [about ten kilometers southwest of Georgshausen]. It was my responsibility, along with some friends, to provide for the care of the horses and have them always available for their intended use. Much was demanded of us. We had to work very hard from four o'clock in the morning until darkness set in at night. But in spite of that, things were good at the *Orcy-Pusztá* because for the first time since I left my parent's house I got enough to eat. Some women from Heideschütz who worked in the kitchen always saw to it that we young boys had more than enough to eat. Once I began to feel physically well, my thoughts turned to thinking about flight and escape. Eventually I began to plan and prepare for the hazardous endeavor. For a start, I got in touch with my fifteen year old brother. He was working in the foaling stable in our home village. Once he was informed of my plans it was only a matter of waiting and setting the right time. In May of 1946, we decided it was time. Along with Anton Niessner from Zichydorf, who was working with me at *Orcy-Pusztá*, we left in the darkness of the night in what must have been Mid-May. Our route took us in the direction of our home village where we picked up my brother. From there we headed towards Zichydorf. From Zichydorf we set out on the road to the Romanian border. The night was extremely dark, we could barely see a meter ahead of us. In one sense, this was also an advantage, since no one could see us either, but on the other hand the dark overhanging clouds poured rain down upon us and we were soaked through and through. In addition, we totally lost our bearings and became disoriented. Even though we had trudged about until morning was breaking, we discovered that we had only come as far as the canal in the vicinity of Zichydorf. We were not only totally soaked and tired, we were also discouraged, which was even worse.

On the bank of the canal there was a huge pile of recently cut willows. We decided to crawl into the pile and hide there until nightfall, and then try to make it in the direction of the border. But we were unable to carry out our plan. We must have been spotted by someone because suddenly two militiamen were standing in front of us. They ordered us to come out the pile of willows immediately or they would shoot. We knew how trigger happy these men were for we had seen this over and over again in Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz. So we crawled out from among the willows with our hands raised high. Our next stopping place was a pitch black wet cellar that the militia used for escapees. News of our arrival spread quickly among the people in the camp at Zichydorf. They brought us something to eat, but our wet clothes could not dry in the damp cellar. Eventually the militiamen had sympathy for my brother because his whole body shivered from being in his wet clothes. My brother was taken to Rudolfsgnad to be with our mother and sister. I, along with my friend from Zichydorf, was kept in the militia's wet cellar. A few days later, the women who brought us some food told us that the authorities were looking for a man who was capable of looking after two stallions at the stud farm. I volunteered for the

job immediately, even though I had no chance of getting it because they did not trust me anymore. But apparently they were unable to find anyone who dared to take on the job with the spirited stallions. So they came back for me. Later on I learned that one of the Czöke brothers, who once lived and worked on the Rarosch near Bally, had a hand in it. This man told the militia officer that he knew me and that I was quite capable of dealing with the stallions. I therefore came out of the cellar and into the horse stable. My friend from Zichydorf was assigned to become a wagon driver at the camp.

The stallions were two splendid horses that were fed, groomed and ridden by me. I slept in the stable and I ate my meals in the camp. There I learned the latest news spreading among the camp inmates. At the heart of all conversation were the words: flight and escape. Apparently all of the people in the camp had only one thought: How can I get across the border to freedom? That was also true of me and at the center of all of my thoughts. Eventually I was resolved to act. But this time I had to be successful, a second failure could very well be fatal. Every day I had to go out riding for two hours on one of the stallions so I sought to find out if there was a way of using this as a reconnaissance for initiating my escape. At the beginning I was always closely watched to see that I followed the prescribed route for the ride. Later, when the Partisans trusted me, I risked making a change on my prescribed route. I rode cross-country in the direction of the *Orcy-Pusztá*. I knew of a small dwelling that was owned by a Romanian and was a short distance before entering the *Orcy-Pusztá*. The Romanian often bought cattle from my father and was well known by him. I stopped by at his place and begged him to help me escape across the border into Romania. He promised to help me. We agreed on a meeting place and time. When I returned to the stable with the stallion he was bathed in sweat so I rubbed him down very quickly with handfuls of hay and straw. Apparently no one had noticed my deviation from the regular route. I shared my plan with my friend who had been with me on my first attempt at flight. He wanted to try again. Each time I went into the camp for a meal I would bring some of his personal effects back with me to the stables. When we were prepared and ready, we left in the night. However, we had already been betrayed so the authorities initiated an intensive and comprehensive search for us shortly after we left. We met the man who was to lead us to the border, but he had lost his nerve. We had to put our plans on hold. The man took us to his house and hid us there. After two days, when it appeared that things had settled down, we set out again. This time our route was in the direction of Kriva Bara [about eight kilometers north of Georgshausen]. The man accompanied us on the old road that led directly to the border until we came in close proximity to it. From there the good man described to us the exact way. He then went back and we were on our own. Close to the *Jagoditsch-Pusztá* we eventually crossed the border without any problems. The border consisted of an earthen wall about a meter high. We lay down in front of this wall and listened until we heard the border guard pass by. We waited for a while longer and then we simply ran as fast as we could without looking around us. We dropped down in a field of barley for a moment and then we went on. When we came to a meadow around a well with a drawing bucket we risked resting longer. Our clothes were wet through and through from perspiration caused by our anxiety, but I can hardly express the overwhelming joy as we suddenly found ourselves free and we no longer had to be afraid of being put to death at any moment. The arbitrariness of our

tormenters across the border in our old homeland no longer had power over us and had come to an end.

We went on in the direction of Stamora [Deutsch-Stamora]. German families sheltered and cared for us there. When things got “too hot” for us we went farther into the interior of the county to avoid being picked up by Romanian border guards and sent back to Yugoslavia, which was something they liked to do.

In Stamora we met Christian Noll²⁶ from Zichydorf and he then went on with us. We were three men who were rashly determined not to stay put anywhere until we had made our way to the Austrian border. However, we first found work at a farm in order to make some money. At this farm I ran into Matz Hügel who was also on the flight to freedom. But he suddenly disappeared. I never met him again. When we had finished working on the farm we went beyond Temeswar in the direction of the Hungarian border. We reached it at the point where the Maros River divides Hungary from Romania. Crossing the river was now our problem. We spent most of the day trying to find a way to get across, but were unsuccessful. Late in the afternoon a man eventually came along and asked us if we wanted to cross over to Hungary. We made a deal with him because we still had some of the money we had earned from working on the farm. We arranged for him to meet us with his boat at a certain spot in the early morning hours the next day and take us across the river. He returned with his boat in the evening and told us to set down our baggage, which consisted of individual sacks with our personal belongings, and then go on up ahead to a designated spot about a kilometer distant where it would be easier to board the boat. We would then come back for our things and cross over to the other bank of the river. We did everything we were told, but our man with the boat never appeared. We ran back to the place where we had left our things, but found neither them nor the man and his boat. Filled with despair, we waited the whole night to see if the man and his boat would come. He never did. So we stood there with only the clothes on our backs and angry at ourselves for having been so stupid for letting the man take advantage of us like he had. The next day, which was a bright and sunny Sunday, my companions were determined to swim across the river. Because we no longer had any baggage, there would be no problem. But I didn't know how to swim. In spite of that we walked down into the water and I held on to a large willow branch as the others pulled me across the river on it. We suddenly reached a sandbank and then made it to the other bank of the river. We were in Hungary.

Our next goal was Szeged. Christian Noll had a relative there. We were able to find the relative, although his family was not overjoyed to have us. They gave us something to eat, plus a loaf of bread and a hard-boiled egg for each of us to eat on our way. Now our goal was Budapest. But we were picked up in a village because we were caught begging. They took us to the community administration office and locked us up again. The lack of liberty in our lives just seemed to have no end. Fortunately, during the night we managed to break out of the room where they were keeping us and we set out for Budapest again. Only now we no longer did any begging. Our food consisted of whatever we could find in the fields as we went on our way. It wasn't much and did not provide much variety for our diet, but at least it wasn't dangerous securing it. In a village on the outskirts of Budapest an old

²⁶ Christian Noll eventually made his way to Canada. He now lives in Regina, Saskatchewan.

woman invited us into her home and fed us. It was a great joy for all of us. This woman showed us the way to the railway station. We went across a bridge over the Danube where to the left and right are the huge statues of lions and then we went into the station where trains departed for Austria. Since we had no money to pay the fare, and stowing away on the train was impossible because there was a conductor in each passenger car, we set out on foot and eventually made it across the border into Austria. Here the Russians took us captive and we had to escape again. Eventually we landed up in the British Occupation Zone in Austria where we registered in Strass in the Styria. We had traveled on foot all of the way from Topola in Romania to Strass in the Styria of Austria. But we had finally found freedom.”

This attempt at flight as Bernhard Dian has described is not an isolated example. Numerous families from our village, as well as the only remaining survivors of some others, endured similar hazardous experiences in their successful flight to freedom into Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany [West Germany]. But if they were unlucky in their attempt at flight as was the case with my mother and sister, the journey to freedom took much longer. My mother and sister were picked up by the police in Budapest and were turned over to the so-called *Tolonzhaz*, the house of custody pending deportation. They were provided with only a minimal ration of food and were kept there as long as possible because the management of this house always wanted to report that it was fully occupied. The director of the facility received money and other forms of assistance from various international relief organizations to help meet the needs of the occupants of the *Tolonzhaz*. But from all the assistance the director received, he gave almost nothing to the inhabitants of the house. The fact of the matter is that due to the greed and corruption of the Hungarian authorities, my mother and sister, along with several hundred others almost starved. Only after months of imprisonment in this facility were the pitiful people finally allowed to leave and eventually make their way to Austria. Our people endured many other trials in their flight to freedom. For example, our countryman Konrad Löchel escaped and fled from a labor camp in the Soviet Union. Everything he went through he stated in a letter that I will present in a shorter version:

“...During my time in Brianka in March of 1945, when we had to drag around the huge rocks at night, I already made up my mind to escape. At minus forty degrees Celsius as the snow crunched beneath my every step, my stomach gurgled from its emptiness. I was overcome by feelings of deep despair and depression. In my thoughts I always envisioned the slaves in ancient Egypt who had to drag stones for the construction of the pyramids over four thousand years ago, very much like we were doing now. The thought that it was possible for people in our own time to be forced to work in this primitive manner nagged away at my inner being. In addition, there was the hopelessness of our situation. There was no bright horizon before us, only the pitch-black darkness of the night and the gloomy thoughts overwhelming us. Eventually our reflections led us to only one alternative and it could be expressed in a single word: flight. The thought plagued me day and night, whether I was hard at work or sleeping. I often awoke in a state of fright because I was already escaping in my dreams. I shared my thoughts about escape with a friend. He was Helmut Weber from Czechoslovakia. He confessed to me that he too could think of nothing else but flight and escape because of the daily misery, the constant hunger, the

dysentery caused by our poor nutrition and the fear of being assigned to work inside the coal mine was becoming more than he could stand. Both of us were also worried about the next winter. If it happened to be as cold as the last one, neither of us would survive.

After we discussed all of this and came to a common agreement, we began to work on a plan to escape. It was soon in place. We wanted to head in the direction of Ukraine by crossing the Dnjeper River [Dnepr River] in a railway coal car. If it worked, we would go on to Odessa and eventually get to Romania where we would find more freedom than we had in the Soviet Union. I did not tell any of my fellow villagers or friends of my plans. I was afraid that some of them would not be able to deal with the news or they would want to come with me and I did not want to be responsible if the plan failed because the punishment would be severe.

It was the end of July in 1945. Along with my friend Helmut Weber, I left the camp by night with the intention of never returning. All we had with us was a tin can to eat out of, some salt, a knife and a lighter. On the night of our flight we walked for quite a distance; as far away from the camp as we could. During the daytime we hid out in a strip of forest alongside the railway tracks. We ate whatever we could find in the forest and we also checked the nearby fields where we managed to find a potato or two and some corn. At night we made our way to a railway station where we waited in ambush for a slow moving train to pass through, one that we could hop on board, and we did. When daybreak came we waited for the right opportunity and then we jumped from the train and ran for cover. Using this method every day we moved on and made good progress.

Apparently as time passed, we became somewhat reckless. Some Russians discovered our campfires and it did not take long before we were back in a camp. This time it was a camp for prisoners of war. Here the officials were better disciplined and more organized, therefore the food provided to the camp inmates was far better than it was in the camps for civilians. They soon found out that we were not prisoners of war so we were transferred to a camp for civilian deportees from where we soon took flight. We set out on our way to freedom once more in the same way as before. In Mid-August of 1945, beneath a bright star-filled night sky, we two civilian escapees sat on board a coal car while the train rushed along.

Suddenly we realized that the train was heading in a completely different direction, for the stars indicated that we were not heading south where we wanted to go, but to the east. Because the train was moving too fast we could not jump off. At daybreak the train pulled into a large railway station. In order not to be discovered, we buried ourselves in the coal. But it did not help. The passing locomotive engineers discovered us and then we were immediately picked up by four armed soldiers who were accompanied by two watchdogs. We learned we were in Marinpol on the Sea of Azov. This was a most devastating realization on our part.

Long interrogations followed. I told them my name was Mile Jankowitsch and my friend gave them a Czech name. We did not want to tell them the name of the camp from which we had fled. Since we had no kind of papers at a time when half of the world was in the

same situation, we ended up in a punishment camp in Stalino. The first thing they did was to put us in a bunker on bread and water. Our stay in the bunker apparently saved our lives. A frightening typhus epidemic broke out and raged in the camp at Stalino with countless victims dying daily. The bunker was so far removed from the rest of the camp that we were spared from picking up the sickness. The breakout of this terrible sickness had consequences. The camp commander was sacked, the food improved and a complete disinfection program was carried out. Eventually we were taken out of the bunker and assigned to work details. We spent the Christmas of 1945 in this camp. We saved a portion of our bread for two days and obtained a handful of beans. Then we cooked it into a thick mash. This was our festive meal on Christmas Eve. I will never forget this Christmas celebration. In the spring of 1946 all of the non-German prisoners in the camp were taken to an assembly point in Odessa. Among these non-German prisoners there was a man by the name of Mile Jankowitsch, alias Konrad Löchel. My friend Helmut "the Czech" was also among them. In Lutzdorf, a German settlement close to Odessa, we were assigned to agricultural work in the vineyards. Here we eventually received better food allotments. Perhaps they did not want to send us home as gaunt and emaciated as we all were. We thought it was unbelievable when it looked like there was a possibility that we would be sent home. At the beginning of April various units made up of the individual nationalities were established, such as Hungarians, Yugoslavians, Romanians, Czechs, etc. These units of about thirty to forty men were accompanied back to their former homelands by guards. All of a sudden I found myself in a group of forty-two men who were to be prepared to leave for Yugoslavia the next day. This is when I had to say goodbye to my friend and companion-in-flight, Helmut Weber, because he was a "Czech" and he was leaving with another group returning to Czechoslovakia. My Yugoslavian unit was accompanied by a Russian officer and a Serb who had served in the Russian Army. We made an interesting discovery during the long and slow train journey on the overcrowded tracks: of the forty-two men in our unit there were only eight at the most who were actually Yugoslavians, the rest were all our German speaking countrymen who after capture from escape attempts gave false names and identities just as I had. We kept this to ourselves and spoke Russian or Serbo-Croatian with one another to avoid blowing it at the last moment.

The train halted at Ploesti in Romania for about an hour. On the railway platform there were people willing to trade all kinds of food for clothing. I traded a *Pufoika*, a heavy padded winter jacket, for three kilograms of bread, one kilogram of bacon and eighteen or twenty boiled eggs. I believed that this could last me for at least a week. I was wrong, because by the morning of the next day I had eaten everything. The great hunger I had endured for so many months demanded to be satisfied just once.

The journey through Romania went well. We arrived in Temeswar around ten o'clock in the morning. At one o'clock in the afternoon we were to go on to Werschetz, Yugoslavia. Here in Temeswar we learned from other Germans we met that all of the Germans in Yugoslavia were still interned in camps and were going through terrible times. Thinking about it for only a short time, I made up my mind. I would remain in Romania for a while.

Along with a companion who had also decided to stay in Romania, we attempted to go to the railway station and get our things. This was a mistake. Most of the men from our

group had already run off and our guards who were to take us to Yugoslavia got into a great embarrassment because they had hardly anyone left to guard. The few of us who were left were locked up in a room at the railway station where we were to wait until the train was ready to depart for Werschetz. We just sat there. Finally I got up and begged one of the guards for permission to go out and quickly buy a flask of vodka to celebrate the arrival in our homeland. They allowed me to go and I soon brought back a flask from which we all eagerly drank. Through some cunning and the effects of the contents of the flask on the guards, my new found friend and I were able to eventually jump off of the train just before the border station into Yugoslavia. We survived our risky fall without too much pain and quickly searched for a hiding place. There was a light rain, which of course was of benefit to us because no one would be out in the fields. Eventually we discovered a hut where we took shelter for the first time. So now what next? This question had our attention all night long. On one hand we finally felt like free persons again, while on the other hand we had no idea of what to do with our sudden freedom. The next day an old woman found us in the hut and she spoke to us in German. When she realized what kind of poor young boys she was dealing with she promised to come and get us in the evening when it began to get dark. That is what she did. She brought us to her house where she first hid us in a back room and then gave us something to eat. This was a dangerous undertaking on the part of the woman for she had made herself liable for punishment by hiding us in her home. She should have immediately reported our presence to the authorities. We learned that she had two sons of her own who had both been lost in the war. She gave us their clothes as a gift. We were able to wash up and cleanse ourselves and for several days we could eat as much as we wanted. The woman told us that they were going to build rice fields nearby. We could find work there and earn some money. We went and looked at them. The new rice fields were situated along the Bega River near the Scharf-Puszta in the Otelek and Uivar area.²⁷

I worked in these rice fields for the whole summer. I worked under an engineer from Temeswar who carried out survey work. I had to help him. Following the rice harvest in the fall, I was sent to work at the Puszta maintenance center where I was employed in the office until 1951. Here I made the effort to learn the Romanian language and I became relatively good at it. Some time during the years of 1947 and 1948, I along with a group of six persons from the Scharf-Puszta attempted to go to the Federal Republic of Germany. We were unsuccessful. We were caught at the border of Hungary and Romania and we were taken from militia station to militia station until eventually we were brought to Werschetz. Along the way we were also put in prison in Temeswar. While I was there I heard that Dittmar Birg and his mother were also imprisoned there. From Werschetz we were again sent across the border to Romania. That is how I came back to the Scharf-Puszta. But not even that brought my search for escape to an end. In 1951 all of the “unreliable” Germans living in the Romanian Banat were sent to the Baragan-Steppe to build a canal joining the Danube to the Black Sea, but there were also numerous so-called stateless persons from Yugoslavia living in Romania who were included in the transports. In this way I too ended up in the infamous Baragan-Steppe. I remained there until my departure for the Federal Republic of Germany in June of 1956. My gypsy-like existence since my arrest on October 3, 1944 and deportation to the Soviet Union finally ended.”

²⁷ About twenty-five kilometers southwest of Temeswar.

The following, which has also been edited and shortened, is the account of the master tailor Lorenz Wingert. It presents an interesting picture of the life experiences of a family from our village after the fall of 1944. He wrote me:

“We lived at peace and in harmony with one another in our village. It would have been completely wonderful if the Second World War never happened. I too had to enlist, not in order to fight, but to dig tank traps in the Batschka. But the Germans won the war in spite of our tank traps. It did not take long before myself and all of the other men had to enlist in the Prinz Eugen Division. I was there for a whole year and then I was transferred to the police. We were stationed in Kubin. Jani Birg was our captain there. Then came the partisan revolution and we had to flee to Vienna. From there we eventually came to Budweis in Czechoslovakia. There I worked as a cook at a refugee camp. Then there was another set back. The Russians captured us and took us through Hungary to the Yugoslavian border. There the Serbs robbed us of everything we had and sent us back to Hungary. But at the border we fell into the hands of the Russians again. They packed us into cattle cars and shipped us off to East Germany. I worked there as a tailor until 1948. Eventually I received news from my nephew Sepp Arnusch. With his help I resettled in Bavaria before the Wall went up. I found a place in Dachau and worked as a tailor in Langwied, close to Munich. Then the battle began. I wanted a larger dwelling because my wife and children were still in Yugoslavia. This battle lasted three years. It was a formidable paper war. As a first step I was finally able to get a dwelling after countless applications and promises by the authorities. Now I could proceed and get a residence permit. After overcoming this hurdle my wife had to apply to be dispossessed of her Yugoslavian citizenship, which cost a lot of money. That is the way it was: First the Serbs removed all of the rights of the Germans and locked them all up in internment camps where they starved and then they were given back their citizenship because the Serbs needed the industrious Germans to work for them. And now large sums of money were demanded to release them of their citizenship again. When all of these matters were finally dealt with, after eight years of separation, we were reunited in September of 1952. We remained in Bavaria for another four years, but because of a lack of proper housing, we immigrated to the USA. Everything went well for us, my wife and I found employment in a coat factory, our daughter was able to return to school and our son Rudi could begin his university studies. Today he is an engineer and earns a large salary. After four years we were able to buy a house. We were not yet on our pension when my wife died. Now I am alone once more. To my good fortune I have my children and grandchildren.”

This description of Lorenz Wingert's path through life represents all of the many others that could not be told. Every family that survived and made their way to freedom could tell us very much the same thing. Although many of their experiences were far worse.

* * * *

In October of 1948, Vladimir Dedijer, the Yugoslavian delegate to the third assembly of the United Nations Organization in New York declared: "In my county there is no discrimination of people because of the color of their skin, race, language, gender, or their political opinions or convictions. In the Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia things like this are impossible, not only in terms of the laws of the land, but also in practice of life." This statement that cannot be outdone by the height of its cynicism and insult was made when the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights was being debated.

CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND CRIMES

We are determined never to forget all of the victims from our village, the women, men and children who lost their lives through the violence perpetrated against them. We will also not tire of speaking about the shameful, brutal and ruthless actions that were taken against the life of these German inhabitants of our village.

In spite of offering these sentiments of our respect for them, the question still needs to be asked: How could all of this have ever happened? This question cannot be answered in one sentence. In what follows we will attempt to answer this important question and formulate our answer based on the available information and the knowledge we have of the historical development of the Banat. First of all, in order to do this, the following aspects need to be taken into consideration:

From the very first day when the Hungarians took over the political governance of the Banat, and especially during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 up until the time when First World War broke out, they were determined to turn all of the inhabitants of the region into good Hungarians. On the contrary, the Serbs from the very beginning of their assumption of power looked upon all of the minorities as a foreign body to be removed or destroyed. Their aversion to the presence of the German population was particularly pronounced. There were already plans as early as 1919 to cleanse the territories recently gained from Hungary, known as the Vojvodina, of all Germans living there. For evidence, I offer one of the many relevant remarks made by the later Serbian Prime Minister, Nikola Pašić: "If we had dealt with the problem of the Germans in the Vojvodina right after 1918 we would be done with the matter today." We could certainly cite other authors who made similar remarks, but that would take us too far a field. The fact of the matter is that the new rulers in the Banat immediately following the First World War wanted to evacuate the German population from the region. The reason why these concrete plans were not carried out at the time was due to the attitude of the victorious powers who favored paying compensation for the eventual resettlement of the German population. While on the other hand, the new state was now six times larger than Serbia prior to the war and was also faced with other problems. We merely have to look at the problems with the Croats.

Because the evacuation and the dispossessing of the Germans was not possible, a rather roundabout method of achieving their aims was set in motion. As a result of the Agricultural Reform legislation of the new state, people from Bosnia, Old-Serbia, Herzegovina and Lika were resettled in the principal areas where the Germans lived. Through this method the Slavic element in this region of so many minorities would be strengthened. The land around the edge of our village that belonged to the large estate owners was confiscated and a new village with Serbian inhabitants was established on it. Even though these residents of The Colony received a house, land and farm animals as an outright gift from the state, they remained in the shadow of the German village. They remained economically weaker and for all intents and purposes they were poor people.

During the years from 1919 until 1944 it was not possible to build bridges and relationships between the inhabitants of the old village and The Colony. There were certainly attempts made, but the time was too short to overcome some longstanding differences in terms of their mentality, cultures and customs. As a consequence, in 1944 the two very separate and utterly different ethnic groups were still foreign to one another.

After Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 there were attempts made in the Banat to get on the bandwagon with the Third Reich. Even in our village there were people who made a great show of their “German-ness” and did so uncritically, and to a great extent with absolutely no knowledge of the true facts. Understandably, it was no wonder that one was proud to be a German in light of the great achievements of the Motherland. No one had anything like a political education or background to enable them to make a judgment with regard to the National Socialist system. Not even the few students from our village who were attending the universities in the Reich could tell us what was really going on in Germany. The truth of matter was that we were being sucked in by the undertow of the German Reich because we were simply made to see ourselves allied to the Motherland. Consequently, in 1941 when the German troops marched into our village they were met with jubilation and great joy.

During the years of the German occupation of the Banat there were no visible signs of strain between the inhabitants of our village and our nearby Colony. With the increasing severity of the war, something that no one could define came to a head. The Germans had to become soldiers in the German Army and the Serbs in The Colony remained poor as always, but in fact they became even poorer because some of the land they had been granted for settling was now taken away from them. In response, the propaganda and recruitment campaign of the Communist Partisans increased. It was successful to a degree, predominantly with the colonists whose land had been taken away and who were barely able to provide for their families.

The occupation policies of the German military authorities were arrogant and formulated without any knowledge of the situation in the county and they focused on only one objective: to strengthen the military potential and the economy of the Reich. The provocations carried out by the Communist Partisans were answered with the greatest severity. Then came the surrender of the Germans at Stalingrad, which resulted in an increase in the number of Partisan activities. The appeal and exhortation of the Soviet author Ilja Ehrenburg was to be signified as the high point of this fateful event. It provided the Tito Partisans, who were a pupils and true adherents of Big Brother in Moscow, the needed incentive and his words became dogma. In the appeal he issued in 1943, among other things, he wrote: “The Germans are not human... From now on fire your gun when you hear the word, “German.” We will no longer talk or speak. We will not allow ourselves to get upset. We will kill! During the passing of the day, if you have not killed at least one German, your day has been a waste of time. After you have killed a German then go and kill another one. Nothing makes us happier than German corpses. Kill the Germans! Your aged mother begs you to. Kill the Germans! Your children beg you to. Kill the Germans! The earth of your homeland also calls you. Neglect no single opportunity. Do your duty! Kill!”

That was the tone emanating out of Moscow and became the prayer of the Communist Partisans and eventually their only commandment. The Partisan war would now become even more gruesome.

Following the entry of the German troops into the Banat, the quickly established German Folk Group leadership began its work. Supposedly, only idealists were involved at the head of this organization and they saw the opportunity to help the German element in the Banat achieve its “full rights.” However, the outcome of their efforts was quite different. Without wanting to detract from the performance of the leadership in some regions, it must be said that from the Folk Group *Führer*, Dr. Sepp Janko, on down to the most insignificant village functionary, almost all of them were nothing more than compliant puppets and marionettes. The officials in the government offices of the German Reich, which happened to be the SS-Headquarters, who were responsible for the concerns of the ethnic Germans, did not give a damn about our concerns if they did not coincide with the interests of the German Reich and the war effort. In the book written by Dr. Janko the reader can readily pick up the tone used by the upper echelons in the SS government offices when they spoke of the Folk Group leadership: “Those of you who don’t do your job will simply have your houses come crashing down around your ears!” This is a rather harmless sentence compared to what actually happened later.

Regardless of having admitted this knowledge of the opportunistic stance of the SS government offices and authorities, our *Führer* of the Folk Group was unable to discern the consequences of their actions in spite of being fully aware of their attitude. The opposite, however, would prove to be the case: Upon the “recommendation” of the highest authorities in Berlin, an “Appeal of the Folk Group *Führer*” was issued by Dr. Janko in which he states: “I appeal to you for all men from seventeen to fifty years of age to report for service to bear arms in the defense of the communities in which we live. No one who is fit and healthy can be exempted from this service. My fellow German countrymen show that you are worthy of your fathers by your manly willingness to obey and carry out your orders.” As a result, all able-bodied men from seventeen to fifty years of age were immediately turned over to serve in German military units. The fact that the able-bodied men capable of military service from our homeland were formed into units of the German Army and were then used exclusively in the war against the Partisans in the Balkans demonstrates our leadership’s ignorance of world affairs. Not to mention the arrogance they copied from their examples in the Reich, and the cynicism they displayed as they went about their task. All of the call-up orders to enlist for “voluntary” military service were signed by Johann Keks, the long-time chairman of the Swabian German Cultural Association and the predecessor of Dr. Janko.

Even though Dr. Janko was fully aware since 1943 that Tito was planning the total extermination of the German minority in Yugoslavia, as he indicates in his book, he did nothing to save the German population from certain annihilation except planning an evacuation on paper. Instead of providing full and frank information, they encouraged the people to stay the course and talked of final victory through new miracle weapons. If someone does not want to believe this they can take a look at the various issues of German language newspapers that were published in the Banat. Such newspapers can be found in

the Austrian National Library in Vienna. There you can read what the “lords” of the Folk Group: Dr. Janko, Dr. Beer, Rasimus and others decided on what needed to be told to their countrymen in 1943 and right up through 1944. Even when our misfortune was complete, when the troops of the Red Army already stood in the Banat, the Folk Group *Führer*, allegedly by mistake, declared: “We will stay here!”

In the ranks of the Folk Group leadership there was insecurity, arrogance, rivalry, a false sense of self-importance and a demand for the absolute obedience of others.

In the hour of the greatest danger the German population had ever faced, not a single member of the upper echelons of the Folk Group leaders remained behind to suffer the fate of their countrymen, or even attempted to defend or rescue them. All of their promises were forgotten in the face of the danger confronting them. All of them saved their own skins through well-timed flight and they left their faithful followers behind to face the misfortune alone. In the end, but certainly not in the right way, Adolf Hitler at least took the final measure and concealed himself away when he realized that his work resulted in chaos for the German people. At least he can no longer attempt to place blame for the misfortunes endured by the German people in somebody else’s shoes. His henchmen from the Banat are the ones who continue to do that! They are heavily engaged in demonstrating their absolute innocence and seem to have only one objective in mind for all of their endeavors. They want to show how everyone else, including the poor victims in the Banat, were to blame for their own fate because they did not see to their own evacuation before it was too late; unlike themselves. Only they themselves, the one-time leaders of these unfortunate people, are without guilt in the matter and in their own eyes they are absolved from all blame because their honest intentions were misconceived.

Even to this present day, not one of them is prepared to admit to the mistake they made when they sacrificed the German Folk Group to help establish the National Socialist movement in the Banat within the framework of the National Socialist ideology. They sacrificed the Folk Group for something that has been exposed as false, deceitful and cynical. All of the above circumstances played right into the hands of the Serbs and their objective to solve the problem of the Germans in the Vojvodina for all time.

But these were still not grounds to provide a pretext for the cold calculated murder of innocent people including women and children. The German inhabitants of our village attempted to get along with their newly settled Serbian fellow citizens in The Colony. The German men of the village disregarded the danger involved to ensure that not a hair on the head of any inhabitant of The Colony was harmed, even though they already knew that some of our fellow Serb citizens abandoned their homesteads to join the underground Partisan units.

Today we know that all of the horrendous crimes committed against the German population occurred as a result of orders from the highest authority. The names Moshe Piade and Josip Broz-Tito must be singled out with regard to these orders as the chief perpetrators. They, along with the other members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia devised all of the gruesome atrocities and were in

command of those who carried them out. In the spirit of the appeal by Ilja Ehrenburg, they allowed for no mercy or leniency until there was no longer a German minority in the new and now Communist Yugoslavia. As this order for the heartless extermination of the Germans in the Vojvodina proceeded down the long chain of command it eventually reached our village where there was now a radical change of attitude and opinion. In spite of all the utterances stating that all the inhabitants of the village were brothers, and the assumption that the Serbs would defend and protect the Germans because in the previous years the Germans had given protection to the Serbs, it would not be the case. When the last of the procrastinators in The Colony realized that the Germans were eventually going to lose the war and that there was no longer a threat from the German troops, they made themselves a red star and sewed it to their hat. In the end, these men were the most malicious and wicked. They simply wanted to demonstrate that they had always been on the side of the Partisans. In order to do so convincingly they thought up the most devilish cruelties one could imagine. But they not only invented the cruelties, they also carried them out. Above all, it was the men from our village who were arrested and taken to Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz who experienced them.

In the meanwhile, during the period from October 2nd to the 31st of 1944, all of the younger Serbian men from The Colony who were fit to bear arms were forced to enlist with the Partisans who now called themselves the "Yugoslavian Army." They were part of a unit known as "Prva kraiška Brigada." A portion of this unit was stationed at Werschetz. And they were involved in the liquidation of the German men from the villages north of Werschetz. Camp Stojkowitsch was strictly under their command and control. As a result, young Serbs from The Colony participated in the torturing and later the shooting of the German men from our village.

These young men barely had an education. They did not have the opportunity to further their education in reading or writing because their teachers were only talking politics. They grew up in families who saw their German fellow citizens as the rich people and in families where vendettas were the way to deal with perceived hurts or injustices. Because of their lack of an education, these young men were susceptible to every incitement from those who commanded them. They believed they had to distinguish themselves and demonstrate their worthiness by their unconditional obedience. They were the perfect choice to liquidate the German population, their fellow citizens, even if they had shared a school desk with some of them. And they did it.

The rounding up of the women and children of our village into labor camps and then later the concentration camp in Rudolfsgnad was ordered by the highest authorities from within the governance of the new rulers of the Vojvodina. The Germans were simply to be destroyed, liquidated, tormented and banished. No one asked if these Germans had committed crimes against their Serbian countrymen, no one asked if these Germans had supported the National Social system of the Reich and no one asked if they had opposed or worked against this system; if a person was a German it was reason enough to die. In the best of circumstances one might be able to escape by stealth and if nothing else, at least live.

In order to authenticate the above thesis, the following occurrence is presented. At the beginning of 1945, when the war was not yet over, a commander of a communications unit in the German Army deserted and went over to the Partisans. He came from the village of Pardan in the Banat and was an SS officer. He not only took all of the wireless and radio equipment with him, but also all of the men under his command. They were mostly young students in the higher age groups from high schools in the Banat. From the day he deserted this SS officer from Pardan and his men worked for the Partisans by making use of the equipment they had brought with them. He remained in the service of the Partisans until after the war. Then the following happened: The young men of his unit ended up in the infamous prisoner of war camp at the Bor copper mines, even though they had fought alongside of the Partisans against their own comrades. The fate of these young men goes beyond our intentions at this time. This incident should serve as an example to show how such treatment was meted out to those who enabled the Partisans to achieve victory, yet could not escape the same fate that all of the Germans in the Vojvodina were forced to endure. For after all, these deserters were Germans and because of that their fate was sealed.

This chapter applies as well to the fate of the Germans in the Batschka. They were also martyred, imprisoned in concentration camps, murdered and banished like the Germans in the Banat, even though the Batschka was occupied by Hungary during the war. In many recorded instances, German men in the Batschka protested and opposed their recruitment into the German military. But none of this made any difference. The Germans in the Batschka like the Germans in the Banat had attractive properties along with fertile fields, houses and business enterprises. And the new rulers zeroed in on this fortune. This is even acknowledged by modern Yugoslavian historians. The fortune consisted of 1,100,00 *Joch* of farmland and more than 90,000 houses. It provided the basis for developing the new agricultural economy of Yugoslavia into co-operatives organized as large business concerns.

With Germany losing the war, the German population that had resided in the Banat for several centuries did not have a chance. They were charged with collective guilt and received a collective punishment, it not only meant an end to the German minority in this region, but for many innocent people whose mother tongue was German it also meant the end of their lives.

THE VILLAGE AND ITS INHABITANTS

In May of 1941, in the old village what was known as the German village, there was a total of 684 inhabitants whose mother tongue was German. In addition to them, there were about 145 persons whose mother tongue was Hungarian. Life among the German population was structured around closely-knit hierarchical families with the father at their head. Even the elderly, the grandparents and those who eventually became great grandparents, who were no longer part of the work force within the family and no longer wage earners, continued to be an integral part of the family even if they lived apart in their own houses. The young provided for the older members of the family. At the time of handing over the farm to one of their children, most of the parents had agreements drawn up with regard to their future rights. These rights included the condition that they would be provided for to the end of their lives. But among skilled tradesmen and day laborers such agreements did not exist. In these families the older members remained as a part of the family and tried to be as useful as possible as long as their health permitted. There was no such thing as social security. Nor was there an old age pension. Only the employees of the state, such as the notary and vice-notary in the community administration office, the teachers and the railway stationmaster had the right to an old age pension. They lived on their pension following their retirement from government service.

The farmers of the village had almost everything their families needed in order to live, for the most part they provided for themselves out of their own production. The only thing the farmer did not have or did not have enough of was money in cash. If some kind of misfortune came along that could only be alleviated through the payment of money, he had to undertake the most unpopular step he could possibly imagine. He had to sell some of his land. The buyers were most often the local officials who had regular monthly incomes. They had ready cash at their disposal and could step in and quickly free the farmer of his difficulty. As a result, most of the officials in the village were owners of land and property. The only exceptions were those officials who were transferred elsewhere soon after their arrival because of various situations during their career. In many cases they no sooner settled in and their transfer orders arrived. This was perhaps most common among the employees of the railway administration.

The farmers suffered a chronic lack of money because of the relatively high taxes they paid to the state. Their taxes often reached a range where their entire crops for the year were swallowed up. In addition, they always had to deal with the grain speculators. These operators in the highest positions were almost solely Jewish traders. They were the ones who set the price. No other buyer was in a position to bid higher than their price and for all intents and purposes there were really no other buyers. The Ministry of Finance demanded the tax payments as soon as the crops were harvested. Thus, the crops had to be sold. The final results of the machinations of the speculators and their business interests sometimes led to the near ruin of the farmers. The situation was especially crass in the last twenty-two years, in other words during the time when the Banat belonged to Yugoslavia.

If the taxes were not paid immediately when the crops were delivered, the tax collector was at the farmer's house the next day to expropriate or take in pledge everything that he

could lay his hands on. Often it was the seed retained for sowing or the corn kept for fodder and in extreme cases the horses. But the farmer could not do without these things. In this case his only alternative was to turn to the money lending institutions. This was often the way to ruin because it was impossible to pay back the money at the interest rate charged. The high tax burden was one of the causes why many decided to emigrate. This was especially true during the years of the worldwide great depression when the price of grain was so low that the entire crop was not equal to the taxes owed on it. This was during the years of 1928 to 1932. During this time some families from our village also left for foreign lands in order to make a better living elsewhere.

The uncertain economic situation of the farmers was also the root cause why very few of their sons were sent to schools of higher learning. These schools were only to be found in larger cities. Whoever wanted to go to one of these schools also had to live there. That required money to pay for both the tuition and other regular expenses. But this money, as previously mentioned, was not readily available. In addition, the youth themselves were needed to work in the fields because hiring others to take their place just cost more money. Just as I am writing this, I am once again aware of the many sacrifices my parents had to make so that I could attend the public high school in Werschetz. I remember quite well that my dormitory costs were paid with flour, lard, honey, etc. and not with money. But in addition, there were always monthly expenses that had to be paid in cash. To meet these regular expenses was not always easy for them. What was true for my own parents was also true of the other parents of boys and girls who were sent to the high schools in Yugoslavia. Naturally, Serbian was the language of instruction in these schools. Even though the financial requirements were met there was no certainty that one would be successful after attending such a school. Along with seeking a higher education there would always be some attendant risks for the family.

It is well known to me personally that even parents of the large extended Birg family on occasion had to exert great effort to come up with the ready cash to provide higher education for their children and also provide the necessary lower levels of education to adequately prepare them for it. In the difficult times, when it was not possible to get a fair price for grain, this fact hit some of the Birg family badly and they had great difficulties in fulfilling the unwritten family dictum of providing the best possible higher education for their children.

Now we will look at other possibilities for earning money in the village. In addition to employment in agriculture in which day laborers were paid in cash, other industries and business also provided incomes for workers, but not enough to keep young people in the village. In the manufacturing industries most of the workers were apprentices. Then, as now, the apprentice became an excellent worker under the direct supervision of a master in his trade, but at very little cost to the master tradesman. Only journeymen found regular jobs in the workshops of the crafts and tradesmen catering to the essential needs of the village. These were the blacksmith, wagon maker, carpenter, cabinetmaker and some of the stores. The barbers were the only ones from the trades who performed various services for the public and they each employed one or two other workers to assist them.

The professionally trained tradesmen from our village usually left for elsewhere in order to better themselves. I can recall many conversations that I overheard as a child about Jakob Krämer, a master shoemaker, who in his youth worked in Vienna for many years. My grandfather, on my father's side, had also been a shoemaker before he bought land on the Rarosch. As a young man he had worked in Budapest for many years. The young tradesmen received a comprehensive introduction to their profession through this migration to the cities. They were competent and qualified and could measure up to their competition in the neighboring villages. The only problem was that they could not find enough work in the village itself, so even they had to go out as cutters during the harvest to help keep bread on the table.

Steady yearlong employment was only available at the local flourmill. There was a position for a machinist to operate the equipment and if there were several shifts there was a need for two stokers. In the mill itself the master miller had up to six workers under him who were required to work hard, but they had steady jobs.

Some families earned their livelihood at the brickyards. But these jobs were often in jeopardy during bad economic times when little construction was taking place and there was no demand for bricks. The earnings of the workers in these establishments was very moderate. In order for it to be sufficient to meet the needs of a family, all members of the family, including the half-grown children were included in the production process.

We also need to speak of the four threshing machines. They required a work party of up to twenty-four workers, plus a machinist and at least one stoker. This enabled them to operate at capacity and produce enough excess wheat to provide sufficient daily bread for their families. With regard to work and income, our village was not in the same range as the neighboring villages around us.²⁸ During the period of time between the two world wars there were both very rich and very poor families among the German population. However, the most dominant group was in between and it mostly consisted of farmers who owned five to sixty *Joch* of farmland.

But above this average acreage were the members of the Birg, Faul and Eisler families. The landholdings associated with the village were concentrated in the hands of these families. From among these families, none had less than one hundred *Joch*, in fact most of them had landholdings of three to five hundred *Joch*. Many families from the village worked for them on these agricultural estates. The flourmill and the brickyards also belonged to the Birg family so this family could be called the major employer in the village.

A good third of the families living in the village had only a very small piece of land; often simply a house and garden. But there were also families that had neither a house nor any land. These families often suffered great need. It was not only a matter of providing their many children with food and clothing, they also had to provide shelter. These parents were especially hard pressed to meet all of these needs in the winter months. Even though there

²⁸ According Anna Hirsch, nee Glass, the income disparity was greater in Georgshausen than the neighboring village of Setschanfeld where she was born.

were not too many, there were families who lived in one room with their six or seven children. The kitchen had to be shared with another family who was not much better off than they were. All of this is an indication of the great social disparity that existed in our village. When we compare this with the large roomy houses of the Birg families we must also acknowledge that social tensions existed in our village as a result of these conditions.

For that reason, it seems rather unbelievable that these poor families were persecuted by the Communist Partisans and dealt with in the same way as the Birg family. Here we have another clear indication of what occurred did not have anything to do with being in sympathy with the German occupation forces, or that only the Germans with large properties and the local intelligentsia of the village were to be exterminated. It was simply a matter of the collective guilt of all Germans whether they were rich or poor. All of them who had a German name, all of those who were known as Germans had to die or at least be driven away so the new Communist Yugoslavia would not have a German minority. This also accounts for the reason why no one in present day Yugoslavia speaks of a German minority. It simply no longer exists.

In spite of these wide spread social differences among the residents of our village, life in the village was harmonious. There were no rebellions created by the poor against those who were rich. Nor was there a separation or segregation of the wealthy. They went to the *Wirtshaus* dances just like the other young people of the village. As mentioned previously they had larger and more beautiful homes and had domestic servants working for them. But when it came to defending the interests of the village and protecting the residents of the village they took their stand with them and were always eager to help. This lasted as long as it was possible until the brutal violence of the Partisans was perpetrated against the entire village.

The younger generation of the Birg family had experienced enough of the forced and many faceted Hungarianization processes endured by their parents. As an example, I simply mention their determination to name their children with first names that could not be translated into Hungarian. The younger Birgs had names like Rudolf, Walter, Dittmar, Helmut, Otto, Emil, etc.

BAPTISM, FIRST COMMUNION, CONFIRMATION

As has already been described and demonstrated, life in the village moved along a well-known and well-worn path. There was orderliness to everything and everyone had their place in the life of the village. There was an established hierarchy and there were no exceptions to the rule. In what follows, we will describe the customs of the village in terms of the life events of its residents associated with the birth and baptism of a child, first communion, confirmation, weddings and funerals.

Once the family was aware of the coming of a child, the parents were faced with a variety of necessary preparations that needed to be put in place to ensure that everything happened in its well regulated course. First of all, contact was made with the midwife in the village.

In our village that was Mrs. Jungert who was known as Jungertin to one and all. With regard to this woman who assisted at least three generations on their way into the world, there will be information about the rich life she lived in another section of this book. After she was informed, the family had to consider who among their relatives would be asked to fulfill the highly honored role of godparents for the new arrival. And once that question had been settled a cradle had to be made or refitted, small clothes and shirts were sewn and all of the last minute preparations for the birth were put into motion. Generally, all of the children from our village were born in the home of their parents. If there were any complications at birth a doctor was fetched from the neighboring villages of Zichydorf or Heideschütz. These situations rarely occurred and in most cases the midwife was able to cope and deal with most of the problems. After the child was born the woman giving birth could finally look forward to getting a break. Then the previously chosen godmother of the child went into action. For at least the first week after the birth of the child she cared for the well being of the nursing mother and in most cases also looked after the needs of the whole family. Only the best and most nutritious meals were cooked and served. This was a time to use the best tableware. Everything was packed in white cloths and carried to the house of the new mother. Women took on the role of the godmother with a great deal of pleasure.

The godfather of the child finally got into the act at the time of the baptism. He was responsible for making the arrangements for the baptism. In our village, sometimes newborn children were not baptized until about a month after their birth because the priest from Zichydorf who served us as a filial of his parish only came once a month. When the priest was finally in the village, the baptism took place during the course of the Mass celebration. The godparents brought the child to the church and later they would take the child back to the home of the parents. On some occasions a musical group would be invited to play at the festive baptismal celebration.

The baptismal celebration was a joyous occasion in which the whole village participated. The children of the village also came into their own. After the baptism they walked behind the baptismal party and called out: “Sweet *Godl*, sour *Phat*!”²⁹ At their call the godfather scattered candy in their direction and the children fought over it in the dust of the street. If a godfather wanted to demonstrate his largess and generosity, along with the candy he would toss some small coins among the children. That kind of baptism with such a generous godfather would be long remembered and spoken about in the village. There is still one more thing to mention: at the conclusion of the baptismal celebration the godmother would also help prepare and serve a festive meal at the home of the child’s parents.

The child grew up in the bosom of their family. At the age of six the child began public school and would usually remain in school for the next six years. Even the children who would later go on to high school remained in the public school these first six years. As pupils in the school the little girls came under the tutelage of Mrs. Amon who was in charge of the Marian Maidens. In addition to what they learned at home, she taught them to sing hymns and songs and to pray. The Marian Maidens wore white dresses and always

²⁹ *Godl* is godmother and *Phat* is godfather.

marched at the head of processions. During their preparation as Marian Maidens they also received their initial instructions related to first communion. The boys on the other hand were not prepared as well and had to get by with the minimal religious instructions they received from the teacher at school.

Children received their first communion on a Sunday in the spring. The whole village participated in the event, especially the parents and godparents. This was a big day in the lives of the children who were under their spiritual care.

The most important churchly ceremony involving the children of the village was their confirmation. It occurred in the village every four years because the bishop carried out a visitation to his parishes every four years and on that occasion he administered the sacrament of confirmation. The arrival and the duration of the bishop's visit in the village was a momentous occasion. The preparations for welcoming this church dignitary were considerable. The activities associated with confirmation traveled on two tracks: the adults looked after and made certain that the welcome for the bishop was worthy of his honor and position and that it would be done in a festive manner, while the children had to choose a confirmation *Firmphat* [sponsor] and complete their confirmation instructions. Most boys chose an uncle to be their sponsor, while girls usually honored a favorite aunt.

Confirmation instruction took place in the schoolhouse. The woman teacher was usually the instructor, even for the older children who were already under the tutelage of the male teacher for their regular school classes.

When the bishop traveled from one village to another making his visitations it was a matter of honor for him to be escorted to the boundaries of the next village in a festive manner appropriate to his position. He would then be met by parishioners from that village and escorted in festive manner on to their village. A carriage drawn by a team of four horses was the usual method of transportation. The preference was four *Schimmel*³⁰ horses, but if there were not four of them in the village, four black horses or four chestnuts would do. The carriage would be accompanied by all of the older farm boys riding on their finest horses. In order for everything to go as planned, practice runs were made months before the bishop came. The four carriage horses had to be familiarized with one another so that they would work well together. Plus, the horses and riders had to be introduced to their places and be instructed on what was expected of them. Jergl Siller functioned as the instructor of all of this. He was well versed in escort riding and knew all of the ins and outs of horsemanship. He had served in the army as a *Hussar* [Hungarian cavalryman] and had risen in the ranks to become an officer. When he issued a command everyone was expected to listen and obey.

The horses and riders practiced out in the *Hutweide* [community pasture], they learned to ride in small circles, then larger ones and followed later with other figures and patterns. For the young farm boys this was a great pleasure while for Jergl Siller it was a welcome change that reminded him of his wonderful time with the *Hussars*. Along with practicing,

³⁰ A *Schimmel* is an off-white or gray colored horse.

the young riders had to keep the metal on their saddles and harness shined and maintained in the best of condition. They were also required to always keep their boots polished.

The horses were groomed to a brilliant shine in the early hours of the morning on the day of the bishop's arrival. They were brushed and preened. The long hairs of their tails and mains were braided with ribbons so the horse and rider would set the gorgeous style and tone for the event. Then it began. The mayor of the village, along with the chairman of the local religious association, rode in the carriage. They were the official welcoming committee for the bishop. They took their place at the boundary of the village and waited until the cavalcade from the neighboring village, with the bishop at the center of it all, drew nearer. Eventually, after a ceremony of saying farewell and welcoming, the bishop boarded the waiting carriage and was brought to our village. This stately sight was only to be seen in our village every four years and no one wanted to miss it. For that reason everyone turned out to watch the grand entrance of the bishop as he made his way through the village in the company of the mayor, the chairman of the religious association and the priest who served our village. While he stayed in the village the dignitary would always be lodged at the house of Karola and Georg Birg. The schedule for the bishop's visit was organized so that right after his arrival he held a mass in which the confirmation of the children took place. During mass all of the confirmands stood around the altar and participated in the mass. After mass all of the confirmands formed a line in front of the church. The confirmation sponsor of each of the children stood behind them with their hand placed on the shoulder of the confirmand while holding a folded white cloth in their free hand. After the confirmand received the sign of the cross with holy oil on their forehead, the cloth was tied around their head to ensure that the holy oil would do its work.

Once the confirmation ceremony at the church was over the parents and the godparents returned home where a festive meal followed. The bishop went to his hosts. There he was dined and had an opportunity to rest from the strenuous activities of the day. Later in the afternoon he would often meet with a delegation representing the residents of the village. On these occasions there was usually only one topic: When will the construction of a new church begin? It was never undertaken as has been noted and explained elsewhere.

For the confirmands there was a special added feature for them to look forward to and it took place prior to the festive meal. They received a confirmation gift. On most occasions it was a watch, but it could be a bicycle or a piece of clothing. Prior to the event the confirmation sponsor usually made proposals of what he could afford to buy so the confirmand could choose what was needed or desired the most.

The next day, in the early morning hours, the bishop was escorted by the youth to the village boundary where the welcoming committee from the next neighboring village awaited him. Then confirmation was set aside for another four years.

Following the reception of this holy sacrament the young people of the village now took their place in the life of their family at another level. The girls were taught by their mother all of the arts and skills associated with being a housewife. In many cases they also worked alongside of their parents out in the fields or accompanied them to work in the

brickyards. These are only two examples that I mention. On the other hand, boys began to learn a trade or they had to work on the farm or in the fields along with their fathers until the time came when they enlisted for military service. From this time onward the former “big boy” who had been the “little boy” now was considered to be a man. It was very important to the families that the recruits were fit and healthy and the successful completion of their military service was considered an honor to the family. In peacetime when a young man returned home from completing his military service he was told that he was now a man and could get married. It did not take long before a bride was found and the wedding date was set. This did not always run smoothly, for often there was a great deal of agitation because the desires of the young people did not necessarily coincide with the desires of their parents, but eventually it usually ended up as a marriage. Among the farming families it was understood that their sons would look for a suitable bride from among other farming families who had holdings equal or comparable to their own. This practice had its origins in the failure of what had been known as *Erbhof*. It was no longer customary for only one child of the family to take over the family landholdings and pay an agreed upon sum of money to the other siblings. Instead, through a method known as *Realteilung*, which became customary in the Banat, the farmstead and land were equally divided among all of the children. When there were a large number of siblings it was possible through this method for a once thriving and viable farm to get into difficulties. The young farmer who wanted to take over the farm had to foresee this and make certain that his marriage would provide enough acreage to make up for what he would lose to his siblings through the required inheritance method.

This method of distribution of a family inheritance had other consequences as well, some of which were not good. Because of the risks involved in the deteriorating agricultural and economic situation of the farmers, many of them opted to have only one child or two at the most. This presented a danger because through a sudden accident or some other misfortune the possibility existed that there would be no one to carry on with the farm. Others attempted to maintain their holdings or increase them through marriage so land became the only criteria for selecting a marriage partner. During the latter years this was no longer the case, but the parents of marriageable children still had a great deal of influence in terms of whom they married.

In terms of tradesmen, day laborers and those with very small farms this equal distribution method of inheritance did not play a major role in the choice of marriage partners. However, the opinion of the parents still played an important role.

There is one further thing to mention. It was customary for the children of German parents to only marry children of German origin. But there were always exceptions to the rule. There were several mixed marriages in our village, most of them involving German and Hungarian marriage partners.

WEDDING CELEBRATIONS

Right from the start it is important to keep in mind that because there were very “rich” and very “poor” families in the village, there were also very large and very small weddings. Regardless, they were all joyous occasions. Once the couple agreed and the parents approved of the partner of their choice, nothing stood in the way of the countless preparations that needed to be set into motion. The first official act for the couple was to apply for the notification of their wedding banns at the community offices. Then the couple went to see the priest and made arrangements for posting the banns at church. A notice was nailed to the bulletin board in front of the community office with the details of the banns, while in the church they were read publicly on three successive Sundays. From the time they applied for their banns the couple was considered engaged.

For a start, the witnesses who would stand up for them had to be approached and a list of wedding guests had to be drawn up. In both households of the young couple all kinds of activities got under way, especially in terms of the kitchen. The bride had to go through her trousseau to see what was still missing because now it was time to add the rest. If a large wedding was being planned a decision had to be made as to which *Wirtshaus* would be used for the celebration and the arrangements had to be made. Also of great importance was engaging the desired musical group to play at the wedding. While making the booking with the band and reserving the *Wirtshaus*, the families would also have to decide whether the wedding would last for one or more days.

From the moment it was known that there was to be a wedding, the whole village got caught up in the excitement and was in high spirits. The topic of most conversations was about the coming wedding.

If the wedding celebration was to be held at a *Wirtshaus*, the invited guests assembled there in the morning, usually around nine o’clock. At this time the men were served some schnapps and the women were offered tea. The musicians who were booked to play at the wedding also set themselves up at the *Wirtshaus* at this time. When it was time to go they formed a wedding procession. They first went to the house of the groom’s parents. By then the musicians were playing merrily, the groom joined them and was escorted by a young woman, often a sister or a close friend of the bride. Now the wedding procession moved on to the home of the bride’s parents. There the music struck up again, only the choice of the music was not of a joyful nature because here it was a matter of farewell and leave taking. The entire wedding party and guests joined in singing the time-honored song, “Wonderful Were the Days of Our Youth,” which always unleashed a river of tears. The separating of the bride from her mother was always especially touching. The bride was accompanied by her male attendant and joined the wedding procession, then it was once again underway. The community office was now their objective, this is where the civil ceremony took place. Next, the entire wedding procession made their way to the church. Then came the high point of the wedding, the church ceremony took place. Following the celebrative ceremony, the entire wedding company made their way to the *Wirtshaus* where the wedding celebration continued, but now took on a more festive character. By now it was high time for the midday meal. At this point the cook in charge of the food for the

wedding came into her own; at larger weddings this was usually Elisabeth Amon. She was given the responsibility for preparing every essential item for the meals at the wedding and saw to its proper serving. Such a wedding dinner consisted of the following: The first course was a good noodle soup and naturally the noodles were home made. Then followed cooked meats with tomato sauce and horse radish. Roasted, grilled and baked meats were the next course along with various salads and a variety of steamed fruits. Dessert consisted of vast numbers and varieties of cakes and pastries to meet everyone's taste, but the Torte cakes were sliced first, and the signal to start with that was when the bridal couple began cutting the wedding cake into small pieces and distributing them to their guests. Along with the cake there were fine pastries and other baking.

For drinks they served the wedding wine provided by the father of the bride, it either came from the proprietor of the *Wirtshaus* or from a winemaker in Werschetz. Near the end of the meal when the festive mood was at its height, sometimes the bride lost one of her shoes. This was usually the work of a bright young boy from among the wedding guests who had been put up to it by one of the adults. Since the Bride's Dance could not occur without this shoe it was auctioned off to the highest bidder, then the money and the shoe were given to the newlyweds. Due to the high spirit already prevailing at this time, the sum of money they received for the shoe was sometimes quite sizeable.

Meanwhile some tables were being taken out of the dance hall so the Bride's Dance could begin. The recently married young couple began to dance. After several dance steps the bride changed partners with another man. This went on until all of the men who had been invited to the wedding had danced at least a few steps with the bride. According to the reports of some older people, in their days the wedding gifts were given at that time, but in our time the gifts were sent to the house of the bride's parents before the wedding. Soon it was time for the evening meal, which was about of the same scope as the earlier meal, followed by dancing and amusements of all kinds until midnight. Now the bride was unveiled and in place of it her godmother tied a kerchief around the bride's head, this meant that her marriage had now begun. After the young couple disappeared, one of the young men with a good sense of humor dressed up like the bride, by doing so the celebration could go on until the early morning hours. Then at that point the wedding guests formed a procession with their "substitute" bride. The guests who had gone home because they were tired were picked up by the procession again and the celebration continued. Some weddings lasted three days. By then all of the participants were so exhausted that they needed the remainder of the week to get caught up on their sleep.

THE LAST JOURNEY

When someone died in the village the news was announced by the tolling of a small bell set aside for this purpose. This death tolling from the small bell occurred after the morning, noonday and evening bell ringing. The bodies of the dead were usually prepared for burial and laid out at home. In the evenings the death watch took place. Relatives and neighbors came together at the house for prayers. Most times, large numbers of people attended the funerals. The name and age of the deceased was imprinted on the coffin,

which was made by a local carpenter from hardwood and consequently was very heavy. The coffin was carried on a special bier by four men. If the priest from Zichydorf came for the funeral, the funeral procession would halt at the church for the Mass of the Dead and then continue on to the cemetery. Our cemetery was well laid out. It boasted of many beautiful monuments and two chapels with crypts.

Unfortunately, this cemetery where our forebears were to find their final rest had their peace disturbed by the Communist powers during the 1950s. According to an eye witnesses report, the graves were plundered and their remains were all dumped into a corner of the new cemetery that was established at the time. [Today a school building is on the site of the old cemetery.]

THIS IS THE WAY IT WAS BACK HOME

In the following chapter we will attempt to describe how we experienced and organized the traditions and customs that over the years held sway in the life of our village. What is written here is based on the narratives and reports of some of the older former residents from our village as well as some of the memories of the author himself.

The New Year actually began in our village on December 31st and it was known as Silvester. On this last day of the year it was usually bitterly cold in our region. It was very common for there to be a great deal of snow. The inhabitants of the village were in good spirits because the Christmas celebrations were just over. As long as there was daylight the horses were harnessed to sleighs and short excursions were undertaken for the benefit of both the animals and the passengers. In the case of the horses it was an opportunity to get outside at this time of the year and provide them with needed exercise, while the people enjoyed a merry time before the evening when the ongoing holiday celebration would take place.

The first task was to bid farewell to the old year. This began at church with a service of thanksgiving. Already, shortly before the worship began, bursts of gunfire could be heard throughout the village. Those to blame for the racket were the young boys who could not wait until the service was over to fire their guns and air pressure revolvers.

Unfortunately, the church service was often held without the presence or leadership of the priest because it was not possible to get him from neighboring Zichydorf. Either the snow was too deep or the good man did not have the time because he also had to conduct the service at his home church in Zichydorf. In light of such situations the villagers themselves would provide substitute leadership. Nevertheless, this service at the end of the year, which was led by someone other than the priest, was very beautiful. The teacher Mr. Petri played the hymns on the harmonium [reed organ] and the congregation sang along under the direction of *Vetter* Klos (Herold). Usually our young friend Hans Bogner offered the prayers, he was a bright pupil and understudy of *Vetter* Klos. The focus of all the prayers was on giving thanks. This helped to get over the missing contemplative homily. *Vetter* Klos would also read the year's statistics that were relative to life in the village. This was actually part of the sermon that would be preached if a priest had been present and was part of the liturgy. Such rich in content sermons were given on the few occasions when the priest had the time to come and hold the thanksgiving service in our small village. *Vetter* Klos could handle this part of the service as ceremonious as the priests. To begin with, he would acknowledge all of the births that had taken place during the year. This was followed by the deaths. If the deaths outnumbered the births he would make an earnest appeal to the younger married women to rectify this because only more births could prevent the village from dying out. Once these vital statistics were shared he then mentioned all of the weddings, the pilgrimages, the processions, the services in veneration of Mary and finally all of the services that had been held when the priest was present and available. At the conclusion of this report, the old year officially came to an end. At the end of this service, which typically began at seven in the evening and ended around eight o'clock, *Vetter* Wastl (Schag) who was the church sacristan was assisted by the altar boys

in ringing the three bells that made a joyous clanging sound in the cold winter night. With regard to the ringing of the bells on this last night of the year I need to mention that there was often a brawl among us boys to be included among the bell ringers because it got us out of church earlier. To be outside as soon as possible after the bells had stopped ringing was of great importance since that is when the shooting began. There was no small cannon in the village. Most of the shooting was done with shotguns, of which there were many in the village. Bursts of shots from air pressure revolvers also created a racket, although nothing compared to the noise of the shotguns. But we had to meet the challenge when the shotguns were being reloaded so we fired our air pressure revolvers. It took a lot of the money that we boys saved all year long to pay for the ammunition so we said farewell to the old year with empty trouser pockets and welcomed in the New Year in the same way. But we weren't really overly sad about it because on the next day, which was New Year's Day, we would end up with money in our pockets as we will learn later.

After the service of thanksgiving, all of the worshippers went home. Those of us who were children went to bed while the adults got themselves ready for the Silvester Dance.

There were Silvester Dances in both of the *Wirtshäuser*: the Brenner band played at one of them and Hügel's played at the other. At Muhr's *Wirtshaus* most of those who were present were married couples and at Loch's it was the young people. But the people had a very good time at both. Things were always very merry and many used the intermissions between sets of music to cool off by taking a deep drink of the tasty local wine from nearby Werschetz. Those who drank more than others were not around when the New Year came in, they were already at home in bed or they were being taken home by friends who looked after them.

At midnight the band played a robust fanfare and then the exchange of New Year's greetings began. The adults did that right away at the *Wirtshaus*. But the youngsters had the whole morning after to spread their New Year's greetings. The *Wirtshaus* celebrations went on until the early morning hours. The musicians accompanied the last of the revelers home. They then re-assembled and headed to the houses of the most prominent families in the village and serenaded them. It was a great honor for each of the houses to be serenaded by the musicians. Custom demanded that all of the musicians would be invited into the house and entertained to meal. They were also provided with some food to take with them on their way. And in many cases they were also given money. This serenading from one house to another lasted until the church service for New Year's Day began.

In this way we said farewell to the old year. Now we want to see how the New Year began.

As we already learned in connection with the music, at the first day of the New Year the residents of the village were in a celebrative spirit, as a result, it was a festive day. For us children the festivities already began quite early in the morning. This was a day when our mothers had no problem with getting us out of bed. We had been lying awake for some time and been asking over and over again if we could finally get up. Our eagerness had a sound basis. On New Year's Day we went *Wünschen* [wishing people well] and wherever

we spread our good wishes we got something in return; in most cases it meant a coin. But before we could pocket the money we had to offer our New Year's best wishes that were usually in the form of a poem we had to recite. The text for such best wishes had various sources. They were much simpler and easy to learn for the smaller children, whereas for the older children they were longer and more difficult. The following are examples of such texts: [Rhyme is lost when translating poetry from German to English.]

"I am a small king, but don't give me too little,
Don't give me too much, so that I won't lose it."

"I wish, I wish, I don't know what.
Behind the oven a rabbit sits and reaches into the sack,
And will give me something."

"I am a little urchin and I place myself in a nook.
If I can't do something, I don't bother to try."

"Even though I am very young I still wish you what good children ought to do today:
In this New Year may yours be much good fortune, health and blessings."

"Last night I awoke from sleep,
An angel brought me this news,
I thought and thought and thought, but did not understand,
What kind of news it was.
But eventually it dawned on me that today is New Year's.
And because of that I wish you much good fortune, blessings and a long life."

"I bring you but a little wish: God bless you in this New Year,
Good fortune, health and long life may our dear Lord grant and give you."

We would begin offering our best wishes at the homes of our closest relatives and our godparents. If there was still time we visited our neighbors, the friends of our parents and our teachers. Visiting our grandparents was of great importance if they did not live with our parents. The money we received for spreading our greetings and wishes was kept in our trouser pockets and every once in a while we would retrieve the money for counting it. The higher the total amount the higher were our spirits so we did not want to stop, it encouraged us to keep going on for more. But once the large bell rang the first time it was time for us to stop. Now an additional word about the coins we received: a silver ten *Dinar* coin was the highest in value that we could expect to receive. We usually received them from our *Godl* (godmother) or our grandmother. The most common coin we got was the one *Dinar* coin. If we received more it was usually a two *Dinar* coin, or if it was something less it would be a half *Dinar* coin, but even it was appreciated.

The Gypsies soon found out that you could get something by going *Wünschen*. In our own village we had no Gypsy families, but in Zichydorf and Gross Gaj there were some. They were already going about the village early in the morning along with us children.

They too offered their best wishes in the form of recited poems. Those wishes of the Gypsies went like the following:

“I wish you a golden table and a golden fish in every corner,
A glass of wine in the middle so that you may all be merry!”

“I wish you an ox with a thick neck and piece of bacon for my sack.”

“I wish you a golden foal so that you can slide with it right into heaven.”

Following the worship that was held later on New Year's Day, whether a priest from the neighboring village came or not, the men would go for one more drink at the *Wirtshaus* while the women hurried home to finish making the midday meal. It was usually a festive meal that began with a good soup and was followed by cooked meat and horse radish. The main course was a roast served with salads, vegetables and compote. There were cakes for dessert. They were an absolute necessity.

Early in the afternoon the musicians began to play once more in both *Wirtshäuser*. This went on until midnight except for one intermission when they went home to feed their stock in the stables. The first day of the year, just like the last, was celebrated with fanfare and gaiety with the hope that it would be a good year and that they would bring in a good harvest in the New Year.

Now the working day came into its own once more. But first we need to say something about the Epiphany [The Feast of the Three Holy Kings on January 6th]. At this time the preparations for Lent had already started so the mothers made the first of the Lenten donuts on the Epiphany. They were served piled on a plate with a coin hidden in one of the donuts. Whoever got this donut was the King and for that privilege he had to pay for something special. In most cases it was arranged in such a way that the father got the one with the coin. On this occasion one of those who were eating, usually one of the older boys, went to the *Wirtshaus* to get a flask of wine to be consumed at the conclusion of the Epiphany dinner. Sometimes the mother put more coins in her donuts so the children would also get one.

The winter months were a time for relaxation and rest. No work could be done in the fields. Since there was no wear, the tradesmen also had restful days. Butchering pigs, ice cutting and hunting fit in perfectly at this time of year.

ICE CUTTING AND HARVESTING

Naturally, fifty years ago in our village there was no such thing as a refrigerator in each household. Nor was there any talk of a freezer. However, certain food had to be kept cold. The butcher and *Wirtshaus* owners were dependent on keeping food cold during the terribly hot summer.

But the methods used to keep things cold and refrigerated were completely different from what we do today. We kept things cold with ice in its natural state, of which there was plenty in the winter. Everything depended upon finding a way to preserve the ice we harvested in the winter for use during the summer. In order to accomplish that there were three large ice cellars in the village: one was at butcher Löchel's and one each at the *Wirtshaus* owners, Muhr and Loch.

The following is a description of what these ice cellars looked like: A three-meter deep pit was dug in the back yard. These pits were about four meters wide and seven meters long. A scaffolding or platform for a pointed roof was placed over it and a haystack was spread on top of the roof for insulation. The straw from wheat stalks was especially effective for insulating the ice from outside air.

In late autumn the ice cellars had to be emptied. The old straw had to be removed and if there was water in the pit it had to be emptied by hand using pails. Then another layer of straw about a meter deep had to be laid on the bottom of the pit. A reserve supply of straw was piled beside the ice cellar to be used for packing along the sides of the pit.

Once the ice in the ponds was fifteen to twenty centimeters thick, the *Wirtshaus* owners and the butcher went to the farmers to invite them to cut and harvest the ice. This was normally at the end of January or beginning of February. Most often the ice was taken from Josef Faul's pond because it had easy access and was fed with clean and fresh water from the artesian well in the yard by his house. Those who did not have horses and sleighs were invited to harvest the ice in the pond or were assigned to pack the ice in the cellars. The men of the village enjoyed doing this work. They had time on their hands during these winter months and the ice cellar owners provided food and drink so ice harvesting was a rather merry undertaking. The sheets of ice in the pond were chopped up into pieces of about a half of a square meter. These heavy blocks of ice were loaded on sleighs and transported to the ice cellar where another work party waited to pack the ice with straw in the cellar in an orderly fashion. Above all, they had to ensure that the sides of the ice cellar were tightly packed with straw. Once the cellar was filled with ice, the last of the straw was placed on top. Then the men covered everything to ensure that the ice would maintain its coldness and not melt. When this was accomplished there was enough ice to last for the coming year. The butcher could preserve his products and the *Wirtshaus* owners had no problem in always being able to place cold drinks on the table. Under his bar the *Wirtshaus* operator had an ice bucket. It was made out of hardwood and it would be filled with the natural ice from the ice cellar. The butcher also had a bucket just like it and had it available in his working area.

The ice cutting and harvesting often lasted about a week and provided a lot of enjoyment. If a man was industrious as he went about his work in harvesting the ice and transporting it on his sleigh, the *Wirtshaus* owner often gave him a chunk of the much appreciated ice during the summer months so his wife could make ice cream. In those days such a luxury was not on a daily basis.

RABBITS AND FOXES

Within the boundaries of our village, hunting was limited to small game. There were rabbits, foxes, partridges, quail and wild ducks. Occasionally, deer put in an appearance in our area whenever they wandered off the hunting reserves around Werschetz. If someone managed to shoot a deer it was considered a local sensation. That was also true of wild boars.

All of the authorized hunters in the village were members of the local Hunt Club.³¹ The last chief huntsman and president of the Hunt Club was Georg Birg. The membership of the Hunt Club included the richer farmers, the teacher, the notary and some of the wives of the richer farmers. The guns used for hunting were exclusively shotguns. The high point of the hunting season was the annual battue when animals would be driven from cover by a group of men who would “beat the bushes.” Invitations to this event were extended to guests from the neighboring villages, the cities of Werschetz and Betschkerek and sometimes even from Belgrade. Some of the men from the village acted as the “drivers who beat the bushes.” Such battues would attract some fifty to sixty participants.

In order to transport the slain animals a sleigh rigged with poles and stakes was provided, much like those used to bring in the grain crops. The Hunt Club members were transported to the various fields on sleighs that followed the men who would scare up the game. Food and drink was served out in the fields during the midday break so that the hunters who had left the village early in the morning would not have to be brought back to the village until early evening.

In the evening at one of the *Wirtshäuser* there would be a Huntsman’s Banquet in which all of the hunters had to take part. In our village there were usually two battues each year, one on the Rarosch and the other on the Ried. When the game was plentiful a third battue would be undertaken. Hunting was forbidden during the closed season. However, there were occasions when small groups of hunters were organized, but only with permission from the president of the Hunt Club. Individual Hunt Club members were always free to go out and hunt on their own throughout the hunting year.

Events from the hunt provided topics of conversation for the whole village during the long winter nights when the villagers sat down with neighbors or their marriage partners, or their friends when they took turns visiting one another on a rotating basis. In this way the gossip was spread throughout the village. After all the topics for discussions were exhausted the men took to playing cards and the women brought out their knitting needles and embroidery. Usually the hunting practices of the female members of the Hunt Club provided many topics for conversation. The men frequently laughed about the women and often rather unfairly because they convinced the women to undertake hunting actions that were nothing more than a practical joke.

The initiation ceremony for hunters that took place during the Huntsman’s Banquet provided additional things to talk about, as well as the hunt itself. All of the *Jungjäger*

³¹ Hunting season and licensing was regulated by the local authorities.

were initiated. They were the first time hunters who had participated in the battue and shot their first rabbit. They were not always just young men, sometimes older men were also among them. Great importance was made of the fact that this first rabbit was slain on the occasion of the particular battue. The initiation usually concluded with a thrashing. The newly initiated huntsman had to lie down on a bench and his rabbit was set down alongside of him. Then the president of the Hunt Club undertook the initiation. After he spoke the standard phrase of initiation he then whacked the new hunter across the seat of his pants with a willow switch or a cleaning rod. Each of the other members of the Hunt Club followed his example. If the number of members present was great and in good spirit it was very possible that the initiated huntsman would have difficulty sitting down for the next week.

BUTCHERING AND THE SOW DANCE

In the late autumn and early winter, almost daily and beginning early every morning, we could hear the squealing cries of the terrified swine that would be butchered that day. It was the time of year in which the pantry was filled with food supplies for the coming year. There was almost not a single family in the village who did not have well-fed swine in their stable because everyone could easily obtain fodder for their swine, even if they did not have their own land or garden. Several *Joch* of corn, a third of which was given to anyone who undertook the task of handling and harvesting it, provided every house more than enough feed for fattening the pigs. The Mangolitza breed of swine was native to the Banat. It provided a lot of lard and good thick bacon. A corn fed young swine of this breed reached a live weight of up to two hundred kilograms. On most occasions there were two and sometimes up to five of these bacon-producing swine butchered in one day. This was a lot of work. A large portion of this meat was salted down. The leftovers of the leaner meat were used for the filling when making bratwurst. The meat from the head of the pig was cooked in a huge kettle to make our fondly remembered *Kesselfleisch* [kettle meat]. The liver, which was also cooked in this kettle, but not as long, was used to make liverwurst. The rind, tongue and bits of diced bacon with blood added were the ingredients of the *Schwartelmagen*³² that we loved to enjoy during the winter evenings.

After the liverwurst and the *Schwartelmagen* were slowly cooked to a boil, the same kettle was set up for making lard. All of the pieces of fat not needed for smoked bacon were cut up into small cubes and tossed into the boiling kettle. The end product was *Grammeln* [cracklings] and gorgeous white lard. The lard was placed in tin containers to cool off; these tins were the pride of the housewives. The extracted lard from the swine served as one of the mainstays of the kitchen and provided for the well-being of the family.

Butchering day was a day of hard work for all of the participants. It was therefore only right and proper to provide a little bit of entertainment after the work was done: the Sow Dance.

³² *Schwartelmagen* is jellied meat, it has a great amount of jellied soup mixed with the skin of the pig and meat from the head, and then it is put into the cleaned maw of the pig. *Schwartelmagen* is also known as head cheese.

Understandably, all of those who had participated in the butchering were invited to this festive evening along with some others that the hosts included in their invitation. The women, who had already spent the whole day working hard, now had to prepare the food for the Sow Dance meal, which usually consisted of the various meat products made during the day. In this way, everything that was tasted during the evening often led to a few or several loud debates about whether there was too much pepper in the bratwurst or whether the marjoram could be tasted in the liverwurst. It was also debated if the *Werschtelbuben* [little-sausage-boys] would soon be coming by and that with a bit of skill it would surely be possible to out maneuver them.

This was the pleasurable part of the butchering day where we young boys were able to get a taste of what had been made without participating in any of the work. It was a wonderful custom in which the youth of the village eagerly participated and it gave them an opportunity to express their creativity.

This activity known as the *Werschteln* was carried out as follows: At the house where the Sow Dance was being held a note on a slip of paper was put into a woven basket that was filled with straw or hay, and then it was placed at the door while making noise. The note in the basket indicated what the boys wanted. The text was as follows:

“We have heard,
That you have butchered.
That you have made good sausage,
And you have a good wife in your house,
Who will hand us sausage from the window.
The butcher with the long nose,
Loves to look into the jigger.
The lady butcher with her long apron,
Farts with every step she takes.
So don’t make us wait too long,
Because our trousers are torn,
And the wind is blowing through them.”

The above text was understood exactly as it was meant to be. Those outside also wanted to taste some of the good things. It was a matter of personal pride for the housewife to make certain that something of everything ended up in the basket. Above all, without fail, there had to be cabbage salad with the fresh bratwurst. But now the real fun was about to take place. When the group of boys from outside came for the filled basket, the guests at the table in the house would attempt to grab and apprehend them. If any of the *Werschtelbuben* were caught they were brought into the house where they could be teased and made fun of in front of all of the partygoers. On most occasions the guests were unsuccessful in capturing the *Werschtelbuben*. Since the boys had to wait in the cold outside they were more alert and sober than the guests in the house. Through all kinds of creative maneuvers the basket eventually came into the possession of the *Werschtelbuben*.

In addition to the *Werschtelbuben*, the children of the household also had their own special fun on butchering day. They waited with a great deal of impatience for the bladder of the pig. One could use it in a number of different ways. After it was carefully emptied it was usually blown up by using a hardened straw until eventually it had the appearance of being a balloon. In the same way that children today play with a balloon, our children played with the blown up bladders. The older men who loved to smoke their pipes often competed with the boys over the bladder. Once the blown up bladder dried out it was a perfect container for their tobacco. Supposedly, tobacco stored in a bladder maintained its consistency and always burned well.

Another byproduct of butchering served as one of our best-loved toys. When the pork hocks were cooked to make a tasty *Sulz*³³ the bones from the feet of the swine were left over. We children coveted these feet bones. They were bored through in the middle, then a cord was threaded through the hole and on each end the cord was wound around a bent finger. The bone was then twisted until the cord was all wrapped up. When the fingers pulled apart the cord and the bone began to turn around in circles and made a very distinctive noise. It buzzed, we said. As a result, the toy made out of the pig bone was called a *Brummer* [a buzzer, also spelled *Prummer*].

Late in the evening, after the children had long since gone to bed, the last of the guests would leave the Sow Dance more or less quietly and after the daylong activities and work, finally peace and rest reigned in the house. There were some grumbling people in the village who complained that often a whole half of a pig was devoured at such a Sow Dance, but most people did not care and in most cases it was not true. Even if it was, there would still have been enough left for the housewife to stretch things out to meet the needs of her family throughout the entire year.

At the crack of dawn the next morning, the screams of swine under the knife could be heard in another house up the street. A final word with regard to the slaughterer: The father of the house usually slaughtered the swine. But when that was not the case a competent man could be engaged to take over this major task and be paid an agreed upon wage. In our village Michael Bogner was a skilled swine slaughterer who would do this. During the butchering season he was in demand every day. Because he always had to participate in the Sow Dances during that time of the year, he had to battle a weight problem and what was even more difficult he did not get enough time for sleep. By the end of the butchering season it got to the point where he would say that he could no longer handle the knife well.

If the butchering went well, most housewives who were not stingy with their meat products shared them by providing some to the teacher, the priest and neighbors. Then they too could taste the results of the butchering effort.

³³ A jellied meat specialty.

CARNIVAL BEFORE LENT

From Silvester to Ash Wednesday a Sunday never went by where there was not at least one dance at one of the *Wirtshäuser*, in fact there was always something going on at both of them during Shrovetide [Pre-Lent]. They did not let an opportunity pass by for holding dances. If there was not a masquerade ball or an orange-blossom ball there was a *Freitanz* [open dance] for the youth of the village. This arrangement is worth looking at more closely. It was a part of the custom that the mothers used to keep a close watch on their daughters. All of their activities were planned and controlled by their mothers. The closest physical contact between young people in the village took place on the dance floor when a waltz commenced or a polka began. For that reason, their daughters had to remain in their sight at the Sunday dances.

Each *Wirtshaus* had a dance hall. It was a large room with a platform at one end where the musicians took their places. All along the walls of the hall there was a row of benches. These benches were reserved for the mothers who accompanied their daughters to the dance. The festively dressed girls had their place in the middle of the hall and dance floor. When the music began the young men and boys would come rushing into the hall from an adjoining guest room and make a beeline for the girl of their choice. It was only on rare occasions when a girl who had taken her place in the middle of the hall would be left standing there without a partner. But if it did happen she would have to take her place standing close to her mother. Of course, this was very irritating to the mothers of our village who all believed that their own daughter was the prettiest and most desirable of the whole lot.

When a young man was successful in claiming his desired partner he had to demonstrate his own dancing skills. With everyone trying to outdo one another the dance floor was all a whirl. Their enthusiasm was often so great that the dance partners were totally out of breath when the musicians finally ended the number. At this point the young man had to escort the girl back to the middle of the dance hall and then quickly make his way back to his place in the guest room where he left his wine glass. Most of the single young men drank wine served in one-liter flasks. But there were also Spritzers for those who added soda water to the wine to reduce its potency. For married women and single girls it was acceptable for them to drink Raspberry Spritzers. By custom the mothers who sat on the benches around the dance hall did not drink anything. The daughters were conditioned to react to the wink of their mother or any other prearranged signal.

If the mother announced, "We are now going home!" the daughter had to obey without a word. That is how strict things could be at the dance hall.

The mothers kept in mind everything they saw taking place on the dance floor. If a girl had the same dance partner for two or three dances in a row, this combination was quickly noted and commented upon by the mothers all around the dance hall. If the young man was not careful he would soon be married!

According to custom, the single young men of the village were considered to be of marriageable age after they completed their military service. They were then twenty-two to twenty-three years old. Once a mother was convinced that the prospective suitor was the right man for her daughter there was little chance of the young couple escaping from the net she would cast out. The sons of farmers were usually matched with the daughters of farmers, the daughters of tradesmen were usually matched with a young tradesman and the farmers with little land and the day laborers found their wives from among those in their economic circle. It was a rare occasion when a farmer's son married a girl of his own choice against the will of his parents.

We are now almost ready to leave the topic of dancing activities. But before we do we also need to be aware of what happened when single young men from a neighboring village attended a *Freitanz*. If they behaved according to custom and were smart enough not to create any problems they could participate without any hindrances being put in their way. That was most often the case. There were friendships and relationships that went beyond the boundaries of our village. These relationships were nurtured and provided for change and diversity. However, if a young man from the outside did not abide by the unwritten rules he would have to face the consequences, which could best be described as an all out brawl. Our village had the reputation of being a rather friendly one. Only on rare occasions were there any fights or brawls. But if young men arrived from a village well known for their arrogance and haughtiness they were quickly put in their place.

The leisurely winter also provided other amusements and activities. Along with the Sunday dances, which in Shrovetide could also be a masquerade ball as previously mentioned, young people also had other opportunities to get to know one another. For example, there were the sleigh rides.

Because the land was flat all around us, sleighs could only be set in motion when pulled by horses. The horses needed the exercise in the winter months and this was combined with the desires of the young people who arranged the sleigh riding parties. During this activity it was often bitterly cold and such parties required the necessary preparations. Building bricks were placed in bake ovens to make them as hot as possible. Then they were placed under the feet of the passengers in the sleigh. A coat called a Romanian *Bunda*, which was made out of a sheepskin pelt, provided warmth to the passengers when worn in winter with the wool on the inside. In the summer months the *Bunda* did the opposite and provided a cooling effect if the wool was on the outside. Those who did not own a *Bunda* had to wear thick warm clothing. The horses were hitched and harnessed with their parade equipment on such excursions. The silver pieces were shined and the leather was polished with lard. Little bells that sparkled in the sun were attached to the horses' harnesses. These horse-drawn sleighs and team were a splendid sight to behold. The farmers' young sons went to great effort to make the best impression. Naturally, girls from the village were invited to these sleigh riding parties. This often led to races between the various sleighs and teams. Now and then all of the passengers ended up in the snow. This happened most often due to a sudden turn. Injuries on such occasions seldom occurred because the deep snow cushioned them against such possibilities. Sometimes

these spills were actually planned just for laughs to see the girls floundering around in the snow.

Another favorite winter activity was the *Reih* [rotation]. The name of this activity relates to the practice of meeting at different homes on a rotating basis. All of the older age groups had their own rotation: the older boys and girls, the younger married couples and the middle-aged couples. The very old seldom had a rotation because the vast majority of them seldom went out. They had to look after the house while the younger members of the household were out.

The single girls and boys usually had their rotation on Sundays. The meeting place was always at the house of the parents of one of the girls. The gathering could number from eight to ten couples. A great deal of preparation was made so that no one would complain afterwards about what they had been offered. There was always good baking and a good supply of drinks. The chief activities at such a rotation involving unmarried couples were parlor games. Sometimes when they played *G'falt dir dei G'sell* they had strong competitions when one boy or another wanted to demonstrate how "precious" or how much he "cherished" one of the girls.

It was different with the young married couples. They usually met together in the evening after a day's work. During the winter months it could involve several evenings during the week. There were fewer games and instead there was a lot of talk and gossip. Sooner or later the men turned to playing cards and the women brought out their knitting and sewing. On occasion, during the rotation among the young married couples, dancing took place if there was someone in the group who played the harmonica.

The older married people, especially if they had marriageable children in their household, had other things to talk about. It was not uncommon for marriage matches to be first discussed and made during one of their rotations, or possibilities were explored, often at a time when the young people were not even thinking about one another in that sense. The men were engaged in topics like daily work, the price of grain, local politics and such, then playing cards were brought out and games of *Tarock*, *Fuchsen* and *Mariage* followed.

Regardless of which rotation it was, they had to leave before midnight. That is how the winter months passed by. The only work that could not be avoided was taking care of the livestock and poultry. The villagers ate supper early in the evening and did not sleep much later than they did in the summer months. Feeding the animals took place before daybreak and was usually completed by the time it was light outside.

The *Reih* was dearly loved during Lent because there were no dances at either *Wirtshaus*. It was practically the only possibility for young people to get together legally without other people talking about it.

Winter was over at Candlemas. Not in the sense that it was no longer cold or that there was no more snow, but in the mood of the people. There was often an additional snow flurry in March to remind people of winter. The impatience that was rampant in the winter

months now turned to the welcome thoughts of the spring work ahead. The sowing of the summer seed had to be undertaken at the appropriate time and the fields needed to be plowed for the root crops before the weeds got a head start. One was also curious to see the condition of the winter wheat that had survived the cold months. From the beginning of February onwards we lived out the old proverb: "After Candlemas forget spinning, eat supper at daylight!" [It means one should stop the winter evening activity of spinning and take supper before it got dark so they could fully concentrate on agriculture. In the summer the villagers were usually sleeping before it was dark because they got up very early in the morning. Candlemas is celebrated in the Roman Catholic Church on the 2nd of February.]

Also at this time the still missing workmen, mostly unmarried farm hands and drivers, were hired for the coming season. With a single word, the winter sleep was over and everywhere the noise of work could be heard. The preparations for the coming working season filled each day.

With the first of the warm breezes a somewhat unpleasant time set in: the spring thaw. When the snow melted and the frost came out of the ground a time came when we were more housebound than we had been in the winter months. Except for the sidewalks alongside of the houses, the streets in the village had no pavement. Whoever attempted to leave his yard with his horse and wagon had to reckon with sinking down into the soft muddied road. This was the time when four horses had to be harnessed to a wagon to take a few sacks of wheat to the mill. The wheels of the wagon sank down to their axles and the straining horses' hooves got stuck in the mud as they braced themselves to move forward. We would often say that it would be a good year if everything quickly dried out after the coming of the warm snow melting winds. When that happened we could get out of our houses and nothing no longer stood in the way of the industrious farmer to get out and cultivate his fields with the goal of bringing in a good harvest.

The next big event for the inhabitants of our village to eagerly look forward to was the festival of Easter and the celebrations related to it. All of the population held the Easter feast in the highest esteem. Not only the children of the village, but also the adults were feverish with anticipation for the Easter holidays.

While the men worked in the fields from early in the morning until late at night, the tradesmen were also at work in their workshops and the housewives had their hands full in and around the house. In the hotbeds of the greenhouses the vegetable plants were nurtured until they could be replanted at the right time and the small flower gardens also became colorful. The earth had to be dug up outside to plant the flowers that had been kept in warm rooms during the winter. The poultry pen was the domain of the housewife, in there she began the preparations to ensure the increase of her flock. There was no such thing as an incubator. Everything was a result of the efforts to breed the hens, ducks and geese. Special nests were set up for this purpose and the eggs were carefully chosen and examined. And what was of most importance, the entire house had to have a fresh coat of paint. Everything had to be fresh and new just like the year that had just begun. As the holidays approached the activities focused on coloring eggs, baking and house cleaning. If

there was a summer kitchen it was the time to transfer the kitchen equipment and supplies into it.

Daily life also intensified in the workshops of the tradesmen. By custom, and if it was possible, one ordered new shoes and new clothing for the holidays. As a consequence, the tailor and the shoemaker were extremely busy. This was also true of the tradesmen whose products were related to agriculture, such as the blacksmith and the wagon maker. During the winter the individual parts and sections for new wagons were made and prepared, now they were assembled and brought to the blacksmith so he could complete the undertaking.

Also at this time the farmers with small landholdings and those with only a house and garden, and later the harvesters, would begin to make work arrangements with would-be employers. In the meantime they worked as day laborers in the large wheat fields clearing the thistles while others began working in the brickyards in order to earn some income.

Even the children of the village were not exempt from the renewed agricultural tasks of the adults. The older boys and girls accompanied their parents in uprooting the thistles, and the younger children helped their mothers around the house as best as they could. Finishing their school homework took more and more effort because the children were also getting sick and tired of sitting around the house. Soon the first of the *Palmkätzchen* [known as pussy willows in North America] were in bloom and the competition for belonging to the *Ratscherbuben* [Rattling Boys] reached its high point because they were responsible for cutting the *Palmkätzchen* and providing them to the church for Palm Sunday. The following section will give a glimpse of the activities and forces at work in the village in preparing for Easter.

[***Ratscherbuben and the Ratsche:*** The next several pages discuss the *Ratscherbuben* and the *Ratsche*. A *Ratsche* was a unique noisemaker; the word translates to rattle or ratchet, but it was different than both. It was made of wood and consisted of a shaft with a handle and a gear-like serrated cylinder perpendicular to the handle. The cylinder had a rectangular wood frame around it that could be rotated. Within the wood frame there was a flapper that rested on the serrated cylinder. When the device was held by the handle and put into a circular motion it made a loud cracking sound as it rotated. They were hand carried by a special group of boys called the *Ratscherbuben*. However, there was also a Great *Ratsche* in the bell tower, it was much larger, stationary and louder, and was operated from there. According to Jacob Steigerwald, a handheld *Ratsche* was sometimes a genuine heirloom that was handed down through the generations.]

WHEN THE PALMS (PUSSY WILLOWS) WERE BLOOMING

Along the banks of the large pond behind the post office there was an abundance of huge bushy willows. They blossomed early in the year. We named these long stemmed rods with their soft gray and puffy open bud *Palmkatzel*. When these pussy willows bloomed, Easter could not be far off. It was a significant holiday celebrated every year and was

especially so for the boys who had the good fortune of belonging to the *Ratscherbuben*. Easter time for us was above all, *Ratscher* time!

But before we could go through the village with our handheld *Ratsche*, some other significant preparation work had to be done by us. The first task was to cut the pussy willows for Palm Sunday. There had to be at least one of these long stemmed beautiful soft gray pussy willows for each of the worshippers on Palm Sunday and they had to be placed next to the altar where they would surely be blessed.

A few days before Palm Sunday, not too soon, we *Ratscherbuben* headed out to the pond equipped with a good sharp pocketknife. This is where the pussy willows would be cut down, tied into bundles and laid out for later transportation back to the village. Then according to custom we explored the secrets of the pond. It was an investigation of one of the oldest ponds among the many all around the village. The banks of the pond were densely overgrown. Numerous small islands with old gnarled and decayed willow trunks were visible. The tall reeds standing all around the outer edge of the islands made it impossible for us to see everything that was on such an island or what was going on there.

We got into a wooden washtub that we had “borrowed” by stealth from the Post Master’s shed and set out across the water. It took a considerable amount of luck and skill to maintain our balance in the thing. Only the most skillful among us made it to the beckoning islands and back without mishap. While for some others this adventure resulted in their first out door bath in the new year. But our wet clothes did not matter to us, the real disappointment was that with the exception of the gnarled willow trunks, we did not get see anything else on the island. Even the fishhooks we had left as a marker the previous year were nowhere to be found. Eventually our research expedition had to be called off when we heard one of the other boys yell: “Illiewich is coming!” That brought us all back to reality. Illiewich was the Post Master and a gentleman of the old school who never threatened anyone and was only concerned about our well being and health. The whole affair ended suddenly as it did every year and we were at least successful in cutting the pussy willows without any complications. We carried the bundles of pussy willows on our shoulders and marched off to the church. But there were still two more things we had to do before Holy Thursday. We had to pull handfuls of green grass to spread out on the church floor for the celebration of the resurrection on Easter eve. Secondly, the long ladder stored at the sacristan’s house had to be taken to the bell tower. We could not expect *Vetter Wastl* who was the sacristan to do this alone, and besides, the large basket of green grass was too heavy for him. The ladder and basket were just too much for one old man.

The most authentic function of the *Ratscherbuben* came into its own on Maundy Thursday. On this first holy day the three bells in our bell tower “flew off” to Rome. The Great *Ratsche* took over the function of the bells. The Great *Ratsche* had been taken up high into the bell tower and had required the use of the long ladder from the sacristan’s house.

The purpose of the Great *Ratsche* was to provide us with the signal that we were waiting for in our appointed places in the village. *Vetter Wastl* climbed up the ladder and with twists and turns he set the Great *Ratsche* noise-maker into motion. An unruly, near deafening roar broke out, which was meant for us: "Get going boys!"

The *Ratscherbuben* divided up the whole village into sections. The *Udjan Gasse* was the Lower Street [*Untere Gasse*] from the house of Schwob Leopold [Leopold Bajerle] up to the house of Hans Herold. The New Street [*Neue Gasse*] was called *Wasserlacken* [Water Puddle]. The Upper Street [*Haupt Strasse*] from Georg Birg's to the Muhr innkeeper was called *Butterloch* [Butter Hole]. And the rest of the village was designated as Birg *Eck* [Birg Corner]. There was also a special troop to do the *Ratscherbuben* work at the outlying homesteads of the village: Nikolaus Birg, Frass, Franz Birg and Arnold Heim.

Two of the *Ratscherbuben* were assigned to each of these sections of the village. Each of them was equipped with a wooden handheld *Ratsche* noisemaker and a club. The latter would be used to subdue the dogs they encountered at most houses.

One can imagine the spectacle as *Vetter Wastl* unleashed the Great *Ratsche* and its rumble and roar engulfed the whole village. With the first impact and roar the *Ratscherbuben* let loose. They went into every yard, said the appropriate saying for the occasion and started in with their handheld *Ratsche*. Occasionally the household dog went wild in response to all of the racket and received a hefty swat or two from the boy's club. There were also some other special tactics used for these kinds of altercations with the household dogs. The *Ratscherbuben* brought along their own dog thrashers. These were younger boys who in the future would join the ranks of the official *Ratscherbuben*. These younger boys wanted to demonstrate their worthiness for joining the *Ratscherbuben* and so fulfilled their role as dog thrashers with great zeal, much to the chagrin of the poor dogs involved.

The noise making occurred twice on Maundy Thursday. At noon we called out: "Dear Christians let us inform you that the small bell has struck twelve o'clock." In the evening our announcement changed to: "Ave Maria, mortal terror, Jesus Christ."

Good Friday brought with it rather heavy work for the *Ratscherbuben*. It already began with the early morning prayers. The announcement we made was: "Ave Maria, this is the hour of the martyrdom of Jesus Christ." No sooner had we boys regrouped in our appointed assembly place and the roar of the Great *Ratsche* sounded again. Within the next hour every house had to be visited twice. The first time we called out: "This is the first call for mass!" The second time we went around we said: "This is the second and last call for mass." Then after the church service the midday hour was soon announced with our now well known cry of: "Dear Christians let us inform you that the small bell has struck twelve o'clock." There was very little provided to eat on Good Friday. However, early in the morning when one could hear popcorn popping in all of the houses, we already had received a good cap full of popcorn after we said our obligatory piece: "I am rattling for a cap full of popcorn." This popcorn was the proper food for fasting on Good Friday. We *Ratscherbuben* received our nutrition for the day in this way. Understandably, Good Friday was strictly observed and fasting was always a part of it.

The afternoon was no less strenuous for us. Already at two o'clock the Great *Ratsche* rumbled and roared again. And again we rushed from house to house announcing: "This is the first call for the sermon." An hour later we went out again and said, "This is the second and final call for the sermon." Then around four o'clock the most important word for the day was announced: "This is the hour of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ." A deep sorrow even overcame us rather unruly boys. The whole village was enveloped in silence. This would last until the rumble of the Great *Ratsche* signaled our last assignment for the day. We ran again from house to house and told everyone: "Ave Maria, Jesus Christ has passed away." But the day had not yet ended. Following the rattling for evening prayers, preparations were made for the selection of the "Jew." This custom proceeded as follows: The "Jew" was something no one wanted to be. The person's face would be painted with designs and he had to assemble the Easter eggs and some alms that were considered to be the earnings of the *Ratscherbuben*. Colorful circles were painted on his cheeks and black crosses were put on his chin and forehead. The decision as to who would be the "Jew" was made on the night between Friday and Saturday. Whoever was the last one of the *Ratscherbuben* to appear at the bell tower at twelve o'clock in the night would be declared the "Jew." Usually the boys formed themselves into two groups, then they kept watch from different houses and planned on how to outdo the other group. Around eleven o'clock they began to sneak around and make their way toward the bell tower. *Vetter* *Wastl* usually arrived a half an hour before it was time to set the Great *Ratsche* in motion and as soon as it roared at midnight all of the boys ran. The last one to arrive at the bell tower was the "Jew." Not only the *Ratscherbuben* wanted to know who the "Jew" was, the whole village waited for the news.

The duties of the *Ratscherbuben* on the Saturday before Easter were of a more pleasant nature. Early in the morning when it was time for prayer the *Ratscherbuben* ran to the houses and delivered the saying: "Ave Maria, the Resurrection of Christ!" Then came the summons to worship in the morning. Around nine o'clock we said: "This is the first call for the baptism of fire." And about an hour later the final saying to be delivered: "This is the second call for the baptism of fire, the first for the Holy Office and the last for this year." At noon the bells from Rome had "returned" and the mission of the *Ratscherbuben* was completed. Now followed the pleasant part of the day: assembling the eggs and filling a bag with coins. The "Jew" was all painted up and things were now set. Two of the *Ratscherbuben* carried a willow basket filled with straw, the leader of the *Ratscherbuben* held his hand *Ratsche*, the "Jew" received in his hand the bag for the coins and the remaining *Ratscherbuben* carried their clubs as their status symbol. They entered a house and sang the following song:

"Here come the three holy women,
They want to see the grave.
They are searching for the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who rose from the dead.
Alleluia, Alleluia.
Summer, Summer tomorrow,
The boys are eating the eggs.
The girls get the shells.

Dust up, Dust up,
In the winter the hair falls out,
The birds and the flowers,
The summer will eventually come.
People, O people, O beloved People,
Here comes the holy Easter time.
Give us eggs, give us money,
Give us whatever you feel like giving.
Only not a spanking, because that hurts.”

Then the leader of the *Ratscherbuben* called out: “Good fortune to this house, all misfortune go away from this house, give us a couple of dozen eggs and a few *Dinars* for the Jew.” While he said this he emphasized it by turning his handheld *Ratsche*. The people of the household gave a few raw eggs, depending on their ability to be generous. In most cases at this time the Easter eggs were already colored and some of them were given to the *Ratscherbuben*. And there were also some coins to put in the bag that the “Jew” was carrying. Lastly, the *Ratscherbuben* said their farewells by singing the following song:

“We are thankful for the gifts we have received,
God will reward you,
From above where he lives.”

By late afternoon all the houses in the village were visited. Then the collected items were brought to *Vetter* Wastl’s house where they were all divided equally. Every single one of the *Ratscherbuben* got his fair share of the money; it was usually from eighteen to twenty-five *Dinars*. His share of raw eggs was about twenty-five to thirty, plus a few colored ones. *Vetter* Wastl also received his fair share.

Because of the chronic lack of money in the village, the results of the rattling were an important portion of the yearly budget for the boys. But the use of the money had already been planned even before it ever fell into their hands.

Other incidents in this regard: There was a Jewish family in the village, the household of Jakob Müller. They had a general store with all kinds of wares for sale; there was Jakob the father, Luisa the mother and two sons: Oskar and Schiga. They were fine people and were fully integrated into the life of our village. We were not very aware of the fact that these people were a Jewish family until the following incident happened:

When the midday Great *Ratsche* rumbled through the village and the appointed greeting was announced everywhere: “Dear Christians let us inform you that the little bell has struck twelve o’clock!” Luisa Müller suddenly appeared in her yard and said, “We are not Christians!” Upon hearing that the *Ratscherbub* replied, “Dear Jewish one, let us tell you...” In response to the boy’s quick wittedness, Luisa Müller, who weighed at least one hundred kilograms, was so astonished and surprised that she ran into her store and brought the *Ratscherbuben* a large tray of various kinds of sweets and candies. From then on it was

the duty of the *Ratscherbuben* leader to inform all of the other members that in future they too would have to announce at Luisa's house: "Dear Jewish..."

Now as to how the *Ratscherbuben* were organized and who could and could not be a member, who could be a dog thrasher and those who were too small. This occupied all of the youth of the village in a very intensive manner from Christmas to Easter. The intervention of some of the older boys was often necessary in order to finally get on the list. If the recommendation of one of the older boys was of no avail, sometimes a pocketknife changed ownership. We learned a lot of lessons about life this way, ones that were of great value to us later on.

The Easter holidays as said previously were days of great celebration. For this festival our priest from Zichydorf came to conduct Easter worship and hear confession before mass. Housewives only did the very necessary housework during the two major Easter Day observances. Even the cooking of the main festive meal had to be arranged in such a way that she could participate in the Easter services.

The children already made their Easter nests on Maundy Thursday. The parents placed the Easter gifts in their nests on the Saturday night before Easter Sunday morning. The gifts always included several colored eggs and if they were fortunate they received Easter eggs made out of sugar or chocolate. If the children had been especially good they might find a chocolate Easter rabbit in their nest. In addition, sometimes there were new shoes and new clothes found in their nests.

On Easter Monday we loved to go and visit our grandparents or other close relatives, especially the brothers and sisters of our parents. Often when grandparents lived in a neighboring village the horses were hitched to a wagon and we went off to *Oma's* where naturally enough there were more Easter eggs waiting for us. It was not uncommon for the first *Wirtshaus* dance to be held on Easter Monday because during Lent such activities were strictly forbidden, but now the restrictions were over. From Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday the idea of dancing was unheard of and totally discouraged.

Especially to be remembered in this regard is the Easter celebration in the year 1941. It was certainly the last to be celebrated with relative freedom, although there were some concerns and worries being felt in the village. The war between Germany and Yugoslavia broke out on Palm Sunday in 1941. Whole squadrons of fighter planes flew over our village. We had our first glimpse of modern military weaponry and equipment. Our village was occupied by German troops on Good Friday. Following some scattered gunfire we came face to face with the first of the German soldiers. From then on we lived in an occupied country. Many thought that from Good Friday on we were in a liberated country. In truth our passion and suffering began on this Good Friday in the year 1941, which would end in death, homelessness, suffering and misery. More than a third of the people of our village who joyously celebrated Easter with us in 1941 would lose their lives in the passion we endured later, often in an agonizing violent death that is beyond description.

The resurrection celebration was the traditional high point of the Easter preparations, but in this memorable year of 1941 it consisted of special services and had a special fervor of its own. The resurrection procession, that did not take second place to the great procession on Corpus Christi Day, made its way through the whole village. The windows of the houses were all lit up with candles and decorated with the first of the spring flowers. The bells, which had only shortly before “returned” to the village, rang more loudly and clearly than usual and the traditional hymn, “The Lord Is Risen,” was sung like never before with great loudness and fervor at this time. This was all possible because the whole population of the village was still present, which would not be the case much longer. The evening was bright with many millions of stars sparkling and shining in the cloudless sky in an attempt to add to the glory and joy of the festival.

Here is another beautiful custom associated with Easter Monday, it was known as the *Mädelspritzen* [The spraying of the girls]. We cannot find an origin for this custom. It consisted of what its name implies: spraying the girls of the village with water. Respectable young fellows prepared themselves for the occasion by purchasing some expensive perfume that was kept in a small flask so they would use it sparingly. Less respectable ones filled their flasks with water that at the most might have been heated and was still warm so as not frighten the girls too much when they were sprayed or how we said, “When they got acquainted with the wetness.”

Some of the boys were courageous enough to go right into the houses where the girls were living and spray the girl in the presence of her mother or both of her parents. While spraying the girl he would say: “Fresh and healthy!” Smaller boys received an Easter egg as a reward for their spraying while older boys were invited by the father to have a drink. The mission in the house was then accomplished so they went on to the next house. This went on until the “first” bell tolled, which meant it was time for church.

Many of the youth ran down the streets and lay in wait until a girl came by. She would then be sprayed by the contents of the flask until she ran away.

Bold girls had their own fun. In the early morning hours of Easter Monday they went outside as if they had something to do. One of their favorite activities was sweeping the sidewalk, just like girls had to do every other day because their mothers believed that in this way people would take note that their daughter was industrious and orderly. Getting water from the well was another excuse for a short excursion from the house. In this case, fetching water had the possibility of bringing some unpleasant results. If a rude fellow confronted a girl walking with a watering can in her hand it was quite possible that he would over do the *Mädchenspritzen* and his adventure would end in the great water trough near the Muhr *Wirtshaus*.

Just in passing, I am reminded of another observation to be made about the practice of fetching water. Because there were only a few artesian wells in the village it became the custom to fetch household drinking water from these wells with a watering can. The artesian wells had a depth of one hundred meters or more. From their pipes flowed wonderful, cold and refreshing drinking water. The wells in the yards by the houses, from

which water had to be drawn in a bucket, only had a depth of six to ten meters. This water had impurities and was dangerous to drink. As a result, fetching water played an important role in terms of health issues so this custom was well established and one also had to follow the fashion. It was not enough to simply fetch the water from the artesian well, the watering can also played a role in this as well as the clothing worn by the person who fetched the water, especially when the water carriers were girls.

It has already been mentioned previously that daughters were closely watched by their mothers. One of the ways to get out from under their mother's strict surveillance was to go and fetch water. Sometimes the trip to the artesian well could take a long time if the girl got stopped and was distracted with a rather interesting and long conversation. Clever young men knew exactly when the girl they were interested in would be coming with her watering can. According to reports, certain marriages had their beginning in this way and in a sense resulted from fetching water.

For us boys however, fetching water was a rather tiresome chore. Usually, just when we were having the most fun playing some game, a mother would call a boy and press the handle of small watering can in his hand with the order, "Go quickly and get me some fresh water because it's high time for me to cook the noodles." In such circumstances there was simply no way out. Everything had to stop because fetching water took precedence over everything else. The water cans were made of sheet zinc or enameled tin, but some cans were not only made of enameled tin, they also had colorful designs painted on them and they had a lid that could be snapped on. Drinking water was also fetched with pitchers made of burned clay, but only the adults were trusted with carrying them. These pitchers kept the water cool for a longer time. The workers took drinking water out to the fields in a *Logl*; it was made out of wood by a cooper. It could be in a round flat shape or it could be in the form of a bucket with an attached lid. The drinking water in it remained relatively cool for a long time, especially when we stored it under a pile of fresh mowed green clover very early in the morning.

The next major holiday after Easter was Pentecost. The time between Easter and Pentecost in the village was filled with busy activities and out in the fields there was much heavy work. The large cornfields especially required a lot of work at this time. In addition to the days of rest on Sundays, there was also Ascension Day at the end of May.

The month of May cannot simply be written off without a word about the May Devotions to Mary. Even though there was no resident priest in the village, the May Devotions were held every day in May.

In order for this to happen it required a close working team that was responsible for carrying them out. Naturally, this included *Vetter* Klos, Karola Birg *Neni*, *Besel*³⁴ Liss Amon [Elisabeth Amon] and when needed the teacher Mr. Petri. Alongside of the obligatory prayers, mostly Marian hymns were sung since the May Devotions were churchly in character and to the honor of the Virgin Mary. On some occasions the team in

³⁴ *Besel* is an honorary title in the Swabian dialect, it is used to address an older woman not related to you. Similar to *Neni* on page 25.

our village received outside support from the priests who came from the Raphael House in Belgrade. Many daughters from our village attended the public school there so these missionaries often came to our village. They conducted the devotions and looked after other activities. The objective of our spiritual lords from Belgrade was to have all of the inhabitants of our village come to confession at least once during the month of May and also take communion. During the month of May the inhabitants of our village were spared from being without a priest and not having regular mass, plus they had the possibility of making confession and receiving communion. In addition, the missionaries also provided an educational program after the May Devotions, so after the devotions people did not go home, instead they went to one of the *Wirtshäuser* where they listened to lectures with regard to religious questions, watched films or participated in discussions.

In addition to these evening programs, the priests carried out home visits, which resulted in the housewives going through all kinds of preparations for their coming. People said that with only a very few exceptions, all the residents of our village participated in the intensive month of May by attending the May Devotions to Mary and going to confession and communion. It was done in spite of the great amount work involved in the fields at that time of the year, not to mention the household gardens and the tasks associated with the poultry. Processions related to special needs and intentions were also led by the missionaries. Dodoloje, the local Gypsy songstress, was not allowed to step foot in the village while the missionaries were there.

During the night of May first, the May trees were set up by the male youth of the village. Such a May tree stood in front of the houses where a marriageable daughter lived with her family. The trees would remain standing there until the end of May when along with musical accompaniment, the male youth would come and dig them up. The setting up of the May tree left room for all kinds of pranks and hoaxes as well as gave expression to some of our old folk customs.

The tallest May tree stood in front of one of our *Wirtshäuser*. A bouquet with long colorful ribbons was set at the very top of the tree, which was common for all of the May trees, but there was also a flask of wine on this one that any of the youth could get for himself if he could manage to climb to the top of the tree.

There were occasions when rivalries and disagreements erupted between the older and younger youth in the village with regard to the May trees. Then things did not go according to plan. It was the older and stronger youth who were responsible for setting up the May trees, they were the ones who had already been called up for their examination by the military. In years where they all qualified for service they had to show off their physical fitness and strength, and they were not shy about loudly boasting of their prowess and manliness to the rest of the villagers, especially in comparison with the younger and less physically mature youth. In the face of that, sometimes these older physically stronger youth had difficulties in digging up the May tree in the front of the *Wirtshaus*. This was hardly perceived as an especially heroic deed on the part of the recruits. So what had happened? The younger boys had undertaken a lot of heavy work by digging up the large May tree during the night and nailing two heavy wooden planks to the bottom of the tree in

the shape of an “x”. Then they reburied the tree trunk and smoothed out the earth around it to erase all signs that the tree had been disturbed. It is obvious why the reinforced trunk resisted the older boys’ efforts and they were unable to get the tree out of the ground. If this happened to a group of recruits, people spoke of it for years and naturally always laughed about it. As a result, the lordly recruits who were the victims of this kind of misfortune lost their proud posturing of the past and were somewhat more humble and less provocative in their demeanor when walking about in the village.

The whole countryside around us was a virtual sea of various shades of green, from the light green of the grain fields to the deep green of the cornfields, and they will never be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to experience living on the Great Pannonian Plain of which the Banat was a part. The whole countryside was filled with the sweet fragrance of the acacia blossoms. By the end of May and beginning of June the wheat started blooming and brought a new variation of aroma. The fragrance of the fields was totally different, but not any less pleasing than the acacia blossoms. The air was filled with birds, the larks were trilling their songs early in the morning throughout the area and the earth was once again dry so that dust accompanied the footsteps of the people wherever they went. This symphony of refreshing fragrances and life itself will never be forgotten by those of us who experienced them. Even today when I pass by a field of blooming grain the feel of the refreshing breezes and the unmatched fragrances of our old homeland immediately come to mind as if I was present there once more. My heart then grows heavy because I know that my homeland no longer really exists, nor will any ever match the one that I experienced and learned to love in my youth.

There were customs in our village that were closely tied to Pentecost and were still observed even in the last years of the war. In this case again the origins of these customs are obscure or completely unknown. Whenever I would ask about them my mother always told me, “That’s the way my mother always did it!” That was the answer I got for the reason why the children were sewn to their bedding. This sewing took place on the night before the day of Pentecost and it was the most harmless of the customs. A much rougher and more coarse custom was “Making Pentecosters.” This was organized and carried out by the older boys of the village and took place on the evening before Pentecost. Their destination when carrying out their plans were the houses in which girls of marriageable age were living. These older boys thought up all kinds of pranks, such as unhinging the small entrance gates to the yard or dumping a load of stable manure in front of the entrance door to the house. In the early hours of the morning one could watch the fathers of these daughters walking around with the wrong gates and searching for their own missing yard gates. Or you could stop by and see them cleaning the house door that was all dirty from the manure piled up against it, and along with this you would often overhear loud curses and swear words ushering in the holy day of Pentecost. Really bold fellows would go so far as to take apart a rack wagon and haul the separate parts to the top of a straw stack where they put it back together. To remove such a wagon took a great deal of work and required several people to do it. It was not uncommon to see such a rack wagon perched on a straw stack several weeks after Pentecost.

Of course, all these pranks had to be performed while the watchful father was on the lookout for the boys. As a result, the older boys had to come up with all kinds of crafty ways to carry out their mission. The horses used for pulling the wagons piled high with stable manure had their hooves wrapped in cloth to muffle the sound. Sometimes it was necessary to create elaborate distractions to outsmart the attentive father. All of these preparations and planning on the part of the older boys added to the fun and made it all well worthwhile. “Making Pentecosters” could show us that one was up to meeting the challenges of life. Perhaps this may have something to do with the origin of this custom at Pentecost.

It was hardly a week and a half after Pentecost when the feast of Corpus Christi had the whole village on its feet. Since the procession went by most of the houses, the last traces of “Making Pentecosters” had to be wiped away if one did not want to be talked about. In most cases they were able to complete this task.

CORPUS CHRISTI: A SUMMER FESTIVAL

Corpus Christi was the festival we celebrated in the early summer. Even though only a normal church service took place on the actual day of the festival without a priest being present, the whole village prepared for it weeks on end to ensure that the procession would be worthy of the day and as impressive as possible. The following Sunday after the actual festival was our Corpus Christi celebration. On that occasion the priest came to our village and provided the procession with pomp and dignity.

In the morning prior to the procession the young boys, primarily the *Ratscherbuben*, went out to the canal and gathered several bundles of branches from black poplar trees and brought them back to the village. These branches would then be planted all along the procession route. The women placed large batches of wildflowers at the chapels where short devotions would be held along the way of the procession. They had to be fresh and delicate. The decorating of the chapels took place along with the planting of the poplar branches. There were three brick chapels in the village that were closed up and only opened and decorated for the Corpus Christi procession. The money for constructing two of these chapels was donated by families who had immigrated to America. On the gable of these small buildings there was a gray plaque with the following inscription: “Donated by the Schulz³⁵ family from America.” One of these chapels stood in the front garden at the house of the Wüst family and another was in the front garden at the house of the Grassl family. The third brick chapel stood in the small garden at the house of the Brockmüller family. The neighbor, Georg Birg had it built there. Stoffel, the village mason, along with old Sepp Bies, built all three of these chapels. A fourth chapel, which was always removed after the procession passed by, stood at the gate to the house of old Mrs. Kirchner next to the Muhr’s *Wirtshaus*.

The route taken by the procession began at the church and then traveled along the street passing the school [the Cross Street] and on to the chapel next to the Wüst house. From

³⁵ The Schulz/Schultz family that immigrated to Saskatchewan.

there the festive procession made its way along the Lower Street up to the house of Franz Grassl where the second chapel stood. Then it went on along the New Street to the chapel by the Brockmüller house and from there to the last chapel by the house of old Mrs. Kirchner. After a good hour, the procession returned back to the church for a brief devotion before the procession disbanded. A schoolboy who carried the small cross from the church led the procession. He, in turn, was followed by the Hügel band. Then came the Marian Maidens all dressed in white and carrying their small baskets. The baskets were filled with rose petals for scattering along the way. Elisabeth Amon led The Marian Maidens. Following them were the older school children, both boys and girls. The focal point of the whole procession was the canopy called "Heaven," under which the priest strode bearing the Blessed Sacrament and dispensing a blessing on all sides as he went along. The canopy was carried by four young married men. In front of the canopy several strong young men carried the votive banners from the church. We had four such banners. One was consecrated to St. Wendelin and another to St. Bernadette of Lourdes, the third to the Sacred Heart of Mary and the fourth to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The houses along the route of the procession were also decorated. Burning candles stood on the window sills so the holy statues in the windows could be seen clearly. Hymns were sung along the way from one chapel to another and interspersed with the hymns the prayer leader would offer prayers. Along with the procession there was always appropriate musical accompaniment.

Following the canopy, the mayor was leading the representatives of the village who were all walking in the procession. The teacher was also part of this group. They were followed by all of the rest of the men in the village. The women brought up the rear. While the procession was underway all three bells in the tower were pealing. Every single family in the village participated in the celebration of Corpus Christi. Before the procession formed, High Mass was celebrated in the church. On this occasion the church was always too small. The younger men had to take their places out in the courtyard and follow the mass from there. As the bell rang at the moment of consecration a deep silence permeated over the assembled congregation. Corpus Christi was without a doubt a high light of church life in the village. Everything was done with great solemnity and dignity.

A REMARKABLE SUNDAY MORNING

Early in the morning, before breakfast, my father told me, "Today you will drive over to Zichydorf and get the priest." This was the first time that this honorable task was assigned to me, the youngest of the family, even though I was barely thirteen years old. This made me feel proud, blessed and excited. My hands shook with nervousness while I got dressed up in my Sunday clothes. I couldn't believe, that I, a mere thirteen year old was being trusted with driving our team of horses and wagon to the neighboring village to pick up the most respected personality in our area, the Reverend Priest, and bring him to our small and simple church to conduct Sunday mass.

In my haste and eagerness while getting dressed, I tore the collar button off my Sunday shirt. My mother refused to profane the holiness of Sunday and would not sew the button back on, so I was forced to quickly take another shirt, one with stripes and a stiff starched collar. This made me very unhappy because the stiff starched collar often caused painful abrasions on my neck. Finally everything was set and I had my breakfast.

Two older and very reliable horses were brought out from the stable and were hitched to the lighter wagon. They were decked out in their brightly polished harnesses. We then set out. I had to make my first stop at the community center. There I had to pick up the so-called *Federsitz* [a seat with springs], it was reserved for seating honorable personalities and was well padded and upholstered with soft leather for their comfort. This seat had to be set up in the back portion of my wagon to ensure that the Reverend Priest could travel with ease and in comfort.

After about an hour traveling in a slight trot I arrived in my light wagon at the rectory in Zichydorf. Our spiritual lord, who in the eyes of a thirteen year old appeared to be an old man, was already waiting for me there. In reply to my polite and respectful, "*Grüss Gott* [Greetings in the Name of God] Your Reverence," he responded, "Doesn't your father have a younger driver to send to get the priest?" "No," I answered truthfully. "Nothing will happen I assure you Sir, the horses are calm and are quite tired after a full week's work." My noble traveling companion piously climbed up into the wagon. He settled down on the well-upholstered seat and made himself comfortable. While my horses and wagon traveled down the still and empty village streets, although every now and then I could see a girl sweeping the sidewalk at her house, my traveling companion attempted to read his prayer book. But that proved to be quite impossible for him because we had to pass over many street potholes. Eventually I could hear the sound of his snoring from the back of the wagon.

Shortly before nine o'clock, after the bell had announced the "first" and "second" call to mass, I delivered his reverence in good condition to the front of the church, which was already filled to the very last pew. With the words, "You have my thanks my lad. You are already a competent driver," my traveling companion slipped off the wagon. He immediately made his way into the church where his servers were all dressed, ready and waiting for him at the altar. I quickly drove the wagon home, put the horses in the stable and hurried back to be in church on time.

A beautiful High Mass was celebrated on this extraordinary Sunday. On the three other Sundays of the month the worship would be held without the priest and there would be no sermon. But today on this beautiful Sunday the teacher seemed to play the harmonium with a greater deal of devotion than he usually did. The women sang the hymns with great enthusiasm and *Vetter Klos*, on whose shoulders the whole liturgy of the mass usually rested, recited the prayers very relaxed and more understandable to the whole congregation. In his sermon, the priest focused on the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and its significance for us. He explained how we could arrange our lives to make them pleasing to God. The priest chose his words very carefully and spoke with great intensity, for after all,

it would have to last us for a whole month because it would be that long before another farm boy from the village picked up the priest in Zichydorf.

With a resounding, “Holy God We Praise Your Name,” sung by all, including the men and children, the mass concluded at around ten thirty in the morning. The men hurried on their way to take their usual and favorite spot at the *Wirtshaus*. The housewives hurried home to put the Sunday meal on the table and have it ready to be serve at twelve o’clock. The youth of the village stood around outside of the church hoping that others might notice and be impressed by their newest clothes, hats or what not. The mass servers went off to the Muhr *Wirtshaus* because they knew that the chairman of the parish would be there. The chairman gave each server a *Dinar* in payment for their ministrations at the altar.

I went home and got the wagon ready to drive the Reverend Priest back to Zichydorf where I delivered him to the rectory in good condition. On my return journey home, without my “precious cargo” I showed the people in the neighboring village, who were all out on the streets before their noon meal, that fine horses could also be found in little Georgshausen. The two horses galloped through the village with a cloud of dust rising from behind the wagon. An expert would have said that there must be a master hand sitting in the front of the wagon and in charge of the reins. Back at home the big bell rang out announcing that it was noon and the men were scurrying out of the *Wirtshäuser* and heading for home just as the noon day meal was being set on the table. It was practically like that on all of the Sundays when the priest came to the village, but for me this one was a rather remarkable and extraordinary morning.

After Corpus Christi the life of the whole village became more hectic because the most important time of the year arrived: the harvest. Teaching concluded in all of the schools at the end of June so the school children would be available to help in the fields for the next two months. Also at this time the heavily scheduled sports activities of the previous months were completely suspended.

In those years in which the grain crops ripened early, the farmers and cutters took their children to work in the fields even before the school year was out. This left the teacher with only a remnant of his pupils. The activities that took place during these harvesting months in our village will be described in the chapter on agriculture. Only near the end of August was there a brief pause from work after the wheat had been cut and stored in the lofts and the corn was not yet ripe. On those Sundays there was music and dancing in at least one of the *Wirtshäuser*. Also the youth from neighboring villages came over for sporting competitions or we traveled with all of our team mates and spectators to numerous football and handball tournaments in neighboring villages. If the harvest was good, these times in later summer were also good. The people were happy and the youth were quite exuberant. It was one of the most wonderful times of the year.

WATERMELONS AND SUGARMELONS

There were two kinds of these round fruits from the field: the watermelons with either red or golden fruit pulp with a dark green outer shell and the sugarmelons with a lighter grayish green shell with red golden to greenish yellow fruit pulp [similar to cantaloupes]. The watermelons tasted best when they were kept cool to quench one's thirst. The sugarmelons were very sweet. As soon as they were ripe they had to be eaten because they spoiled very quickly in the warm months. They could simply be eaten as sugarmelons, or as it often happened, as a side dish with bread and smoked bacon. At other times they were served as a dessert in a stewed form, or with what connoisseurs liked: paprika and peppers instead of liverwurst.

Melons were cultivated in various sections within the boundaries of the village. They met the local demand and were available for sale to the neighboring villages. But before the ripe melons could be sold a lot of work, effort and sweat had to be invested in the enterprise.

Melon growing usually involved two people: the farmer who owned the piece of land and a real expert melon grower. The farmer had to fertilize the soil, plow it up and prepare it for planting the seeds with his equipment. The expert melon grower would manage the sowing of the seeds and during the growing period he weeded the melon patch. Another very important job for him was to keep a close watch on the whole melon field to ensure that no damage was done by trespassers. A short time before the first melons ripened, which were usually the sugarmelons, the melon grower went out to live in his fields. He lived and worked there until late autumn or until all of the melons were harvested and sold. His shelter was called a "melon hut," it was where the ripened fruit was also stored and sold. The profits from the sales were split fifty/fifty with the owner of the land.

Many anecdotes and stories are connected to these melon fields. Here are but a few from the rich lore that I will share.

Let us begin with the melon huts. They had to meet a variety of needs. The melon grower had to live and sleep in it for three months during the harvest time so there had to be at least enough room for a bed. In addition, it had to be built solid enough to withstand the heavy rain and brisk winds of the season and also provide protection against too much sun. And what was very necessary, it had to be cool inside because as already indicated the ripe melons that were ready for sale were stored inside of it. For us boys, our adventures in the melon fields began with the construction of the melon huts. My father owned one acre of land located right next to the last house in the village and one of these melon growers occupied it. The grower was known as "Bies *Vetter* Sepp" by the whole village. He had learned and practiced the masonry trade. But as the result of an accident in which he broke his right leg, he could no longer engage in his trade. The broken bone was not set properly and became deformed because there was no professional medical care available. In spite of his misfortune, our *Vetter* Sepp did not want to just sit around doing nothing so he became a melon grower.

When the weather was favorable and the melon vines were filled with almost ripe fruit, the melon fields had to be guarded night and day. The melon hut was also built to serve as a symbol that someone was there keeping watch. It was made from expertly formed acacia wood poles and a whole load of wheat stalk straw that was brought in from the field. The ground on which the hut was built was dug up to the depth of a spade to help keep the interior cool under the scorching sun. Keeping the hut cool was further accomplished by roofing the hut with straw. The finished hut looked like a haystack.

Vetter Sepp once lost or misplaced his pipe during the roofing of his hut. Life without his pipe was not worth living for this melon grower. As a result, the roof of his newly built hut was dismantled, and he meticulously searched through all of the straw because *Vetter* Sepp was convinced that he could have only lost his pipe in all of the comings and goings while building the hut. In spite of an intensive search, the pipe was not found. It was not in the straw! *Vetter* Sepp's grandson Phillip and I, who happened to be the son of the landowner, had swiped the aforementioned pipe and made our first attempt at smoking while hiding in the cover of a nearby cornfield. We both got sick. The packing in the old man's pipe consisted of some coarse Turkish tobacco, dried potato plant leaves and dried leaves from a cherry tree. We both immediately experienced fearful results from our attempt at smoking. Vomiting and diarrhea took regular turns in punishing us. Filled with a great deal of guilt we brought the pipe back. We told *Vetter* Sepp that we found the pipe just lying there on the path to the hut. To this day I don't know if the old man actually believed us or not. His was so overjoyed with the return of his pipe that he never bothered to question us about it any further.

There was a path from the hut through the entire field. It divided the field into two halves. On the one side were the watermelons and on the other side the sugarmelons grew. Every evening the ripe melons that were discovered by searching through the field were brought down the path to the hut. In the area around the hut the pathway was planted with tomato plants that eventually reached quite a height and made it difficult to see *Vetter* Sepp from the road adjacent to the field. This state of affairs often led to stealing. In such circumstances our *Vetter* Sepp had to retrieve his large old blunderbuss of a revolver from under his bed and wave it around. Consequently, every uninvited intruder would make tracks to get out of his reach as quickly as possible. The tomato stalks, usually laden with fruit, spread their own distinctive fragrance. This, along with the smell of ripe melons and sunflowers planted around the hut provided a striking fragrant bouquet that was noticeable from quite a distance; it was a certain sign that a melon field must be close by.

One of the most important tasks of the melon grower was searching for ripe fruit. To a great degree *Vetter* Sepp trusted his hearing. If the sound created by the snapping of his index finger and thumb on the shell of a watermelon was identical to the sound that *Vetter* Sepp created doing the same thing on the leg of his boot, he was dealing with a ripe melon. It could be taken from the vine and sold without fear of being returned because it was not ripe. The ripe sugarmelons could be identified by the color of the outer shell.

The price of a melon was determined by its size. Small melons could be bought for a half *Dinar*. Nice big melons could get a price as high as two *Dinars* and on occasion as much

as five *Dinars*. Naturally, there was a lot haggling about the price. Since *Vetter* Sepp only spoke our local German dialect, the Serbs and Romanians made a game out of arguing about the price for their own amusement.

When there was a weekly market in one of the neighboring villages, about four hundred melons would be loaded on a wagon. Two horses were hitched to the wagon and it was driven to the market where the sellers would remain until the last melon was sold. Then the numerous small coins they received in payment would be tied into a pocket handkerchief and they would head off for home. I sometimes had the good fortune of driving to the market with *Vetter* Sepp. In such cases the ripe melons had to be found and loaded on the wagon the evening before. Then early the next morning while it was still gray overhead we had to set out. Once at the market we had to claim a good spot because it would have a major effect on our sales.

The greatest worry that plagued *Vetter* Sepp was melon thieves. He often had to get out his big old revolver and go out to scare away a gang. But there were also melon thieves who simply made a practical joke out of it just to outsmart the old man. That happened in the following way: Two young fellows who were good at words went to the hut and began to bargain over the price of a melon. While the melon grower was thus engaged, other fellows crawled on their belly into the melon field and grabbed several melons. These were later eaten in the cover of a nearby cornfield. On most occasions like this, his grandson Fillip and the farmer's son Joschi were part of the gang. These were harmless melon thefts. But naturally there were also professionals like the hordes of Gypsies who sometimes passed through our village.

There was something joyful about the melon season. Perhaps it was because there were always small amounts of money around in the house and the fathers were more likely to give us a *Dinar* when the Turkish ice cream man came with his sweet flavors and monotonously announced his products: "*Sladoled!*" For *Besel* Marian, the wife of *Vetter* Sepp, the melon season was also a good time of year. She could go more often than usual to the *Wirtshaus* with a flask hidden under her apron to get a stiff drink for the old man, as she lovingly referred to *Vetter* Sepp. But she herself took advantage of the situation and got her fair share as well. Our *Besel* Marian was always ready for a small brandy.

As children we were never bored during the melon season. There was always something going on in the melon fields. We helped carry the melons to the hut and we did small errands for *Vetter* Sepp, which were often getting a small package of tobacco from the store. We also helped him keep watch over the melon fields when suspicious elements were around. Our reward was always one of the smaller, well cooled watermelons that we ate with great delight. At home our parents simply tossed the watermelons into the well to keep them cool and after a bit of time they were fished up with the drawing bucket. Even today I am still convinced that there are no longer such delicious melons like the red watermelons with the small yellow seeds our *Vetter* Sepp cultivated back home.

IN LATE AUTUMN THERE WAS KERWEI

Autumn meant a heavy workload again. The corn crop had to be harvested and brought in, and the autumn seed sowing, especially the winter wheat, had to be completed by the time of the *Kirchweihfest*, as long as the weather remained co-operative. The Feast Day of St. Martin falls on the 11th of November. On the closest following Sunday the *Kerwei*, as our dialect referred to it, was celebrated in our village. Cynics tended to agree with the assertion that the *Kerwei* was the major holiday during the year because more time and effort was dedicated to it than any other. It began on a Saturday after the midday meal and lasted until the midday meal on Wednesday. During this time all of the good cuisine of the village ended up on the tables. Even families who for economic reasons never offered their guests any alcoholic drinks during the year had more than enough flasks of wine and bottles of beer in the house throughout the days of the *Kerwei*. It was simply celebrated and everyone sought to put his own best face forward. The women, on whose shoulders the major responsibilities related to the preparations were laid, once again undertook the cleaning of their houses as their first priority. The houses also received a new coat of paint to cover the shabby shade of gray they had turned into during the dusty summer months. As soon as the exterior was presentable again the interior had their full attention. The curtains were taken down from the windows and ended up in the washtub along with tablecloths, wall hangings and the bedding. The floors were polished, the kitchens were left sparkling clean and the clothes that would be worn during the festival were ironed. In addition, there were preparations for the numerous meals during the *Kerwei*. Several geese were force-fed with freshly harvested corn in order to increase the size of their livers. Also at this time the first of the swine were slaughtered to ensure that there was a plentiful supply of fresh meat and lard in the house. The wonderful aroma from the baking of the *Kerwei* cakes arose all over the village. Numerous cakes were baked so that everyone who came and stayed for any of the three days of *Kerwei* could be royally entertained. For this reason no housewife held back, she wanted to outdo all of the others and went overboard in the cuisine she provided to her guests. Of course, *Kerwei* was also the time when people went visiting. Friends and relatives from the neighboring villages arrived by horse and wagon to celebrate along with the entire household. On occasions like this the housewife had the rare opportunity to show what she could do, how well stocked her pantry was, how plentiful were the fowl in her coop and how accomplished of a cook she was in providing tasty meals served on the best tablecloths with her very best cutlery.

Long before the *Kerwei* there was great excitement among the youth of the village. In spite of the many tasks and heavy work during the summer months, each of the young men and older boys in the village who wanted to be part of the *Kerwei* Boys had to come to a decision with regard to who he wanted to invite to be his *Kerweimentsch* [his date] from among the young females of the village. Once he made up his mind and the other young men of the village agreed and consented, he then faced his biggest hurdle. He had to go to the girl's house and seek permission from her father and mother for their daughter to decorate his hat and if she would be allowed to accompany him to all of the events as his *Kerweimentsch*. This first official visit to the girl's home was so important and needed to be most discreet because this visit was often the first step on the road to marriage.

Once all of the young men had their dates, there were still more decisions to make: they had to choose a *Kerweiherr* from among them to be in charge, as well as a *Geldherr* to be responsible for the finances. These two functions were important, not only because their titles made them sound important, they were responsible for organizing the sequence of events, carrying them out and setting up the order of precedence among the *Kerwei* couples. At the head of the procession would be the *Kerweiherr* with his girl, they were followed by the *Geldherr* and his girl and next in line were the other couples. They also had to choose the *Wirtshaus* where the official *Kerwei* would take place. Usually it was held at the *Loch Wirtshaus*, but there were also notable festivals held at Muhr's. The choice of the *Wirtshaus* was often based on the choice of the band for the *Kerwei* dance because it was usually the band that played regularly at the chosen *Wirtshaus*.

Before all of these formalities were put in place, quite naturally there were some discussions and a lot of gossip because every little detail had to be questioned by somebody, or at least they needed to make a comment about it. The festival began on Saturday right after the midday meal. The young fellows, all dressed up in their festive clothing, hurried to the *Wirtshaus* where their musicians were waiting. Each *Kerwei* Boy received a flask of wine that he had to carry from a string fastened to his wrist while he marched along in the procession. The first official act of the *Kerwei* festival now took place. The flask of wine from the *Kerwei* tree of the previous year had been buried beneath the door of the *Wirtshaus* and now it had to be dug up. Then each one had to fetch his decorated hat from the house of the girl who had decorated it. After all of the *Kerwei* Boys were reassembled with their status symbols of a flask of wine and a decorated hat, the whole group went to the village mayor to receive permission to hold the *Kerwei* festival.

After this task was accomplished they proceeded with the setting up of the *Kerwei* tree. It was a long pole wound with ribbons with a bouquet and a flask of wine placed at the top. It was the flask of wine that had been dug up from under the door of the *Wirtshaus*. Somewhere near the middle of the pole a hat and scarf were attached to it. Now this decorated *Kerwei* tree was set up along the edge of the driveway in front of the *Wirtshaus*. When that was done the *Kerwei* Boys rolled a large barrel out of the *Wirtshaus* and set it upright at the foot of the *Kerwei* tree. While all of this was going on the *Kerwei* band was playing and accompanying them. The band always marched ahead of the procession of the *Kerwei* Boys. There could be no official movement during *Kerwei* without the band and their music.

On Saturday evening the band had already begun playing for the dance, but the *Kerwei* Girls were still not in action. However, the partner of the *Kerweiherr* had things to care of beforehand, she had make sure that the *Kerwei* bouquet was decorated and ready to be carried at the head of the *Kerwei* procession. It consisted of a large stalk of rosemary with ribbons tied on its branches. The end of the stalk was stuck into a golden yellow quince. The actual *Kerwei* celebration, the celebration of the Church, began in the early morning hours on Sunday. The *Kerwei* Boys first assembled at their chosen *Wirtshaus* and then, accompanied by the musicians, they went to the homes of the girls who had decorated their hats. Naturally, they first went to the girl's home who was the partner of the *Kerweiherr*, then to the girl's home who was the partner of the *Geldherr* and last of all they made their

way to the other girls' homes until each fellow had picked up his girl. Then the whole *Kerwei* procession, accompanied by music, made its way to the church.

There they formed into a half circle around the altar and participated in a High Mass celebration. The *Kerwei* band played along with the hymns sung during the mass, but there was no room inside of the church for the musicians, they had to stand outside and play. After High Mass the housewives rushed home to put the final touches to the festive meal. The youth, accompanied by the band, returned to the *Wirtshaus*. Then the girls were taken home and the *Kerwei* Boys went out to sell twigs of rosemary with colorful ribbons. In addition, raffle tickets were sold for the hat and scarf on the *Kerwei* tree. This was a rather important undertaking. The results from it would determine the entire financial viability of the *Kerwei* organization. The *Geldherr* had to make sure that the costs they had incurred would be covered by the income they received. Whatever expenses remained would have to be covered by the proceeds from auctioning off the *Kerwei* bouquet. We will deal with this again later. There were guests in most of the homes for the midday meal on *Kerwei* Sunday. The plates were heaped up to the breaking point. One course followed another and at the conclusion the delicious baked goods and cakes were served. The early afternoon activities began again with a march through the village. While they marched, the girls were picked up at their houses by their partners and brought to the *Wirtshaus*. In the meanwhile, some merry-go-rounds had been set up and the candy makers had set up their booths that were laden heavy with various marvelous sweets. Whole mountains of "Turkish Honey" caught the eye of the children. The entire population of the village was now assembled here. This led to the most exciting part of the official program: the barrel dance and the auctioning of the *Kerwei* bouquet. Also, the announcement of the winner of the hat and scarf was now imminent. The excitement soon reached its high point. The *Kerwei* Boys and Girls stood around the *Kerwei* tree and the barrel. The auctioneer stood on top of the barrel and they counted on his ability to bring in the needed results. The band began to play a loud march. The *Kerwei*herr and his partner continued to hold the beautiful rosemary bouquet stuck inside of the thick quince.

The bidding always began reserved, but became more animated and rose to a pitch of frenzy. When the bidding stalled the band would begin to play while the *Kerwei* Boys and Girls danced around the barrel until things settled down. Then the auctioneer got started again. Eventually it became apparent who would be the owner of the year's *Kerwei* bouquet. If it was a member of the *Kerwei* Boys, the bouquet was handed over to his partner and it would remain with the circle of revelers. But if the successful bidder was from outside of the group he received the bouquet directly and he could take it home with him. In addition, he could have the band for his own entertainment for three hours. They had to play at his house until evening when they had to be back at the *Wirtshaus* so the festival could continue there. After this rather exciting afternoon, everyone rushed home to look after their livestock in the stables and to renew their energy by eating the evening meal to ensure that they had enough strength for the coming nighttime activities.

Meanwhile in the Muhr *Wirtshaus* another group had assembled. They were the married couples and were in the company of the other village band. Around eight o'clock at night things got underway. A polka followed a waltz and that is how it went on for the rest of

the night. *Kerwei* lasted until Wednesday. After the *Kerwei* tree wine flask was buried under the entrance to the *Wirtshaus*, the last of the partygoers were accompanied home by the band playing all of the way. Then everything returned to normal. All of the things that had brought joy and jubilation into our lives during the *Kerwei* days would be remembered and spoken of during the approaching long winter evenings. Someone always asks the question: How did the people manage to stand up to all of that? It is really quite easy to answer: They slept in on the mornings before the celebrations in order to reserve their energy for the afternoon and night. Furthermore, we ate very well during the *Kerwei* festival.

Even though dancing was the main focus of the festival, there were other possibilities to pass the time of day at the *Wirtshaus*. There were the already mentioned merry-go-rounds. Additionally, there were bowling alleys and billiard tables in both *Wirtshäuser*. The bowling balls rolled down the alleys all afternoon and the boys of the village had the opportunity to earn *Kerwei* money as pin boys. After every frame the winner had to pay the pin boy a half *Dinar*.

ST. NICK AND THE CHRIST CHILD

Once the *Kerwei* festival was over, preparations began for the winter ahead. The Ordinary Time of the church year was closing, the weather became unfriendly and during the nights the first signs of frost arrived; snow often arrived on St. Nikolaus Day. There were still two more festivals: The Feast of St. Nikolaus and Christmas. Special preparations for Christmas were already in motion once the *Kerwei* festival was over.

I will try to describe these last two holidays in the final season of the year in the way I experienced them living in the house of my parents, the happy memories of which I remember to this day. It was probably very much like what other families experienced, even though there would be some minor differences. However, there were some individualists in our village who did their own thing when it came to these holidays.

At the time of Nikolo [St. Nick], as we were to say, there were nuts, some fruit and occasionally oranges or mandarins for the good boys and girls. Mothers hid these delicious delicacies in what was called a Nikolo Tower.³⁶ It was made out of red crepe paper and a bundle of sticks. In our house this shiny construction was not made by my mother, she did not have the time for it, instead it was made by a great aunt, one of the sisters of my grandmother, our *Tante* Amon.

This never tiring woman always took time for us children. There was no boundary to the trust we placed in her, she was always our last resort when we had done something wrong

³⁶ The Nikolo Tower was a tall cylinder. The base was a board with holes in a circular pattern, sticks were inserted in these holes and then crepe paper was wrapped around them with a big bow on top. The goodies were put in a sack and then placed inside of the tower. The Nikolo Tower was a creation of the author's Aunt (*Tante*) Amon and was unique to the Wüst family. Other families also gave goodies to the children, but simply used a sack.

and had nowhere else to go for protection. For example, my brother Franz and his friend Stefan Niedermayer secretly tried to take up smoking while hiding behind the straw stack. Earlier they had pilfered a box of matches from our mother's summer kitchen. A thick piece of straw was to serve as a cigarette. As the boys later admitted, it did not burn very well. It would always go out so they came up with the idea of setting a small pile of straw on fire to avoid striking another match each time their "cigarette" went out. This undertaking resulted in almost the whole barnyard going up in flames, it burned up all of the straw and hay. Franz and Stefan Niedermayer fled to Tante Amon. It was where they looked for protection and understanding for their misdeed. They had calculated correctly. Once everything was over and done with, Tante Amon brought the boys back home. They were just five years old. She said a good word for them to the angry parents and prevented their punishment from being as bad as it could have been.

Our *Tante Amon* was responsible for the celebration of Nikolo in our house. On the evening of December 5th she would appear at our house with her Nikolo Tower and place it in a prominent place as she said to us children, "Now you have to be good and behave all evening so when Nikolo comes he will put something in the Tower." Behaving ourselves was not difficult because our good *Tante Amon* stayed and told us fairy tales until late at night. I still remember to this day her version of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. When I think about this fairy tale with its fascinating jewels, the romantic lives of the thieves and the eventual happy ending after a good deed, it's almost as if the feast of Nikolo, when I first heard it, was just yesterday.

Eventually we children went off to bed without a murmur with the hope that St. Nikolaus would bring us something. And he always brought us something. Very early in the morning on St. Nikolaus Day, the 6th of December, for some strange reason we found it very easy to get up that day. Our joy and good fortune was indescribable when the nuts, the apples and sometimes an orange rolled out of the Nikolo Tower. Krampus, who our children feared in later years, was also well known in our homeland. He was called Pelzenbock. Opposite of Nikolo, he was the embodiment of evil. We were told: He hurries through the streets on the eve of St. Nikolaus Day with a sack on his shoulders and a long chain in his hand. If he discovered a child on the street in the late hours of the evening he would take the child, bind it all around with the chain and stick it into his big sack. The child would be left in Purgatory for all eternity. Pelzenbock was pictured very much like the Devil.

The celebration of Christmas was not as simple as the Feast of St. Nikolaus. Christmas, next to Easter, was one of the major holidays of the year, and accordingly it was celebrated in a festive manner. From a churchly perspective, the Second Day of Christmas, which was also St. Stefan's Day, was the most significant for us. On this Second Day of Christmas the priest came to the village. But first, let us consider the Christmas Eve activities. Early in the afternoon of Christmas Eve the *Christkindl* [Christ Children] were sent out on their way. Mainly they went to homes where there were smaller children and to homes that they had been invited to. The *Christkindl* were a group of six youth from the village, three girls and three boys. Long before Christmas they had been instructed and

trained for their role as *Christkindl* by Barbara Storch and Anna Bies, the wife of Hans Bies.

The girls impersonated the Archangels Gabriel and Michael and also the Christ Child. From among the boys, one was the ox, the other was the donkey and the third was Pelzenbock. The girls wore white costumes and the angels had wings on their backs. The Christ Child wore a crown on her head. The ox and the donkey were hidden under white bed sheets. On their heads they wore an ox and a donkey mask. Underneath the bed sheets they each carried a cane for tapping out the tempo of the songs while the girls sang. The Pelzenbock was covered with a sheepskin pelt and had a very long beard made out of hemp. He carried a small bassinet in which the baby Jesus lay.

When the *Christkindl* arrived at a house in which there were children they knocked at the door and asked, "May the Christ Child come in?" If the answer was "Yes," the angel to the left who was the Archangel Michael stepped into the house. Following the greeting: "Praise be to Jesus Christ!" a short recitation followed and it ended with the words, "Dear Archangel Gabriel do come in, for they allow you to do so in this household." In response, the other angel entered the house with the greeting: "Praise be to Jesus Christ!" This angel also said a recitation and it ended with the words: "Beloved Christ Child do come in, for they allow you to do so in this household." Then the Christ Child accompanied by the ox, the donkey and Pelzenbock walked in. After a short recitation the Christ Child asked the parents, who were present in the room, if the children had been good and well behaved, if they prayed fervently and did well in school. If the mother answered these questions with a "Yes," Pelzenbock then distributed the gifts to the children. The parents had given him the gifts when he came through the door. The girls sang the following song in farewell while the ox and donkey kept time by stomping their canes on the floor:

"All of you take in the little Baby Jesus!
O Baby Jesus so sweet, O Baby Jesus so sweet!
And if this Baby Jesus had not been born,
We would all be lost!

O sweet little Jesus, O sweet little Jesus!
We now all fall down on our knees,
To greet this little Jesus!

O sweet little Jesus. O sweet little Jesus!
Now we travel to another house,
Now we journey to another town!
O sweet little Jesus. O sweet little Jesus!"

With the parting wish for a beautiful Christmas the *Christkindl* left the house and went on to the next house to repeat their performance. Before they left, the father of the house placed some coins in the collection box they had brought for the occasion.

For us children Christmas began on the 24th of December. Not because it was Christmas Eve, but because on this day, as you have just read, the *Christkindl* went from house to house. This was the cause of all of our excitement.

The *Christkindl* put us in the proper mood. Just by their coming to our homes we knew we could count on some beautiful Christmas presents. Of course, this was the most important aspect of Christmas for us children. In the afternoon we put our shoes in the window, the ones we were not wearing, which we had polished spick and span just for this occasion. If there was no more room there, they would be placed in a row in the living room where they could not be missed by the Christ Child. My family did not spend Christmas Eve at home, but rather over at the house of our friends, the Illiewich family. It was the family of the village Post Master. There were two boys in the family whose ages were quite comparable with my own and my siblings. When it was dark we set out for their house. Because I was the youngest in the family I had to carry the lantern out in front of everyone. Already on this night all of the family members were dressed in their Sunday best. At the Illiewich's there was a simple evening meal and then we children were excused so we could spend the time playing with a variety of toys while our parents exchanged village news and gossip.

It was at the Illiewich's house where I first learned how to play chess at a very early age. During these Christmas Eve gatherings I also learned a lot about stamp collecting. I learned how to peel them off the envelopes, how to press them and finally place them in the proper spot in the album. The Illiewich boys taught me all of these things. My sister, who was the only girl present, had no interest in the stamp collecting activities, nor did she ever really understand chess, so she did not find much enjoyment in these gatherings. But for me these evenings passed by too quickly. Shortly after eleven we had to get ready for the Christmas church service. We put on heavy coats and a couple of pieces of underwear because our church was often bitterly cold at this time of year. The burning candles were the only source of warmth.

Unfortunately, even the Christmas church service was held without a priest being present. *Tante Amon*, *Karola Birg Neni* and *Vetter Klos* (Herold) went to a great deal of effort to arrange for a nice Christmas church service in our village. All of the children had to take their places up front around the altar. We were under the watchful eyes of the adults for the entire service. To stand still in one spot when it was so cold was quite an ordeal for us. It was only the expectation of a beautiful present from the Christ Child, who would be arriving sometime during the coming night, that made it possible for us to endure it all and not disrupt the Christmas church service.

In spite of these torments, the beautiful carols that were accompanied by *Karola Birg Neni* on the harmonium have remained among my fondest memories. I still know by heart the prayers that were offered on that night to our Holy Father in Heaven. These prayers were spoken by *Vetter Klos* and also to a degree by *Hans Bogner*. They were offered with such a great deal of fervor that one learned them very quickly, so even to this day I have not forgotten any of them. Early in the morning on Christmas Day, the long awaited Christ Child's presents could finally be opened. There would be various fruits like figs, oranges

and apples, some new pieces of clothing and usually some toys. I always wanted a small gun and there was always one among my Christmas things. However, these were always very simple things and cannot be compared with the toys our children receive at Christmas today. But at the time these gifts were the nicest and the best and we found such great joy in them.

In the morning there was another service at the church. We children loved to go to church on Christmas Day because we could talk to our friends and playmates about the Christmas presents we had received. Right after church we made our way directly to the home of our godmother where more Christmas presents were waiting for us. The best memories I have of my godmother, who is still living today, are her wealth of ideas and her generosity. The last present I received from her was a wristwatch. I had this watch with me through all of the confusion of the times until the end of the war when it was taken from me by prisoners who had been released from a concentration camp in the Böhmerwald in the Upper Palatinate. I always took great joy in this watch and I would still cherish it in great affection if I could have been able to keep it. As had been previously mentioned, St. Stefan's Day was our major Christmas celebration. There was always a very festive High Mass celebrated in our church. And now, after the long time of waiting, it was finally time for the *Wirtshaus* dances to resume. With this celebration for the youth of the village, the Christmas festival officially ended.

Now a word about the Christmas tree. There were a few to be found, but not in every house. Since there were no forests nearby, Christmas trees could only be obtained by purchasing them for quite a bit of money in the nearby city of Werschetz. Sometimes there were also some available at the Hirsch store. We never had a real Christmas tree in my parent's home. But there was a spruce tree in our garden. Where it came from, no one knew. It simply stood there. Each year a branch was cut off the spruce tree and it was decorated like a Christmas tree. Packaged candies were hung on it and a few candles were lit in the evening. I experienced my first real Christmas tree after the war in my new homeland in Austria.

THE BIRG FAMILY

Our village would be unimaginable without the Birg family. They left their mark on a wide variety of events in the life of our village and made Georgshausen what it was and how we remember it. Consequently, there is a need to provide a fuller detailed account on this family.

In our contemporary way of speaking we would describe the public recognition factor in terms of this family in the Banat as enormous when one considers the communication system at that time. The Birg name could open doors, the mention of the name made for easy access to every official, and every undertaking in need of sizeable amounts of credit was theirs for the asking. Furthermore, there was no social event in the entire Banat in which the host did not go to great lengths to have at least one of the Birgs as a guest.

There were around eighteen families in the village with the Birg name. Additionally, we can add two other families who through marriage to a Birg daughter also had a right to the name and were considered to be legitimately part of the Birg family. We could also add numerous other close relatives of the Birgs.

These twenty directly descended families of the Birgs owned more than two-thirds of the land associated with our village. They also operated the two most important industries, the brickyards and the gristmill. All four industrial smoke stacks, which made the village recognizable from a distance, stood on land belonging to the Birg family. Of the four steam driven threshing machines in the village, three of them belonged to a Birg. The Birgs also owned the many roomed residences that looked more like villas for the nobles than a farmhouse. We could go on and on in this manner, but it would take us too far a field, so we will simply leave this as our introduction to what follows.

The first Birg who came to our village moved there from Karlsdorf. He contracted himself and his wife to Baron Bela von Csavossy as a brickyard worker. We know from official records that a Friedrich Birg was born in Karlsdorf on March 9, 1814, the son of Friedrich Birg and his wife Katharina, nee Told. This Friedrich Birg, whom we shall call Friedrich II, must be the same Birg who came to Georgshausen from Karlsdorf. His marriage to Maria Anna Veni [also spelled: Veen/Wehn/Wein] also took place in Karlsdorf on February 2, 1834. When they were living in Karlsdorf the first son born into the family arrived on September 23, 1836. He was given the name Konrad. The marriage of this Konrad to Margaretha Kirchner took place in Georgshausen on June 8, 1858. The bride's family was from Ernsthausen.

There is a second version of the Birg family coming to our village. It differs from the former, indicating a different set of circumstances in that Friedrich II did not come to work for Csavossy as a brickyard worker, but rather it was his widow and their five children who came to Georgshausen. The time period when the Birg family decided to move from Karlsdorf to Georgshausen was a pretty difficult one. It was in the midst of the turbulent times during the *Vormärz*, as well as the Revolutionary Years of 1848 and 1849 and at the very time when the reaction set in after the Revolution was over. It is therefore possible

that Friedrich II died in Karlsdorf at the age of thirty-five years. His widow obviously had no easy time of it since her oldest son, Konrad, was barely thirteen years old in the Revolutionary Years and the other siblings were even younger.

[**Additional information on the Birgs:** When Dr. Wüst wrote this book in the early 1990s the former villagers did not have access to all of the Zichydorf church records and the Stephansfeld Family Book by Hans Awender was not yet completed. Awender published his book in 1998: *Familienbuch der katholischen Pfarrgemeinde Stephansfeld Banat 1796 – 1945*. When *Verlorene Heimat Georgshausen* was translated to English the editor had access to all of the Zichydorf church records and the Stephansfeld book by Awender. Thus, some additional information on the Birgs can be added:

After Friedrich II and Maria Anna left Karlsdorf they first moved to Maria Anna's home village of Stephansfeld; she was born there on February 10, 1815. Friedrich II, Maria Anna and their children are listed on page 121 of the Stephansfeld book. According to the church records, their last child born in Stephansfeld was Anna, born in 1848, and their first child born in Georgshausen was Klara, born in 1852. Sometime between 1848 and 1852 the family moved to Georgshausen. Here is a listing of the known children of Friedrich II and Maria Anna Birg: Konrad, b. 1836 in Karlsdorf; Antonia, b. 1838 in Karlsdorf; Maria Anna, b. 1841 in Stephansfeld; Nikolaus I, b. 1843 in Stephansfeld, Nikolaus II, b. 1845 in Stephansfeld; Anna, b. 1848 in Stephansfeld; Klara, b. 1852 in Georgshausen and Peter b. 1854 in Georgshausen. Antonia died in 1860 and Nikolaus I died in 1853, it is unknown if Anna lived to adulthood. Since Klara and Peter were both born in Georgshausen during the 1850s it is very unlikely that Friedrich II died in Karlsdorf at age thirty-five, which would have been about 1849. Apparently, they moved from Karlsdorf to Stephansfeld between 1838 and 1841, which was during the time of the *Vormärz*.]

Friedrich Birg II had two other sons in addition to his son Konrad. They were Nikolaus and Peter. He also had two daughters, Marian [Maria Anna] and Klara. These five children of Friedrich II are the ancestors of the later extended Birg family who were spoken of in the introduction.

The question that begs to be asked whenever the Birg family is mentioned needs to be raised up front: How did the Birgs get to be so rich?

The former residents of the village answer that question with several different legends. But they are, as the name suggests, simply legends that cannot be proven to be true or accurate.

Legend Number One: The first Birg who came to our village struck a heavy, massive, iron-rimmed chest when digging up the clay laden earth for brick making. The chest was filled with gold coins and rare jewels. The treasure was presumed to have come from the time of the Turks. The contents of the treasure were exchanged for the currency of the time and then large pieces of land were purchased from several of the noble estate owners in the area. According to this version the Old Konrad Birg who was born in 1836 had an estate of one thousand *Joch* at his death. In gratitude and as a memorial to this treasure

find, a monument with a forged cross, known as the *Wallfahrerkreuz* [the pilgrim's cross] was erected on the edge of the pond between Toni Eisler's and Schwob Franz's [Franz Bajerle].

Legend Number Two: One of the Birgs, his first name is never mentioned, came from Germany with a great deal of money and settled in our village. He bought several pieces of land and built brick burning kilns on them with the money he brought. From the earnings of his brick business he bought other pieces of land. This went on until he assembled a large estate of his own.

This is where the legends and the attendant folklore end. The facts themselves are of a completely different nature. The tasks before the original Birgs were much harder and more difficult and had nothing to do with finding buried treasure and more closely resembled the life of the farming population at that time: a lot of work and very little bread.

There are grounds to assume that the migration of the Birg family to our village was played out in this way: The landowner, Baron Csavossy, wanted to establish an estate by settling workers on his large tracks of land and with their help he expected to improve the income he would receive from their agricultural endeavors. But there were simply no building materials in the area. There were no forests from which lumber and timber could be harvested and there were no suitable roads to bring in building materials. Something local and plentiful had to be used for building purposes. Bricks were the obvious answer. The workers who were recruited to establish the brick making works included the Birg family from Karlsdorf.

Of the five children who accompanied their parents, of whom we have already read about, Konrad who was the oldest had to take hold of hard work at an early age. He proved to be a capable young man, who not only had two hard fists and strong arms, but he also had a head for business. These exceptional qualities were noticeable at an early age. Once Baron Csavossy's estate was established, he terminated the employment of his brick makers. As a result, Konrad rented the pond and the cellar kilns where up until then he had been one of the workers. He then went into business on his own and began to supply bricks. His business must have gone well for him because he was soon able to buy six *Joch* of land from the Baron and become the lord and master of his own land and domain.

One can only imagine how hard this work was when he started out with his business, especially when we know that he delivered some of the finished bricks by carrying them on a wooden *Kraxen* on his back. These bricks were not for building houses, instead they were used for making solid ovens or other safe firing places. Bricks produced by Konrad Birg were the best material for this application.

The time frame around the economic upswing of Konrad Birg was very favorable. As mentioned in other sections of this book, Hungary achieved a Compromise with Austria in the year of 1867. This gave them a large degree of independence that had practical implications in many areas of life, especially in terms of the domestic economy free from interference from Vienna. This independence went far beyond simply the governance of

the country. The Hungarians immediately wanted to make everything better in “their country,” which up until then had been controlled by the Austrians in Vienna. Through the newly implemented education regulations, the many faceted Hungarianization of the people and all public life was set in motion. Through government encouragement and support, small workshops soon developed into industrial enterprises. A marked economic boom was registered throughout the country and it was further encouraged by the so-called period of promoterism³⁷ in Central Europe where the economy was greatly influenced by the milliards of French Francs paid as war reparations following the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. The results and effects of this development spread over to Vienna and beyond to Hungary and had its far reaching consequences on the Birg family brick kilns in our village. New factories were being constructed across the land, which resulted in creating additional wealth and value in every last corner of the country. Even today, one can see some of these original factories from the period of promoterism. They were built of bricks, for which there was an insatiable need and demand.

The bricks produced by the Birg firing kilns had a ready market. This production was further promoted and increased with the construction of the railroad line between Betschkerek and Werschetz and the connection it provided to the entire European railway system. The bricks produced in our village were not only delivered to all of Hungary, but throughout the entire Monarchy. This was the time when the large ponds around our village first appeared and the time in which the enterprising and far seeing visionaries among the Birgs achieved major additions to their widely admired fortunes. Intelligent and foresighted, they began investing the profits from their brick business into land purchases and into the future expansion of other budding business enterprises. In this way, relatively early in the village, a gristmill driven by a steam engine was constructed, which of course, naturally was done by a Birg. The brick business was a mainstay practically up to the First World War. In order to improve their product and increase production capacity, two large circular kilns were built during the years of 1907 to 1909, and they are still standing to this day. Production changed markedly at the turn of the century when a crucial point was reached and the focus expanded from exclusively producing bricks to manufacturing roof tiles as well. As a result, almost all of the original straw and reed roofs on the Banat homes were replaced with tile roofs. It was also during this time shortly before the First World War when the Birgs switched their priorities from brick production to agriculture as the primary means of gainful employment for the family. This became the means of livelihood for the large extended Birg family with only a few exceptions, the mill and the metalworking shop, up until 1944.

[**The brick kilns:** The two large Birg circular kilns built during the years of 1907 to 1909 are modified Hoffmann kilns; named after Friedrich Hoffmann who patented the highly energy efficient design in 1858. The Hoffmann design is still used today. Once fired up, a Hoffmann kiln is typically a round the clock operation and seven days a week for extended periods of time. Even though these kilns were very efficient, firing such large units presented a problem in Georgshausen where there was no nearby coal or abundant supplies of wood. The Birgs overcame this precarious fuel situation by modifying the design of their kilns and then relying on local fuel, such as straw, corn stalks and corn roots. Their

³⁷ In Austria-Hungary the period of promoterism was the time from 1850 to 1914.

kilns had fewer firing chambers than a conventional Hoffmann. Thea (Dorothy) Engelmann, daughter of the last beneficial owner of the Peter Birg kiln, remembers them mainly being fired with straw. However, this fuel was very dangerous. The enormous amount straw needed on hand to fire these huge kilns posed a real external fire hazard; and there were fires. Thea remembers a great fire that caused extensive damage. The Peter Birg kiln, which is still standing today, remained in operation until 1941. Production ceased shortly before the men were drafted into the German Army, but the family continued selling products from the large stock on hand. After the war the communist government reopened the kilns and operated them for various lengths of time with former Hungarian brick workers.

The chimneys are quite tall in order to create a sufficient draft from the combustion chamber. For some Hoffmann designs the chimney stands away from the main structure and is connected through an underground passage. According to some of the former villagers, there is a ladder on the inside of these chimneys that the more adventurous children liked to climb all the way to the top. Of course, those who did so came out covered with black soot! See the kilns in the picture section.]

Hard work and the spirit of the times are not the only criteria to account for the Birg family success. Unlike most of the Germans in the Banat who were seldom were interested in pursuing further education beyond their own villages where they lived, the Birgs, as far back as the pioneering families, were always very active in pursuing other possibilities. On their regular business trips, the majority of which were in the northern part of the Banat where the well regulated Bega River offered much greater transportation possibilities in terms of product delivery, the old Birgs always kept their eyes and ears open. Everything that came their way was tested out in their own situation and if it proved successful it was put into effect. During their trips, Old Konrad, Nikolaus and Peter Birg learned by close observation that it was virtually impossible to move forward in contemporary Hungary if the only language they spoke was German. The lack of education was also a hindrance they recognized.

During that time in Hungary all teaching was done in the Hungarian language in all of the schools [from 1867 to the end of the First World War]. Even in entirely German villages the children could not be educated in the public schools in their own Mother Tongue. As a result, since the young Birgs had to go to Hungarian schools, many of them adopted the Hungarian form of their first names, such as Nikolaus/Miklosch, Friedrich/Fridjesch, Michael/Mischi, Franz/Feri, Georg/Gyuri and so on. After the entry of the German troops into Georgshausen, the so-called folk conscious residents of our village attached the stigma of *Madjaronen* [Magyar Lovers] on the Birgs because of their Hungarian first names. The term meant that these residents of German descent had lied about their German origins and tried to pass themselves off as Hungarians.

Today we know it was unjust to accuse the Birgs of such. They always acknowledged themselves as German and they did so even though they would suffer great losses and share the same fate along with their fellow villagers during the persecution by the Tito Partisans.

We need to say another word about the exceptional educational background of the Birgs. This did not only provide positive economic benefits to their families by increasing their business competence, it also enhanced their social standing. Almost all of the men were reserve officers in the various armies in the always changing political history of the Banat. Here are some examples: Nikolaus Birg (Miklosch) was in the Austro-Hungarian Imperial Army during World War One and served as a lieutenant in the artillery, Georg Birg (Dicker Gyuri/Fat George) was also in the First World War as a lieutenant in the regiment of the *Kasierjäger*, Adam Birg had the rank of lieutenant in the *Honvéd* [Hungarian National Army] and Matthias Birg was a junior cadet at the end of the First World War. All of the younger Birgs who were too young to serve in the First World War were officers in the Royal Yugoslavian Army. Later these young men were taken into the German Army or German police units with the rank of officer and a portion them lost their lives as German officers.

The girls in the Birg family could also look forward to a higher education. A favorite institute of theirs was the Raphael Home in Belgrade. It included a German public school. Then at the end of their school term they would spend six weeks on tour through Germany to broaden their horizons. Here are examples of some of the students in the institute from our village: Adele and Henrietta Birg, Hedwig Birg, Karola Birg and some others who were also Birgs. In the high school in Werschetz, the secondary school town, as well as in the public school and the teacher's training institute, there were numerous students from our village, but the vast majority of them were members of the Birg family.

At cultural events like the *Trachtenfest*³⁸ sponsored by the Cultural Association in Neusatz [Novi Sad], there were always participants from the extended Birg family. The wives who had graduated from home economics schools in their youth set up model households. Numerous young girls in the village learned the use of household equipment by working in their homes. Here is another facet of all of this. The Birgs were progressive and lived with the times. The large steam driven plow, which was capable of digging up countless fields each day, was brought to our village by one of the members of the Birg family. Friedrich and Nikolaus set themselves up in business on their own land and then later the equipment was taken over by a co-operative. A steam engine used to power the mill was put into operation by Old Konrad Birg in 1895. This farsighted man also brought the first steam driven threshing machine to the village. Old Konrad Birg was always identified as "Old." He died at the age of eighty-four years. He was the grandfather of Maria (Maza) Birg. His son, who was also named Konrad, died at the age of thirty-one years.

There were no real paved streets in the village, but there were some very modern automobiles, which naturally were owned by the Birgs. There were always funny stories to report about these automobiles. They often had to be pulled out of mud up to their axles by a team of horses and then dragged home. One can just imagine the kind of village gossip that resulted from the event. On the other hand, sometimes when these automobiles met horse drawn wagons they caused the horses to bolt and turn over the wagon or inflict other damage.

³⁸ An event where local folk-costumes were worn.

THE FOLKLORE ABOUT THE BIRGS

It is hardly any wonder why a large and extended family that was also rich and lived a life very much its own, unlike the lives of those around them, would be the subject of all kinds of gossip, amusement and on occasion anger (as was the case with regard to the automobiles). In what follows are some of the living habits of the Birgs as seen by the folks around them.

Old Peter Birg was a capable entrepreneur, an industrious man who cared and provided well for his family. He and his wife Susanne were the parents of thirteen children. He was also said to have been pious. On the death of his wife he wanted to donate the money to finally build a proper church in the village. The site for the church had already been selected. It was a large piece of land between Adam Birg and Illiewich. The new village center was planned for there. There was just one stipulation that had to be met before the energetic old man would proceed, he needed approval for constructing a final resting place for himself and his wife, Susanne, in the new church. For this purpose a special crypt would be built beneath the altar. However, this condition on the part of the old man was not acceptable. The church authorities were apparently opposed to it. In addition, it was said that several inhabitants of the village also spoke against it. So this last chance for the village to have a proper church with his help was turned down.

However, several of the furnishings in our prayer house were gifts from the generous hand of old Peter Birg. It is claimed that he donated the harmonium and the confessional. Also, the three bells in the tower (this tower stood in front of the prayer house and was lovingly referred to as the belfry) were supposedly due to the benevolence of old Peter Birg for which we were all grateful.

Friedl Birg, who was known as the Dicke Friedl [Fat Friedl] in our local way of speaking about him, was the subject of a lot of talk. He liked to go around in his shirt without a coat or vest. It was never cold enough for him and he was fond of saying this far and wide. As you would expect, the people did not believe him, even though they imagined that his extra pounds might be protecting him against the cold. His secret was revealed on a bitter cold Sunday. As Fat Friedl once again entered the *Wirtshaus* without a coat on, some of the curious patrons sought to put an end to the mystery. They decided to search him. And what they found was rather sobering. Fat Friedl was wearing a fur vest under his shirt. He always thought that no one would ever notice since he was very fat.

Konrad Birg, the son of old Peter Birg, always went around in clothes that made him look like one of the wagon drivers or a day laborer. He wore *Opanken* (also called *Patschker*³⁹) on his feet, on his head he wore a shabby old fur cap and the rest of his clothes were patched, tattered and torn. All of this changed radically when the good Konrad Birg married Maza (Maria Birg). He instantly became the neatest dresser among the men of the village. Where in the past he wore *Patschker*, he now wore a pair of white shoes, on his head there was now a clean white fur cap and the rest of his clothes were of the latest fashion; he could have stood his own with the best dressed gentlemen in Werschetz.

³⁹ A Danube Swabian word for a knitted slipper or moccasin with a heavier sole.

Nikolaus Birg was known as a good human being. He helped everyone who came to ask him for a favor. He also welcomed everyone to fish in his pond. Many fat carp were taken from there on any given Sunday. He was not in the least opposed to the village children playing in the old abandoned brick burning kilns. The children were not only encouraged to fish in the pond, but were also permitted to swim in it. That is the reason for the answer to the following question: "What are we going to do this afternoon?" "Let's go to Miklosch's and play there!"

The writer of these remembrances also had a personal revealing encounter with Miklosch Birg. As a thirteen year old student in the Werschetz high school, I encountered Miklosch Birg while I was taking a walk through the town. In response to my respectful, "*Grüss Gott* [I greet you in the Name of God]," he responded with a question by saying, "And just who are you?" "I'm the youngest Wüst who goes to high school here in Werschetz," I answered. I could only hear: "I see." Shortly after I stood with Miklosch in the fine shop called "Menl" in Werschetz and had a tin scoop full of candy in my hand. I could never have bought that much candy with the meager pocket money I received from my parents. I hardly had a chance to thank him before the good Nikolaus Birg was quickly on his way again. Nikolaus Birg was really a fine human being and I can personally vouch for that.

People have reported that Maza (Maria Birg) loved to arrange marriages. In our dialect this was called *Verkuppeln* [coupling people]. Shortly before his death, Wingert the tailor informed me about one of her activities in this regard. According to Wingert's letter, Maza and her sister Anki were fashion conscious young women and engaged a household seamstress from Werschetz to sew for them. In order to keep her and bind her to the village, Maza began to search for a marriage candidate for the young seamstress from Werschetz. Her choice ended up being Wingert, the young tailor who was single and a reputable workman. Using the excuse that the young Konrad Birg (who was Maza's husband) needed some new suits, the young tailor was invited to the house where he would find the young seamstress from Werschetz sitting at her work. This ruse worked and the way was opened. In fact, things went so well that soon their wedding was celebrated. It was the beginning of a very happy marriage that was able to survive all of the hard times ahead. This marriage, like many others owe their thanks to Maza Birg.

HOUSING, EATING, DRINKING

The majority of the houses stood with the gable facing the street and often the gable had a pointed tip. They were long houses [perpendicular to the street] with the living quarters and the stables all under one roof. Along the side of the house was the so-called *Gang*, a covered walkway leading to the house door and the door to the loft. The walkway was roofed and was about one and one-half to two meters wide. There was a balustrade or masonry railing about a meter high on the side to the yard. On the pillars supporting the roof eave over the *Gang* there were grapevines and various other kinds of vines spun around them; all of this provided cool shade during the hot summer months all along the walkway. The *Gang* was always an invitation to rest and relax. At one end of the walkway was the street. The street gate was located there and it was the primary entrance to the house and yard. At the opposite end of the walkway, towards the yard, there was another door leading to a room where the horse harnesses and other such equipment was stored. From this equipment room one had access to the stable where the horses and cattle were kept. In the wintertime one could go from the house to the stable without having to really go outside.

In most cases there were two entrances in the middle of the walkway, one on each side. One led back to the yard and across from it was the actual entrance into the house. This was usually a double door where one entered into the middle of the kitchen, which was in the middle of the house. To the left and the right side of the kitchen there were doors on each side. One door led to the *Kammer* [parlor], which was usually on the street end of the house. The other door led into the *Stube* in the back portion of the house. This room was really the center of life in the house. Along with the spacious kitchen, these two rooms together were a unit.

The parlor was more like what we would now call a guest room. This room was the pride and joy of the housewife. No one was allowed to go into the parlor, even when the rest of the house could barely meet all the needs of the family. It had hand laced curtains on the windows. The beds were decked out with the finest linen fabric and the duvets and pillows were filled with the softest down. There was also a stove and often it was a beautiful tiled stove. But these stoves were seldom used. Only the Sunday clothes were kept in the large clothes cabinets in the parlor. Furthermore, no one was allowed to sit on the sofa located at the foot of the marriage bed. It was covered with a richly embroidered heavy linen blanket that would have become wrinkled if someone ever sat on it.

This division of the rooms into *Kammer*, kitchen and *Stube* had its origins from the first houses built by and for the settlers. Over time there were some variations and if the water table allowed it, a cellar was dug. In addition, next to the kitchen there was a food pantry where supplies for the winter were stored. In many cases there was also a summer kitchen built opposite of the main house in a separate lower building. From about the middle of April to the end of October this roomy space served as the family summer eating and living place. During the summer months the rest of the house was only used for sleeping. The formerly described house plan was also revised so the house could be built at a right angle [right angle to the lot, parallel to the street with the *Gang* on the side opposite of the street].

In such cases the gable of the house was on the side facing the front garden and most of the windows were facing the street. There were some houses like this in our village. This layout was especially popular for corner houses where there was enough space for a large yard. In such cases one could enter from the back side. On the street side only a small gate provided a direct entrance into the house and yard.

A further enhancement to the type of houses in our small village was the larger homes in the form of a villa surrounded with large gardens of various flowers and vines. These houses would fit in with the kind of housing we find on the outskirts of many contemporary cities. These homes, which in no way could be compared with a farmhouse, were already very comfortable and suitable back then, some fifty years ago. They had everything we would expect to find in our homes today.⁴⁰ As previously explained elsewhere, there was not only the rich Birg family in our village, there were also some very poor families who did not have a house of their own. They and their many children often lived in the smallest possible area in a part of the type of farmhouse we have described. Many of these farmhouses had walls made from pounded clay and lime and they had no wood floors in the rooms. Instead there was a tamped mud floor that was washed and scrubbed regularly to prevent dust or earth buildup on it. I remember quite well such a house with that kind of floor. It was the house of Bies, the barber who specialized in giving shaves. When we went there to get our haircut, we were sometimes allowed to sit in the *Stube*. It was always cool and comfortable in the rooms with clay floors. In the case of the Bies family the floor was in two colors: under the beds there was a rosy shade and in the places where people walked the floor was gray. It was quite a sight to see. Now whether this kind of flooring was healthy or not remains unknown. There were many cases of lung disease in our village, which perhaps can be partially traced back to the living conditions in cramped areas.

The furnishings in the houses varied. As expected, there were homes with expensive items as well as ones with meager items. Essential furniture began with a large table and enough chairs. Then there had to be several beds and a stove for the housewife to do her cooking. In order to keep the house warm in winter the homeowner hired one of the local master masons to build a brick oven that would throw off enough heat to warm up the entire house. Several clothes cabinets, a credence table in the kitchen and a sofa were all part of the necessary furnishings. In the beds you would usually find a *strohsack* filled with cornhusks and duvets and pillows filled with feathers. The bedding was piled up high and covered with a beautiful bedspread so that a homey well straightened out room would create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Many of the houses also had sewing machines that were busy during the winter months in providing suitable clothing for the family and sewing for household needs. If there were single hired hands in the house, they had their beds in the harnesses equipment room or in a corner of the stable.

For the contemporary reader this description of life in the houses of our village will perhaps sound rather simple if not primitive. However, if we look back some fifty years at how the farmers and day laborers lived in our current new homeland, our way of life and

⁴⁰ The Christof Hirsch house, no. 61, actually had indoor plumbing; water came from a tank in the attic. The tank was filled with a hand pump. This house was made of brick and had wood floors.

situation in which we lived no longer looks as simple and primitive after all. There is one more thing I need to mention when we speak of the houses in our former village. All of these houses were clean, not only in terms of the interior, but in terms of all around the exterior as well; this gave a friendly inviting character to our homes. They were whitewashed at least twice a year, so even from a distance you could recognize them as German homes. This was true of the whole village. No one had to ask what kind of people lived there in those houses. If the houses were clean and recently whitewashed, one could be certain that it was a village with a German population. In villages with a mixed language population, as was true of our own village where Hungarians lived next door to the Germans, the Hungarian population quickly adopted the higher standards of the Germans, so practically all of the houses, including the Hungarians, were orderly and clean.

Unfortunately, there were no paved streets in our village. Although there were sidewalks laid alongside of the houses so one could travel along even in bad weather without getting muddy shoes. These sidewalks were about one and one-half meters wide and were made out of bricks laid side by side. For many, especially the older people, the sidewalks in front of their homes played a special role in their lives. When the weather was nice they placed benches or several stools in front of their home and welcomed the shade from the tall acacia trees along with their friends and neighbors. Particularly on Sundays, you could always meet people in front of the houses when they took their appreciated Sunday rest to talk about the latest village news and world events with their neighbors and friends. These benches in front of the houses were an important link in the communications network of the village.

In conclusion, one further word about the living conditions in the village. On the basis of what has been said previously it might be assumed that all the village residents could afford to have a parlor. That would not be true. Even though there were families with three or four members who lived in houses with ten or more rooms, and many of the farm families had their parlor, there were families in the village who had to manage in one room. They were families who often had six, seven and even more children. Along with their parents, these eight to ten persons all lived in one room. The kitchen where the mother prepared the meals had to be shared with another family. In this book you are reading about the social distinctions and disparities in our village and they have been openly described several times. In discussing these living conditions the vast differences and disparities are again brought to light.

[The next five pages cover food and eating habits. The German names are used for the various foods.]

Both eating and meal preparation were of greatest importance to the women of village. When it comes to the kitchen we need to be quite specific, it was not Viennese cuisine, not Hungarian cuisine, not Serbian cuisine, it was a totally Danube Swabian cuisine. Within it we will find all of the tidbits and delicacies of the other nationalities that we were in contact with, along with the basic elements of cooking our forebears brought with them when coming to far and distant Hungary from their former homelands in the Palatinate,

Swabia, Bavaria or Austria. As a result, it was a fine cuisine with a variety of delicacies and dainty morsels. In a single word, one remembers our cuisine with a special kind of “melancholy.” Even today we still attempt to cultivate it because it is through these cuisines that we maintain the memories of our one time homeland in the Banat. That is why in the preparation of this book we sought to assemble recipes for those wonderful and delicious dishes. In what follows, they are now passed on so that after two generations they will not be lost to memory.

But first a few words about eating habits. When breakfast was eaten at home, it always consisted of bread or cake and some form of liquid. Frequently, in the early morning hours, the mothers prepared *Einbrennsuppe* [a basic soup made from flour, lard and spices]. For the children there would always be milk. On Sundays and holidays there would be coffee. Just like the soup, the milk and coffee would be served in a soup dish and be spooned up. But various bits and pieces would be added to it. Breakfast became a special event on bread baking day when the mother baked a *Dickkuchen* [bread that looked like a cake] early in the morning. That was done when there was either very little bread or none at all. This so-called *Dickkuchen* was made out of bread dough that was detached before the bread was baked. It was placed in a cake tin and then put into the kitchen oven. It was always ready before the fresh bread was thoroughly baked and could already be served at the breakfast table. Unlike the adults, the children did not have to have an early breakfast, so there was often *Flammkuchen* [looked like a pizza] made for them by their mothers on bread baking day. This cake was also made out of bread dough. For this purpose a piece of bread dough was fashioned into a flat cake and placed in the heated bake oven. After a short period of time the thin flat cake was well done so it could be removed and eaten right away. But first, lard from pigs, geese or ducks would be spread on it. It was a dream of a breakfast for a child.

Since we have already discussed the baking of bread, let us continue with this topic for a while. There was no baker or bakery in the entire village so every housewife had to bake bread for her family. There was a bake oven in each house and in most cases it served as a combination baking and heating source. At one time a master baker did come to the village and settle there. He was especially capable and competent in his profession. He made wonderful baked goods, such as marvelous croissants, pretzels, small loaves and of course bread as well. His name was Peter Herold, the oldest son of *Vetter Klos* (Herold). He had learned his trade well, but all of his ability did not help him because the village was too small to support a bakery. He could not make a living from the income he generated from his products. In the first place, the villagers were always short of ready cash for a good croissant, even though it did not cost very much, it required an outlay of money that was sparse in most households, and secondly, the housewives were unable to get out of the habit of baking their own bread. Good old Peter Herold had to search out a larger village to make a living from his trade.

We can compare the baking of bread with a holy deed. As it will be explained later in the section dealing with agriculture, even if they were poor, every family in the village was able to earn enough grain during the harvest to provide the necessary bread grain for the coming year. The grain was ground into excellent flour at our local mill. The bread baked

from this flour was white bread, however, it could hardly be compared with what we call white bread today. It was very porous and spongy as we were fond of saying. It was kind of light gray in color and did not taste as dry like the white bread in England or America. The loaves were round and high and they had a glossy brown crust. Sometimes the loaves were so high that they had to be brought down from the tripod inside the oven in order to get them out through the oven door. Smaller loaves were called a *Mitschel*. Here is the recipe that most of the women used to make their bread for daily use. This baking usually took place once a week, so there was always fresh bread in the house. (The following recipe was provided by Katharina Wolbank, nee Arnusch.)

Baking bread was done in the following manner in our village, she wrote: About 10 kilograms of flour was placed in a kneading trough. On the night before, a *Dampfl* was made out of sour dough (from some of the dough that was made at the last baking) along with some yeast. The *Dampfl* would rise because water was added to the sour dough and yeast. Then it was added to the flour in the kneading trough. This mixture was left to sit overnight until about four o'clock in the morning. At that time, additional water was added along with some salt and the entire mass of dough was kneaded well. When this was completed the dough was left to stand for an hour. In the meantime, the bake oven was fired up. Then the loaves were formed and kneaded into a round shape and pushed into the oven. Baking time was about 2 hours. With regard to baking bread, Eva Niedermayer, nee Selesch, wrote: When the bread was taken out of the oven it was washed off with clear water so that it shined beautifully. Very often a small amount of dough was formed into a small loaf called a *Mitschel*. The *Mitschel* baked much faster so it could already be eaten at breakfast. Mothers also loved to make *Flammkuchen* out of the bread dough. This was a flat cake, 20 to 30 cm in diameter in its natural state before baking and quite thin. The flat cake was smeared with sour cream. Then before baking the bread, it was put into the hot oven, right on the cleaned stony bottom. Butter, goose fat or lard spread on the *Mitschel* or the *Flammkuchen* provided a rare delicacy at breakfast. The well loved *Dickkuchen* was also baked using bread dough. The *Dickkuchen* was rolled and kneaded with lard, like flaky pastry, but was baked thicker, not as thin as flaky pastry. Bread could be improved by adding cooked shredded potatoes, or by using buttermilk or whey in the place of water. That is how we made all our good bread. Now we go on to some other items that are also reflective of our very good cakes:

Grammelpogatschen (Recipe from Maria Fuchs, nee Gerger.)

Stir the following ingredients together to form a light dough: 400 grams of flour, 1 or 2 egg yolks, 20 grams of yeast, 40 grams of lard, some salt and 2 tablespoons of vinegar and milk. This dough must be well whipped with a cooking spoon until it peels off the spoon. Then the dough is set aside to rise. In the meantime, grind 400 grams of *Grammeln* [a byproduct of lard rendering – cracklings] in the mincing machine as fine as possible. After the dough has risen it is rolled out as thin as possible, the *Grammeln* are spread all over it and it is folded over the same way that flaky pastry is made. This should be done at least 3 times. In between each time the dough should be left to rest at least 10 to 15 minutes. Now the dough should be rolled out to a thickness of 1½ cm. The *Pogatschen* are cut out of the dough by using a *Krapfenstecher* [similar to a doughnut cutter], then smeared with egg and baked at a high temperature. Before forming the *Pogatschen* one can sprinkle

coarse salt or breadcrumbs on the dough. A further tip: Do not let the dough stand in an overly warm place while waiting for it to rise.

Schmerkipferl [a croissant with filling] (Recipe from Maria Fuchs as well.)

Use the following ingredients: 400 grams of flour, 2 egg yolks, 2 tablespoons of cream, 1 tablespoon of sugar, 20 grams of yeast (softened in a bit of milk), some salt and wine (or sour cream). Then knead into a light dough until it no longer sticks to your hands or the wood cutting board. Let it settle and rise in a bowl (but not in a warm place because it could rise too much). While it is settling and rising grind 280 grams of *Schmer* [pig belly fat] through the mincing machine. Set aside some of the 400 grams of flour before making the dough. This remainder of the flour needs to be thoroughly worked in with the *Schmer* so that the dough will be soft and elastic. Roll out the dough to the thickness of 1½ cm and to a length and width of 20 cm. Lay out the dough and work in the *Schmer* like you would when making flaky pastry. Let the dough rest 3 times, then cut it up with a hot knife into pieces of any size and let it rise. Before shaping and forming the croissants, fill them with marmalade and let them rise again before baking.

Kürbisstrudel (Recipe from Elisabeth Budimac, nee Kirchner, widow of Fochler.)

In a very large bowl add ½ liter of lukewarm water, a tablespoon of vinegar, some salt, an egg and enough flour so that the dough remains soft. Thoroughly mix all of the ingredients together. Place the dough on your cutting board and knead it very well, divide it into 3 portions and form them into round balls, then cover them with a bowl and let sit for 10 to 15 minutes. Next, the round balls need to be rolled out to the size of a large dinner plate, smeared with warm oil and let sit for 10 to 15 minutes. Peel a squash or pumpkin, remove the seeds and grate the remaining pulp (coarse). Then stretch the dough out on a large table with a tablecloth, as it is pulled the dough at the edge is removed along the fringe of the table, rolled up into a ball and put under the bowl. A quarter of the pumpkin or squash is spread out over the stretched dough. Then some oil, sugar, cinnamon and honey is poured on the dough and the squash or pumpkin. Using the tablecloth, the strudel is rolled up into a long roll and placed on a baking tray smeared with lard. Bake at 200 degrees Celsius.

All of the leftover balls of dough are then worked into forming another large ball and it is dealt with in the same manner as the first 3 portions. As a result, you can make 4 strudels from the above indicated ingredients.

According to a recipe from Maria Fuchs, the stretched out dough can also be covered with any of these ingredients: raw ground apples mixed with sugar and cinnamon, pitted cherries, curds mixed with some salt and sugar or cooked cabbage. In addition, ground poppy seed or walnuts can be added.

Polsterzipf (Recipe from Elisabeth Budimac.)

The following ingredients are required: 350 grams of flour, a heaping tablespoon of lard, a teaspoon of baking powder, ½ teaspoon of salt, an egg and milk. The baking powder and flour are mixed together with the lard. Then salt is added along with the egg and the milk and it is all kneaded together in a bowl. Then the dough is kneaded on a cutting board until

it is smooth. Next, the dough is rolled out to about 3 mm in thickness and cut into squares with a baking wheel. The squares are dropped into heated lard until they turn light brown. *Polsterzipf* were a favorite served with potato soup.

Krumbiretatschl (Recipe from Elisabeth Budimac.)

Cook a kilogram of potatoes, let them cool off, then peel and grate. Add a bit of salt with an egg and enough flour so that the dough does not become too hard. Use a cooking spoon to stir all of the ingredients together. Take a heaping tablespoon of the mixture and form a small ball. Use your hands, covered with flour, and press together to form a *Tatschel* [little flat cake] about 1 cm thick. Drop the *Tatschel* in heated lard and allow it to fry. They can be served with tomato soup. They can also be coated with marmalade or with cinnamon and sugar sprinkled on them.

Crème-Pitte (Recipe from Elisabeth Widl, nee Wüst.)

First, we have to prepare a good flaky pastry. For that purpose we need 300 grams of flour, 250 grams butter, some salt, 2 egg yolks, ½ liter of cream and ½ liter of wine. With a slice of the butter the size of a walnut, flour and other ingredients we will make a dough. We will flatten it to a thickness of 1 cm and then coat it with the rest of the butter (one can also use *Schmer* for this purpose) and work up the dough and then let it sit. We will do this 3 times. Then we will divide the dough into 2 equal portions and bake them on a baking tray at a high temperature. For the filling we will need to boil ½ liter of milk to which we will add 6 tablespoons of sugar and a vanilla husk. In another bowl we will stir the following ingredients together: 5 eggs, a tablespoon of flour and some corn meal. This mixture will now be poured into the boiling milk and stirred until all the mixture thickens. When this developed crème has cooled off we add 5 egg whites that have been beaten to snow and stir it together. The flaky pastry will be filled with the crème, then cut up into small pieces and superfine sugar can be sprinkled on top.

Spritzkrapfen (Recipe from Anna Passul, nee Benda.)

First, the dough is made. For making about 20 of them we need 100 grams of flour and 100 grams of butter. These two ingredients are stirred together in approximately 1 dl [1 tenth of a liter] of boiling water. It has to become a very heavy dough. Add 3 eggs and stir into the mix, then knead and stuff into an injector, which you will use to form little sticks in the figure of a star. The dough mixture needs to be splashed into hot lard, fried on both sides and sprinkled with superfine sugar.

Dobosch-Torte (Recipe from Hede Loch.)

First, stir 8 egg yolks with 9 spoons of sugar and then add 8 spoons of flour to the mixture. Then 8 egg whites will be beaten to snow and added to the mixture. The dough should have a rather fluid consistency. It will be baked in 12 thin light yellow layers in the following manner: Pour the mixture into a ladle or dipper and then pour it over a reversed baking tray to the depth of the spine of a knife. It will be necessary to monitor the baking process so that the thin substance does not burn. Make the filling next. For this purpose take 8 egg yolks, add 8 spoons of sugar and beat the ingredients over heat until it is cooked and then let it cool. In the meantime, warm 3 bars of baking chocolate and stir with 250 grams of butter. Now stir both mixtures together and spread over the thin biscuit like

layers. The top layer is not treated in the same way. It will eventually receive a glazed sugar topping prepared in this way: 100 grams of sugar is browned in a pan to a light yellow shade and then it is quickly spread over the top layer before it cools. One can also choose to make a rectangular cake. It is simpler and easier.

Gleichgewicht-Kuchen (Recipe from Hede Loch.)

We need 5 large eggs, 200 grams of flour, 250 grams of butter, 1 package of vanilla sugar and ½ teaspoon of baking powder. The egg yolks are mixed and stirred with the sugar and butter. Then the flour is added. The egg whites are beaten into snow, then vanilla sugar and baking powder are mixed with it and the mixture is added to the dough. All of this must be well mixed and then baked for 40 minutes at 200 degrees Celsius. Instead of butter, lard can be substituted as it was often done at home. As a result, the whole cake was much richer. The finished baked cake was usually cut into little moons.

Along with the above described cakes there were naturally all kinds and sorts made out of yeast dough, such as poppy seed and walnut strudel, pre-Lenten donuts, pancakes and finer sorts of things like jelly roll cakes, fruit cakes, various macaroons and honey cakes. To print all of the recipes would be beyond the scope of this book. But in conclusion, a special word: there always had to be cake on the table when visitors came to the house and cake had to find its way to the table at the conclusion of lunch on Sundays and holidays. During the week, Thursdays were usually pudding day. For lunch on these days one of the nice tasting specialties from above were served after the soup.

The evening meal, what we would call supper, was a cold meal on most occasions. In the food pantries there were all kinds of items for this purpose. Dearly loved were the various products made from our own family butchering, delicacies like bratwurst, liverwurst, *Schwartelmagen*, paprika bacon, smoked bacon, *Sulz* and salted smoked hams. In addition, various sour items were served: pickles, peppers, green tomatoes in vinegar and of course sauerkraut. Often whole heads of cabbages were included among the shredded sauerkraut and they ended up on our supper table. Entire leaves of these preserved cabbages were used in the creation and preparation of cabbage rolls, or what we called *Sarma*. They provided the meal with a piquant taste.

During the summer when work continued late into the evening and when the midday meal was eaten from the *Brotsack*,⁴¹ the mothers would not hesitate to set a complete meal on the table in the evening. That was quite understandable.

With regard to the *Brotsack* taken out to the fields, the food and the contents will be dealt with elsewhere. Here I just want to mention that in the fall, at the time of the winter plowing, we loved to fry “Gypsy Bacon” out of the bacon in our *Brotsack*. We would slit our pieces of bacon several times so that they looked like crowns, then attach them to a stick and hold it all over an open fire. The bacon fried quickly. The drippings from the sizzling bacon were caught with a piece of bread. It was customary to eat an onion along with the “Gypsy Bacon.”

⁴¹ A lunch bag made from linen or canvas.

Drinking was much simpler. In our homes we usually drank artesian well water. Before we had these wells it was rather risky for the villagers to drink from the other wells [hand dug shallow wells]. The water from the hand dug wells could not be kept clean and often led to severe illnesses; in fact, it caused epidemics that claimed a large number of victims. The artesian well water was a blessing for our village and for the health of all of its inhabitants.

No commercial wine was produced in our village. However, wine could be purchased with relatively little money in the large city of Werschetz that had a winemaking industry and was only thirty kilometers from our village. Wine was only drunk at the *Wirtshäuser* or in the homes on special occasions. With regard to hard liquor, the most you could find in some homes was schnapps. It was distilled out of various raw materials. One of the more notorious kinds of schnapps was potato schnapps; another was distilled from mulberries. Good fruit schnapps as well as schnapps made from grape skins was available at the *Wirtshäuser*. Schnapps was called *racki*. During harvest time or other times when hard work was being done, many people enjoyed serving the workers a glass of schnapps at home.

Of course there was also beer. But it was not as popular as it is today. Beer of rather good quality was available from the brewery in Werschetz. It was available either in small wooden barrels or in bottles. Some housewives made beer for their own families. The following is a recipe from Anna Passul: First, 2 kilograms of barley are roasted into malt. Then the roasted barley is cooked in 20 liters of water, some sugar is added and it is left to cool. Later on, all of it is poured through a sieve. Then approximately 50 grams of leaven is added to the cold liquid to give it body. All of this is placed in a cold room in a kettle and left there until foam forms on top. Everything should settle very well before it is poured into bottles and capped.

There was also a place in the village where they produced soda water. It was used to dilute wine and fruit juices. Without soda water there would have never been our beloved Spritzers.

Naturally, we also drank various milk drinks. What was loved the most was what we called sour milk. It was milk left standing in crockery in the cellar and drunk on hot days. The children loved sweet milk, which was still warm following milking.

In general we can say that the men preferred to drink wine, *racki* and beer in the *Wirtshäuser*, while at home they chiefly drank water. If a married woman or an older girl wanted to drink something at the *Wirtshaus* the most she could get was a Raspberry Spritzer.

Drunken people in the village were a rarity. I cannot recall any men or women who had a drinking problem. There could have been, but the cases were so rare that I never took notice of them.

AGRICULTURE THE MAJOR INDUSTRY

The work associated with agriculture established the rhythm of life in the village. The four tall chimneys and the rigging around the drilling derrick out in the pastures would give a distant observer a false impression of our village. Our industries and workshops were not the centerpiece of our local economy. It was agricultural production that carried the tradesmen and manufacturers and provided work for willing hands. Daily bread was earned in agricultural production and the prices of agricultural products determined the prosperity of the village. If the wheat prices were high, the farmers had money to buy other things. If the prices were low, everything stagnated because there was no money in the village.

Of course, the agricultural work was also the hardest work around. The work had to be done in all kinds of weather and did not allow any delay. When the wheat was ripe it was time to harvest. That was the same for all of the other field crops cultivated within the boundaries of the village. Of first order, there was wheat, closely followed by corn. Barley and oats were grown primarily for fodder, as well as the aforementioned corn. Rye was less prevalent. The long stalks of these grains were used for making baskets to store eggs and other things. The straw from rye stalks was eagerly sought after by those who manufactured these products in their homes. Potatoes were grown for personal use, while turnips were grown to feed livestock. In the last years, the cultivation of sunflowers and rape plants was greatly encouraged. The seeds were sent to the oil mills where they produced fine cooking oil. There was also some cultivation of medicinal plants, such as *Rizinusbohnen*,⁴² peppermint and chamomile.

Vegetables and fruit were seldom grown as cash crops and if they were, among the vegetables it was peppers and cabbages, and in the case of fruit it was apples. There were no vineyards within the boundaries of our village and no winery. If we include melons as a fruit, they also need to be mentioned here because they were not grown for household use or local consumption.

In what follows with regard to the planting and harvesting of wheat and corn are representative of all of the other grain crops. They serve to provide a full picture of the yearly life cycle of the village. The cultivation of these two grain crops demanded various types of work throughout the year with the exception of the winter. In the winter, the cold temperatures and great amount of snow made it impossible to do any kind of work in the fields. As mentioned elsewhere, only hunting took place in the fields in the winter months.

By the time of the *Kirchweihfest*, which was in Mid-November (the first Sunday after St. Martin's Day) the winter seeds had to be sown and the corn had to be brought in and sheltered so the kernels could dry out on the cobs during the winter. Winter wheat and winter barley was also sown at this time. If there was a lot of snow, which was often the case, then the winter seeds germinated well because they were protected from severe frost.

⁴² Beans used for the production of castor oil.

The work in the spring began with the preparation of the fields for the sowing of the rest of the grain crops, as well as corn, turnips and sunflowers.

The following facts about our village will give a picture of the extent of the work and the size of the fields involved. The fields themselves were neatly arranged around the village. There were approximately 7,500 *Joch* [about 10,700 acres or 4,300 hectares]. The great majority of the land, around seventy-five per cent, belonged to families with the names of Birg, Faul, Balli or Eisler. The rest was divided up among the small and middle sized farmers. When speaking of the first mentioned group of farmers we could call them big estate owners because of their large land holdings. There were numerous field names identified with the land: Rarosch, Okne, Schumbeck, Sptizen, Ried and Hutweide. Small pieces of land adjacent to the family home and household gardens were called *Kleegärten* [clover gardens]. They were mostly planted with fodder grains or clover (the source of the garden's name), turnips and a portion of the potatoes; plants that you would like to have close to your house so when you needed something it did not take much time to go and get it. The distance to the border of the arable fields was less than four hundred meters. They were grouped together and at one end there was a driveway.

Let us consider plowing. This was an important but difficult and time consuming task. Up until the year 1944, which was up until the end of our time in the village, the horse provided the necessary pulling power. Two horses were hitched to a single bladed plow.

In a single day the horses and plowman walked a good thirty kilometers going back and forth in the field they plowed. That is quite remarkable when we consider that plowing took several weeks of a working year, one can judge just how hard and demanding this walking in the fields actually was. But the fields were not only traversed back and forth from one end of the field to the other while plowing. The sowing of the seeds, the corn planting, and above all the hoeing and forming small heaps around the corn also made walking from one end of the field to the other to be repeated over and over again. Corn was hoed at least twice and small heaps were formed around the plants once, it required a gigantic amount of time and effort with the corn alone. In addition, there was the work associated with the harvest.

The farmers with small landholdings mostly plowed their land with a single bladed plow. The farmer who owned somewhat more land used a two bladed plow to make his furrows. The largest estate owners worked with the latter as well, but had several teams of horses and plows. Of course, the Birg family saw the need for a more rationalized approach, as we might say nowadays, and introduced steam driven plowing. These were enormous machines. They were equipped with two steam engine tractors, two water wagons, and a swivel plow with eight to twelve blades. The tractors had a powerful rope winch driven by the steam engine. A machine like this stood at each end of the field. Through the use of the rope winch the large swivel plow was pulled from one end of the field to the other. The capacity and accomplishments of this equipment was enormous in terms of the conditions at the time. But even so, in terms of the expenses involved it was not worth it. It required a large operating crew to maintain the steam engines and to keep the huge plow in good repair. This greatly affected its possible rental to others, not to mention the fact that the

steam engines had to be run with coal. Since there was no coal in the region, it had to be transported from a great distance and was very expensive by the time it reached its destination. After several seasons of plowing with them, they were no longer used for this purpose and the plowing of fields reverted back to using horses.

Once a field was plowed and planted, and if the weather was favorable, the crops grew superbly until the harvest with little work to do. The only major exception was eliminating the thistles, which was done mostly by day laborers and older children. Cutting these thistles was to some extent kind of fun. You used a handle with a sharp broad blade cutting knife attached to it. The thistles, a deeply rooted weed, had to be cut down with this tool at the point where they entered the ground so all of the nutrients in the soil could be absorbed by the planted grain. A good farmer did not need these thistle cutting people because he kept his fields in good order; on well kept fields you would not find any thistles or very few.

Once the summer grain crops were sown and had taken root, the planting of corn, turnips and sunflowers could be undertaken. Corn was planted in rows at a distance of sixty-five to seventy centimeters apart. The distance from stalk to stalk would be about forty-five to sixty centimeters. On a strip of land two meters wide there were usually about three rows of corn planted. It was very much the same with sunflowers. Spacing was important because a special tool designed to cultivate the field had to easily pass between the rows when pulled by single horse. While the grain crops grew, the root crops took a lot of work and energy. As mentioned before, the corn was hoed at least twice, and at least once the stalks had to be stabilized by mounding earth around them to ensure a good crop. This required an enormous amount of work by hand. When the hoe was unable to dispose of the weed, it had to be pulled up by hand. Hoeing corn was an important and time consuming task that had to be done before the grain harvest.

Bringing in and gathering the grain harvest, also called *Fexung*, took place in three phases: the cutting, the gathering and the threshing. The first to be cut was the barley. There was not a great amount of it cultivated, usually only as much as the farmer needed for feeding his own livestock. By Mid-June the barley was golden yellow in the fields. It was mostly harvested by hand with the use of the scythe and sickle.

At the end of June, or the beginning of July in years when there was more rain, the real cutting began: the wheat harvest. Of first importance, we need to say that the cutting was the major annual event that provided bread for the whole year. Every family, whether they were farmers, tradesmen or laborers prepared for this event. The farmers who cultivated larger fields of wheat arranged for harvesting equipment. The highest technically advanced machine was the self-binder, or as it was also called: the reaping and binding machine. This machine was pulled by four strong horses, it cut down the ripe grain, bound it into sheaves and dropped them off into the stubble field. A working crew consisting of four to five persons followed behind the binder. They set up the bound sheaves into crosses, the sheaves were crisscrossed and leaning up against one another. In this way the recently mowed grain was left to dry out. These "crosses" were built up with eighteen sheaves. After a day of cutting one could sit back in the evening and admire the rows and

rows of “crosses” in place of the golden yellow stalks that had waved about in the wind in the morning hours. It had such a clean and orderly appearance. On a good day, a reaping and binding machine could easily harvest a field the size of eight *Joch*. If there were more horses at the farmer’s disposal the teams could be changed every three hours and the performance of such a machine was enhanced considerably.

The farmers with small landholdings and all of the families who did not own any land of their own, all participated in the harvest work. They primarily worked as cutters since human labor was still a necessity for this task.

The cutter, who was usually the father of a family, prepared his scythe. It had a special cutting edge for cutting the ripe but dry stalks. The sharpening of the scythe in the last days of June made a special background noise all over the village. The monotonous beating of the whetting hammers on the whetting iron could be heard coming from every yard. Harvesting the major crops was distinctly different than mowing hay in the fields or the clover and other fodder. The mowed grain had to be left in even piles so the women harvesters could easily pick it up and bind it into sheaves. To ensure that the cut grain stalks were spread out evenly, the cutter attached a curved wooden handle to his scythe at its upper end. Through his skill and his work tool, the cutter was able to leave his cuttings in an even pile with the heads of grain all facing in the same direction. Whole families, including children who could not even walk, joined in the cutting. A shady place for their little ones was constructed out of the first sheaves to be tied. The older children helped along and laid out the ties for their mothers to bind the sheaves. The cutting day began very early in the morning. While the dew was still on the grain making it damp, the ties needed for binding the sheaves for the day ahead were being made by the family members. Once they were finished, the cutting got under way. The man went on ahead with his cutting scythe while his wife followed after him and gathered up the cut grain stalks and bound them together into a sheaf. If an older child was present to lay out the ties, the child waited until their mother had enough grain stalks in her arms to make a sheaf and then laid it out for her. If there was no child to do this the woman had to carry a bundle of ties on her back and access them as she needed to, which meant a lot more work and effort for her. The children were quite capable of helping their parents in this way.

They would eat out in the field from a *Brotsack* that contained a piece of smoked bacon, an onion, fresh bread and if possible some homemade cheese. A can of milk was taken along for the children. Water was drunk from a *Logl*, which was a small wooden barrel with a built in siphon so one could drink from it whether standing up or lying down. The secret was to keep it in a place where the water would be kept cool.

The heavy work in the blistering heat made the task of harvesting rather physically exhausting and yet strangely enough by the time the long winter was finally over we actually looked forward to it. After a cutting team of husband and wife harvested about a *Joch* they set up their crosses of sheaves and then went home tired, but feeling fortunate. The beautiful rows of standing sheaves in their cross formation were a witness to their required day’s work. A good cutter would cut from ten to twelve *Joch* each season. The

cutter was paid with each tenth cross, or in other words, throughout the season he would receive one tenth of what he cut.

The second phase of the harvest consisted of transporting the sheaves from the cross formations to the threshing place. Threshing was usually done in a farmer's yard, but if there was a larger amount to be threshed the straw stacks were built up in the fields and the grain would be threshed there. A rack wagon with special rails along its sides was used to haul the large loads to the threshing place.

Usually there was a need for two people with each wagon and a team of horses to transport the sheaves. One person would load a sheaf from the cross with a light pitchfork and toss it on the wagon. The second person would set up the load. This load of sheaves was a kind of work of art that just not everyone could manage. If the wagon was not sitting on a level spot, the load could easily fall over. If this misfortune happened to a man from the village, the whole village would be talking about it for a long time. This kind of mishap also occurred when one of the new cars in the village approached a loaded wagon. In that case there was the danger of the horses shying away or rearing and running off. Wagons piled high easily tipped over and spread sheaves along the road. When that happened the car drivers were definitely named with a "best wishes."

When one arrived at home with the wagonload of sheaves without any incident along the way, which was normal, it was time to unload. All of the sheaves were taken off the wagon and made into one big stack. These stacks reached such a height that several persons were needed to assist in setting it up, and that too was a work of art. At about half of the height of the stack, the sheaves would be arranged and formed in such a way that the stack would have a pointed peak. Once the stack was in place and stable, much of the harvesting was completed. Then the company that did the threshing work followed. It was the operator's responsibility to put the threshed grain into sacks that could contain sixty kilograms before they were stored away. Carrying these sacks was the ultimate proof of the strength of every young fellow. If he could hold out for the day, he was a man! This was no easy task because such a threshing machine could thresh around twenty tons of wheat per day [metric tons]. That means twenty thousand kilograms. With each sack weighing sixty kilograms it would amount to about 335 sacks per day. Two to three men had to take these to the attic of the house or another storage place where the grain was kept until it was sold and then loaded on a boxcar at the railway station. Once the wheat was stored in the attic or a granary, the grain harvest was officially over. Then we knew whether the work we had done for the year was worth it and if it was a good or a bad year.

One more word about the threshing machines: there were four such threshing machine outfits in our village. They consisted of a steam engine tractor that drove the threshing machine by the action of flywheel and a long belt. They also had a grain elevator for transporting the straw onto the straw stack. Additional equipment included a water barrel on wheels that provided the necessary water for operating the steam engine. The personnel required to operate the threshing machine included a machinist, a fireman, two *Einlassern*,⁴³ four men on the sheaf stack, four men on the straw stack and four girls to

⁴³ Workers who fed the wheat sheaves into the threshing machine.

clean up the chaff. In addition, two men were responsible for filling the sacks with the threshed grain and then placing them on the appropriate scales. Once the sacks were weighed, the manager of the operation had the responsibility of routing them to their proper destination.

The steam tractor was constructed in such a way that it could move under its own power. Once everything was threshed at one place, the steam tractor was used to pull the threshing machine, the elevator and the water barrel to the next stack of sheaves. These steam driven threshing machines held a real fascination for the people, especially the children. The steam engine had a whistle that was used for announcing the beginning of the lunch break and at night to signal that work was over and whenever there was a need to add straw to the fire or fill the barrel with water. Sometimes we boys did the firing for half a day to build up enough extra steam to be allowed to blow the whistle just once. We could identify each of the threshing machines by the sound of the whistle, so we knew precisely where they stood. In the village our local co-operative had a machine that belonged to a group of farmers, Friedl Birg and Michael Birg (Locksmith Mischi) had their own machines and eventually Nikolaus Birg had one too. As previously mentioned, each of the four machines had their own crew with a *Bandagazda*⁴⁴ in charge. They were paid in wheat. A certain percentage of the threshed grain was given as a man's earnings. This wheat was stored in a granary and then divided up proportionately among the workers on the weekend. Everyone received his own share, so in this way all had the assurance of daily bread for the year ahead. Those who had already earned their portion of wheat as cutters and then later worked with the threshing machines could sell their excess grain if they already had enough for their own needs.

Wheat can be seen as the major agricultural product of our village, so we need to say a word about the crop yield from the wheat fields of our village. One could count on having about twenty *Zentner* per *Joch*; a *Zentner* weighed fifty kilograms. Naturally, there were some very good years when the yield doubled and two thousand kilograms were harvested. The barley and the oats yield were a little less than what it was for wheat.

The second major foundation crop in our agricultural production was corn, called *Kukuruz* in our village terminology. The corn was ripening while the wheat was being brought in from the fields. The corn stalks easily reached a height of over two meters and they usually had about two cobs. The fields had the appearance of a deep green forest and a pale yellow color by September. Rosszand corn was the major variety cultivated because it provided a good yield and had very good quality. In a good year, one could count on twenty-five *Zentner* per *Joch*. When the corn grew well the cobs were rather large. They had up to twenty rows of kernels with about one hundred kernels in each row. This means a cob had about two thousand kernels. This was something that gladdened the heart of the farmer.

A farmer who planted more corn than he could work with his family members and potential hired hands would have one or more *Drittler* [one-third sharecroppers]. These people along with their families also worked as cutters in the wheat harvesting. They made

⁴⁴ Hungarian for work crew boss.

themselves available to “their” farmer who was in need of extra hands. Following the planting of the corn they took over several *Joch* and worked the fields until the harvest was complete. The wages for their work consisted of a third of the yield, as well as the stalks, which provided fodder for their livestock in terms of the leaves while the stalks themselves were used as heating material.

The corn crop required a lot of time and attention. Not only because it had to be hoed twice and earth mounded around the stalks, but the harvest itself had to be done by hand. At the time of harvesting the ripe corncobs had to be broken from the stalks, the outer husk had to be peeled back and then they were thrown on large piles. Two of the piles belonged to the farmer and the *Drittler* would take the other one home. The corncobs were stored in a granary called a *Hambar* [corncrib]. These *Hambars* were about two meters wide, three meters high and five to fifteen or more meters in length. In most cases they were constructed above the pigsty so they could benefit from the increased air circulation aloft. The *Hambar* had walls made of narrow wooden slats about five to seven centimeters in width and separated from the next one. This design allowed the air to circulate through the *Hambar* and dry out the stored corncobs. The *Hambar* had a flat pitched roof and was covered with roofing tiles. The corn was stored in the *Hambar* until spring, by then it was well dried out and it was easier to rub the kernels off the cob. In our village there were actually motor driven machines to do this and using one of them could empty an entire *Hambar* in two days. The corn kernels were put into sacks that could hold sixty kilograms. Then the sacks were taken to the railway station where they were loaded as bulk cargo into boxcars. With that, the work associated with this field crop was concluded.

Corn was the favorite fodder used to feed the swine. The first corncobs of the season had their kernels rubbed off by hand. They were used to force feed the geese. The fattened geese were already needed for the *Kirchweihfest* in Mid-November. The corn kernels were mixed with lard so they would easily slide down the throat of the goose. The wonderful large goose livers were always and everywhere in great demand and were a result of good Banat corn.

With regard to the corn, one further item needs to be noted. The popping variety of corn was very important and had to be in every household because it was highly prized at Easter as food for fasting. This variety of corn was planted by hand along the edge of the cornfields and then it was treated like the other corn. The stalks were hoed and earth mounded around them. They were not as tall as the *Rosszand* corn and their cobs were much smaller. That is why the popcorn stood at the very edge of the cornfields. These smaller stalks would then have enough air and sun and would not be covered over by the higher stalks and broad leaves of the *Rosszand*. The popcorn was harvested in the same way as the *Rosszand*. But it took longer to dry out. If the popcorn was not completely dried out, the kernels would not pop in the heat of the fire, so instead of the white popcorn there were only *Breindl*, as the un-popped kernels were called.

Corn was above all a rather wonderful crop. Its cultivation provided many advantages because of the various practical uses of almost every part of this valuable gift from Mother Earth. The kernels, when they were sold, were a significant product that helped the

farmers meet the costs of running their farms and providing for their families. What was left over from the cobs after the kernels were rubbed off served as heating material in the kitchen stoves. Since there was no firewood in our region, the empty corncobs were highly prized by the housewives. The outer covering of the cobs, the corn husks, were used to stuff the *strohsacks* that served as mattresses. They were good to lie down on and did not crunch together like those filled with straw from the stalks of oats. The stalk itself, which was over two meters in length, ended up in the cow's feedbox. The long dry leaves were preferred by the beef cattle who chewed on them with great delight. The leaves were a favorite fodder for the livestock in the winter months. The stems remained as leftovers. These leftover stems were taken out of the cow's feedbox, tied together and stored outside to completely dry out. Then the dried stems were used to heat the bake ovens in which bread for the entire family was baked weekly, or they were used to heat the rooms when winter set in. The heating stoves were built in such a way that bread could be baked in them. They had an oven built into them. In the wintertime this type of stove was fired up twice a day and the housewives used it to keep their meals warm. A large pot full of the corn kernels covered with water could be kept in the oven. Within a half of a day the corn kernels would be softened. When eaten with some salt added they were a welcome treat, especially when groups of friends were together for gossip. The pot would be set in the middle of the table and people would take a handful of the cooked corn while spending a cold winter day in a warm room along with some of the favorite people in their lives.

With regard to the other field crops and cereal grains, there is no need to go into any detail. All of the work involved was secondary to the major occupation of wheat and corn cultivation. Certainly, something could be said about these secondary agricultural products, but that would take us too far a field. Here I am thinking especially about the wonderful thick pumpkins and squashes that lay in the cornfields. There were two kinds of pumpkins: *Rosskürbis* were squashes intended for cattle feed and *Bratkürbis* were used by people to create all kinds of tasty treats. The pumpkins and squashes in that sense were by products of the cornfields. They grew and ripened easily in the fields because they were shaded from too much sun by the corn stalks, and yet they received enough light and air. Farm boys often earned their first money from the *Rosskürbis*. They split open the large pumpkins and took out the seeds in the center. After the seeds were well dried they could be sold to the Jewish storeowner, Mr. Müller. We would get up to seven *Dinars* for a sack of these dried pumpkin seeds, which in light of the chronic shortage of money in the village was a fortune to a small boy. The *Bratkürbis*, which had a white to bright gray shell in contrast to the dark yellow to dark green shells of the *Rosskürbis* that were used for cattle feed, could be divided into four to six pieces and then placed on a tripod and shoved into the oven. They baked very quickly and because of the high sugar content they could be taken out and eaten on the spot. A tasty stew could be made from them as well, or they could be used as an ingredient in making strudel. All of those who had the good fortune of having tasted this kind of strudel will tell you that it was an unforgettable experience. Just writing this sentence makes my mouth water in remembering the wonderful sweet taste of the pumpkin strudel. (A recipe is included in another section of this book.)

PLOWING

Alongside of sowing and planting, followed by harvesting, the plowing of the fields was the most impressive and strenuous work undertaken during the year. Plowing took place several times during the year. This work began right after the grain harvest because it was necessary to plow the stubble fields in order to prevent all kinds of weeds from seeding after the grain had been mowed, as well as unearth and destroy the burrows that the field mice had established for spending the coming winter in the grain fields. Also, the soil had become hardened during the long months while the grain grew and needed to be loosened and exposed to oxygen. As already mentioned, plowing was done with a single or double bladed plow. I can still remember quite well that during the Second World War when all of the men from the village were serving in various units of the German Army, it was young boys like me who were called upon to do the work.

In the early morning hours, around four o'clock, the livestock had to be attended to and the wagon we would drive out to the fields to do the plowing would have to be readied. The two bladed plow was very heavy and had to be placed up on the wagon. Two horses were harnessed and hitched to the wagon and two other horses were tied to the back frame of the wagon. Then we set out. The road we took in most instances took us to the Rarosch. The horses were watered at the artesian well in the community pasture and we gathered some fodder from a clover field along the way and put it on the wagon. Then our destination was right before our eyes: the stubble field waiting to be plowed under. This work usually took place in the month of July and the beginning of August. They were wonderful days filled with sunshine. Along our way we were accompanied by hundreds of trilling larks that had awakened with the rising sun and welcomed the day with their songs of jubilation. In the fields the quails added their mating calls and in the nearby waterlogged ditches there were thousands of frogs croaking. It was the awakening of a new day that one could only experience on the vast plain in our homeland. When we finally reached the field after about an hour's journey, the two bladed plow had to be lifted off the wagon. Then the horses were harnessed and placed in front of the plow and the work began. The freshly plowed up black earth was damp and fragrant, the horses were rested and a brisk tempo was established and set in. One furrow lay alongside of another. The pastel colored field of stubble was changed into a deep black. The plowman behind the plow became overwhelmed with a sense of happiness and a zest for action. The mice, whose nests were unearthed by the plow, were a welcome prize for our dogs Micki and Dacki who followed right behind the plow looking for them. Eventually it was noon.

The four horses had to have their harnesses removed and led to the nearby well where they were watered using water buckets. Then they were led to the wagon and given the clover that was gathered earlier in the morning. They were allowed to eat and rest for the next two hours. During this time the plowman opened up his *Brotsack* and strengthened himself with the delicacies his mother had sent along, then he took a long swallow from the *Logl* and lay down under the wagon where there was a bit of shade. A short nap brought back strength to his body, so the work that had been done in the morning could be carried out in the same way until evening. Furrow lay alongside of furrow and by evening a good two *Joch* had been plowed under. The plowman and his obedient horses had covered a

distance of a good thirty kilometers and they were looking forward to the restful night ahead of them. On the way home a stop was made at the well in the community pasture once more. The cool water from the depths of the earth refreshed both the animals and the plowman.

Before the livestock were looked after for the night, the plow blades had to be unscrewed and taken to the blacksmith. At his hands they received a new cutting edge to make plowing easier. Every plow was equipped with two sets of blades. One was at the blacksmith's and the other was attached to the plow. It took more than two weeks before all of the stubble fields were plowed under. Then the task of harvesting the corn was set in motion. A day of plowing by one person using a double bladed plow was a really great achievement. Guiding, directing and turning the plow around with the horses required knowledge and skill, and naturally strength and endurance as well. But we had already taken that in with our mother's milk. That was our strength and our advantage.

In addition to plowing the stubble under after the grain harvest, there was another plowing season in the spring before Easter. At this time all of the fields that had been planted with corn, turnips and sunflowers had to be plowed under. By plowing time before Easter the wheat should have reached a height in which a full-grown crow could hide itself. If that was the case we could expect a good wheat harvest.

A further condition for a good fruitful harvest was adequate good weather: It had to rain at the right time. During the time when the corn cobs were growing there was a need for a steady exchange of sunshine and showers. When the weather was not co-operating other special help and assistance was called upon. A proven method for assuring rain at the appropriate time was to carry out a procession with special prayers and supplications.

Even though there was no resident priest in the village, a group of several older women would assemble along with a prayer leader. A boy led the procession with a cross from the church, the one that was always used on all occasions related to the activities of the church. The route of the prayer procession took them out across the fields. This kind of procession could last the whole day. If it did not rain as a result of it, other plans were considered and discussed. Also, when the rain didn't come, it was not long before the Gypsy women from one of the neighboring villages found out that there was a necessity to plead for rain. They covered their whole bodies with large leaves of lettuce and swaggered through the village in this get-up. Wherever they dropped in a bucket of water was poured over them. They were sometimes lucky and after carrying out all of their procedures it actually began to rain. In this case the *Dodoloje*, as the costumed Gypsy women were called, were the winners over the crucifix. The Gypsy women received an abundant wage for their efforts: a piece of bacon, a half of a loaf of bread, or sometimes a *Dinar* for them to buy a small package of pipe tobacco.

Within the boundaries of our village there were very few occasions when there was only a handful of rain. More common by far was an overabundance of the wet blessings from above. This was especially true of the fields out in the Rarosch because they lay much lower than the surrounding fields and were often flooded and under water. The system of

canals passing through all of the fields could quickly drain the water away, so the damage was not as severe as it could have been.

A good harvest was always the desired goal. The life of the village hinged completely on the harvest. If it was a meager harvest and if the little there was fetched a poor price it resulted in a real emergency for many of the villagers. The price of wheat could command anywhere from eighty to four hundred *Dinars* and the price for corn varied from forty to three hundred *Dinars* for every double *Zentner* (one hundred kilograms). Good prices were achieved in 1924 while in 1933 the prices were terrible. A good yield at harvest was one that brought in fourteen to eighteen times more than what the planted seeds cost.

At this point we need to say something about another product that provided a good income for the farmers of the village in the years before the First World War and during the time of the Monarchy: tobacco. This product flourished and grew rather splendidly. Through agreements with the buyers a good price was assured when the crop was sold. Consequently, everyone knew that tobacco growing quickly brought money into the cash box. This would change after the First World War. The authorities in the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia established tobacco growing as a state monopoly. In addition, matches and other important products like sugar and salt were also state monopolies. Officials from the State Finance Offices were in charge of controlling the monopolies and ensuring that there were no infringements on the regulations to protect the monopolies themselves. These officials particularly kept a close watch on tobacco and cigarette lighters. And for good reason: for no man who was addicted to smoking tobacco would buy the expensive state promoted tobacco if he could grow it in his own fields.

Eventually the controls and surveillance measures were strengthened and the fine for being apprehended with “black market” tobacco was so set so high that most of the farmers decided it made no sense to grow it and gave up its cultivation. They did it with heavy hearts because from then on they had to buy the expensive state tobacco products. From then on smoking was looked upon as a real luxury. One of the men’s favorite pastimes in the *Wirtshäuser* had been telling stories about their adventures with the officials from the Finance Department and their successes in hiding their tobacco crops from them. However, with the total abolition of tobacco growing these beloved stories no longer had an audience.

Another good source of income for the farmers was horse breeding. Horses could be sold for an appreciable profit to the various armies of the Balkan States. The majority of the farmers raised the Nonius and Gidro breeds. These horses were ideal for military use because they had sturdy but slender body frames. They were unassuming, easily satisfied and were good work horses. When there was the need they could also serve as riding horses. The horses in a farmer’s stable were his pride and joy. They were well kept and attended. During the winter months when there was no real work for the horses their coats would shine from constant grooming. They were brown, rust brown, centime, and here and there a *Schimmel*. The best-loved names for horses were Irma, Astra, Elmer, Freila, etc.

The cows kept in the stable were there for the purpose of meeting the household requirements in the terms of milk, butter and cheese. Occasionally a head of cattle would be sold for ready cash. The Romanians had a good reputation as cattle drovers. Supposedly, they understood a lot about how to handle cattle. They wore their own distinctive attire: long white linen trousers and a long white shirt on the outside of their trousers. They wore a broad belt around their waist into which numerous small pockets were sewn. In these pockets they kept some money, tobacco and usually their knife. On their heads these Romanian cattle herders wore a round black hat. When a man dressed like this came into a stable it was not uncommon for a cow to jump into her feed box in total fright of him. The Selesch family had one of the most beautiful cows in the village. They lived on the Lower Street. Many people paused to cast admiring glances in the direction of *Besel* Anna when she drove the cow through the streets to water it at the artesian well in front of the Muhr *Wirtshaus*.

The livestock was always the pride of the people. The men rivaled one another in having the best horses, while the women took delight in their cattle, the swine in the stalls and their fowl. They loved all of the products of their butchering activities and they took joy when there was some extra milk for delivery to the local cooperative. The money they earned from delivering the milk belonged to the housewife as *Kerbelgeld*, her pin money.

Still another word about swine rearing: these animals were highly favored because of the essential nourishment they provided to the rural population. The people usually kept only enough swine in their stalls to meet their own needs. However, more swine were raised in our village after the Herz family in Karlsdorf established a salami factory. The swine were fattened to a weight of 120 to 180 kilograms and then sold to the salami factory in Karlsdorf. The Mangolitza swine was the breed they raised. This breed, in particular, produced a lot of bacon from which a great deal of lard could be extracted. It also proved excellent as the chief ingredient for the well regarded salami. The swine only received barley and corn to eat and gained weight rapidly. The subject of the actual butchering is dealt with in another section and can be read there.

We also need to mention that the yards of the houses were filled with fowl and poultry: geese, ducks, chickens and turkeys all played a major role in providing nourishment for the people. The poultry did not produce much of an income. Of course some cash was realized from the sale of chicken eggs as part of the housewives pin money. Occasionally, one or two of the fowl were taken to the weekly market and sold there. The work associated with the poultry was the housewife's domain. She did the feeding, settling the brooding hens on eggs and looking after the baby chicks. There were no breeding incubators in the village.

In the years prior to the Second World War, and during the war years, numerous farmers tried cultivating medicinal plants to improve their income. *Rizinusbohnen*, peppermint and chamomile were cultivated. But it soon became apparent that they did not have the appropriate equipment or machines to harvest these crops; everything had to be done by hand. The sale and delivery of the product was also quite different from the other crops. There were difficulties upon difficulties, so the attempts to grow these products proved to

be more and more untenable. Even though there was a great demand for the final products, the large amount of work associated with cultivation and harvesting was not manageable. Since the men were not available to undertake the agricultural work during the war years, the situation was simply compounded. Thus, the cultivation of *Rizinusbohnen*, peppermint and chamomile was simply halted and given up.

There needs to a word said about beekeeping in our village. Numerous people had bees, but only in small amounts, bees were not of much economic importance. There was one major beekeeper who needs to be mentioned: Nikolaus Birg. There was a substantial beehive in his garden and the honey gathered and produced from it was systemically and expertly processed. The price of honey was far cheaper than the expensive sugar produced by the state monopoly. As a result, it was often used as a substitute for sugar. Due to the costs involved, feeding the bees with sugar in times of need, as practiced nowadays, was a losing proposition in our time. I have very fond memories of beekeeping because my grandfather had a large beehive in his garden. As a child I had to stand guard and ring an alarm bell when a swarm of bees left the hive. I can still recall quite well extracting the honey from the honeycombs and pressing the beeswax. My grandfather sometimes made candies out of the honey provided by the bees. This so-called honey sugar was a much desired sweet for us children and it cost practically nothing since it was our grandfather's leftover honey. Unfortunately, the beehive stood empty in later years when my grandfather was no longer with us. My father had no interest in beekeeping.

Since agricultural activities set the rhythm of life in the village, as the former chapter indicated, we will speak of other things associated with agriculture in some of the following chapters. There is a saying of our homeland writer, Adam Müller Gutenbrunn, that was to be proven untrue. He had said, "Where the Swabian's plow cuts through the land, the earth becomes German and he will never move." The opposite was to become the bitter truth. When the German farmers in the Banat were suddenly without protection and totally deprived of their rights, they were driven off and many of them lost their lives. In the land where the plows of the Swabians had produced a "flourishing Eden," other people are plowing and harvesting today.

PASTURES AND PRAIRIES

Like most other villages in the Banat, where the vast majority of the inhabitants were farmers, our village too had its *Hutweide*.⁴⁵ It was a piece of land consisting of approximately 100 *Katastraljoch*.⁴⁶ It served as a public pasture and meadow for the villagers' livestock. The cattle and swine of the village frolicked out there from spring to late in the fall. In addition to this primary use of the *Hutweide*, there were other comforts and pleasures sought there by the entire village population.

First of all we will deal with its original purpose to serve as a pasture. Within the boundaries of the community, which was a total of 7,500 *Katastraljoch*, only 100 *Joch*

⁴⁵ A community pasture where all of the villagers were entitled to graze their livestock.

⁴⁶ *Katastraljoch* is the Austrian *Joch*, same as the *Joch* in this book.

were an actual pasture. The rest of the 7,400 *Joch* was reserved for growing various crops, roadways and ditches with water reserves. The *Hutweide* was near and dear to the hearts of the local population. They kept guard to make sure that this land would be preserved and not be offered up to the plow for crop cultivation. It had an artesian well with a long watering trough that was located at the junction of all the paths and roads across the *Hutweide*. The horses were watered at the long trough when we drove out to our fields in the Rarosch early in the morning. At the height of summer you could also take a bath in it. Since an artesian well functions like an underground spring and flows water nonstop, the excess water spilled into a lower trough that was dug into the earth and used to water the swine. From the lower trough the water was channeled to a large pond with trees planted on the edges of two sides, it appeared like a miniature forest. This little forest provided the animals with shade and protection from the scorching sun. It consisted of acacia trees as well as huge mulberry bushes. In this little forest, the herder and his family had their hut. It was sturdy and covered with a lot of straw. It not only provided the herder with protection from the terrible heat, but also against rain and storms. The *Hutweide* was flanked on one side by the railway line and on the other side by an overgrown ditch filled with water that ran into the canal system at the lower end of the *Hutweide*.

At the canal there were huge acacia trees with a massive number of crow nests in the branches. Also standing there were a few mighty black poplars whose leaves rustled in every gentle breeze.

The Wasch family had the responsibility for the care and guarding of the livestock out in the *Hutweide*. Father Wasch, whom we called Joschka *Batschi*,⁴⁷ his wife and their three sons, along with several hunting dogs, made up the family. The family was also provided with a house in the village. People respected them and some people were actually afraid of them. Early in the morning they assembled the livestock by cracking their whips (called *Tschopple*) and blowing their rather crude horn called a *Thudl*, and then they drove them out to the *Hutweide*. The first group was the cattle, the cows in particular, and then came the swine. Early in the day when the signal of the herdsmen was heard in the village houses, the villagers quickly drove their livestock out on the street where the herdsmen took them into their care. Then the herd of livestock made its way to the *Hutweide* in the form of a broad cattle drive. All of the livestock remained there until the evening. The cattle herd usually numbered about 250 head, while the number of swine were somewhat greater.

Towards evening the rising dust cloud as well as the cracking of the whips announced the arrival of the livestock at the first houses where herdsmen let them free. Every animal, whether it was one of the cattle or swine, made its way directly to its stall by taking the shortest route as possible. After all of them were in place, the stable door was locked and the livestock was back home again.

Even the village bulls were driven along with the other cattle and they often created quite a spectacle early in the morning. The bulls were wild. Especially when they saw red

⁴⁷ *Batschi* comes from the Hungarian word *bacsi*. It translates to uncle. In the Swabian dialect it is used as an honorary title when addressing an uncle or a familiar elder man. Similar to *Vetter* on page 23. When written as Joschka *Batschi* it is in Hungarian naming convention; the title *Batschi* follows the person's name.

clothing, at least that is what people said. Because there were always unforeseen incidents with the bulls and the herdsmen in the *Hutweide*, these incidents provided welcome material for discussions during the long winter nights.

The *Hutweide* also provided the children with lots of fun. The village youth loved to go out to the *Hutweide* on Sundays to engage in various sports. But for the children, their chief interest lay with the herds. They could watch how the quick herd dogs kept the herd together and they could also pretend to be a herdsman by cracking their whips. But what attracted the children's greatest attention was the large pond. The spacious *Hutweide* also served as the playing field for soccer and handball, and as track for races on horses or with our beloved bicycles. But everything in its own turn! The large *Hutweide* had its special charm for us children because we could play being the herders and go around cracking our whips. In order for the young livestock to learn the way to their stalls, especially the young swine, they had to become familiar with the route to get there. Getting "the young swine into the habit" was an ideal job for us boys. It went like this: To start with, the young swine were separated from the larger herd and then very slowly they were driven home on the same route. Right after the midday meal we headed out to get the young swine. The route we traveled was along the canal and on the railway tracks where thousands of pebbles lay in between the ties. We used the pebbles in our slingshots or just tossed them about. Whenever there was water in the canal there were usually plentiful numbers of fish. There were countless numbers of pike that we called *Entenschnabel* [duck beaks] because of their peculiar mouths. The banks of the canal were densely covered by a variety of willows, blackthorns and poplars. We whittled whistles out of willow branches and if we were lucky we managed to grab a pike, if we were really bad some of the insulators on the telegraph poles that stood alongside of the railroad got broken as a result of our stone throwing activities. If there was still some time left, a couple of crow's nests would be emptied.

Finally, when we reached the herd of swine, we began to sort out the young swine, which was not difficult because our mother had identified them by applying colors to their backs. Once all of those with the same color were herded together the young swine were able to make their way home without too much haste. The pond out in the *Hutweide* was especially interesting: one could say it was still in use. Since the *Hutweide* was owned by the whole community, as mentioned previously, anyone of the inhabitants from the village could come and take some earth whenever they needed it. Right there and then they could make bricks on the edge of the pit where there was a level platform. They would dry there and then could be used as desired. These bricks were called *Kotziegel*. They were made of clay mixed with chaff or short straw, shaped into the desired form and then set out to dry as described above. It was not uncommon for women and children to help in this kind of heavy work.

The banks along the edge of the pond, adjacent to the fields, were overgrown with willow underbrush and reeds. The water was deep enough so that a non-swimmer could easily drown in it. Before noon on Sundays the horses were bathed in this pond. During the week the herd of swine would wallow in it and sometimes a fisherman would toss in his fishing line with the hope of catching one of the fat carp.

In the fall, after the winter seeds were already sprouted out in the fields, the pond in the *Hutweide* provided a resting place for thousands of wild ducks. During the day they grazed in the fields and then towards evening they came in thick swarms and simply landed on the water to seek out a good place to spend the night. For the duck hunter or the poacher this pond was a much frequented place. We often went home with ten to fifteen ducks. The hunting usually ended when our Dachshund⁴⁸ no longer wanted to go back into the water.

The routes and paths across the *Hutweide* had the advantage of being relatively smooth. They stretched out in a straight line alongside of the brushy ditches filled with water and then lost themselves somewhere out on the Rarosch. For bicyclists, as well as some motorbike riders, these were welcome routes for an evening ride. I still remember with great joy the evening when I was allowed to ride on the back seat of a motorbike owned by the master carpenter Toni Moor. This meant we went at a pretty fast pace on the various routes through the *Hutweide*. Even today I can almost experience the peculiar scent created by the mixture of the blossoming wheat in the field and the odor of badly burned gasoline in the cool evening air.

O those wonderful times out in the *Hutweide*. How often did we play close games against teams from our neighboring villages, whether it was soccer or handball? How often did we come home dead tired and exhausted and told our mothers that everything was just fine because we had just been out in the *Hutweide*.

Our report is not complete yet because we have not said anything about the *Puszta*.⁴⁹ The *Puszta* was just as large as the *Hutweide*. The only real difference between the two was the fact that the *Puszta* was a good twelve kilometers away from our village. It was located within the boundaries of the community of Konak and was much like the *Hutweide* except only meadow grass grew there and it served as pasture for the young livestock during the summer months. It had the same function as a community pasture does in mountainous lands.

In the spring when the grass stood high enough, the young cattle were sent to the *Puszta*. Very early in the morning, most times it was still dark; it was time to set out. Ten to fifteen men assisted the *Puszta* herder in getting the herd in motion. The route was through some fields. The road itself was not wide enough in all places for the large herd. That made it difficult to prevent the high-spirited young livestock from breaking away from the herd and making their way to the nearby clover fields. There was a lot of badgering and much effort to get the animals to the *Puszta*. The same spectacle repeated itself when the herd had to be brought back to the village in the fall.

The herder in the *Puszta* stayed with the herd for the entire summer. He had a hut, like the one on the *Hutweide*, roofed with straw for protection against too much sun or rain, as well as storms. He also slept in the hut at night. Our village *Puszta* was bordered by other

⁴⁸ The author is referring to their dog Micki. Even though Micki was a Dachshund, he was a very good hunting dog and retriever. He would also retrieve chickens for cooking from the chicken coop.

⁴⁹ *Puszta* as used here refers to a prairie or large grazing area, unlike on page 19 where it refers to a large farm.

grasslands that were much like it, but they belonged to sheep farmers from the neighboring villages. On many occasions the sheep from the neighboring *Pushta* came to feed on our *Pushta*. The *Pushta* herder, who was far away from his home village where the harvest was in full swing during the height of the summer season, quite often worked hand in glove with the sheep farmers. It was precarious for the herder when our mayor sent his appointee to the *Pushta* to investigate if there were any sheep pasturing on our *Pushta*. When this happened to be the case, which occurred often, the mayor's representative confiscated all the sheep and drove them over to our village where they had to wait in the community center courtyard. When their owners showed up, they had to pay the designated pasturage fee. In this sense our local guardian of the *Pushta* was Peter Brenner who was actually armed with a shotgun and would often bring the whole flock of sheep to our village. This was always great entertainment because no sheep were kept in our village. We were unacquainted and unfamiliar with the rearing of sheep; they were really quite strange to us, especially the milking of the female.

THE TRADES AND BUSINESSES OF THE VILLAGE

Even though our village was small, in addition to agricultural production, there was a thriving industrial economy that served as an important source of income for both the German and the Hungarian inhabitants. As mentioned in other sections of this book there were four tall industrial smoke stacks and during our last years in the village there was a freestanding drilling derrick. The derrick was used for oil exploration. When a traveler would come journeying from as far away as Werschetz, either on horseback or by wagon, as he came closer to the village he would not be able to see a church tower as he would in most cases when approaching a village anywhere else in the Banat, but instead he would be greeted by the industrial smoke stacks and the tall freestanding derrick. When compared to other villages in the Banat, this created a totally different silhouette for our village. Three of these smoke stacks or chimneys belonged to the brickworks and one to the steam powered mill.

In addition to the classical agricultural crafts, the blacksmith trade and the wainwright who worked on wagons, the gristmill was by far the most important establishment. It was the source of the flour for our daily bread and the delicious baking we ate on Sundays. According to the memories of the oldest village inhabitants there was a gristmill relatively early in the development of the village. It was built at the time of the village re-settlement on the site where the Franz Bajerle (Schwob Franz) house stood. It was a *Rossmühle*, which means it was horse driven and typical of the times. These mills were referred to in this manner because the millstone was set in grinding motion by two horses pulling on a horse gin. The easily recognized hallmark of every *Rossmühle* was the large and relatively high round hall where the horses walked in a circular track to set the horse gin in motion. Next to this large structure there was a smaller building where the actual mill was located. This *Rossmühle* was torn down at the turn of the century, shortly after the opening of the railway line, when Old Konrad Birg built a new and highly modern steam powered mill in close proximity to the railway station. This mill still stands there to this day and continues to function. The present operators have simply added a grain silo to the complex. This mill has had a career of change. Ownership frequently changed hands, but it ended up in the possession of one of the three Georg Birgs from the village, the so-called *Langen Georg* [Long Georg, indicating his tallness].

The electrification of the village is closely tied to this mill. Originally, the electrical system depended on the mill generator, but the results were not the best. When the mill steam engine was shut down on weekends or at night, there was simply no electric power. The dances that were held at the *Wirtshäuser* on Sundays and at night had to rely on light from the petroleum lamps as in the past. A change in this unsatisfactory situation did not occur until an electrical power station was built in the village and the link with the mill generator was severed. The man responsible for the technical aspects and operation of the village electrical system was Anton Eisler, a man gifted with technical know how and one of the most respected farmers. He supervised the installation of the tall poles along the streets from which the electric wires stretched from one pole to another. From this point onwards it was possible for homes and businesses to have electric lights. This major step forward in our village came rather late, only in the beginning of the 1930s. With the

introduction of electricity the use of the radio become widespread. Even though Nikolaus Birg arranged to have one of these modern wonders in 1926, the word radio was simply a foreign word. Wearing earphones, all you could hear was a distant roar and occasionally a voice or snatches of music would be distinguishable. It was not until the 1930s, when many of the various forms of radios appeared, that they became numerous in the village. Later, when the trade agreements between Yugoslavia and the German Reich went into effect, trade intensified and we could buy good and affordable radios with built-in loudspeakers. They were all operated by twenty-eight batteries and a small accumulator that had to be regularly re-charged at the new electric power station. The reception was good. We could hear the news, play-by-play descriptions of soccer games or speeches by politicians. Included as well were the political speeches from Adolf Hitler. The small electric power station was best serviced by Rudi Wanya.⁵⁰ It functioned very well and fulfilled its purpose, there was better light and the accumulators for the radios were always ready for use.

As mentioned previously, the other three industrial smoke stacks belonged to the brickworks. Our village had much to show with regard to this sector of our economy. The brick business was in the capable hands of the Birg family from the very beginning and it remained so until 1944 when the catastrophe enveloped our village. As described previously, the brick business was the foundation and source of the Birg family wealth. At the time of the village re-settlement after the revolution in 1849, the scarcity of building materials was acute. The Birg family came to the village and establish brick manufacturing. At the beginning these bricks were burned in simple constructed cellar kilns dug into the earth. Later, shortly after the turn of the century in the years from 1907 to 1909, the two large circular kilns with the tall smoke stacks went into operation with a notable increase in brick production. Alongside of the bricks, roof tiles were also an important building material produced. The old colonist homes from the time of the settlement of the Banat had straw and reed roofs that were rebuilt and covered with tiles. Countless families who did not own land worked in the Birg brickyards to earn their daily bread. The Birg brothers earned a lot of money with their brick kilns and purchased large tracts of land and grain fields from the estate owners in the area. This went so far that eventually our village was designated a farming village because the majority of its residents lived off agricultural production. Even the tradesmen set their tools aside when it was the time for the wheat harvest and earned their bread for the next year as cutters.

Alongside of the mill and brickworks, which can be designated as the major industries, there were other businesses in our village that met the daily needs of the inhabitants. The first who need to be mentioned are the two blacksmiths who serviced horses and wagons: Josef Reiter and Josef Benda, and towards the end, Josef Benda's son-in-law, Anton Passul. They worked in concert with the wagon makers. The busiest tradesman in this respect was Johann Kiefer. In addition, there are three others who should be mentioned, none of whom had the same importance as Johann Kiefer. There was the Anton Schütz workshop, the shop of old Benda in the Heinermann house next to the Post Office and the

⁵⁰ After serving in the German military during the Second World War, Rudi Wanya was allowed to return to the village because of his knowledge of the electric power station. Also his wife, Anna Hirsch, a cousin to the editor, was spared from the concentration camp. About 1952 Rudi and Anna moved to Germany.

workshop of old Kubeni whose house and shop were later taken over by the master carpenter Michael Sauer.

All of these master tradesmen were experts in their field. Here is only one example: If you wanted a new farm wagon you brought some well dried out acacia tree trunks to the wagon maker. The trunk would be cut up to meet the specific dimensions required. Then the various parts of the wagon, including the wheels, were crafted by hand and assembled together. The wagon was then taken in its unfinished state to the blacksmith who would make and mount the necessary metal fittings. Of greatest interest to me was watching him forge the round iron rims and fit them on the wheels. Of course in those days there was no electric welding apparatus or one with shielding gas to assist in doing this, it was all done by hand.

The two village smithies also had another important function. They had to ensure that the plow blades were always sharp. Every evening during the plowing season the blade was unscrewed from the plow and brought to the blacksmith shop. The second blade that had been sharpened during the day was picked up to replace it. In addition, all of the many draft horses in the village had to be shod regularly by the blacksmiths. The impression these blacksmith shops made on us remains unforgettable: the loud clanging of the anvil, the rising sparks in the fire from the forge and the smell of burning horse's hooves were the telltale signs that could be recognized from a distance that a blacksmith shop was present. Also unforgettable are the experiences when the horses were shod. When a horse was stubbornly resistant, a whole group of men were called upon to restrain the animal before the blacksmith began his work. He had to be quick and certain of how to handle the horse in order to prevent the nervous animal from being restrained for too long.

Other important tradesmen and craftsmen were the shoemakers, the tailors and the barbers. All of the work done on shoes was done by hand. It was only in the latter days when factory made shoes were sold in the stores and provided competition to our local shoemakers. Whoever could afford it, and took pride in their shoes, would have them made by a shoemaker even though the factory made shoes were far cheaper. The shoemaker's workshop was also a well-frequented place by the men of the village who stopped in to chat. In the cold winter months when the men had time on their hands it was a warm spot to be in and enjoy one another's company. From among the active shoemakers there were two masters in their craft and need to be mentioned: the most busy master of his trade, Jakob Krämer, and not far from him, also on the School Street,⁵¹ the master shoemaker Heinrich Moor. Even though they worked at the same trade and produced quality shoes, they were vastly different from one another. Jakob Krämer was a craftsman with the very highest qualifications. He would criticize things, but he also has had an open world outlook. While learning his trade in his early traveling years he went as far as Vienna where he lived for several years and worked in several famous shoe workshops. He was above all a perfectionist as a shoemaker and there were no problems he could not deal with as he carried out his art and trade.

⁵¹ *Kreuz Gasse* or Cross Street.

The master shoemaker Heinrich Moor gave the impression that simply making shoes was not enough for him. He had ambitions for other things as well, and his organizational talent stood him in good stead. In fact, after the First World War he became the mayor of the village and organized the farmers into a co-operative that later purchased a new threshing machine. The shoemakers exclusively worked with leather and used strong *Gradl* for lining. The materials themselves came from Werschetz where there were several very good leather dealers and suppliers. The older residents of the village well remember seeing Jakob Krämer on his way home from the railway station and carrying a roll of shoe sole leather under his arm from his weekly trip to Werschetz. He made exceptionally good high boots that the farmers especially liked to wear. He had all of the special technical equipment and necessary tools to produce these boots in his workshop. When you entered his shop you were aware of two real eye catchers: the little bench, which was actually his worktable and the storage rack with various lasts in all shapes, forms and sizes to meet every need. Supposedly, Jakob Krämer was able to save his life because of his expert knowledge and competence in making high boots. He was one of the three men (in addition to Peter Hirsch senior and Friedrich Birg) who were allowed to come back home from the infamous Camp Stojkowitsch in Werschetz. According to reports, Krämer was only allowed to go home because one of the higher Partisan officers wanted a new pair of his high boots.

Alongside of these two master craftsmen there were numerous other shoemakers in the village. I am thinking of Jakob Bies (Dragan Shoemaker) and Andreas Wingert. However, all of them, including Krämer and Moor had to struggle to make a living. There was simply not enough spare cash on hand in the village for these tradesmen to meet their full capacity. The shoemaker's profession was a well respected one, but it was difficult for them to meet their day-to-day needs.

When one speaks of the tailors and seamstresses, the first ones to come to mind are the married couple, Lorenz and Irma Wingert. She originated from Werschetz where she was taught to be a ladies' seamstress. He in turn, was from the well known Wingert family from our village. His special forte was men's clothing. He was taught by the famous master tailor Hangozky in Zichydorf and was very talented. His suits were famous. But Irma and Lorenz Wingert were not only capable experts in their field, they also enjoyed good fellowship and social interaction. There was always something going on at the Wingert's. Especially during the winter months when there were always several girls learning to sew clothes and bedding in its basic form. Naturally, wherever there were pretty girls the young men from the village could be expected to put in an appearance. As already reported, there were not only industrious workers at the Wingert's tailor shop who sewed and cut patterns from cloth, a lot of marriages also found their origin there, some which continue to this day.

Not far from the Wingert's tailor shop was the house of the Mess Tailor [Josef & Katharina Mess]. As long as his wife was living (she died far too early), he carried on the work in the tailor shop. Tailoring at their house ended when he later moved to Setschanfeld where his daughter lived.

Johann Milowan was also a trained master tailor. He lived with his large family on the Lower Street and operated his shop there.

Another master tailor who lived on the New Street should be mentioned. This was Josef Hügel who the people simply called Hügel Tailor. He too only worked on producing men's clothing. His suits and heavy winter coats were famous because of his expert skills in this regard.

In Werschetz there were good suppliers for our village tailors. We could go to their stores and buy the material for our clothing, as well as the lining, and take it to the local tailor. The services the tailor offered always began with taking the measurements. Then the clothing had to be fitted at least twice before it was ready to be sewn. The tailors were never in a hurry. They were living examples of the old proverb: "Good things always take time."

Two barbers were independent operators in the village. But neither of them worked alone. They usually had an apprentice or an assistant. The Bies barber [Jakob Bies] lived on the Lower Street and the Brennessel barber [Jakob Brennessel] was on the Upper Street.

Jakob Bies was native to the village. But his life was rather varied. Jakob Brennessel was from Werschetz and chose to settle in our village. He was known as the finer barber who came from the city. Jakob Bies, who understandably was also a good barber, had to rely on other business as well: he could pull teeth, apply leeches and do surgical dressings after injuries. In addition, he had several remedies to treat the sick. In his younger years he had immigrated to Brazil where he lived for several years. It was believed he brought these medications and remedies from there.

Both barbers used the same basic methods. They had their customers and looked after them and their family members by cutting their hair. They also shaved the adult men and trimmed their beards and mustaches. Depending on how heavy a man's beard was, he could get shaved once, twice or even three times a week. The number of shaves each week determined the barber's earnings. He was paid with wheat, not with money! If the man did not have wheat he had to work it out with the barber beforehand on how he would pay.

The barbers came to the houses. Everything they needed to carry out their profession was brought in a wooden suitcase: a white cloth that would first be stuffed into the collar of the customer, a mug for the soap, along with a brush and a piece of soap to work into a lather in the mug, a razor, a belt to hone the razor, a comb, a pair of scissors and a hand operated hair clipper. When he was done, the master barber packed everything back into his suitcase and went on to his next customer. Along the way he would prepare for his next customer by discarding the lather that contained any hairs from the previous customer, either on the street or in the ditch alongside of it.

During the summer months the barbers experienced real difficulties in locating their customers. Most customers were up early in the morning and on the way to their fields by four o'clock and they only returned home late in the day after sundown. It required a

special talent to get the customer to sit down in the chair and submit to the barber's ministrations. The barbers were always well informed about the village gossip. They came to every house and their curiosity was legendary.

There were no women's hairdressers in the village. If a woman wanted to have an exquisite hairstyle, she had to travel to the city where there were rather capable professionals. Most of the wives and single women in the village had a curling iron in their drawer. When their hair had to be arranged for a festive occasion or a dance event they resorted to using their curling irons and helping one another.

There were four carpenters in the village at the end of our time there: Toni Moor, Michael Sauer, Franz Grassl and Andreas Merle. Toni Moor had the largest workshop. It was located across from the school. The carpenters did all of the important woodwork. When a new house was built or renovated, it was the carpenters who made all of the windows and doors. If someone needed new pieces of furniture, the carpenter made them. Even the very last need of every person: a coffin, was made by one of the village carpenters.

Until the mid 1930s we had a very capable master carpenter whose workshop, "The Wingert Carpenter Shop," was located on the Lower Street; his fame spread far beyond the village borders. He was a flawless craftsman who died much too early. But he had made plans for the future. Since he always had apprentices working for him, he passed on his high standards and knowledge to the younger generation. The work of a carpenter in our village was not easy. Not enough suitable timber grew in the region so he had to obtain his wood, the major material of his trade, from distant suppliers. There were conifers, but they were merely decorative. The most common tree in the area was the acacia, but the wagon makers used these trees. There were also mulberry trees, but we were not allowed to cut them down as often as we would have liked. They provided a highly prized kind of wood that the coopers used in making schnapps barrels. The yellow golden wood provided a wonderful color to the schnapps after a certain length of storage time in the barrel.

In regard to providing food supplies to the village, the master butcher was the only one who survived financially. He was Konrad Löchel, in addition to his butcher shop he operated a soda water business and between the two of them he made enough income for a good living. In the butcher shop he sold mostly beef and veal because during the winter months swine were butchered at every house to meet the household needs. But various kinds of excellent sausage were also available at Löchel's. One of the three large ice cellars in the village was located in this master butcher's yard. These cellars, as mentioned previously were filled with natural ice in order to keep products cool throughout the year.

The life and work of the butcher had a certain regularity about it and yet there were always exceptions. There was always great tension when a ferocious community owned breeding steer had to be put away. When this was the case the whole village was in an uproar because the steer had to be slaughtered by the master butcher Löchel. But everything had to be done in order so they would know how many kilos the creature weighed. Weighing the steer became the first problem. A scale for weighing a heavy steer could only be found at the railway station. The steer had to be taken out of its stall in the

community center stable, taken to the railway station through half of the village and then brought back to the slaughtering block at Löchel's butcher shop. That was easier said than done. Since the steer was not accustomed to suddenly hearing all of the sight seeing crowds along the street, it became more and more nervous, minute by minute. It often happened that such a steer broke loose and stampeded away. That was a spectacle to behold! But eventually it would be captured and led to its inevitable destiny, which was the villagers' cooking pots.

An additional word about soda water production. There was a machine for adding carbonic acid to the water that was already in bottles. It was a rather tiresome task because the machine had to be operated by hand. But producing it was well worth the effort because there was a demand for soda water to dilute wine and to create the fizz in Raspberry Spritzers. So there was always activity in the little shop. Delivering it was a major problem. The heavy cases of bottles were transported in a horse drawn wagon to the various *Wirtshäuser* in our village and throughout the neighboring villages. This was a time consuming and expensive undertaking.

At one time the eldest son of the Lefor family, whose name was Bernhard, opened a butcher shop in our village. He was a well trained master of his craft and very knowledgeable about his work. Above all, his fine sausages were the talk of the town, as well as in the neighboring villages. But not even the best sausages could overcome the fact that the local population did not have the money to purchase his products. His business soon closed down. Bernhard Lefor then moved to the city and opened up a successful butcher shop there.

Michael Birg, better known as Schlosser-Mischi [Locksmith Mischi] by the other villagers, operated a highly technical business for those times. This business and its genial proprietor could solve any problem associated with metal and machinery. Schlosser-Mischi was a problem solver with regard to repairing bearings in the threshing machines and revamping stationary tractor engines into independently operated mobile machines. He was also excellent at making parts for all kinds of equipment in the village and so on. His highly technical knowledge was the basis for the Partisans sparing him from the same fate as the other men in Camp Stojkowitsch. He had to work on the oil rig out in the *Hutweide*. But he suffered from the bad food rations they received and developed a virulent kidney disease. He was in desperate need of a doctor. But as a German he was forbidden to have a consultation with a doctor so this capable technician remained without medical help and was left to die. He found his final resting place in the earth of our homeland.

Before we go on to look at the merchants and storekeepers in our village one more industrial workshop needs to be recognized. Kaspar Awender ran it. He learned his trade as a rope maker and established a small business on the Lower Street. He worked with hemp and produced all kinds of rope products for carrying out agricultural activities. For this purpose he set up a winder under the covered porch of his house. Naturally, the winder was hand driven. This very simple operation produced first-rate products that were

eagerly purchased by others. So this craftsman had also found his place in the life and economy of the village.

MERCHANTS AND SHOPKEEPERS

The various goods needed by the villagers on a daily basis were provided by two general stores. The history of both of the stores reaches far back into the past of the village. There was the Waradi Store, which was operated by the Christof Hirsch family from a long way back. It was only in the last years when Hirsch gave it up and Peter Hemmert from Zichydorf took over.

The Waradi Store, which was actually the Hirsch Store, was the larger and better arranged store from the perspective of most of the former village residents as they remember it now. Everything needed in the village could be bought here. In the storage areas and shelves there were barrels of axle grease and kerosene along with fine things like honey and marmalade. There were also all kinds of spices, poppy seed, yeast for baking bread, salt, sugar and cinnamon. In addition, there was a big assortment of textiles and fabrics. Hirsch provided a variety of materials of good quality whether it was for making a curtain, silks for a new Sunday dress or party wear, or coarser materials for everyday clothes. There were long rolls of textiles and material for making men's suits, winter coats, bedding and underwear. There were also fine things available at Hirsch's for the men and women clothes closets like cravats, cashmere scarves, etc. The heart and soul of the store was the head of the family, Christof Hirsch. Even in those days he had a typewriter on which he typed his orders and carried out all of the correspondences. His brother-in-law, Matz Eisler, was his associate. They were always at the center of things along with their trained clerks and usually one apprentice. The Christof Hirsch family was regarded with high esteem in the village. Their honesty was praised and their competency was equally recognized. The village's daily needs were completely met because of the numerous capabilities of Christof Hirsch. Naturally, all kinds of tobacco products were also available. Cigarettes were not only sold by the package, but also individually. There was always a hullabaloo in the village when word got around that a traveling salesman from a supplier was at Hirsch's. Most of them had an automobile or they had themselves driven from village to village by horse and carriage. The automobiles often ran into technical problems after traveling over the potholes in dirt roads. They frequently broke their axles or something else.

The store operated by the Müller family was hardly less interesting. It was more focused on meeting the requirements of the less affluent villagers. They not only had wares to sell, they also bought products in the village and sold them. We used to say, "I'm gonna go to Luisa," when referring to the store run by the Müller family because in this case the woman of the house was in charge. Since she weighed at least one hundred kilograms, even her outward appearance was imposing.

This store, which was later located between the houses of the Wingert tailor and Friedl Birg, perhaps had a more colorful history than the Waradi Store. Supposedly, according to

the oldest residents of the village, Jakob Müller's father came to the village as a wandering peddler. This was at the time when the railway line first opened. He bought the house on the site where the *Loch Wirtshaus* was later built. The old man ran a primitive butcher shop from the house and a small *Wirtshaus* in conjunction with a simple general store that was stocked with spices and other articles for daily use. The family was soon integrated into the life of the village even though everyone knew that the merchant was an adherent of the Jewish faith.

In spite of supposedly great efforts on his part, the business did not go well. Old Müller declared bankruptcy. He had to sell his house and then he rented rooms in a house where the *Agraria*⁵² was later located. After one of his sons died in the First World War, his son Jakob took over everything. One of the first things Jakob did was to bring home his wife, Luisa. With her appearance on the scene, a capable business-like person took over. Soon the house next door to the Wingert tailor was purchased and adapted to meet the needs of a store. Most of the people who went to Luisa's store to do their shopping did so because she extended credit. Since cash was always so scarce, she kept a running tally of people's accounts. She did this without hesitation. No questions asked. Through her discretion and her personal charm she was always able to collect the outstanding accounts. I can still remember earning my first money in this store. I gathered and dried pumpkin seeds that were left over after feeding the cattle in the fall of every year. I sold them to Jakob Müller for seven *Dinars* per sack. For a small schoolboy this was a staggering amount of money. In 1938 the Jakob Müller family sold the business to the farmer, Peter Müller, who lived out on the Rarosch. He gave the store to his daughter Elisabeth who had just married the young merchant, Heinrich Ebner, who also lived in the village. Beginning in the year 1938 the business was called: "Mixed Wares and Goods: Heinrich Ebner." The young couple built up the business and expanded, but changes in the political situation affected the business adversely. Heinrich had to enlist in the military and his wife would become a refugee. Today they live in Klagenfurt. All traces of the Jakob Müller family come to an end in Betschkerek where they had relocated after selling their store.

There was another competent merchant who lived in the village and needs to be mentioned: Johann Schütz. He did not sell anything in the village, instead he bought agricultural products, especially wheat, corn and barley. This Jani Schütz, as he was called in the village, was an all purpose genius. Not only did he have a spirit of adventure and the foresight of a merchant, he also had two very skilled hands. Along with his business as a salesman he was also a machinist for the co-operative's threshing machine and he owned a motor driven corn husker. He also had a great love for horses and working the land. Although he had little in the way of his own fields, he did own two stallions. But that is still not everything. The normal practice was to offer corn for sale in the spring after letting the cobs dry out during the winter. However, he noticed that corn brought a better price in the fall so he built a corn dryer in his house using his own design. It was not a technical masterpiece, but it worked! From then on, in the late fall, wagonloads of his dried corn made their way to the railway station and earned him a good profit. To a certain extent, Jani Schütz was the last link in the chain of the professional agricultural products salesmen. He bought things on the spot. Once the grain was loaded in the wagon he had

⁵² A small bank.

nothing more to do with it. It went off to one of the huge mills in old Serbia where it was ground into flour and sold. All further sales transactions were in the hands of the Jewish merchants because that was the situation in Yugoslavia at the time. They were major operators and they set the prices. Whoever did not have his wits about him would live to see their own ruin at the hands of these dealers. But not in the case of our Jani Schütz. Through his stubborn determination and his solid handle on good salesmanship, along with his untiring efforts and always coming up with ideas, not to mention his great industriousness, he not only survived the difficult times of the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s, he became more independent and expanded his operations. Eventually the limitations for opportunities in our village became too constraining for him. He sold his house and business and moved to Werschetz where he built up a large agricultural products business. Unfortunately, this capable son from our village also became a victim of the political upheaval all around us. He lost his life in Werschetz in the fall of 1944.

The commercial activities of our village are incomplete unless we deal with three other enterprises that provided the villagers with other necessities: the traveling peddlers.

There was a man called "Billigware" who would appear with his products wrapped around his waist in a hawker's tray and shout "Cheap goods!" as he passed through the village streets. He had a whole variety of products in his hawker's tray that one did not want to buy openly at one of the stores, or they were unavailable items such as flint for lighters, which were forbidden by the state monopoly. The kinds of items the housewives loved to buy from these people were combs, costume jewelry, suspenders, perfume, sewing thread, thimbles, needles, etc. The peddler had the forbidden items for sale hidden in a secret compartment in his tray, and for that reason he was trusted and respected.

In the same way the Watch-Gigler was also well respected. He was a man who knew everything there was to know about watches. He made sure they did not stop working. He did small repairs immediately, while those requiring major repairs were taken with him and brought back later. New watches could also be purchased from him. Pocket watches were highly favored and every upstanding man carried one in his vest pocket.

A hat maker also came to our village regularly. During the summer we could buy straw hats from him. He also had felt hats in his satchel, both for men and women. If a person's hat no longer appeared fashionable, the hat maker took it with him and reworked it at his workshop into a modern head covering. A few women in the village who wore hats to church or at important events were regular customers of this likable man.

Here at the conclusion we still need to acknowledge a woman who for many years traveled to Werschetz two times every week to sell her products to customers at the market: she was the old Mrs. Ebner. She had a small milk business in the yard of her house. Those farmers who had too much milk, more milk than they could use, brought it to her little co-operative. There was really not very much milk brought daily because as noted previously, milk production did not play much of a role in the village economy. From what was brought to her, Mrs. Ebner made butter, cheese and sour cream. All of these products could be bought from her at the market in Werschetz. When the work

became too much for her she turned over her small enterprise to the wife of Andreas Merle. She carried on the business in the same way as old Mrs. Ebner had.

THE PUBS (WIRSTHÄUSER)

Over the centuries the institution we know as the *Wirtshaus* has performed an important function. It was not only a place for entertainment and amusement, but it was also the communication center. This is where news was exchanged and business deals were made. Strangers who came to the village could always find lodging at the *Wirtshaus* [see page 27 for a detailed description of the *Wirtshaus*, plural: *Wirtshäuser*].

That was also true of the *Wirtshäuser* in our village. There were three of them.

The first to be acknowledged is the Muhr *Wirtshaus*. It had the most accessible site and best location in the village. Not only because it was at the central point on Main Street [*Haupt Strasse*], but because it was also at the intersection with the Cross Street [*Kreuz Gasse*] where the school was located. It was across the street from the church and the bell tower and the most frequented of the village artesian wells was at its front doors. Practically every excursion you took would take you past the Muhr *Wirtshaus*. There had always been a *Wirtshaus* on this site. It was developed into a high prestige establishment under the proprietorship of Franz Dittrich. The Dittrich *Wirt* [innkeeper], as he was called, was a far-sighted owner who always had a vast and well maintained assortment of drinks on hand and strangers who came to the village could count on a good meal from the kitchen operated by his wife. The Dittrich innkeeper enlarged his *Wirtshaus*. He had a dance hall built without a wooden dance floor, which the older residents pointed out was typical of the times. All kinds of large gatherings took place in it, including the Sunday free dances.

A worthy successor to the Dittrich innkeeper was Karl Muhr. He was a first class businessman. His training had taken place in some of the most respectable *Wirtshäuser* in the Banat, particularly in Betschkerek where he was the headwaiter in the best house of the city before he moved to our village. He came to our village in the 1930s and began to adapt the Dittrich *Wirtshaus* to meet his own specifications. The bowling alley was renovated and supplied with new bowling balls, the dance hall was outfitted with a wooden floor and on the street side of the building several overnight guest rooms were added to the facility. Karl Muhr also purchased a billiard table to give his guests more variety within the *Wirtshaus*. In the bar all of the new contemporary crafts and products associated with a *Wirtshaus* were on display. Karl Muhr's wife, Eva, worked by his side, she was a prudent and cautious innkeeper's wife. Her competency and her affable nature made the business into a *Wirtshaus* in the truest sense of the word. All of the large weddings, many theatricals, numerous successful *Kirchweih* festivals and the innumerable Sunday night free dances that took place here conjure up a vision of the happy memories we have of this *Wirtshaus*.

But the *Wirtshaus* operated by the Lochs was just as highly recommended as the Muhr *Wirtshaus*. It also had an excellent location on Main Street next to the Löchel butcher shop and close to the Hirsch family's large general store.

This house too had a long and colorful past. It was here where the only Jewish family in our village, the Müller family had established their store. "The old Jew," as the father and head of the family was known in our village way of speaking, had established a general store and added a butcher shop, along with a *Wirtshaus*. The family was very well respected and integrated into the life of the village. They were always proud of their citizenship in the Monarchy. The sons performed their military service, one in fact lost his life on the Russian Front during the First World War, and they were always helpful and charitable in giving to the poor. Apparently the old man did too much good and filed for bankruptcy. The house had to be sold and the family was forced to search for a new place to live. The Loch family from Gross Gaj bought the house and set up their *Wirtshaus* in it. The older Loch was a mason by trade, but became an innkeeper. After his takeover of the house he undertook various adaptations. A bowling alley was built in the yard, and in addition to the existing guest rooms and living accommodations, there were some new visitor rooms added. Thanks to the large yard this *Wirtshaus* sat on, it was known as "Der Loch" and was utilized for carrying out large-scale events that required a lot of space. As an example, whenever a circus came to town it would be set up at Loch's. Sometimes during the unprofitable winter months the circus people stayed at Loch's and earned what they needed by providing entertainment in the large hall. When the merry-go-round operator came to the village for the *Kirchweih* festival he camped in the yard at Loch's. The traveling salesmen also loved to stay at the Loch's. Those who began to travel by automobile would park their cars in the yard at Loch's. In those days when an automobile appeared it would attract a large crowd of onlookers. It was also an attraction for the other guests staying in the *Wirtshaus*. When the older Loch died, his son Melchior took over the *Wirtshaus*. He was a capable innkeeper, but unfortunately he did not have time to realize the full use of his abilities. In 1943 he fell in battle and his widow Margit had to carry on alone in the *Wirtshaus*. The fall of 1944 saw the end of the Muhr *Wirtshaus* and the Loch family *Wirtshaus*.

The third *Wirtshaus* belonged to the Oberle family. Its location was very close to the railway station. The guests at this establishment were mostly the younger set who loved to go to the railway station when they had free time to see who drove by, who came by train and who was preparing to go somewhere. The railway station had some kind of magic power over the youth. It was especially true on Sundays for those who were out on their afternoon walk to make the railway station their primary destination.

The Oberle family moved to our village relatively late in the mid 1930s. They came from the neighboring village of Zichydorf. The Oberle's did not have much time to get their *Wirtshaus* established. The family was no sooner integrated into the life of the village when the end for all of us came crashing down. Stefan Oberle perished in the camp at Rudolfsgnad and his wife and children immigrated to America.

There was also a fourth *Wirtshaus*. It was located in The Colony and was run by the Andjelić family. However, practically no one from the German village stopped there for a drink or for something to eat. At one time this place had gained notoriety. A murder took place there. One of the inhabitants of The Colony shot the innkeeper with a shotgun. At the time we were told it was instigated as part of a blood feud. Many inhabitants of The Colony insisted that it was justified. The perpetrator was arrested and the courts sentenced him to a prison term, but he was released a few years later. Apparently the courts in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia recognized blood feuds as an acceptable form of behavior and gave lighter sentences for such crimes.

BANDS AND OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

Even though the village was relatively small there were two well functioning bands. They consisted entirely of brass instruments, drums and a clarinet. Only men played. In our manner of speaking we called this kind of band a simple *Banda*. In order to tell the two small bands apart they were identified by the family name of the bandmaster. Thus, we had a Brenner *Banda* and a Hügel *Banda*. They played most often at dancing events, in funeral processions and at weddings. Occasionally, the musicians were also invited to play at large family events or festivals.

The following men played in the Brenner *Banda*: Franz Brenner the bandmaster, Hans Brenner, Hans Arnusch, Leopold Bajerle, Philipp Bies, Franz Filips, Nikolaus Reiter, Adam Wingert and Hans Zopf.

The Hügel *Banda* included the following men: Josef Hügel (known as Jossep) who was the bandmaster, Adam Hügel, Lorenz Hügel, Adam Hartmann, Toni Filips (Busch Toni), Franz Busch, Georg Treib (Jergl), Hans Ölberg and Franz Storch.

Besides these well organized brass bands one could also invite individual musicians to play at a special event. The most outstanding of these individuals was Hans Froh, “the Froh Hans” as he was called. When everyone heard this name they knew it had to have something to do with music. Along with Adam Wingert on the clarinet, the two of them formed a duet. If desired they could be expanded to a trio. In those cases Stefan Berkowich joined them with his guitar or zither.

Hans Froh also busied himself with teaching music. He not only played well, but he could also read notes. He was proficient in numerous musical instruments, but his favorite above all else was the harmonica, which he often played as a soloist. As soon as a boy or girl received the gift of a harmonica, Hans Froh would soon be at their door. He taught them with a great deal of patience in order to pass on what musical knowledge he had to the next generation.

In this regard there is also Blind Franz who needs to be mentioned. He was blind from birth. He lived with his parents in the house of the Brennessel barber and he had an accordion that he played very well. It was of special importance to us young people from the last generation in our village. He had a repertoire of current dances, waltzes, polkas and country dances from which we could choose. During the war years from 1942 until the end, due to the seriousness of the times, we were told that there could be no entertainment at the *Wirtshaus*. But the youth of our village, like youth everywhere, had no appreciation for such measures, so at night we went to Blind Franz. He would play in the yard of the Brennessel house and we danced until late at night. We did not need a clean dance floor covered with talcum powder like what was common at the *Wirtshaus*; we were quite content with the uneven pavement and plaster in the yard. All of us who participated in these summer evening dances in 1943, and above all in 1944, will always remember them fondly. One of the photographs in the final section is a picture of a group of younger boys and girls with Blind Franz.

[Blind Franz: Obviously Blind Franz had a very important role in providing entertainment for the youth during their final years in the village. Those who did not live in the village may ask: Who is Blind Franz and what happened to him? His full name is Franz Wersching. He was born in Elisenheim, about fifty kilometers west of Georgshausen. In 2006 the editor inquired about the fate Blind Franz by contacting some of the former villagers: Anna Hirsch Giesler, nee Glass, (born in 1920) and Georg Brennessel (born in 1930) who now lives in Lörrach, Germany. From 1945 to 1948 Georg was imprisoned in the camp at Heideschütz, but he had lived in the Brennessel house with Blind Franz until then. According to Georg, Blind Franz and his mother, Barbara Wersching, were sent to Rudolfsgnad and Blind Franz died there. However, Anna shared this vivid memory about Blind Franz with her daughters, Helga and Erika, and the editor:

“It was a cold and rainy early morning on January 6, 1945, when the young adults of Georgshausen were summoned to the community center. We were told that we would be taken to work in the vineyards at Werschetz for a period of six weeks and then returned to our village. We were allowed to bring some fresh clothes, a blanket and a pot. We traveled by open wagon and on foot in the rain to the meeting place at Werschetz, some thirty kilometers away. There we boarded the train, along with other villagers, not knowing what was going to happen in the confusion. The train stopped along the way at other towns and villages and picked up more people.

Blind Franz was among these unfortunate people from Georgshausen, as far as I know, he was in the next car of the train. The Russians did not believe he was blind and one officer in particular treated him quite badly.

The train kept going on much longer than we ever expected. In Romania some of the local villagers, upon hearing that the detainees were coming, readied food in an effort to help and squeezed it into the train as best as they could. In Mid-March all of us poor half starved and frozen people arrived in Almaznaya in the Soviet Union. There we were divided into different groups and different barracks. Blind Franz was still among us, again near his own village people, in the room next to me. That's how I know that he was still with us. Again in the Soviet Union they didn't believe he was blind and they took his accordion away, but then later, possibly by word of mouth, it was revealed that he was a good player and the Russian guards would take him out of the camp and invite him to play at their events and parties, then bring him back to his camp. Sometimes he would be gone for days at a time. He also played at Kadjevka.

After I was shipped to East Germany I lost track of him, but years later I was in touch with Resi Milowan and was told that he died in the Soviet Union. In hindsight, he may have not been so unfortunate in the Soviet Union after all, since he was appreciated and treated rather well for his talent on the accordion.”]

There is another special feature of a musical nature that needs to be mentioned. There was a young girl, the daughter of the Muhr innkeeper, who was known as Muhr Liesl, she had a zither and would play it beautifully. She played it in her room, which was also a guest room in the *Wirtshaus*. Towards evening one could hear the soft and gentle sounds

of the zither. Sometimes they were sad and sorrowful, and at other times joyful and boisterous, depending on the mood of the young musician. Other times she sang while she played the zither. Her voice was sometimes full and powerful and at other times soft and winsome. Whenever Liesl Muhr sang and played, even the rowdies like us who were much more accustomed to making a racket and being a public nuisance would be silent and take notice. We listened in rapt attention. Today Liesl Muhr lives in America and I wonder if she still has her zither.

The activities of the various clubs, societies and associations in our village were rather modest. Naturally, the rather small population base set the parameters for what could be offered in a community of our size. From among the oldest associations we must first mention the Rosary Society. It was a well established religious society that encouraged more than just daily prayer. Among the Society's objectives was the acquisition of necessary items for the church and to be represented at all major gatherings, and above all, be part of all processions. At the lowest level of membership in the Society were the Marian Maidens. They played a very important role at all of the major church events by leading the participants in the processions and spreading flower petals along the way from their special little wicker baskets. They always wore their white garments at these public gatherings. When they were older, usually following their First Communion, or when they left school at the latest, they would form the core of the village youth group in terms of the female members.

We can also look back on the long tradition of the Men's Singing Society. It reached the height of its development when the young Mr. Petri came to teach in our village. At that time the handwritten songbooks for the various parts not only provided the text, but also the notes. Older men of the village who are still living speak of the years before the First World War when our Men's Singing Society was so good that it won every one of the competitions they entered. At the time they liked to carry out these competitions between the neighboring villages. These events also received support from the Hungarian government officials because they saw the choirs as a medium to help Hungarianize the non-Magyar populations. The Men's Singing Society took on new life in the 1930s. At that time Michael Birg, the son of Peter Birg, was the choir leader. He was an especially talented musical person. He was known as a virtuoso on the piano. Unfortunately, the political upheaval that began before the Second World War soon brought these developments to an end.

The oldest association in the village was the volunteer fire brigade. Originally organized for simply providing protection against fires in the village, it developed into a social club in which young men sought membership because it was considered a point of honor and distinction in the life of the village. The equipment available to the fire brigade consisted of a hand-operated fire engine with hose, fittings, attachments and some special tools. When a fire broke out, two horses were hitched in front of the engine and they were off at full gallop. The water for the engine had to be dumped into it with buckets or if it happened to be in the nearby vicinity of a well they could make use of a suction pump.

The volunteer fire brigade was most active in the years between the two great wars. Michael Birg (Locksmith Mischi) was the commander during these years. Under his leadership the old fire engine was restored and modified. Men from The Colony were also invited into membership of the fire brigade during this period. The response was rather muted, only two men from The Colony responded. During the summer months, which were the most dangerous time of the year for fires, the fire engine always had to be stationed in front of the community center. The two horses were always kept at the ready so the response could be immediate and the fires could be reached as quickly as possible. The fire alarm was the ringing of the bells in the bell tower. However, there were no catastrophic fires in the village. The most spectacular blaze took place during wheat threshing over at The Colony. The boiler of the steam engine for one of the threshing machines exploded, which not only led to a raging fire, but also cost one man his life. The fireman working on the machine, Joschi Benda, a son of the master blacksmith Benda, suffered severe injuries as a result of the accident and later died of his wounds. Because of the well organized fire brigade and their quick response the blaze was brought under control in time to spare the nearby houses and stables. In spite of their zeal and tireless efforts, the men were never given uniforms of their own, they merely had simple look a like hats. With these they were easily recognizable on their runs or at the *Wirtshaus* on Sundays.

In the years between the wars, the work of the Swabian German Cultural Union with its headquarters in Neusatz in the Batschka became important in the life of our village. The representatives of the Union in our village were Georg Birg and his wife. This couple oversaw all of the local Cultural Union activities. The wife, Karola *Neni*, occupied herself entirely with the youth. There were play practices for theatrical productions in the winter months, our traditional folk costumes were sewn and put on display at the costume ball in Neusatz and there were study groups for young future farmers. Altogether they were beneficial and culturally worthwhile undertakings.

Closely tied to the Cultural Union were the co-operative organizations and the help projects to assist the farmers. Of these, only the *Agraria* was established in our village. This was a small savings bank available for all of the villagers to use. At its head there was a board of directors made up of farmers from the village. Georg Birg was the president and his assistant was the young Franz Wist⁵³ who acted as the cashier. Deposits were received and small loans were made.

The beneficial aspects of the Cultural Union were adversely affected by the fact that some inhabitants of the village, mostly younger men, joined the so-called Renewal Movement.⁵⁴ As a result, this created rivalries that brought all kinds of political ramifications and repercussions while adding absolutely nothing to the welfare of our people.

⁵³ Franz Wist: He was born as Franz Wüst. However, when he entered the Yugoslavian Army the “ü” was replaced with an “i” since the “ü” does not exist in the Serbian language. He kept the Wist spelling the remainder of his life.

⁵⁴ Nazis, led by Dr. Sepp Janko.

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

For children, playing is the preliminary stage for learning how to work. But we also know from experience that adults, away from their daily work, will find recreation, relaxation and balance in their lives through play. The various forms of play that we experienced in our growing up years in the life of our village will shape the content of what follows. But something needs to be said right at the very beginning. The kinds of toys and games our children are accustomed to, as well as those now familiar to adults, seldom existed in our time; ours were far simpler and created fewer problems.

To a great extent we mostly played with things in their natural state or we altered them for ourselves with very simple tools. What nature provided for us most abundantly was our heavy black mother earth. It was the ground under our feet where we lived and moved and had our being. This sticky black earth of the Banat eventually became every child's plaything, either early or later in one form or another. The most beloved game using mother earth was the *Pollerloch* game. In order to play this game you had to sit down on the ground, usually on the bricks of one of the sidewalks alongside of the houses, and knead a lump of damp earth. You had to form a cube out of it. On one side of the cube you would make a hole to the center with your thumb. Then, with the help of some spit, the bottom of the hole had to be worked out so that it was thin.⁵⁵ When all of this was done you took the cube in your hand and with the hole facing downward, you threw it onto the ground. This would create a loud cracking sound on impact. We called this explosion *pollern*. And that is how it got its name, that is: a hole that "*pollert* [goes boom]!"

You could also take the material used in making the *Pollerloch* and shoot it. To accomplish this you needed a long willow switch that was easy to bend and would work like a bow or catapult. After a well-kneaded lump of our sticky black earth was securely fastened to the tip of the willow switch, it was pulled back with the lash of a whip and let go. The projectile could travel quite a distance. Unfortunately, too often it ended up splattered against a recently whitewashed house wall or gable where it remained stuck. This activity was rather frowned upon by mothers who took such great pride in their freshly whitewashed houses.

In the summer months our good and much-acclaimed mother earth built up a lot of dust. The layers of dust on the roadways or the cattle paths could be up to ten centimeters deep if it did not rain for a long period of time. This dust was another beloved medium for playing. It was easy for us to create make believe copies of things we saw in every day life. From these layers of dust all kinds of things emerged like "haystacks," "straw stacks" and "sheave stacks" that we threshed with our self-crafted threshing machines. Out of the large sheaves we could make a smaller straw stack or even a smaller chaff stack, all from the dust of mother earth. We also formed replicas of things that we observed while they threshed during the harvest. When you look at it from our perspective today, our earliest games may have been rather primitive, but they already demonstrated a lot of creativity.

⁵⁵ The bottom of the hole had to be thin so when the cube was thrown on the sidewalk the resulting air pressure would break open the bottom and make the boom noise.

Another favorite game played on the ground was *Schnelzen*. A *Schnelz* hole was dug in the ground, usually at the edge of a sidewalk. It was about eighty by eighty millimeters and had to have sharp edges with no taper. The medium for this game was buttons of all kinds. From simple tin buttons (known as *Plekusch*) to the most highly valued coat buttons made out of horns were allowed to be used for playing this game. During *Schnelz* season, which was mostly in the spring, we boys tied a string or cord to our suspenders on which we strung our collection of buttons. The longer and more impressive the string of buttons was, the greater was the prestige of the owner as a good *Schnelzer*.

From a distance of three to four meters every player had to toss his button as close to the hole as possible. The player whose button was the closest to the hole could make the first *Schnelzer*. [By using his button he had to flip the other buttons into the hole.] This went on until he failed to hit the hole, then the next closest took his turn. All of the buttons that one got into the hole belonged to the player. In the space of an afternoon a large number of buttons would change hands. Once a player no longer had any buttons he was *plustsch*.

There was still another game where a hole played a leading part, but it was the older boys who played it. We called it *Kutzhalter*. I would like to inform the reader that this *Kutzhalter* game we played was preparation for what has now become golf. To play the game you needed to make a hole in the ground. Around the hole you needed a large flat play area like the schoolyard, which in our village happened to be the case. Our golf “club” was handmade out of acacia wood. They were real clubs with a curved base or they were extra thick at the end. The ball was made out of rags worked into a round shape using strong string to bind it tightly together. This game required two teams. The objective of each team was to get the ball into the hole as quickly as possible. This led to a lot of rough play and it resulted in many black and blue shins if the clubs happened to miss the ball. I imagine that *Kutzhalter* could also be compared with field hockey.

Another game played by the older boys was *Pulli*. This game would give birth to many imitations. Although modified, it was particularly played in America with great enthusiasm. There they even built stadiums and called it baseball. But we had no need of a stadium, all we needed was a bat to hit the ball. It was played kind of like this: two teams faced one another about twenty-five to thirty meters apart. The ball had to be hit so that a player on the opposing team could catch it. As soon as the ball left the pitcher’s hand he had to race to get off of the field as quickly as possible. While the pitcher was running, the ball would be thrown at him by the opposing player who had caught it. If the pitcher was hit he had to leave the game. The winning team was the one with the last man on the field.

Understandably, we like all of the children in the world played Cops and Robbers, as well as Tag. Then there was “*Blinde Kuh*”⁵⁶ and Hide and Seek; games we all loved to play. The girls had their skipping ropes and their dolls, which they played with when we boys were too wild for them. When girls played with their dolls they sang:

⁵⁶ Literally Blind Cow, but probably Blind Man’s Bluff.

“Sleep baby sleep,
Your father tends the sheep,
Your mother tends the little lambs,
Sleep my little angel.”

Or they sang:

“*Hutschi, Hutschi*, Rider,
Sword to the sides,
Money in the pocket,
Wine in the flask,
Beer in the little crock,
And the child in the baby’s cradle.”

When they played *Ringl-Raja-Spiel* [Ring Around the Rosie], the girls sang:

“*Ringe, Ringe, Raja*,
The cat eats the eggs,
The dog eats the cake,
The mother will soon be swearing.
Let’s sit down on the elder bush,
And all of us will shout Hush, Hush!”

Completely different were the parlor games played by the older youth, both boys and girls engaged in them. They usually took place during the *Reih*. There they joked, gossiped, sang and played various parlor games. In some cases they played games where the loser had to give a pledge that had to be redeemed later. Some games had a serious intent. The game, *G’falt dir dei G’sell* [Do you like your partner?] was a favorite. It was played like this: The couples sat in a circle with a boy and girl standing in the middle. The boy in the middle had a twisted wet towel in his hand and would approach one of the couples and ask the girl, “*G’falt dir dei G’sell?*” If she answered “yes” the boy she was with could give her a kiss. If it was “no” this boy could request another girl to his side. If the other boy in the circle did not want to give up the requested girl he was with, he had to extend his hand and receive a blow from the twisted towel. If he said “no” there was one blow and if there were two “no’s” two blows would be given and so on. If a boy did not want to give up his girl, he could expect a lot of blows. The only way he could save himself was to quickly say, “*Sie soll lafe* [I will let her go]!”

AN EXCURSION TO THE KIRCHWEIH IN GROSS GAJ

A PERSONAL LIFE EXPERIENCE FROM OUR HOMELAND, FROM WHERE SKY AND EARTH COME TOGETHER, FROM THE BANAT

(AS TOLD BY HANS LOCH BORN IN 1919)

The summer dust on the streets of our village was ankle deep when our Dewitsch *Batschi* arrived in his car at the front of the Hirsch store in the fall of 1935. Since he was a traveling salesman he carried a large sample bag in his car that was stuffed full with all kinds of sweets and candy like the kind that was given to the children at Christmas. There was fudge candy, spun silk candy, sweets to hang on the Christmas tree and many others. After he wrote up all of his orders, our Dewitsch *Batschi* packed his things back in his bag, which I then had to carry to his car. While doing this I noticed that there were all kinds of signs in the sky indicating a thunderstorm was brewing. The convertible roof was quickly put in place before we headed in the direction of Jakob Müller and his wife, Luisa's place. A huge cloud of dust arose from behind our speeding car, which was a clear sign of no rain yet.

But before our Dewitsch *Batschi* had a chance to talk Luisa into ordering his so-called Potato candy, Turkish honey and similar rarities like Bon Bons, the heavens opened up and the rain came down in sheets. The cloudburst along with the accompanying thunder and lightning soon moved on. But to our dismay the beautiful summer dust had changed into a gigantic quagmire of mud. Of course, this turn of events was greatly welcomed by the children, but unfortunately not by our Dewitsch *Batschi* in terms of his shiny car.

Whenever the need is great, God's help is always missing. Fortunately, *Vetter* Friedl Birg had a large yard next to Luisa's with ample available space. And as luck would have it, his very venturesome son, Fritz, also lived in the house and was at home. Fritz immediately recognized the difficult situation facing the candy manufacturer's representative. He appeared out of the stable with two horses and hauled the car into the yard, which of course was a great relief to our Dewitsch *Batschi* who then journeyed on by train.

On the following day, the weather was nice again and the massive mounds of mud reverted back to our beautiful street dust. This prompted Fritz to think about the possibilities regarding the parked car. At the time, Fritz had his heart set on a motorbike, but he also had other ambitions in terms of the future, which included driving a car. Always resourceful, he managed to turn the car around and face it in the direction of the manure pile in the yard so that he could drive in the direction of the manure pile and be assured of a soft landing if any problems with the brakes developed. So fate took its course. Fritz ended up spending several days practicing "driving" the car. By the end of his practice he had mastered the skill to a passable level. Thinking about it, he decided he was ready for greater undertakings in driving.

One evening Fritz told Heinrich Ebner and I about his car driving expertise. Rather innocently, he asked us if we had the desire to join him and go for a ride. Of course, it did

not require much persuasion on our part and we were immediately prepared to go. While we considered where we wanted to go I recalled that there would be a *Kirchweih* celebration in Gross Gaj on the coming Sunday. Because my father came from Gross Gaj and we had many relatives there, we quickly decided on driving to the *Kirchweih*. We would get under way right after our midday meal on Sunday. Just as we had arranged among us, right after we ate, Heinrich and I both showed up with our coat at the designated meeting place in front of the *Wirtshaus* and waited. We stood there on the lookout for Fritz and the car. But he was nowhere in sight. As we later learned, Fritz had to wait until his rather strict mother took her afternoon nap because naturally she was not supposed to know about our planned excursion. While Heinrich and I took turns walking out into the middle of the road to see if we could catch a glimpse of Fritz, our neighbor Konrad Löchel passed by. He was just coming out of the *Wirtshaus*. His butcher shop was open on Sunday mornings until noon. He had a few drinks of schnapps at Loch's *Wirtshaus* to get the taste of meat and sausage out of his mouth. *Vetter* Konrad immediately sensed that something was up. Without beating around the bush he asked us why we had the coats because it wasn't a bit cold. The reason for our being there and our plans were forced out of us. *Vetter* Konrad was no longer hungry and he decided to ride along with us and Fritz to the *Kirchweih*. After all, he was a rather upright man who owned a motorbike of his own and was well acquainted with its operation. This knowledge could very well be an asset to us on our trip. Then Fritz and the car appeared. The convertible top was removed and clamped down at the back of the car; it was just great. Fritz drove close by and called, "Jump in. I can't let this thing stop." That was no problem for us because Fritz was driving no faster than most of the pedestrians walking down the street. All three of us hopped into the car and we drove off in the direction of the *Kirchweih* at a rather leisurely pace.

Close by the mill we faced our first unanticipated hurdle. The railway tracks were somewhat higher than the road level and we had to cross over them. The car simply stalled and stopped. We had to get out of the car and push it across the tracks. Then the road led down hill and soon the motor sprang back into action. *Vetter* Konrad took over the steering wheel and all of us were in high spirits. Because there were no more railway tracks to cross before getting to Gross Gaj we thought that all obstacles were behind us so we could move on faster. We would regret that thought later. The countless number of potholes in the road forced us to get out and push the car. By the time we got in the vicinity of Gross Gaj we had sweated a lot, pushed a lot, and cranked the engine a lot. A few kilometers from Gross Gaj we refreshed ourselves at the artesian well out in the *Hutweide*. In our minds we could already see the *Kirchweih* tree ahead of us. In order for us to drive, we had to crank, push and sweat again. Finally, after three hours we reached the outskirts of Gross Gaj. We had traveled over three hours to get there by car. The total distance we had traveled was thirteen kilometers.

As we drove into the village we suddenly ran into the cowherd being driven home. Even though the herder cracked his whip and our car made enough noise of its own, the cows refused to let us pass by them. The bull was especially determined not to make any room for us. His snorting and angry looks forced us to put on the emergency brakes. The car simply stalled and we just sat there. We were in another perfect mess.

We stood there in sight of the *Kirchweih* festivities with all of the people gathered around the *Kirchweih* tree. All of our cranking of the engine and pouring in more gas did absolutely nothing. The car simply refused to move from the spot. We could have eventually started it up again by pushing it, but we did not want to create such a disgracing scene in front of the *Kirchweih* celebrants.

What to do? The bull was now in his stall and we kept cranking with no results. A crowd of children surrounded us and asked over and over again why we were unable to get the darned thing started. They were curious to see a wagon like ours without a horse move forward on its own. Some of the youth from Gross Gaj also came to watch. They wanted to push it. But we were too proud to let them. Then a young man came along to our rescue. He knew a lot more about a car than any of us did. He adjusted something on the motor and then with one long powerful crank on our part it sprang into action once more. We all jumped into the car and off we drove to the biggest *Wirtshaus* in village, which was owned by Joschi Barbi. It was where the *Kirchweih* tree stood and where all of the villagers were assembled. We stepped out of the car with all the pride we could muster and went into the *Wirtshaus*. As I passed by an older woman, I heard her say, "The little one there must be Michl's boy." She meant me. In an instant we were the sensation of the *Kirchweih*. No one had ever come to the *Kirchweih* by car before. The news spread like a grass fire, "That bunch from Georgshausen came to the *Kirchweih* by car!" My Uncle Melchior also heard of the momentous event. He came to see us and discovered me among the car enthusiasts. He took me home to his house for supper.

We had all agreed to set out for home at eight o'clock in the evening. If this trip took more than three hours it could mean that we would not get home before midnight. I had a very good meal at my uncle's and then I was soon on my way to the Barbi *Wirtshaus* to meet my fellow travelers. Even though it was dark I could see a team of horses coming towards it. As I looked closer I noticed that they were hauling a car behind them. Now what happened? As soon as I went into the *Wirtshaus* the first person I met was Fritzzi who had a rather shocked look on his face. He soon told me what had happened. Our rescuer, the young man who had been successful in starting the car, filled "our" car with young boys and girls and took them on an excursion to a neighboring village. But while they were there the engine had given up the ghost so they had to fetch them with the horses and tow the car back to Gross Gaj. By luck we happened to run into Peter Lefor who also happened to be in Gross Gaj. He promised to tow the car back to Georgshausen with his horse and wagon the next day. Fritzzi decided to stay in Gross Gaj. He wanted to go home with Peter Lefor and the car the next day. Heinrich and I wanted to go back to Georgshausen at eight o'clock as planned. Our *Vetter* Konrad was on a roll playing billiards and would not hear of stopping for nothing. Eventually we decided to set out for home at eleven o'clock. *Vetter* Konrad indicated that since he was a motorbike rider he knew the way to Georgshausen even in the pitch black darkness of the night. We remained at the *Wirtshaus* until the billiard game was over and then we set out. After a two-hour march we saw a light in the distance and we could hear barking and baying dogs. After a few wrong turns, we finally arrived home at four o'clock in the morning.

We saw nothing of Fritzi for the next few days. We then heard bad things regarding the condition of the car. Apparently massive repairs costing at least ten thousand *Dinars* were necessary. All of us boys were responsible for the costs. This only created additional terror for us because none of us had that kind of money to pay for it, nor could we find a way to earn it in the village. Our fear and anxiety grew more and more intense because we had not heard a single word from Fritzi.

Finally, we learned that Fritzi's father had looked after everything. Heinrich and I were greatly relieved at the news. What happened to Fritzi at home has always remained a secret. But this adventure we shared did not in any way affect our friendship. We still sit back and laugh when someone tells the story of our misadventures on our excursion to the *Kirchweih* in Gross Gaj. But regrettably, dear *Vetter* Konrad is no longer alive to enjoy it with us.

THE FORMER GERMAN RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE

In what follows is a list of most of the families who lived in one of the houses in the village at Easter of 1941. The compilation of all of this information after the passing of some fifty years cannot be considered to be totally complete. Some families have totally died out while we were unable to contact others.

At the very least, the birth year of every person is provided to help us identify whether we are referring to a child or an adult. Moreover, we have attempted to indicate what happened to each person and if they are living or dead. The place and year of death is provided, or the person's current place of residence is given.

On the basis of these dates, the individual fate of the former residents of the village can be determined to a certain extent. At the conclusion of this documentation we have included an empty page. Any necessary corrections can be noted there. A short history of individual families can also be entered there.

The following list of names and houses should be used in connection with the village plan map. Hans Herold compiled the list and Hans Loch drew the plan map, it shows every house in the village with a number. This is not identical with the actual house numbers. It simply serves to help in identifying the location of each house and the family who lived in it. It begins with the house of Georg Birg (the mill owner). This house is number 1. The house of Michael Dian on the Rarosch is the last and is number 157.

All of the dates are not necessarily guaranteed to be accurate.
[b. = born, d. = died: Original list created in 1991, in this edition some dates have been changed or added as a result of having access to the Zichydorf church records and family sources.]

House No. 1

Birg Georg: b. 1908; d. 1987 in Stuttgart, Germany

Birg Karola: nee Gulding, lives in Stuttgart, Germany

Birg Ilse: b. 1942, lives in Böblingen, Germany

Birg Sigrid: b. 1944, married name is Hainmüller, lives in Stuttgart, Germany

House No. 1A

Gerger Nikolaus: b. 1902; d. 1989 in Rastatt, Germany

Gerger Eva: nee Barbaresko, b. 1909; d. 1981 in Rastatt, Germany

Gerger Hans: b. 1925, lives in Hungary

Gerger Anna: b. 1926; d. 1948 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

House No. 1B

Reiter Adam: b. 1903, lives in Pfinztal, Germany

Reiter Angela: nee Reiter, b. 1907, lives in Pfinztal, Germany

Reiter Susanne Adelheid: b. 1928, married name is Zwetschek, lives in Ettlingen, Germany

Reiter Käthe: b. 1934, married name is Raupp, lives in Pfinztal, Germany

House No. 2

Birg Peter: b. 1881; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Birg Eleonore: nee Hochstrasser, b. 1896; d. 1964 in Gernsbach, Germany

Birg Anton: b. 1909; d. 1944 in Tuzla, Yugoslavia

Birg Otto: b. 1926, lives in Gernsbach, Germany

House No. 3

Birg Wilhelm: b. 1906; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Birg Anna: nee Sauer, b. 1910; d. 1990 in Wörth, Germany

Birg Lenne: b. 1932, married name is Nuss, lives in Rülzheim, Germany

Birg Horst: b. 1940, lives in Wörth, Germany

House No. 4

Brenner Nikolaus: b. 1893; d. 1956 in Diengsheim, France

Brenner Magdalena: nee Schmied, b. 1896; d. 1981 in Diengsheim, France

Brenner Matthias: b. 1920; d. 1944, fell in battle in Italy

House No. 5

Birg Hans: b. 1912, lives in Vienna

House No. 6

Birg Matthias: b. 1900; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Birg Theresia: nee Bali, b. 1900; d. 1979 in Rockenhausen, Germany

Birg Robert: b. 1932, lives in Rockenhausen, Germany

House No. 8

Faul Adam: b. 1901; d. 1944 in the military hospital, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Faul Aranka: nee Birg, b. 1904; d. 1972 in Bellheim, Germany

Faul Ingrid: b. 1936, married name is Pacurar, lives in Paulis/Arad, Romania

House No. 8A

Birg Anna: nee Nussbaum, b. 1883; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 9

Birg Georg: b. 1909; d. 1968 in Neubiberg, Germany

Birg Irma: nee Zaránd, b. 1909, lives in Geretsried, Germany

Birg Günter: b. 1936, lives in Neubiberg, Germany

Birg Gerhard: b. 1939, lives in Munich, Germany

House No. 11

Bäcker Matthias: b. 1903; d. 1976 in Solingen, Germany

Bäcker Elisabeth: nee Diwo, b. 1903; d. 1978 in Solingen, Germany

Bäcker Anna: b. 1925, lives in Bittingheim, Germany

Bäcker Katharina: b. 1928, married name is Sekeresch, lives in Ulm, Germany

Bäcker Karoline: b. 1930; d. 1988 in Heidenheim, Germany

Bäcker Eva: b. 1932, married name is Biskan, lives in Heidenheim, Germany

Bäcker Maria: b. 1934, married name is Ceschan, lives in Recklinghausen, Germany
Bäcker Matthias: b. 1935, lives in Düsseldorf, Germany
Bäcker Peter: b. 1937, lives in Düsseldorf, Germany
Bäcker Elisabeth: b. 1939, married name is Weinz, lives in Solingen, Germany

House No. 13

Eisler Anton: b. 1900; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Eisler Anna: nee Birg, b. 1898; d. 1952 in Geretsried, Germany
Eisler Wenzel: b. 1925, lives in Geretsried, Germany
Eisler Richard: b. 1930, lives in New York, USA

House No. 14

Bajerle Franz: b. 1885; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Bajerle Christina: nee Niedermayer, b. 1895; d. 1974 in Cologne, Germany
Bajerle Magdalena: b. 1919; d. 1973 in Cologne, Germany, widow Bajerle/Enzmann
Bajerle Leopold: b. 1913; d. 1937 in Skopje, Yugoslavia [Macedonia]
Enzmann Hans: b. 1900; d. 1947 in Kadjevka, USSR
Bajerle Anni: b. 1937, married name is Heller, lives in Cologne, Germany

House No. 15

Kiefer Johann: b. 1883; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Kiefer Maria: nee Tierjung, b. 1898; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Kiefer Elisabeth: b. 1920, married name is Kreilach, lives in Cologne, Germany
Kiefer Maria: b. 1921, married name is Herold, lives in Niederkrüchten, Germany
Kiefer Katharina: b. 1925, married name is Hansmann, lives in Cologne, Germany
Kiefer Anna: b. 1934; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Bajerle Maria: b. 1937, married name is Hardt, lives in Liplar near Cologne, Germany

House No. 17

Reiter Josef: b. 1902; d. 1982 in Villingen, Germany
Reiter Katharina: nee Petrikovic, b. 1908, lives in Villingen, Germany
Reiter Michael: b. 1927, lives in Canada
Reiter Susanne: b. 1929, married name is Kutter, lives in Villingen, Germany
Reiter Johann: b. 1932, lives in Villingen, Germany
Reiter Jakob: b. 1933, lives in Villingen, Germany
Reiter Katharina: nee Lichtfuss, b. 1880; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 19

Remilong Wilhelm: b. 1893; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Remilong Katharina: nee Frank, b. 1897; d. 1976 in Rovine, Yugoslavia
Remilong Peter: b. 1919; d. 1941, fell in battle
Remilong Wilhelm: b. 1923; d. assumed fell in battle
Remilong Johann: b. 1925; d. 1943, fell in battle in Bosnia
Remilong Josef: b. 1926; d. 1980 in Temeswar/Timisoara, Romania

House No. 20

Amon Elisabeth: nee Gulding, b. 1885; d. 1969 in Vienna

House No. 21

Jakob Johann: b. 1881; d. 1944 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Jakob Katharina: nee Awender, b. 1888; d. 1978 in Cologne, Germany

Jakob Theresia: b. 1921, married name is Güntner, lives in Cologne, Germany

House No. 22

Treib Peter: b. 1908; d. 1988 in Taufkirchen, Germany

Treib Elisabeth: nee Hartmann, b. 1903

Treib Franz: b. 1928; d. 1947 in Kadjevka, USSR

House No. 23

Petri Stefan: b. 1905; d. 1984 in Kelbert, Germany

Petri Ester: assumed living in Zichydorf, Yugoslavia

House No. 24

Herold Anna: Widow

Herold Barbara: b. 1913, married name is Wachtler, lives in Graz, Austria

House No. 25

Muhr Karl: b. 1900; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Muhr Eva: b. 1901, lives in Warren, USA

Muhr Karl, junior: b. 1921, lives in USA

Muhr Elisabeth: b. 1926, lives in Warren, USA

House No. 26

Heinermann Anna: nee Nussbaum, [b. 1874]; d. 1945 in Camp Setschanfeld, Yugoslavia

House No. 27

Sauer Michael: b. 1908; d. 1944, fell in battle in Mostar, Yugoslavia

Sauer Elisabeth: nee Schütz, b. 1912, lives in Nürtingen, Germany

Sauer Adele: b. 1935, married name is Varga, lives in Temeswar/Timisoara, Romania

Sauer Anni: b. 1939, lives in Nürtingen, Germany

House No. 28

Hügel Josef: b. 1904; d. 1978 in Bad Wurzach, Germany

Hügel Katharina: nee Zopf, b. 1908; d. in Bad Wurzach, Germany

Hügel Maria: b. 1927, married name is Klemm; d. 1957 in Bad Wurzach, Germany

Hügel Matthias: b. 1929, lives in Bad Wurzach, Germany

House No. 29

Ebner Heinrich, senior: b. 1879; d. 1948 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Ebner Anna: nee Wingert, b. 1889; d. in Kaiserslautern, Germany

Ebner Magdalena: b. 1911, married name is Knapp, lives in Kaiserslautern, Germany

Ebner Anna: b. 1916, married name is Maitsalu, lives in Vancouver, BC, Canada

House No. 30

Lefor Nikolaus: b. 1914, lives in Sun City, USA

Lefor Barbara: lives in Sun City, USA

Six adult children for whom no information has been provided.

House No. 31

Brennessel Jakob: b. 1906; d. 1988 in Lörrach, Germany

Brennessel Franziska: nee Rindje, b. 1909, lives in Lörrach, Germany

Brennessel Georg: b. 1930, lives in Lörrach, Germany

Brennessel Anna: b. 1931, married name is Sohl, lives in Lörrach, Germany

Wersching Franz: d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 32

Müller Anton: b. 1898, d. 1977 in Alt Letz, Yugoslavia

Müller Theresia: nee Holz, b. 1904; d. 1968 in Alt Letz, Yugoslavia

Müller Traudi: b. 1922, married name is Kerri, lives in Alt Letz, Yugoslavia

Müller Hans: b. 1926; d. 1944, fell in battle in Bosnia

Müller Franz: b. 1930, lives in Spaichingen, Germany

House No. 33

Schütz Johann: b. 1904; d. 1944 in Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Schütz Susanne: nee Fochler, b. 1904, lives in Nürtingen, Germany

Schütz Elisabeth: b. 1930, lives in Nürtingen, Germany

Schütz Anni: b. 1931, married name is Mangold, lives in Nürtingen, Germany

House No. 34

Wingert Konrad: b. 1897; d. 1975 in Villach, Austria

Wingert Magdalena: nee Schütz, b. 1900; d. 1975 in Villach, Austria

Wingert Anna: b. 1923, married name is Wirnsperger, lives in Villach, Austria

House No. 35

Merle Andreas: b. 1913; d. 1969 in Obervellach, Austria

Merle Katharina: nee Killenberg, b. 1916, lives in Obervellach, Austria

Merle Richard: b. 1941, lives in Vienna, Austria

Merle Erwin: b. 1942, lives in Obervellach, Austria

House No. 36

Ebner Jakob: b. 1910; d. 1979 in Arnoldstein, Austria

Ebner Hellen: nee Müller, b. 1913; d. 1983 in Arnoldstein, Austria

Ebner Jakob, junior: b. 1933, lives in Klagenfurt, Austria

Ebner Frieda: b. 1936, married name is Bruck, lives in Munich, Germany

Ebner Erika: b. 1943, married name is Müller, lives in Vienna, Austria

House No. 37

Borschowa Adam, senior: b. [1892]; d. 1944, Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Borschowa Theresia (Sarcev): nee Kollinger [Ritter?], [b. 1881?]; d. 1945 in Camp
Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia [on her daughter Magdalena's birth and marriage record,
Theresia's maiden name is listed as Ritter, her first husband was Adam Sarcev]
Borschowa (Kolling) Jakob: b. 1924, [lives in Kirkintilloch, Scotland]

House No. 37

Bajerle Lorenz: b. 1904; d. 1969 in Hamburg, Germany
Bajerle Katharina: [nee Sarcev], b. 1905; d. 1965 in Hamburg, Germany
Bajerle Magdalena: b. 1929, married name is Wagenhals, lives in Mansfield, Ohio, USA
[d. 1994]
Bajerle Adam: b. 1931, lives in Willowdale, Canada [2007, lives in Toronto, Ontario]
Bajerle Elisabeth: b. 1936, married name is Kazmierski, lives in Hamburg, Germany

House No. 38

Bockmüller Martin: b. 1877; d. 1942 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Bockmüller Anna: nee Maier, b. 1887; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Bockmüller Jakob: b. 1908; d. 1944 (missing)
Bockmüller Josef: b. 1914; d. 1944, fell in battle in Bosnia
Bockmüller Regina: b. 1921, married name is Stojanof, lives in Hechingen, Germany

House No. 39

Birg Georg: b. 1887; d. 1944 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Birg Karola: nee Iwanitza, b. 1899; d. 1990 in Heidenheim, Germany
Birg Karola: b. 1920, married name is Löchel, lives in Rio Cuarto, Argentina
Birg Emil: b. 1922; d. 1971 in Heidenheim, Germany

House No. 40

Frass Johann: b. 1889; d. 1928 in Georgshausen
Frass Maria: nee Tessling, b. 1894; d. 1965 in Heidenheim, Germany
Frass Michael: b. 1913; d. 1966 in Nelson, Canada
Frass Sepp: b. 1920; d. 1956 in Stuttgart, Germany

House No. 42

Hügel Adam: b. 1893; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Hügel Maria: nee Sachs, b. 1901; d. 1966 in Gersfeld, Germany
Hügel Elisabeth: b. 1920, married name is Busch, lives in Weingarten, Germany
Hügel Katharina: b. 1922, married name is Schleicher, lives in Gersfeld, Germany
Hügel Hans: b. 1924; d. 1985 in Halle, former German Democratic Republic
Hügel Josef: b. 1931, lives in Frankfurt/M, Germany

House No. 43

Ölberg Johann: b. 1898; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Ölberg Elisabeth: nee Kohl, b. 1900; d. in Munderkingen, Germany
Ölberg Anton: b. 1923; d. 1979 in Karlsdorf near Bruchsal, Germany

Ölberg Magdalena: b. 1928, married name is Laux, lives in Munderkingen, Germany
Ölberg Hans: b. 1932; d. 1986 in Ehingen, Germany

House No. 44

Müller Andreas: b. 1893; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Müller Gertrud: nee Jakob, b. 1895; d. 1977 in Menden, Germany
Müller Barbara: b. 1914, married name is Enderle; d. 1982 in Graz, Austria
Müller Anton: b. 1919; d. 1944 in Gross Betschkerek, Yugoslavia
Müller Katharina: b. 1926; d. 1943 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Müller Andreas: b. 1932; d. 1980 in Menden, Germany

House No. 46

Benda Josef: b. 1882; d. 1962 in Wuppertal, Germany
Benda Sofia: nee Schadt, b. 1888; d. 1980 in Wuppertal, Germany
Passul Anton: b. 1906; d. 1980 in Wuppertal, Germany
Passul Anna: nee Benda, b. 1910, lives in Wuppertal, Germany
Passul Franz: b. 1931; d. 1984 in Wuppertal, Germany
Passul Josef: b. 1933, lives in Wuppertal, Germany

House No. 47

Jakob Franz: b. 1910; d. 1944, fell in battle in Jablanica, Yugoslavia
Jakob Katharina: nee Moor, b. 1913; d. 1976 in Feldhausen, Germany
Jakob Anton: b. 1933, lives in Feldhausen, Germany
Jakob Erna: b. 1936, married name is Sauter, lives in Feldhausen, Germany

House No. 48

Froh Hans: d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Froh Gretl: d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 49

Schütz Anton: b. 1870; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Schütz Susanne: nee Jung, b. 1875; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 50

Birg Friedrich: b. 1883; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Birg Eva: nee Eberhard, b. 1890; d. 1971 in Wuppertal, Germany
Birg Friedrich, junior: b. 1918, lives in Bodensdorf, Austria
Birg Anna: nee Müller, b. 1916, lives in Bodensdorf, Austria
Birg Evelin: b. 1939, married name is Rippel, lives in Landskron, Austria
Birg Siglinde: b. 1942, married name is Leobacher, lives in Salzburg, Austria

House No. 51

Ebner Heinrich, junior: b. 1918, lives in Klagenfurt, Austria
Ebner Elisabeth: nee Müller, b. 1920, lives in Klagenfurt, Austria
Ebner Ilse: b. 1949, married name is Dörfler, lives in Lieserbrücke, Austria

House No. 52

Wingert Lorenz: b. 1903; d. 1991 in Elmwood Park, USA

Wingert Irma: nee Stein, b. 1908; d. 1985 in Elmwood Park, USA

Wingert Rudolf: b. 1936, lives in High Crest, USA

Wingert Marlene: b. 1942, married name is Vladyka, lives in Saddlebrook, USA

House No. 53

Paul Johann: b. 1879; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Paul Elisabeth: nee Frass, b. 1883; d. 1948 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Paul Johann, junior: b. 1907; d. 1990 in Betzweiler-Wälde, Germany

Paul Barbara: nee Klas, b. 1918, lives in Betzweiler-Wälde, Germany

Paul Helmut: b. 1938, lives in Lossburg, Germany

Paul Wilfried: b. 1953, lives in Betzweiler-Wälde, Germany

Paul Sieglinde: b. 1954, lives in Sulz, Germany

Paul-Schmidt Margarethe: b. 1907; d. 1977 in Canada

Hames Nikolaus: b. 1906; d. 1982 in Germany

Hammes-Kašić Katharina: b. 1929, lives in Yugoslavia

Hammes-Hampf Elisabeth: b. 1931, lives in Canada

House No. 54

Mess Josef: b. 1872; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Mess Katharina: nee Peter, b. 1873; died early

House No. 55

Petri Karl: b. 1880; d. 1944 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Petri Eva: nee Krug, b. 1879; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 56

Gerö Michael: b. 1887; d. 1953 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Gerö Josefine: nee Schütz, b. 1884; d. 1944 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

House No. 57

Löchel Konrad: b. 1901, missing in Dresden

Löchel Magdalena: nee Hetzel, b. 1917, lives in former German Democratic Republic

Löchel Konrad, junior: b. 1928, lives in Reutlingen, Germany

Löchel Erich: b. 1930, lives in Maria Saal, Austria

Jungert Magdalena: nee Hetzel, b. 1876; d. 1952 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia

House No. 58

Loch Anna: nee Herold, b. 1885; d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Loch Melchior: b. 1917; d. 1943, fell in battle in Bosnia

Loch Margit: nee Olajosch, b. 1921, lives in Vienna, Austria

Loch Hilde: b. 1940, married name is Marik, lives in Vienna, Austria

Loch Hans: b. 1919, lives in Stuttgart, Germany

Loch Elisabeth: b. 1924, married name is Hermann, lives in Pöcking, Germany

House No. 59

Friedlein Johann: b. 1903; d. 1944 (missing)

Friedlein Gertrud: nee Holz, b. 1901; d. 1969 in Alt Letz, Yugoslavia

Friedlein Nikolaus: b. 1928, lives in Spaichingen, Germany

House No. 60

An elderly Jewish couple named Gross lived in this house.

House No. 61

Hirsch Christof: b. 1894; d. 1944 in a military hospital in Hungary

Hirsch Katharina: nee Eisler, b. 1902; d. 1984 in Toronto, Canada

Hirsch Elisabeth: b. 1925, married name is Kartner, lives in Ajax, Canada

Hirsch Elfriede: b. 1930, married name is Gutri, lives in Toronto, Canada

House No. 65

Faul Josef: b. 1901; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Faul Magdalena: nee Amon, b. 1904, lives in Vienna, Austria

Faul Marianne: b. 1926, married name is Kober, lives in Vienna, Austria

Faul Cecilie: b. 1929, lives in Vienna, Austria

House No. 66

Benda Anton: d. 1945 in Sredischte, Yugoslavia

Benda Andreas: d. 1986 in Iserlohn, Germany

Benda Finni: lives in Iserlohn, Germany

House No. 66

Eisler Matthias: b. 1906, lives in North Berge, USA

Eisler Maria: nee Oberle, b. 1921, lives in North Berge, USA

Eisler Ilse: b. 1948, lives in USA

House No. 67

Wanya Rudolf: b. 1912, lives in Bad Dürkheim, Germany; [d. 1995]

Wanya Anna: nee Hirsch, b. 1919, lives in Bad Dürkheim, Germany; [d. 2005]

House No. 68

Illiewich Josef: b. 1893; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Illiewich Klara: nee Gulding, b. 1896; d. 1982 in Vienna, Austria

Illiewich Josef: b. 1920, lives in Gleisdorf, Austria

Illiewich Matthias: b. 1923; d. 1988 in Vienna, Austria

House No. 68

Brücker Christof: b. 1910; d. 1944, fell in battle in Bosnia

Brücker Anna: nee Brenner, b. 1919, lives in Unterhaching, Germany

Brücker Hans: b. 1937; [d. 1945] in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Brücker Michael: b. 1940, lives in Unterhaching, Germany

Brücker Anna: b. 1942, married name is Müller, lives in Vaterstetten, Germany

Brücker Johann: b. 1944; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 72

Birg Adam: b. 1892; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Birg Rosina: nee Hergat, b. 1898; d. 1950 in Aidenbach, Germany

Birg Hedwig: b. 1921, married name is Lefor; d. in Brussels, Canada

Birg Helmut: b. 1929, lives in Ottobrunn, Germany

House No. 74

Birg Konrad: b. 1897; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Birg Maria: nee Birg, b. 1901; d. 1982 in Bellheim, Germany

Birg Walter: b. 1925, lives in Annweiler, Germany

Birg Dittmar: b. 1929, lives in Bellheim, Germany

House No. 75

Birg Friedrich: b. 1891; d. 1936 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Birg Anna: nee Waradi, b. 1894; d. 1981 in Mannersdorf, Austria

Birg Michael: b. 1911; d. missing since 1945

Birg Elisabeth: nee Birg, b. 1921, lives in Mannersdorf, Austria

Birg Reinhold: b. 1941, lives in Vienna, Austria

House No. 76

Birg Josef: b. 1909; d. 1943, fell in battle in Croatia

Birg Anna: nee Birg, b. 1916; d. 1967 in Detta, Romania

Birg Trude: b. 1934, married name is Mayer, lives in Wuppertal, Germany

Birg Agathe: b. 1935, married name is Buchmann, lives in Germany

House No. 77

Birg Michael: b. 1900; d. 1945 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Birg Irma: nee Hochstrasser, b. 1901; d. 1978 in Stolberg, Germany

Birg Thea: b. 1929, married name is Engelmann, lives in Stolberg, Germany

Birg Alfred: b. 1934; d. 1985 in Stolberg, Germany

House No. 79A

Oberle Stephan: b. 1888; d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Oberle Elisabeth: nee Stehle, b. 1898; d. 1975 in USA

Oberle Elisabeth: b. 1923, married name is Seyr, lives in USA

Oberle Hans: b. 1928, lives in USA

House No. 80

Keipl Jakob: b. 1905; d. 1975 in Walldorf, Germany

Keipl Magdalena: nee Storch, b. 1909, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Keipl Theresia: b. 1932, married name is Bayer, lives in Iserlohn, Germany

Keipl Magdalena: b. 1935, married name is Reible, lives in Laupheim, Germany

Keipl Anton: b. 1939, lives in Sandhausen, Germany

Keipl Maria: b. 1943, married name is Gillenberger, lives in Hassloch, Germany

House No. 81

Deutsch Johann: b. 1910; d. 1986 in Helse, Germany

Deutsch Theresia: nee Storch, b. 1916, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Deutsch Philipp: b. 1934, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Deutsch Theresia: b. 1936, married name is Zirkel, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Deutsch Lenne: b. 1944; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 81

Birg Nikolaus: b. 1893; d. 1975 in Bad Dürkheim, Germany

Birg Rosa: nee Debert, b. 1897; d. 1983 in Bad Dürkheim, Germany

Birg Rudolf: b. 1919; d. 1985 in Bad Dürkheim, Germany

Birg Ernst: b. 1920, lives in Ebringen, Germany

Birg, Adele: b. 1921, lives in Villingen, Germany

Birg Henrietta: b. 1923, married name is Wessoly, lives in Villingen, Germany

House No. 81A

Brenner Michael: b. 1869; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Brenner Katharina: nee Brücker, b. 1877; d. 1945 in Camp Setschanfeld

Brenner Anna: b. 1929, lives in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany

Brenner Franz: b. 1929, lives in Waiblingen, Germany

Brenner Adam: b. 1931, lives in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany

House No. 82

Holzmüller Peter: b. 1906; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Holzmüller Elisabeth: nee Reusch, b. 1908, lives in Wegberg, Germany

Holzmüller Anna: b. 1929, married name is Sedeljak, lives in Wegberg, Germany

Holzmüller Elisabeth: b. 1930, lives in Wegberg, Germany

House No. 83

Bies Jakob: b. 1900; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Bies Margarete: nee Herold, b. 1901, lives in Paderborn, Germany

Bies Traudl: b. 1929, married name is Bohland, lives in Paderborn, Germany

Bies Anna: b. 1931, married name is Foydl, lives in Weeze, Germany

Bies Jakob, junior: b. 1935, lives in Paderborn, Germany

House No. 83

Bies Phillip: d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Bies Amei: nee Babilon (Reiter), lives in Zweibrücken, Germany

House No. 84

Milowan Johann: b. 1895; d. 1942 in Kubin, Yugoslavia

Milowan Barbara: nee Schag, b. 1901; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Milowan Theresia: b. 1922, married name is Salfner, lives in Cologne, Germany

Milowan Georg: b. 1923, lives in Cologne, Germany

Milowan Josef: b. 1926, lives in Hamm, Germany

Milowan Johann: b. 1929, lives in Tamm, Germany

Milowan Michael: b. 1933, lives in Cologne, Germany
Milowan Maria: b. 1934, married name is Liebgott, lives in Geisingen, Germany
Milowan Franz: b. 1939, lives in Lübbecke, Germany

House No. 85

Hirsch Peter: b. 1884; d. 1963, Grand Forks, BC, Canada
Hirsch Katharina: nee Prunkl, b. 1886; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Hirsch Peter, junior: b. 1912; d. 1945, fell in battle in Yugoslavia
Hirsch Anna: b. 1920, married name is Giesler, lives in Parksville, BC, Canada; [d. 2007]
Hirsch Helga: b. 1940, married name is Wilson, lives in [Port Coquitlam, BC], Canada
Hirsch Erika: b. 1942, married name is Foley, lives in [Qualicum Beach, BC], Canada

House No. 86

Selesch Marton: b. 1891; d. 1967 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Selesch Anna: nee Reiter, b. 1899; d. 1985 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Selesch Anna: b. 1922, married name is Widt, lives in Monheim/Rheinland, Germany
Selesch Eva: b. 1924, married name is Niedermayer, lives in Böne-Nordbögge, Germany

House No. 87

Lay Adam: b. 1909, lives in Sierck-les-Bains, France
Lay Margareta: nee Jakob, b. 1909, lives in Sierck-les-Bains, France
Lai Adam, junior: b. 1930, lives in Sierck-les-Bains, France
Lai Anton: b. 1941, lives in Sierck-les-Bains, France

House No. 88

Dormuth Adam: b. 1879; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Dormuth Maria: nee Rosch, b. 1881; d. 1966 in Nieder Olm, Germany
Stemper Johann: b. 1909; d. 1945, fell in battle in Bosnia
Stemper Katharina: nee Dormuth, b. 1915, lives in Nieder Olm, Germany
Stemper Maria: b. 1933, lives in Nieder Olm, Germany
Stemper Josef: b. 1935; d. 1984 in Nieder Olm, Germany
Stemper Hildegard: b. 1943, lives in Germany

House No. 89

Niedermayer Peter: b. 1904; d. 1943, fell in battle in Croatia
Niedermayer Elisabeth: nee Horwath, b. 1910, lives in Gosheim, Germany
Niedermayer Theresia: b. 1928, married name is Harti, lives in Gosheim, Germany
Niedermayer Magdalena: b. 1933, married name is Hittinger, lives in Denkingen, Germany
Niedermayer Anna: nee Bajerle, b. 1872; d. 1948 in Karlsdorf, Yugoslavia

House No. 90

Bies Johann: b. 1883; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Bies Anna: nee Schmidt, b. 1890; d. 1970 in Bierbach, Germany
Bies Katharina: b. 1910, married name is Türk, lives in Bierbach, Germany
Bies Anton: b. 1923, lives in Lauterecken, Germany
Bies Nikolaus: b. 1925; d. 1945 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

House No. 91

Herold Nikolaus: b. 1883; d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Herold Marianne: nee Schneider, b. 1893; d. 1922 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Herold Franz: b. 1920, lives in Munich, Germany

Herold Katharina: b. 1922, lives in Trossingen, Germany

House No. 92

Wingert Eva: nee Mayer, b. 1872; d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 93

Bogner Michael: b. 1895; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Bogner Elisabeth: nee Herold, b. 1900; d. 1986 in Münnerstadt, Germany

Bogner Hans: b. 1921, lives in Rosstal, Germany

Bogner Peter: b. 1924; d. 1945 in the military hospital in Neumünster, Germany

Bogner Michael, junior: b. 1930, lives in Münnerstadt, Germany

House No. 94

Kirchner Peter: b. 1895; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Kirchner Maria: nee Herold, b. 1897; d. 1989 in Wilster, Germany

Kirchner Michael: b. 1920, lives in Wilster, Germany

Kirchner Konrad: b. 1923; d. 1944, fell in battle in Bosnia

Kirchner Elisabeth: b. 1924, married name is Wellhöfer, lives in Ulm, Germany

House No. 95

Gerger Johann: b. 1905, missing in Lübeck

Gerger Magdalena: nee Mess, b. 1905; d. 1939 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Gerger Maria: b. 1926, married name is Fuchs, lives in Wehingen, Germany

Gerger Hans: b. 1927, lives in Balingen, Germany

Gerger Nikolaus: b. 1932, lives in Gensingen, Germany

Winter Katharina: b. 1869; d. 1947 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Mess Josef: b. 1869; d. 1941 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Mess Sabine: nee Jakob, b. 1872; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Mess Eva: b. 1909; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 96

Siller Valentin: b. 1858; d. 1941 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Siller Katalin: nee von Keszthely, b. 1869; d. 1945 in Camp Heideschütz, Yugoslavia

House No. 97

Arnusch Andreas: b. 1910, lives in Keenesburg, Colorado USA

Arnusch Katharina: nee Sommer, b. 1915, lives in Keenesburg, Colorado, USA

Arnusch Nikolaus: [b. 1936, lives in Keenesburg, Colorado, USA]

Arnusch Johann: [b. 1942, lives in Keenesburg, Colorado, USA]

Arnusch Franz: [b. 1950 in Austria, lives in Keenesburg, Colorado, USA]

Arnusch Rosalia: nee Herold, [b. 1881]; d. 1968 in Germany

Arnusch Nikolaus: b. 1920; d. 1944, fell in battle in Split, Yugoslavia

House No. 98

Schreiner Franz: b. 1907, lives in Asperg, Germany

Schreiner Katharina: nee Hirsch, b. 1909; d. 1985 in Asperg, Germany

Schreiner Karl: b. 1932, lives in Asperg, Germany

Schreiner Franz: b. 1943; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 99

Awender Kasper: b. 1904, missing since 1945 in Yugoslavia

Awender Anna: nee Wagner, b. 1911; d. 1989 in Kornwestheim, Germany

Awender Theresia: b. 1931, married name is Nagy, lives in Freudental, Germany

Awender Elisabeth: b. 1933, married name is Heinermann, lives in Marbach-Hörnle,

Germany

Awender Maria: b. 1935, married name is Ellmer, lives in Bissingen, Germany

Wagner Magdalena: b. 1874; d. 1945 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

House No. 100

Wingert Andreas: b. 1878; d. 1943 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Wingert Anna: nee Herold, b. 1874; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Wingert Andreas, junior: b. 1906

His wife: Wingert Gretl, remarried name is Bogner, lives in Germany

House No. 100

Arnusch Franz: b. 1895; d. 1943 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Arnusch Elisabeth: nee Wingert, b. 1900; d. in Tuttlingen, Germany

Arnusch Peter: b. 1919, lives in Adelskoben, Germany

Arnusch Magdalena: b. 1921, lives in Magdeburg, former German Democratic Republic

Arnusch Magdalena (Leni): b. 1924, lives in Hohenberge, former German Dem. Republic

Arnusch Sepp: b. 1926; d. 1987 in Schwedt a. d. Oder, former German Dem. Republic

Arnusch Michael: b. 1929, lives in Kirchheim, former German Democratic Republic

Arnusch Susanne: b. 1931, married name is Knezevich, lives in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Arnusch Anna: b. 1933, married name is Pauli, lives in Tuttlingen, Germany

Arnusch Edda: b. 1934, married name is Heschl, lives in Wehingen, Germany

Arnusch Barbara: b. 1937, married name is Gossner, lives in Tuttlingen, Germany

House No. 103

Armbruster Josef: b. 1883; d. 1944 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Armbruster Elisabeth: nee Oppermann, b. 1883; d. 1946, Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Armbruster Elisabeth: b. 1920, married name is Grünwald, lives in Stuttgart, Germany

House No. 104

Hirsch Jakob: b. 1910, lives in Grand Forks, BC, Canada; [d. 1999 in Grand Forks, BC]

Hirsch Rosalia: nee Arnusch, b. 1912; d. 1990 in Grand Forks, BC, Canada

Hirsch Jakob: [b. 1939], lives in Grand Forks, BC, Canada

Hirsch Elisabeth: b. 1942, married name is Haggbloom, lives in [Coquitlam, BC], Canada

House No. 105

Bauer Jakob: b. 1905; d. 1973 in Contz-les Bains, France
Bauer Magdalena: nee Mess, b. 1908; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Bauer Elisabeth: b. 1931, lives in Gorze, France
Bauer Margareta: b. 1934, married name is Zieder, lives in St. Nikolaus, Germany
Halmaschan Ladislaus: d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Halmaschan Magdalena: d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 106

Herold Johann: b. 1894; d. 1988 in Rastatt, Germany
Herold Magdalena: nee Hirsch, b. 1902, lives in Rastatt, Germany
Herold Franz: b. 1924, lives in Rastatt, Germany
Herold Katharina: b. 1927, married name is Temmer, lives in Rastatt, Germany
Herold Elisabeth: b. 1930, married name is Bohland, lives in Rastatt, Germany

House No. 107

Grassl Franz: b. 1911, lives in Trossingen, Germany
Grassl Annamiedl: nee Herold, b. 1913, lives in Trossingen, Germany
Grassl Stefan: b. 1938, lives in Trossingen, Germany

House No. 108 [110?]

Berkowich Stefan: b. 1891; d. 1978 in Singen, Germany
Berkowich Anna: nee Biesz, b. 1895; d. 1965 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Berkowich Anton: b. 1916; d. 1980 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Berkowich Anna: b. 1919, married name is Toth, lives in Singen, Germany
Berkowich Leopold: b. 1921, lives in Emmerich, Germany
Berkowich Nikolaus: b. 1921; d. 1944, fell in battle in Yugoslavia
Berkowich Jakob: b. 1930; d. 1947 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Berkowich Katharina: b. 1932, married name is Barschi, lives in Singen, Germany

House No. 111

Engst Franz: b. 1895; d. in Gudurica [Kudritz], Yugoslavia
Engst Magdalena: nee Prunkl, b. 1888; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Engst Matthias: b. 1919; d. 1989 in Augsburg, Germany
Engst Hans: b. 1921; d. 1945, fell in battle in Ostpreussen

House No. 112

Brücker Michael: d. 1945 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Brücker Katharina: nee Jakob, b. 1886; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 112

Brenner Hans: b. 1913; d. 1973 in Munich, Germany
Brenner Rosalia: nee Erndt, b. 1915, lives in Munich, Germany
Brenner Christof: b. 1924, lives in Munich, Germany
Brenner Anna: b. 1933, married name is Gottesgräber, lives in Strassberg, Germany
Brenner Katharina: b. 1936, married name is Möhle, lives in Lengede, Germany

Brenner Magdalena: b. 1939, married name is Lutje, lives in Kirchdorf, Germany

House No. 113

Bajerle Jakob: b. 1885; d. 1943 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Bajerle Rosalia: nee Mess, b. 1893; d. 1966 in Chicago, IL, USA

Bajerle Georg: b. 1915; d. 1977 in Germany

Bajerle Anna: b. 1919, married name is Korischitsch; d. 1987 in Chicago, IL, USA

House No. 114

Jakob Lorenz: b. 1908, lives in France

Jakob Anna: nee Hügel, [b. 1879], went to France

House No. 115

Arnusch Johann: b. 1904; d. 1982 in Haimburg, Austria

Arnusch Rosalia: nee Bajerle, b. 1909, lives in Haimburg, Austria

Arnusch Katharina: b. 1927, married name is Wolbank, lives in Haimburg, Austria

Arnusch Adam: b. 1928, lives in Guntramsdorf, Austria

Arnusch Theresia: b. 1930, married name is Koschu, lives in Haimburg, Austria

Arnusch Anna: b. 1949, married name is Hansche, lives in Haimburg, Austria

House No. 115

Storch Barbara: b. 1886; d. 1959 in Walldorf, Germany

Storch Anna: b. 1907, married name is Laffler; d. 1952 in Serbia

Storch Magdalena: b. 1909, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Storch Franz: b. 1910; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Storch Theresia: b. 1916, married name is Deutsch, lives in Walldorf, Germany

Storch Barbara: b. 1920; d. 1969 in Berlin, Germany

House No. 115A

Wenzel Josef: b. 1882; d. 1939 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Wenzel Elisabeth: nee Reiter, b. 1885; d. 1965 in Zweibrücken, Germany

Wenzel Matthias: b. 1915, lives in Zweibrücken, Germany

House No. 118

Wingert Andreas: b. 1899; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Wingert Anna: nee Buda, b. 1907, lives in Sprockhövel, Germany

Wingert Josef: b. 1926, lives in Sprockhövel, Germany

Wingert Jakob: b. 1934, lives in Hemmer, Germany

House No. 119

Busch Franz: b. 1904; d. in Germany

Busch Rosalia: [nee Jung, b. 1904], lives in Sierck-les-Bains, France

Filips Anton: b. 1922; d. 1944, fell in battle in Yugoslavia

House No. 120

Heinermann Barbara (Frizin): d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Heinermann Barbara (Wawi): b. 1918; d. 1960 in Taufkirchen, Germany

House No. 120

Seger Johann: b. 1913; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Maria: b. 1911; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Theresia: b. 1933, lives in Skopje, Yugoslavia [Macedonia]
Wenzel Anna: b. 1934; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Lenka: b. 1937; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Philipp: b. 1938, lives in Oberteuringen, Germany
Wenzel Maria: b. 1939; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Jakob: b. 1941; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Wenzel Franz: b. 1943; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 120

Reiter Josef: [b. 1894]; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Reiter Elisabeth: nee Ölberg, [b. 1900]
The family had four children: Reiter Rosalia [b. 1920], Anna [b. 1922],
Magdalena [b. 1925] and Theresia [b. 1927]

House No. 121

Hirsch Anna: nee Dian, b. 1886; d. 1955 in Una, Germany
Hirsch Heinrich: b. 1912; d. 1987 in England
Hirsch Magdalena: b. 1925, married name is Prommer, [lives in Kelowna, BC, Canada]

House No. 122

Wüst Michael: b. 1894; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Wüst Anna: nee Fochler, b. 1895; d. 1975 in Vienna, Austria
Wist Franz: b. 1920, lives in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany
Wüst Elisabeth: b. 1921, married name is Widl, lives in Vienna, Austria
Wüst Josef: b. 1925, lives in Lintsching, Austria; [d. 2003 in Lintsching, Austria]

House No. 123

Paul Matthias: b. 1904; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Paul Juliane: nee Löchel, b. 1910, lives in Balingen, Germany

House No. 124

Filips Franz: b. 1892; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Filips Anna: nee Renner, b. 1901; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Filips Rosalia: b. 1923, married name is Jerhoff, lives in Cologne, Germany
Filips Anna: b. 1925, married name is Söntgen, lives in Bornheim, Germany
Filips Elisabeth: b. 1926, married name is Brzank, lives in Lülsdorf, Germany
Mess Regina: b. 1920; d. 1985 in Cologne, Germany
Mess Josef: b. 1924, lives in Cologne, Germany
Mess Katharina: b. 1929, married name is Neu, lives in Cologne, Germany

House No. 125

Merle Barbara: nee Wingert, b. 1892; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Merle Fritz: b. 1915; d. 1944 in USSR

House No. 126

Bies Jakob: b. 1894; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Bies Theresia: nee Tell, b. 1897; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Lach-Bies Phillip: b. 1926, lives in Neumünster, Germany

Bies Anna: b. 1928, married name is Keller, lives in Stockstadt, Germany

Bies Josef: b. 1933, lives in Weisskirchen, Yugoslavia

Bies Josef: [b. 1864]; d. 1939 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Bies Maria: nee Tasch, [b. 1866]; d. 1945 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

House No. 127

Niedermayer Johann: b. 1889; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Niedermayer Maria: nee Wertenbach, b. 1902, lives in Wegberg, Germany

Niedermayer Stefan: b. 1920, lives in Böne-Nordbögge, Germany

Niedermayer Magdalena: b. 1923, married name is Bajerle, lives in Wegberg, Germany

Niedermayer Anna: b. 1929, married name is Becker, lives in Duisburg, Germany

House No. 128

Bajerle Leopold: b. 1892; d. 1952 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Bajerle Anna: nee Kripens, b. 1895; d. 1970 in Peine, Germany

House No. 129

Peter (Brenner) Franz: [b. 1887]; d. 1955 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Peter Regina: nee Jakob, [b. 1885]; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

They had two sons: Peter died in Georgshausen and Sepp died in an accident in Belgrade.

House No. 130

Mess Georg: b. 1871; d. 1954 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Mess Rizzi: nee Reiter, b. 1872; d. 1947 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

Mess Rosalia: b. 1920, married name is Reinecke, lives in Springe, Germany

Borschowa (Sarcev) Adam: b. 1920; d. 1950 in Werschetz, Yugoslavia; [d. about 1955]

Borschowa (Sarcev) Apollonia: nee Mess, b. 1925, remarried as Marinkov, lives in Reinstetten, Germany; [d. 1992]

Sarcev Brigitte: [b. 1943], married name is Falkenstein, lives in Reinstetten, Germany

Sarcev Walter: b. 1944, lives in Karlsruhe, Germany

Sarcev Eva: [b. 1947], married name is Rakovic, lives in Reinstetten, Germany

House No. 132

Reiter Franz and wife Amei

Four children: Franz, Johann, Heinrich and Maria, no dates available

House No. 133

Winter Johann and Winter Maria, nee Jakob. They had one son, Nikolaus, who fell in battle and one daughter, Elisabeth, who lives in the USA. There were also stepsons who belonged to the Johann Winter family: Jakob Adam, Jakob Jakob and Jakob Peter.

House No. 134

Kirchner Konrad: b. 1889; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Kirchner Apollonia: nee Domann, b. 1896; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Kirchner Peter: b. 1920, lives in Herzogenaurach, Germany
Kirchner Susanne: b. 1926, married name is Besold, lives in Amberg, Germany

House No. 135

Reiter Nikolaus: b. 1912; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Reiter Anna: nee Armbruster, b. 1913, lives in Heideschütz, Yugoslavia
Reiter Elisabeth: b. 1935, lives in Heideschütz, Yugoslavia
Reiter Theresia: b. 1940, married name is [Muskinja], lives in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Reiter Stefan: b. 1942, lives in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia

House No. 136

Hügel Josef: b. 1885; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Hügel Katharina: nee Schlossel, b. 1881; d. 1958 in Bad Wurzach, Germany

House No. 138

Brenner Peter: [b. 1890]; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Brenner Elisabeth: nee Bies, b. 1892; d. in America
This married couple had four children: Magdalena [b. 1917], Peter [b. 1922], Elisabeth [b. 1924] and Maria [b. 1930].

House No. 139

Kirchner Kaspar: b. 1887; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Kirchner Magdalena: nee Herold, b. 1892; d. 1986 in Ulm/D., Germany
Kirchner Peter: b. 1914; d. 1988 in Ulm/D., Germany
Kirchner Magdalena: b. 1920, married name is Kowatsch, lives in Ulm/D., Germany

House No. 140

Siller Georg: b. 1890; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Siller Susanne: nee Frank, b. 1898; d. 1932 in Georgshausen, Yugoslavia
Siller Magdalena: b. 1922, lives in Mannheim, Germany
Siller Barbara: b. 1924, married name is Schulze, lives in Falkenberg, former German Democratic Republic
Siller Konrad: b. 1926; d. 1977 in England
Siller Johann: b. 1928; lives in Cologne, Germany

House No. 141

Hirsch Johann: b. 1907; d. 1943 in the military hospital in Belgrade
Hirsch Theresia: nee Merle, b. 1911; d. 1987 in Penticton, BC, Canada

Hirsch Magdalena: b. 1934; d. 1945 in Camp Setschanfeld, Yugoslavia
Hirsch Peter: b. 1937, lives in Penticton, BC, Canada

House No. 143

Jakob Adam: b. 1910, lives in Taufkirchen, Germany
Jakob Elisabeth: nee Treib, b. 1914, lives in Taufkirchen, Germany
Jakob Nikolaus: b. 1934; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Jakob Katharina: b. 1937; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Jakob Eva: b. 1938, married name is Paulick, lives in Moosen, Germany
Jakob Elisabeth: b. 1940; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Schag Sebastian: b. 1898; d. 1945 in Camp Setschanfeld, Yugoslavia
Treib Nikolaus: b. 1924; d. 1989, Villingen, Germany

House No. 145

Moor Anton: b. 1910; d. 1987 in USA
Moor Magdalena: nee Riess, b. 1914, lives in USA
Moor Richard: b. 1938, lives in Prospect Heights, USA
Moor Manfred: b. 1941, lives in USA

House No. 146

Moor Heinrich: b. 1881; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Moor Gretl: nee Siller, b. 1885; d. 1960 in Feldhausen, Germany

House No. 147

Lefor Nikolaus: b. 1888; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Lefor Elisabeth: nee Dian, b. 1892; d. 1981 in Altötting, Germany
Lefor Peter: b. 1916, lives in Brussels, Canada
Lefor Barbara: nee Stumper, b. 1922; d. 1947 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Lefor Hermann: b. 1941, lives in Kitchener, Canada

House No. 148

Krämer Jakob: b. 1880; d. 1954 in Modosch, Yugoslavia
Krämer Anna: nee Schalmayer, b. 1885; d. 1960 in Haigerloch, Germany
Krämer Anna: b. 1909, married name is Pollinger; d. 1983 in Haigerloch, Germany

House No. 151

Halmaschan Todor and Halmaschan Margarethe: d. in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia
Seim Peter: b. 1918; d. 1944, fell in battle in Bosnia

House No. 152

Heim Arnold: d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia
Schwarzsepp Anna lived in this house and was the housekeeper.

House No. 153

Birg Franz: b. 1910, lives in Karlsfeld, Germany
Birg Grozda: nee Vujitsch, b. 1912, lives in Belgrade

Birg Erwin Johann (Slobodan): b. 1940, lives in Munich, Germany

House No. 153A

Wingert Adam: b. 1902; d. 1947 in USSR

Wingert Barbara: nee Brenner, b. 1905; d. 1946 in Camp Rudolfsgnad, Yugoslavia

Wingert Anna: b. 1927, married name is Schiefer, lives in Mödling, Austria

Wingert Johann: b. 1929, lives in Guntramsdorf, Austria

Wingert Andreas: b. 1933, lives in Guntramsdorf, Austria

Wingert Michael: b. 1935, lives in Vienna, Austria

House No. 154

Deutsch Philipp: b. 1890; d. 1958 in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany

Deutsch Katharina: nee Bajerle, b. 1892; d. 1970 in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany

Deutsch Barbara: b. 1911, married name is Scheirich, lives in Peine, Germany

Deutsch Matthias: b. 1914; d. 1964 in Vienna, Austria

Deutsch Regina: b. 1920, married name is Falk, lives in Mühlheim/Ruhr, Germany

Deutsch Filipp: b. 1932; d. 1989 in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany

House No. 155

Müller Peter: b. 1887; d. 1954 in Klagenfurt, Austria

Müller Magdalena: nee Schmöhl, b. 1891; d. 1973 in Klagenfurt, Austria

Müller Lorenz: b. 1911, lives in Kitchener, ON, Canada

Müller Maria: nee Lefor, b. 1918, lives in Kitchener, ON, Canada

Müller Peter junior: b. 1938, lives in Kitchener, ON, Canada

Müller Hilde: b. 1942, married name is Baninger, lives in Brampton, ON, Canada

House No. 156

Almazan Anna: b. 1902; d. 1990 in Ofterdingen

Almazan Johann: b. 1935, lives in Mossingen, Germany

House No. 157

Dian Michael: b. 1901; d. 1944 in Camp Stojkowitsch, Werschetz, Yugoslavia

Dian Elisabeth: nee Kappel, b. 1912; d. 1986 in Stolberg, Germany

Dian Bernhard: b. 1929, lives in Kapfenberg-Hafendorf, Austria

Dian Heinrich: b. 1931, lives in Schwerte, Germany

Dian Maria: b. 1935, married name is Birg, lives in Stolberg, Germany

PERSONAL NOTES AND REMARKS ABOUT FAMILIES

(Additional information, corrections and new information on family members who were born after 1944.)

WORDS FROM OUR LOCAL DIALECT

Adje	adieu	Paradeis	tomato
Agrasl	gooseberries	Patschker	knitted slippers
Aldemarsch	taking a drink to seal a deal	Peer	boar
Alewitschko	Turkish Delight	Pessl	Mrs.
allirit	again and again	Phanzweh	stomach ache
Ambr	a bucket	Pipatsch	wild poppy seeds
Anfreme	place a custom order	piple	drinking too much alcohol
anri	other	Plakich	bald cut
arweide	working	Plodr	bladder of a pig
Azl	magpie	Pluch	plow
Bartlmee	decay in fruit	Pollerloch	a game with damp clumps of earth
Batschi	uncle	Pojgl	turkey
Betjar	a good for nothing	Porscht	beloved boy friend
Biko	a bull	Pratschkei	slingshot
Bizikl	a bicycle	Presem	soft inside of bread
Budji	women's panties	Prewet	outhouse, toilet
Bunda	long sheepskin coat	Prummer	a toy made of pig bone
drhemm	at home	Raatz	Serb
Eech	harrow	Racki	brandy or schnapps
ender	before or earlier	Rampasch	unfermented grape juice
Fertr	an apron	rass	rancid
Fexe	harvesting	Ratz	rat
Fischkal	a lawyer	Rein	a large cooking pot
Fitscheheil	bow and arrow	Reindl	a small cooking pot
Fratschler	one who sells at the market	Ritt	male dog
Gatjehos	men's underwear	Riwisle	red or black currents
Gfret	drudgery	Saaf	soap
ginn	gave	Schammel	stool to sit on
Gwetsche	plums	Schapodl	frills on women's dresses
Halbscheid	the half	Scherwl	a chamber pot
Haldr	pig or cow herder	Schlappe	slippers
Hälftler	share grower who gets half	Schlut	men's trousers
Hingl	chicken or hen	Schnackl	chin
Hotar	fields within the boundaries of the village	Schnappmesser	jack-knife
Hutschl	a colt or foal	Schnelzloch	a hole in the ground used for a button game

Jangl	a jacket	Schnepskapp	peaked cap
Katsch	a duck	schpauze	spit
Kehlhaus	a domestic rabbit	Schreipichl	coin purse
Kerschtl	crisp break crusts	Schweindl	piglet
kertschtlich	roasted to a crisp	seicht	not deep
Kerwe	yeast	staliere	blame
Klaks	a child's toy made from a hollow piece of elder wood	Stazi	stationmaster
Kokosch	a rooster	stutzich	stubborn
Kornik	a field guard	Tachtropp	roof eave
Korscht	bread crust	Taich	dough
Kraak	a crow	Teppl	cup
Kritsch	a hamster	Tepsi	high sided baking pan
Krumbire	potatoes	Tochtermann	son-in-law
Kulless	horse and buggy	Trutschl	loose living girl
Kupfer	a suitcase or bag	Tschakan	walking stick
Lambl	lamb	tummle	hurry
lapich	sloppy	Tutlkruch	a crock for drinking
Laprot	loaf of bread	Ulakr	pocket knife
Latr	ladder	Umorke	cucumber
Lawor	a wash basin	verstawrt	driven off
Leiwl	a man's vest	Vetter	uncle, or all men older than you
letz	inside out	Vorphalt	estate cottage reserved for the farmer's parents
Logl	a water container for taking to work	Waan	wagon
maje gehn	go visiting	wacklich	loose and unsteady
markiere	to simulate something	wackrich	awake
Mentsch	girl friend, also housemaid	Wallach	Romanian
Minnich	gelding, castrated stallion	Weidling	a large bowl in the kitchen
Mitschl	small loaf of bread	Wooch	weighing machine
Modr	mother	Worscht	sausage
Mulder	washing trough, also pan for baking bread	Zaug	female dog
Neni	aunt	Zeger	shopping bag
Paam	tree	Zeidich	ripe
Packschiss	shovel to put bread in oven	Zichtl	female pig or young pig
Paprikasch	goulash		

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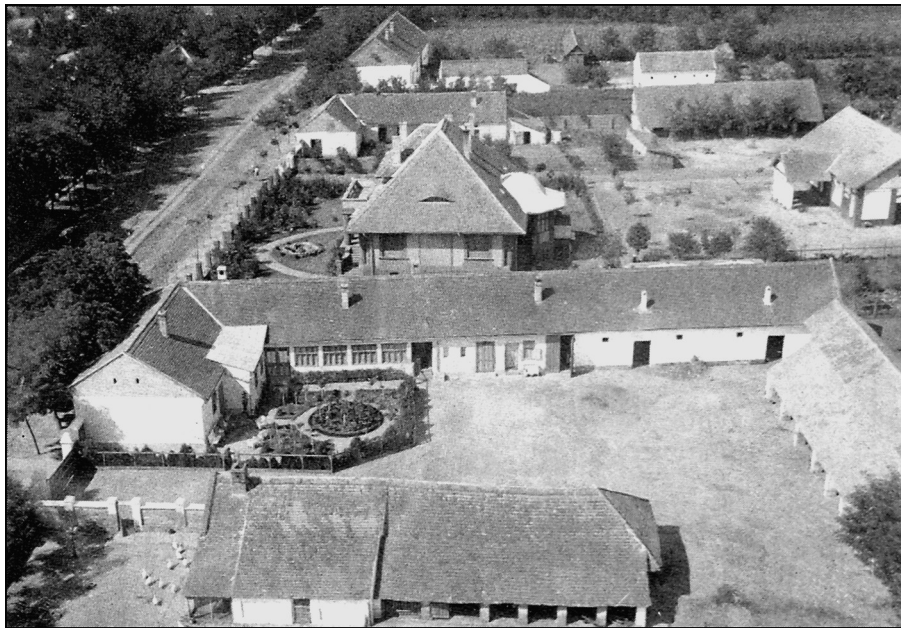
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OUR HOMELAND IN PICTURES

What we have only been able to describe in words in the first portion of this book, we will now enhance with pictures. From among the over 300 photographs submitted by former residents of the village, there is only room for the 128 that we have chosen to appear on the following pages. The quality of these photographs varied, as might be expected, since all of them are over forty-five years old. Some of these pictures, like their owners, have had an interesting history of their own. For example, the photograph that captures so beautifully Nikolaus Herold, our so-called *Vetter* Klos, was hidden in the shoe of his daughter Kathi when she was in the Soviet Union. If this picture could speak, none of the misery and suffering endured by the deportees to slave labor in the Soviet Union would ever be forgotten.

Some of the photographs, like the one of our church could not be adequately reproduced. Therefore, our countryman Heinz Birg created an ink drawing based upon an original. In this way we will keep the memory of our church alive, it is where we were all baptized and where we worshipped. Our parents married in it and it was the last place where we took leave of our ancestors at their last station in life on their way to the cemetery. The church no longer exists. The Serbs tore it down.

Just as in the case of these two pictures, there is also a story behind each of the others. We present these pictures that we believe are worthwhile and hope that the reader will see them in the same light. They not only tell us about our former homeland, but they also all have their own individual histories.



A Partial View of the Village

Taken from the top of the chimney of one of the brick kilns. In the foreground is the house of Friedrich Birg, in the background is the villa and yard of Konrad Birg and beyond that is the property of Adam Birg.



Magdalena Jungert (1876-1952)

This woman, whose maiden name is Hetzel, was born in the neighboring village of Heideschütz. In her youth she came to our village when she married an official associated with the railway administration. By profession she was a midwife and was highly respected. She assisted three generations of the villagers with their entry into the world. Without Die Jungertin, as she was known, life in our small community would have been much more complicated. She was well versed in her profession and its fine points. In addition, she provided a sense of security and confidence to the young women who were expecting a baby. That was not always easy when we consider that all births took place in the house of the parents. There was never a resident doctor in our village. We all had to count on Die Jungertin. And she was

always prepared around the clock. She survived the difficult times during our persecution and found a place of refuge with relatives in Belgrade where she died in 1952.



Karl Petri (1880-1944)

He came to our village at the turn of the century. He was a young teacher and recognized that the times were ripe for activities beyond simply the daily hard work that was demanded of the people. At about the same time, a young woman teacher also arrived in the village. It did not take too long before these two young people became a married couple. The next forty years of the life in our village without them would have been unthinkable. They taught our parents how to read and write, and we followed in their footsteps. Thanks to them, a prayer chapel and school were soon built. They were also responsible for all kinds of activities in the village that were in addition to those provided by the school. For example, The Men's Singing Society, in which our fathers sang, was under Petri's direction; it added more to their lives than simply hard work. Besides many other things, Teacher Petri was also well versed in languages. Because he learned to speak and write in several foreign languages, he was able to bridge some of the divisions in our village of mixed populations. Unfortunately, the end of his life came as a tragedy. In 1944 he was murdered by one of his former Serb pupils from The Colony.



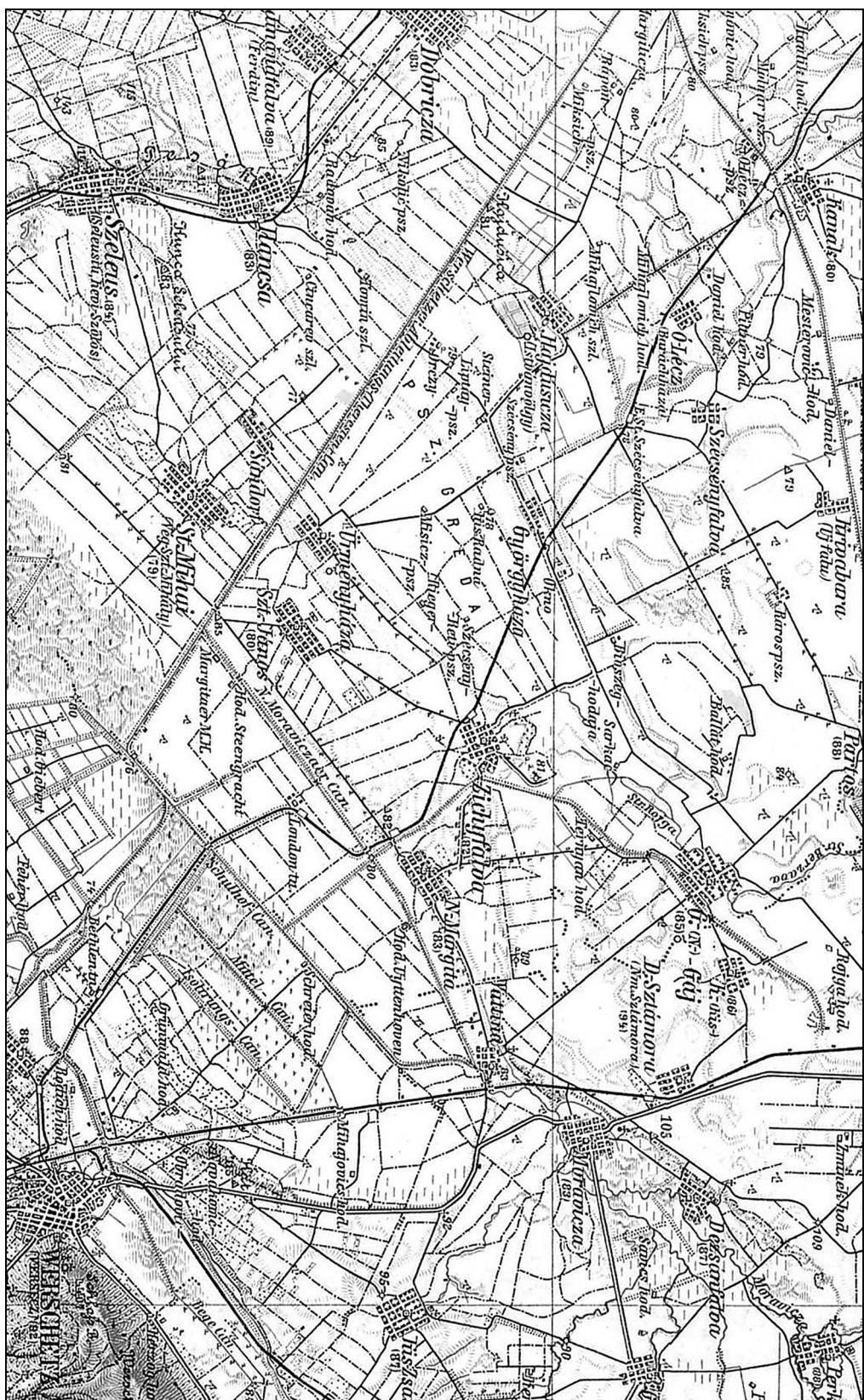
Karola Birg (1899-1990)

This noble, unselfish woman was born in Karlsdorf and came to our village as the wife of Georg Birg. From the day of her arrival she became a model in many respects and the driving force for the various cultural activities in the life of our village. During the winter months she taught the young boys and girls simple theatrical practices that were later performed for the village. Auditions were held in one of the *Wirtshaus* halls until all of the roles were assigned. Karola Neni, as she was lovingly called, was at the head of a large and well respected household. All dignitaries, notable visitors and personages who came to the village were guests in her home. Especially the bishop when he came for his visitation and the confirmation of our youth. She also played a leading role in the religious life of the village. She could play the organ and she knew all of the hymns. In addition, she ensured that the missionaries would come each year to provide a month long intensive religious education program. Her life was not easy. At the end she endured the same persecution as the other villagers. Like many of the women of our village, she lost her husband and had to flee her homeland. She died in Heidenheim at the age of ninety-one years.



Nikolaus Herold (1883-1947)

Many memories of our homeland are closely tied to the name of this man. He did not have an easy life on this earth. His wife died early at the birth of their fourth child and he raised the children on his own. All four children reached adulthood and made something of themselves in very difficult times. They were reliable industrious people. In spite of the hardships he faced, he ordered his life in such a way as to be pleasing to God. He gave untold hours of his life to the service of the church. He led worship whenever there was no priest available. He held singing evenings in his home for the young people and he served as the prayer leader during processions. When it was necessary, he also offered the prayers when a fellow villager was on their last journey to the cemetery. The most important thing about him was not that he preached God's Word, but he also lived it. Not even in the Rudolfsgnad concentration camp did he waver for a moment in his faith. He was a model, pillar and guide in our most difficult time. In the fall of 1947 our Lord took him home. Along with his neighbors, he shared in our hard times and our lack of freedom right up to the end.

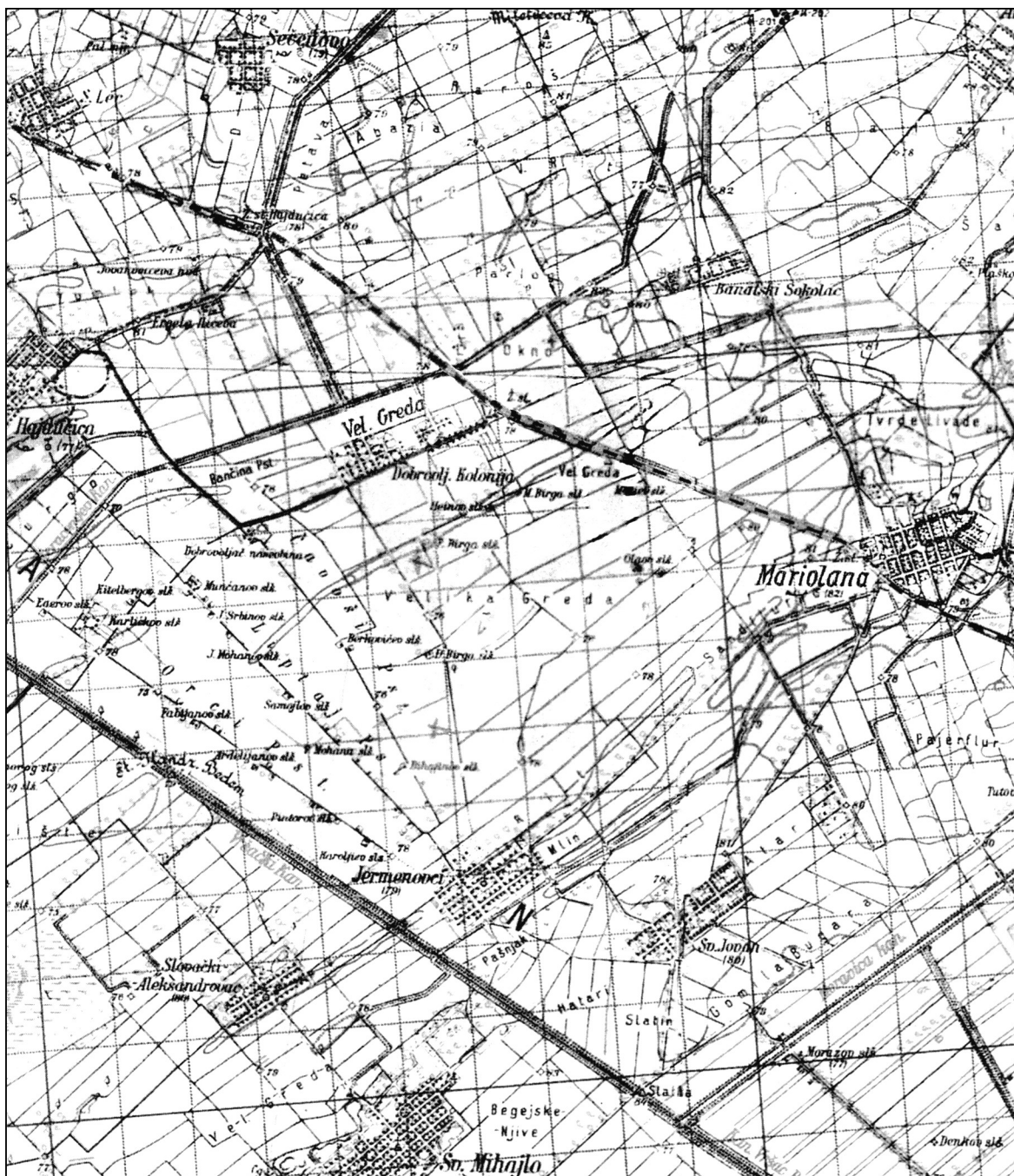


The village and its surrounding area. Cut from a 1910 map. Scale: 1 cm = 1.9 km

D-Szálmora = Deutsch-Stamora, G. Gaj = Gross Gaj, Györgyháza = Georgshausen, Hajdusicza = Heideschütz, Ilancsa = Ilandscha

Ó-lecz = Alt Letz, Szécsenyfalva = Setchanfeld, Urményháza = Urmehausen, Zichyfalva = Zichydorf

Map is not part of the original German book. From the Department of Cartography, Eötvös University, Budapest, Hungary



The village and the surrounding area. Cut from a 1933 map. Scale: 1 cm = .95 km

Vel. Greda = Georgshausen

Mariolana = Zichyrdorf



Our Church

A prayer house with a bell tower. Sketched by Heinz Birg. The new rulers of Yugoslavia tore everything down; other buildings now stand on the site.

WIDE LANES AND PRETTY HOUSES DECORATED THE VILLAGE



When the road was dry it was great for bicycling.



A scene after a rainy day.



There were sidewalks made with burned bricks that were laid alongside of the houses. They kept your shoes dry after rain as you went from house to house like these Birg girls. From left to right: Trude, Lenne and Thea.



Winter always provided a lot of snow.



The villa of Konrad and Maria Birg and their family.



Michael Wüst's stallion mounted by his son Josef. Peter and Elisabeth Niedermayer's farmhouse is in the background.



The general store owned and operated by Elisabeth and Heinrich Ebner. Fritz Birg is seated on the bicycle.



Almost the entire population of the village is gathered in front of the Karl Muhr *Wirtshaus* during the annual festival commemorating the consecration of the church.

The Filips girls: Rosi, Anna, Lissi and Kathi, along with Joschi Mess reclining at their feet.



Some of the village's local beauties amidst a flower garden were standing there ready for the photographer. From left to right: Kathi Herold, Maria Hügel, Maria Gerger, Maria Pfeifer, Resi Reiter and Anna Gerger.

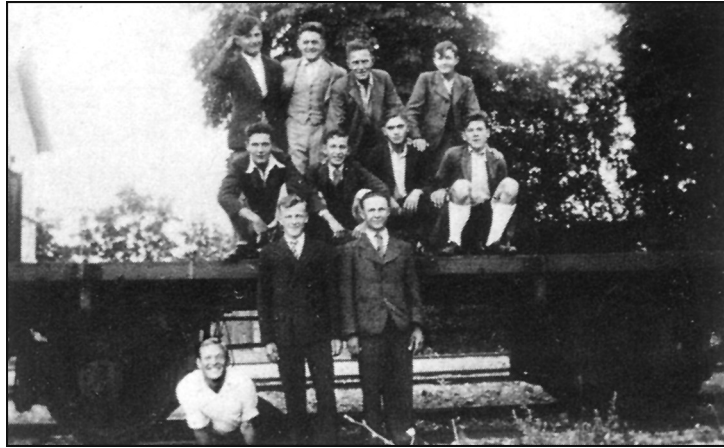


Some girls out for their Sunday walk are escorted by Hans Bogner; home on leave from the army. From left to right: Kathi Kiefer, Traudi Müller, Kathi Herold and Lissi Loch.



Visiting with the smaller occupants of the pigpen. From left to right: Magdalena Löchel and Lissi Loch with little Hilda in her arms.

Older teenage boys on a Sunday walk at the railway station.



Ever since 1894 the railway station was our gateway to the world. Meet some of our village residents and railway officials.



Young people leaving to go to work in Germany.

April of 1942: a sad day at the railway station. The men of the village are saying their final farewells as they leave for military service.



This is the only known picture of our cemetery. The crypt of the Birg family is in the center.



At the entrance to the Loch Wirtshaus you could expect to meet happy young people.

THE BRICKWORKS CAST AN IMAGE OVER THE LIFE OF THE VILLAGE



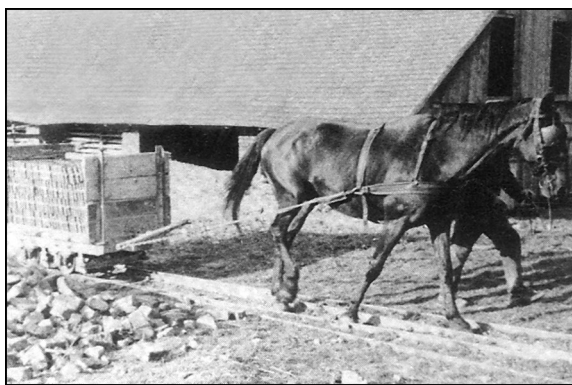
Clay was hauled by horse and wagon from the deep pits that were dug to obtain it.



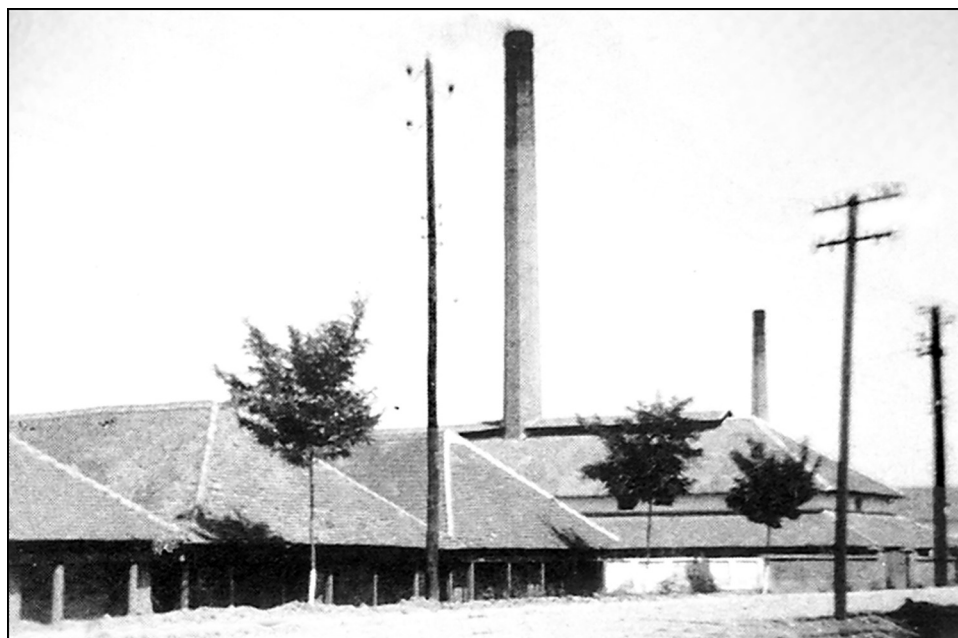
The heavy work of loading the clay was still done by hand.



Ponds were created when the pits filled with water. This one is at Nikolaus Birg's. It was highly valued for recreation, as it is by his son Ernst in this picture.



The finished product. The burned bricks were transported by horse and wagon.



The two big ring kilns in operation.

FARMERS OUT WORKING IN THE FIELDS



The wheat cutters are in their element. Here we have Franz Birg with his cutters. Standing to the right (with the gun) is the field guard, called a *Kornik*.



Franz Herold with his sister Kathi and Stefan Niedermayer with his sister Lentschi; sitting on the sheaf in the foreground is Michael Frass.

Seeding was an important undertaking because he who does not sow cannot harvest. This is a seeder and its crew in operation. In the background is the silhouette of the village with a brick kiln.



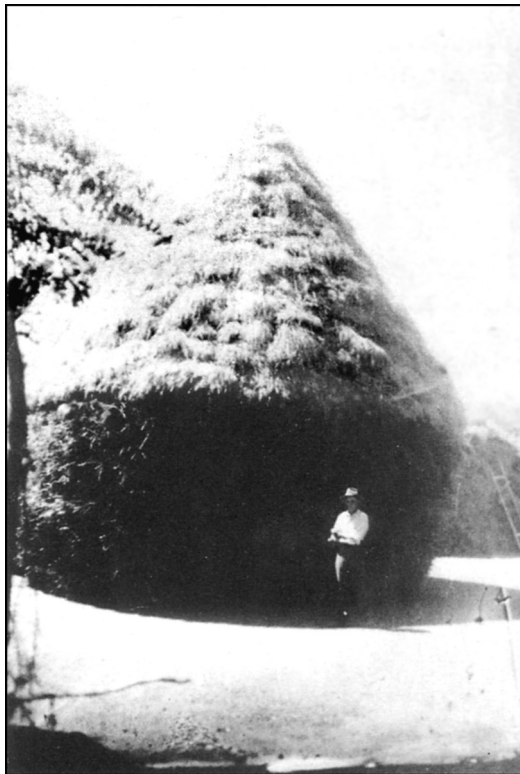
A threshing machine is in operation on the Adam Birg farm. The machine belonged to the Birg brothers.



A team of horses harvesting with a self-binding reaper. Those pictured are all members of the Johann Niedermayer family.



The hay was stacked higher and higher by the men from one height to another in order to reach the top.



Fritz Birg is standing in front of a completed stack of wheat sheaves.



The Post Master, Josef Illiewich, extracts honey in his garden; another form of harvesting.

Wheat fields as far as you can see and cornfields that are like dark green forests. The two people in the pictures are Wilhelm Birg and his wife Anna.



A view of the gristmill taken in the 1960s. To the left front is the now dilapidated home of the former mill owners, Georg and Karola Birg. The building on the right is where the master miller, Nikolaus Gerger, lived.

THE FARMER AND HIS HORSES



In addition to the beautiful wheat fields, the pride and joy of the farming families were their domestic animals. This picture above is of the Johann Niedermayer family. Mrs. Etta Löchel and her sons, Konrad (on horseback) and Erich, came for a visit. The man in the background on the left, behind the fence, is the barber Jakob Bies.



Konrad Birg mounted on his stallion.



The family of Konrad Wingert with two splendid horses of the Nonius breed. In the left front is a motorized machine for removing kernels from corn cobs and on the right is the view of their house with the roof over the walk way.

The family of Peter Kirchner in their yard; the oldest son, Michael, is missing from the picture.



Two magnificent horses outside the stable of Andreas Wingert. From left to right: the grandmother Eva Wingert, the wife of Andreas and grandson Jakob. The grandson Josef is sitting on the horse.



The family of Heinrich Ebner senior in their yard. From left to right: his wife Anna, himself, daughter Helen, daughter-in-law Elisabeth and son Jakob. The two little children are Frieda who is standing and Jakob is on the horse.



SOLDIERS IN THE VARIOUS ARMYS



Three of these brave fighters in the Imperial Austro-Hungarian Army are from our village: Philipp Deutsch senior, Ladislaus Halmaschan and Jakob Bajerle.



Georg Siller, a highly decorated Imperial Austro-Hungarian *Hussar* [cavalryman].



Michael Wüst (with the telephone) with the Imperial Austro-Hungarian Artillery in the First World War.



These men served in the Royal Yugoslavian Army. Left to right, standing: Leopold Bajerle, Konrad Wingert, Georg Bajerle and Josef Hügel; seated: Johann Milowan, Johann Kiefer, Anton Passul, Christof Hirsch and Todor Halmaschan; reclining: Peter Herold and Jakob Jakob.



They were called up to dig anti-tank traps before the war broke out in 1941: Toni Müller, Adi Faul, Jakob Brennessel and Joschka Kaludjer.



Johann Paul, a member of the Royal Yugoslavian Guard (sitting in the middle).

The following pictures show men from our village who served in the units of the German Army during the Second World War.



Hans Loch as a Junior Squad Leader in the SS-Division "Prinz Eugen" (left).



Second Lieutenant Michael Birg in the SS-Division "Prinz Eugen" (right).



Fritz Merle as a Corporal in the SS-Division "Totenkopf."



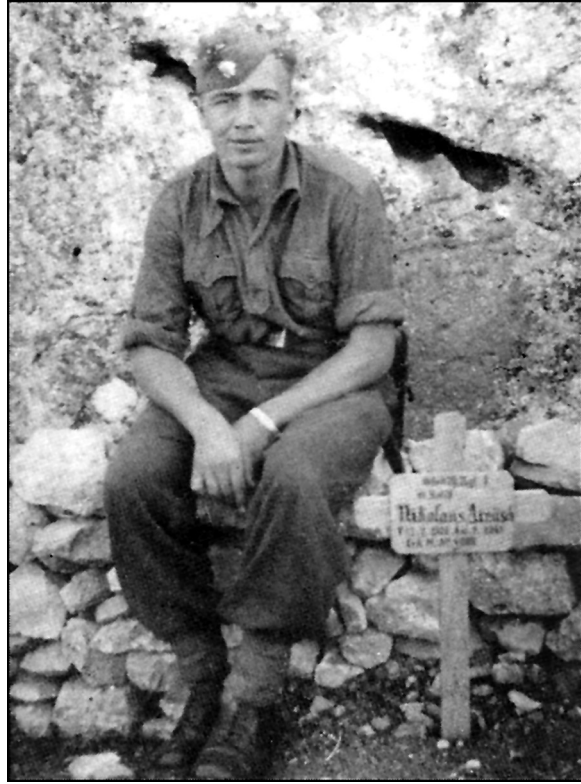
The always charming and well disposed Toni Filips (Busch).



This picture shows the terrible results of the war. The second from the right is Fritz Birg.



This picture shows the extent to which the Second World War took over the lives of our families, in the family of Michael Bogner only his wife is not wearing a uniform.



The war claimed a high price in lost lives. The Mountaineer Franz Wist sitting at the grave of his friend Nikolaus Arnusch who was killed in action.



The tragedy of the war cannot be hidden. Josef Birg, one of our fellow villagers is buried in one of these six graves alongside of the road.

THE CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE, SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN



Our school children pictured with their teachers, the Petris (a married couple) in 1934. One wonders whether those who survived the atrocities that were unleashed against them would be able to recognize everyone today.



During the years of the Second World War there was a Kindergarten in the village so the mothers could work in the fields. The Kindergarten teacher was Elisabeth Oberle. She was assisted by Elisabeth Herold, Katharina Herold and Katharina Arnusch; the Fritzin also helped them. [Hans Arnusch is in the right picture, standing second from the right and up front. Fritzin is a woman's nickname.]



The children are watching a comic theatrical presentation with rapt attention. Not everyone seems to be enjoying it.



Our school children in their last year at home. The school building can be seen in the background.

THE CHRISTKINDL CAME AT CHRISTMAS



Before Christmas Eve the *Christkindl* were already about their task since the afternoon. Here they are in the house of the Hans Arnusch family.



Christmas with the Friedrich Birg family. From left to right: his wife Eva, daughter Anna, himself, son Fritz with his wife Anna and their children: Evelin and Siglinde. The year is 1940.

BAPTISM, CONFIRMATION, WEDDINGS AND BRIDES AND GROOMS



The godparents: Resi Niedermayer and Josef Wüst are with the infant Hildegard Stemper at the entrance to the church.



The Marian Maidens in action with Mrs. Karola Birg supervising.



The big event: Confirmation! The godparents stood behind the confirmands. Among the men on the left we recognize Matthias Eisler, Toni Moor and Andreas Merle. The children who were being confirmed lined up between the bell tower and the prayer house.



This wedding occurred on August 17, 1940; it was between Karola Birg and Fritz Löchel. In the picture on the left there is Walter Birg with Anni Faul, Josef Birg with Liesi Muhr, Josef Illiewich with Liesi Hirsch and Ernst Birg with Anna Wingert, then Madi Faul from Zichydorf and all the way back is Henrietta Birg and Hans Birg. In the picture on the right, walking before the married couple, are Günter and Agathe Birg, Trude Birg and Erich Löchel, Dittmar Birg with Frieda Hirsch, Konrad Löchel with Cecilie Faul and also Helmut Birg.



The wedding of Lorenz Müller and his bride Maria Lefor. The wedding took place on August 19, 1937.



One of the biggest wedding celebrations in the village. It lasted three full days. The married couple is Anna and Josef Birg.

This is the wedding party for the marriage of the carpenter Toni Moor and his bride Magdalena Riess from Modosch. To the left is the father of the groom, Heinrich Moor, and beside him is the long time village mayor, Peter Hirsch senior. The married couple is in the center of the picture.



Matthias Eisler walks his bride, Maria Oberle, to the church to get married.



A wedding during the last years at home. The bride is Theresia, the oldest daughter of Kasper Awender, the groom is from Setschanfeld; on the left and standing are the two sisters of the bride, Elisabeth and Maria; standing between them is Joschi Passul.



Married couples
through the years.

Michael Wüst and
his bride Anna
Fochler; they were
married in 1919 (left
picture).



Konrad Löchel and
Etta Jungert are seen
in the picture to the
right; they were
married in 1927.



Two years later,
Jakob Brennessel and
Franziska Rindje
exchanged marriage
vows (left picture).



Andreas Merle and
Katharina Killenberg
were married in 1940.
Notice how fashions
changed over the
years (right picture).

THE GERMANS ARE HERE, UNIFORMS FOR EVERYONE



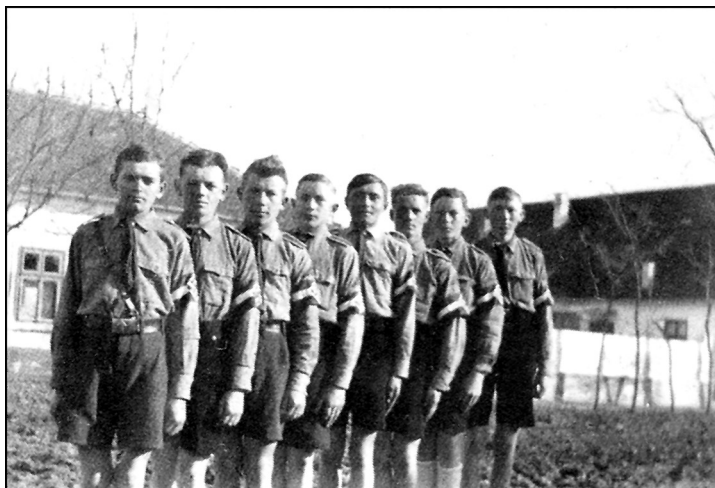
Men wearing their black German military uniforms for the first time. From left to right: Franz Jakob, Anton Moor and Peter Hirsch junior.



Even the children were put into uniform. This is Philipp Deutsch as a member [a *Pimpf*] of the youngest age group in the German Youth.



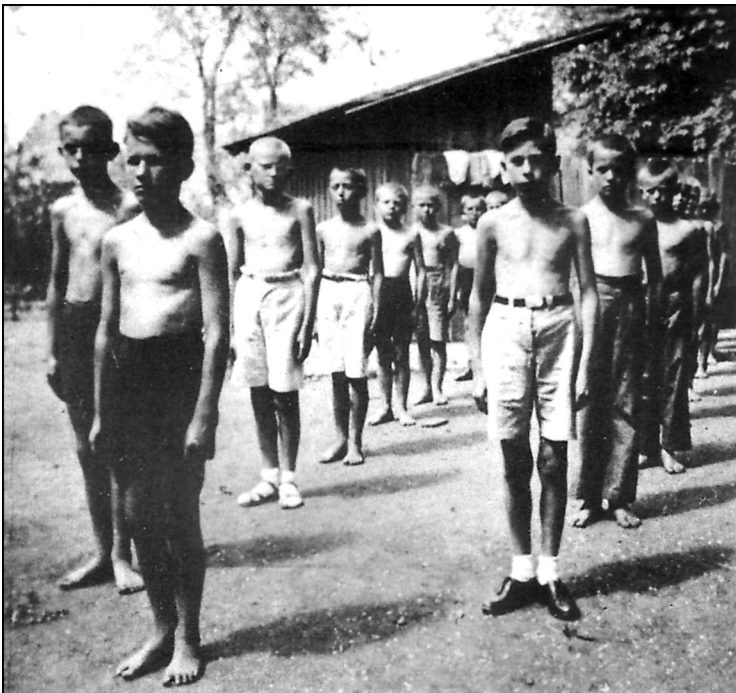
Three girls in dress uniforms. From left to right: Theresia Jakob, Rosi Filips and Aplon Mess.



Members of the village youth group. From left to right: Josef Reiter, Hans Remilong, Konrad Siller, H. Becker from Alt Letz, Josef Milowan, Josef Remilong, Fillip Lach-Bies and Jakob Borschowa.



The majority of the adolescent girls of the village in their nice sports uniforms.



Younger boys had to report and participate in sports activities.



Josef Wingert in the uniform of the Labor Organization of the Banat.

GAMES, SPORT, FREE TIME

The football team [soccer team] in the *Hutweide* before a game. Standing, from left to right: Hans Loch (referee), Josef and Mato Illiewich, Franz Herold, Michael Kirchner and Toni Bies; kneeling: Hans Hügel, Sepp Frass and Toni Ölberg; lying: Toni Filips, Franz Berger and Franz Wist.



An abundant hunt was always the pride of the sharpshooter.



The hunts were big events in the late fall and in the early winter. Notice that there were ladies in the hunting parties.

Great emphasis was placed on participation in the *Trachtenfest* in Neusatz. They were arranged by the Swabian German Cultural Association. [The *Trachtenfest* was an event where local folk costumes were worn.]



Nikolaus Birg with his wife.



Josef Birg with Maria Birg (a very nice *Kerwei* dress).



Elisabeth Müller and Elisabeth Wüst (in white dresses).



In the garden at the spa in Vrnjačka Banja: Elisabeth Müller, Magdusch Schütz and Uncle Johann Schütz.



Near the pond owned by Josef Faul there was a fenced swimming pool that was only for the experts. A group of young Birgs are having fun in the pool.



Here a happy bowling party poses for a photograph. Standing, from left to right: Maria Birg, Mädi Birg, Karola Gulding, Toni Birg and Wendelin Balli; sitting, from the left: Stephan Petri, Magdalena Faul, Arnold Heim, Karola Birg and Josef Birg.



Wilhelm Birg, who studied mechanical engineering in Mannheim, in full dress as a corps member.



There were automobiles in the village, even though the streets and roads were not very good. Here is Nikolaus Birg with his son Rudolf and daughter Adele in their automobile (above).

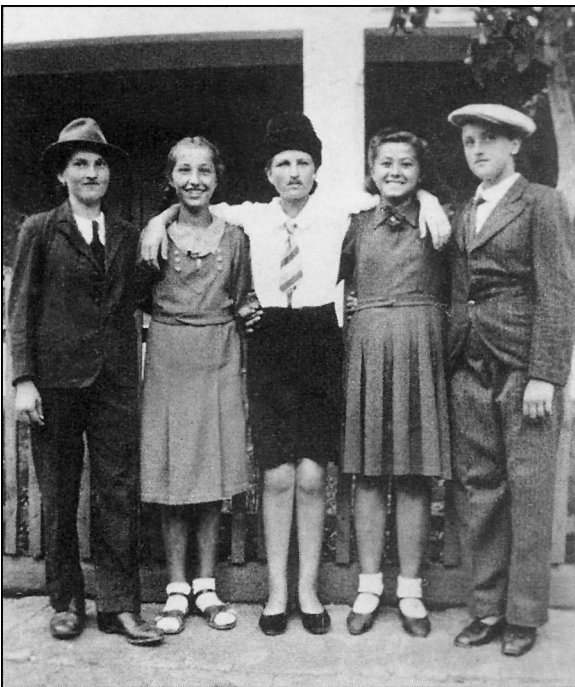


The automobile of the Konrad Birg family [top right].



Toni Moor roared through the district on this motorcycle. Toni Jakob is seated in front; behind him is Richard Moor and Erna Jakob.

Blind Franz with his guests. He played the harmonica and they danced late into the night.



Some girls from the village theatrical group.



The girls were always happy about the sleigh riding parties. From left to right: Anna Wingert, Resi Jakob, Anna Selesch, Elisabeth Armbuster and Elisabeth Wüst.

**IN LATE FALL, THE KIRCHWEIH (KERWEI) FESTIVAL FOR THE
CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH**



A church consecration festival in the 1930s; the musicians are in front.



The decorated hat and the wine bottle were the status symbols of the *Kerwei* Boys. Sitting in front on the left is Hans Hirsch and on the right is Nikolaus Loch.



Michael Birg bought the *Kerwei* bouquet for his young wife, Elisabeth.



In the year of the war, in 1940, there was only a modest festival. In spite of that, the youth were still happy and in good cheer.



This was the church consecration festival in 1938.

RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE AT THE PASSING OF TIME



Franz Wüst, the village mayor, and his family in a picture taken in 1900.



Margarethe and Jakob Bies with their daughter Traudl, a picture taken in 1930.



The Loch family in 1925, the owners of the *Wirtshaus*.



The family of the former village mayor, Peter Hirsch, circa 1923. Standing, from left to right are sons: Nikolaus, Hans, Jakob and Peter, in front is daughter Magdalena [also his wife, Katharina, nee Prunkl].



The couple, Gertrud and Johann Friedlein with son Nikolaus in 1935.



The family of Susanne and Peter Birg on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary in 1928. Standing are the seven sons with their wives; from the left: Nikolaus and Theresia, Peter junior and Eleonore, Friedrich and Eva, Georg and Karola, Adam and Rosina, Konrad and Maria, Michael and Irma; behind the wedding couple stands the oldest grandchildren; from the left: Georg (called Little Gyuri), Georg (called Tall Gyuri), Anton and Michael; sitting in front are the grandchildren: Otto, Fritz, Anna, Josef, Karola, Emil, Hedwig, Nikolaus and Walter.



A family picture from 1932. Standing, from left to right: Jakob Keipl, Josef Wenzel, Matthias Wenzel, Markus Babilon and Philipp Bies; sitting, from left to right: Magdalena Keipl, Elisabeth Wenzel, Barbara Babilon and Anna Bies; children from the left: Leni and Resi Keipl, Resi and Anna Seger.



The last house built with pounded clay. In the small baskets, the women are carrying clay for pounding into walls.



Various families from the village are represented. This picture was taken during a visit by one of the daughters of Kasper Wingert, he had six daughters and one son; two of the daughters came from America for a visit.



The volunteer firemen; the commanders are recognized by the white cords on their caps.

The family of Hans Hirsch.
[From left to right:
Theresia, Peter, Magdalena
and Hans, circa 1942.]



After the Sunday church service in front of the prayer house. From left to right: Hedwig Birg, Anna Birg (Fritz's wife), Anna Birg (Wilhelm's wife), Anna Eisler with her son Richard, Anna Birg (wife of young Fritz) with daughter-in-law Anna (Josef's wife).



Homemakers ironing, from left to right: Katharina Hirsch, Magdalena Hirsch and daughter Frieda [Katharina's daughter].



Young unmarried women from the village. From left to right: Anna Bies, Barbara Enderle, Sali Brenner and Maria Wenzel.



Konrad Kirchner and Franz Reiter. Both were killed in action.



Young men from the village. Standing, from left to right: Franz Wist, Peter Remilong, Karl Muhr, Franz Herold, Nikolaus Arnusch, Peter Kirchner, Michael Kirchner and Matthias Engst; in front: Mato Illiewich, Stefan Niedermayer, Josef Illiewich, Hans Bogner and Nikolaus Winter.



Young farmers who attended an agricultural course in the Batschka. On the far right stands Michael Frass, beside him is Lorenz Müller and in the middle sits Nikolaus (Niki) Birg.



Students at the School of Home Economics in Neusatz. Sitting on the far left is Elisabeth Wüst and standing second from the left is Elisabeth Müller.

APPENDIX

Additional information and pictures not in the German edition.

CROSS REFERENCE FOR GERMAN CITY AND VILLAGE NAMES*			
Old Names		Modern Names and Location	
German	Hungarian	Romania	Serbia
Alisbrunn	Alibunár		Alibunar
Alt Letz	Ólecz		Stari Lec
Apfeldorf	Torontálalmás		Jabuka
Banater-Brestowatz	Beresztócz		Banatski Brestovac
Banlok	Bánlak	Banloc	
Batschka Topola	Bács-Topolya		Bačka Topola
Betschkerek / Grossbetschkerek	Nagybecskerek		Zrenjanin
Detta	Detta	Deta	
Deutsch-Etschka	Németécska		Ečka
Deutsch-Stamora	Németsztamora	Stamora Germană	
Deutsch-Zerne	Német Czernya		Srpska Crnja
Elemer / Deutsch-Elemer	Németelemér		Elemir
Elisenheim	Nagyersébetlak		Belo Blato
Ernsthausen	Ernöháza		Banatski Despotovac
Franzfeld	Ferenchalom		Kačarevo
Georgshausen	Györgyháza		Velika Greda
Glogau	Galagonyas		Glogonj
Grabatz	Grabacz	Grabati	
Gross Gaj	Nagy Gaj		Veliki Gaj
Grossjetscha	Nagyjécsa	Ieccea Mare	
Hatzfeld	Zsombolya	Jimbolia	
Heideschütz	Hajdusicza		Hajdučica
Hellburg	Világos	Șiria	
Ilandscha	Iloncz		Ilandža
Karlsdorf	Nagykárolyfalva		Banatski Karlovac
Kathreinfeld	Katalinfalva		Ravni Topolovac
Kleinjetscha	Kisjecsa	Ieccea Mică	
Klek	Klekk		Klek
Konak			Konak
Kriva Bara / Markowitschewo	Újfalva		Markovićevo
Kubin	Kevevára		Kovin
Kudritz	Kudric		Gudurica
Lazarfeld	Lázárföld		Lazarevo
Margita	Nagymargita		Margita
Marienfeld	Mariafölte	Teremia Mare	
Modosch	Módós		Jaša Tomić
Morawitza	Moravicz	Moravita	
Neusatz	Újvidék		Novi Sad

German	Hungarian	Romania	Serbia
Ostern	Kiskomlós	Comloşul Mic	
Otelek	Ótelek	Otelec	
Pantschowa	Pancsova		Pančevo
Pardan	Párdány		Medja
Partos	Pártos	Partoş	
Peterwardein	Pétervárad		Petrovaradin
Rudolfsgnad	Rezsöhaza		Knićanin
Sankt Georgen an der Bega	Bégaszentgyörgy		Žitište
Sankt Hubert	Szenthubert		Banatsko Veliko Selo
Sankt-Johann	Szentjános		Barice
Setschanfeld	Szécsénfalva		Dužine
Sigmundfeld	Zsigmondfalva		Lukićevo
Stefansfeld / Stephansfeld	Istvánföld		Krajišnik
Temeswar	Temesvár	Timisoara	
Titel	Titel		Titel
Triebswetter	Nagyösz	Tomnatic	
Tschanad	Csanád	Cenad	
Uiwar / Neuburg an der Bega	Ujvár	Uivar	
Ürmenhausen	Ürményháza		Jermenovci
Weisskirchen	Fehértemplom		Bela Crkva
Werschetz	Versecz		Vršac
Zichydorf	Zichyfalva		Plandište
*List is not all inclusive and does not include all spelling variations.			



The Birg brothers' threshing machine at work on the Adam Birg farm.

THE LONGTIME MAYOR: PETER HIRSCH (1884-1963)

Peter served as mayor of Georgshausen for a total of seventeen years. As mayor, he received a salary of one thousand *Dinars* per year, but most of this money was required for entertaining dignitaries. He also operated a small farm that consisted of four *Joch* or about six acres. He was born in Georgshausen on August 28, 1884 and is the fourth and youngest child of Karl Hirsch and Magdalena Dormuth. The Hirsch family came to Georgshausen from Zichydorf in about 1858; before living in Zichydorf they lived in Deutsch-Etschka.

Peter was kind hearted and a village favorite for mayor. The position of mayor was an elected office, although only the men were allowed to vote up until 1942. The Serb villagers also like him, as mentioned previously, he was one of the few men who were allowed to return home from Werschetz after the men were arrested in November of 1944. Some local Serbs convinced the Partisans that he had engineering skills and was therefore a very valuable individual. The root of this gesture on the part of the Serbs probably goes back to the beginning of the German occupation when the local Serbs sought Peter's help in stopping the German soldiers from harassing the Serb women in The Colony. Peter took their concerns to heart and did indeed use his influence with the German authorities and order was restored. After the Partisans took over the village in 1944 they eventually searched the homes under the pretense of looking for German soldiers and various other excuses. During their search through Peter's house they discovered his low quality tobacco in the attic, which was actually dried cabbage leaves. Nevertheless, low quality or not, they confiscated it! Later, the local Serbs stopped by and asked if everything was all right. Not wanting any trouble, Peter said yes, everything was fine. However, his young granddaughter Helga did not see it that way; she spoke up and told them about the stolen tobacco. They knew that Peter was an avid cigar smoker, so in an unusual gesture of generosity, in view of the political conditions, the local Serbs replaced the cabbage leaf tobacco with real tobacco and food!

When the remainder of the villagers were sent away in the spring of 1945, Peter stayed behind, but not his wife. The Serbs quartered him in a stable and each day they escorted him to work in the village office. By 1946 he had grown so lonely for his wife that he requested to join her in Rudolfsgnad. His request was granted, unfortunately, by time he arrived there she had already passed away. In 1947 he convinced the authorities to allow his daughter in law, Theresia Merle Hirsch, and her son Peter, to leave the Molidorf concentration camp and join him in Rudolfsgnad. After Rudolfsgnad was closed, Peter appealed to the Yugoslavian government for permission to join his son Nikolaus in Canada. After convincing the Yugoslavian authorities that he was in poor health and a burden to the state, they allowed him leave in 1951, along with his grandson Peter Bajerle. They settled in Grand Forks, British Columbia where Nikolaus was living. The following year Theresia Merle Hirsch and her son Peter joined the family in Grand Forks. Peter Hirsch died in Grand Forks at the age of seventy-nine.

Replacing the stolen tobacco was certainly an extraordinary event for those times and it indicates how much the villagers respected Peter Hirsch. From what we have read previously and the fact that his wife was not allowed to stay with him in Georgshausen is an indication of how precarious the political situation was. Undoubtedly, the Serbs who gave him the tobacco would have been severely punished if caught. During this time even the Serbs who did not obey the rules of the new communist state were sometimes executed.



The Peter Hirsch family in 1935. From the left: Hans, Theresia, nee Merle, holding Magdalena, Peter junior, Katharina, nee Prunkl, Magdalena, Peter senior and Jakob. Missing is Nikolaus who immigrated to Canada in 1924.



Jakob and Rosalia Hirsch family, circa 1943. From the left: Jakob, Jakob junior, Elisabeth and Rosalia, nee Arnusch.



Peter Hirsch, 1915.



Children of Peter and Anna Hirsch: Helga and Erika, circa 1944.



Peter Hirsch junior and his bride Anna Glass from Setschanfeld; 1940.



The village church and prayer house.



Andreas Arnusch in the Royal Yugoslavian Army. He later served in the German army. After the war he settled in Keenesburg, Colorado.



Andreas and Katharina Arnusch family, circa 1944. Katharina is holding Hans, Nikolaus is in the middle.



Hans and Rosa (Anna) Arnusch family, circa 1943. Children, from the left: Adam, Katharina and Theresia.



Standing on the left is the sister of Katharina Arnusch, Regina Prungl, who is holding Hans Arnusch; Nikolaus Prungl is standing on the right. In the wagon: Nikolaus Arnusch is standing and Regina's father is holding Katharina Prungl. Hans and Nikolaus Arnusch are sons of Andreas and Katharina from house no. 97. Circa 1943.



Josef and Katharina Borschowa family, circa 1908, Georgshausen. Left to right: Elisabeth, Katharina, nee Czagler/Zagler, Leopold, Josef and Magdalena. Leopold and Magdalena immigrated to Canada; Leopold in 1910 and Magdalena after the Second World War. Leopold is in his military uniform. From November of 1906 to October of 1909 he was gunner and cook in the k. u. k. Fortress Artillery Battalion 2, 4 Field Company; headquartered in Temeswar. He attained the rank of Gunner First Class and received the Military Jubilee Cross. After his discharge he was a reservist in the k. u. k. Fortress Artillery Battalion 2, 1 Field Company. The Borschowa family emigrated from Lorraine to the Banat in 1770. About 1840 they moved from Stefansfeld to Zichydorf and then to Georgshausen at time of it's founding. They were one of the few families in the village who were French descendents (originally the family name was Bourgeois).



Adam Borschowa senior and his wife Theresia; 1930s.



Adam and Apollina Borschowa (Sarcev) with their daughter Brigitte, circa 1943. Before and during the Second World War, Adam was a freighter boat captain on the Danube and other rivers in the region.



Peter and Maria Borschowa family in St Paul, Minnesota, June 10, 1902. From the left in the back row: Carl, Magdalena, Josef Faul from Deutsch-Stamora and Peter junior; front row: Peter, Maria junior, Adam in front of Maria junior and Maria, nee Hirsch. This family immigrated to Canada in 1901.



Jakob Hügel in the 29th Infantry Regiment, 1905.



An early resident of the village, Magdalena Poling, nee Amon, with her husband, Heinrich Poling. Magdalena was born in Georgshausen on March 26, 1857. After getting married she lived in Zichydorf.



Right: Gertrud and Josef Schwellinger. Gertrud, nee Bajerle, was born in Georgshausen on September 17, 1879. In about 1906 these two immigrated to Canada.



The 50th wedding anniversary for Matthias and Regina Hügel; 1929. Front row, starting fourth from the left: Regina Hügel, nee Kleisinger, Matthias Hügel, Anna? Jakob, nee Hügel, Katharina? Thazer, nee Hügel; middle row, from the left: Josef Sepi Hügel and his wife Katharina, Adam Hügel and his wife Maria, nee Sachs, Elonka Hügel and her husband Johann Hügel; the members of the Hügel Band are in the back row, on far right in the back is Josef Hügel, the band leader. Three children of Matthias and Regina are not in the photograph: Jakob, Rosalia and Matthias had already immigrated to Canada.



Relaxing with friends. In the center is Adam Hügel, born in Georgshausen on June 3, 1893.



The First World War. Standing is Matthias (Matz) Hügel, born in Georgshausen on April 9, 1898 . He immigrated to Canada.



Adam Hügel in the First World War.



Josef Hügel and his wife Katharina, nee Zopf.



Johann Hugel, born March 15, 1901, and Elonka, nee White.

Ministerium der Streitkräfte
UdSSR Quarantäne

Militäreinheit beendet am 30.7.48 intern
Ehemaliger Kriegsgefangener

Feldpost-Nr. 81 948

3. AUG 1949

geboren am 1914 ist aus dem

entlassen worden und befindet sich auf der Heimreise

nach Passau, Bayern

Verpflegt bis einschl.: 7.8.49

Kommandeur der Einheit der Sowjetarmee

Feldpost-Nr. 81 948

1 Kleid

OTTO NOACK, LEIPZIG M/195

Magdalena Hirsch's release pass from the Soviet Union. After three and a half years of hard work she received a pair of shoes for payment. Unfortunately, they were both left shoes! Soon after her release she immigrated to Canada. Magdalena is pictured on pages 265, 266 and 271.



The grandparents Peter and Katharina Hirsch with their grandchildren Peter and Magdalena Hirsch, circa 1940. Notice the vines hanging from the gutter, their purpose was mentioned in chapter on housing.

THE VILLAGE TODAY

Looking down *Haupt Strasse* (Main Street) toward the railroad tracks.
Photographed by László Rudolf.



Kreuz Gasse, the Cross Street.
Photographed by László Rudolf.



The gristmill, formerly owned by Georg and Karola Birg.
Photographed by Glenn Schwartz.





The Birg brickworks. Top photograph by Eugene Flichel. Left photograph by Glenn Schwartz.



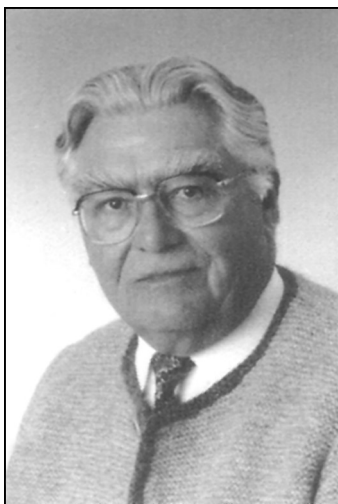
The site of the former cemetery. Photographed by László Rudolf.



The site of the former church. Photographed by Sors Bona.

END OF APPENDIX

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Josef Wüst was born in 1925; he spent his early childhood at his parent's farm in Georgshausen, Banat. He attended high school in the nearby city of Werschetz, a district and educational center. During this time (1941) war broke out with the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This led to severe consequences for this student in the high school: The language of instruction changed from Serbian to German. His graduation from high school was followed by his enrollment in Teacher's College in St. Pölten in 1945. This was followed by a short term in the military and then he spent time as a prisoner of war.

The results of all of this were the loss of his homeland and becoming a stateless person. He served as a public school teacher in a camp school for refugee children who had lived through the war and had been driven out of their homelands.

After some detours he began his university studies in the fall of 1948 in the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Vienna. He majored in History, Psychology and Journalism. Following many years as a working student he was granted the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, awarded to him at Christmas in 1954. The topic of his dissertation was: "The Beginnings of Book Publishing and Newspaper Publishing in the Banat."

The major focus of his career was activities related to being an editor for a publishing house specializing in economics. In 1985, following thirty-five years as an economics journalist, he retired. His last position in terms of his career was department head.

Josef Wüst is married and the father of four children, all of whom are married and have their own families. Currently there are fourteen grandchildren. He wrote this book, *Lost Homeland Georgshausen*, for his children, grandchildren and the former residents of the village of Georgshausen.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Henry Fischer was born in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada; he is the son of Swabian immigrant parents from Hungary. He has spent the past several decades researching his family origins and the history of his people. His research has resulted in the publication of three books: *Children of the Danube*, *The Pioneers* and *Strangers and Sojourners*; the last two are part of his ongoing Remember to Tell the Children trilogy. He has also done numerous other translations of material pertaining to the Danube Swabians. Henry is recognized as a historian and genealogist researcher by Danube Swabian organizations in North America, Germany and Hungary.

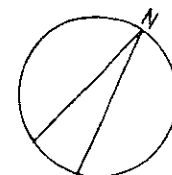
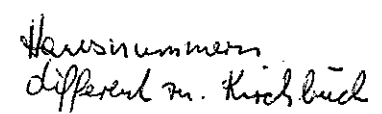
He resides in Oshawa, Ontario where he is enjoying the freedom of retirement and a life of over forty years together with his wife Jean, blessed with two sons, their wives and four grandchildren. He is a former Lutheran pastor and a co-founder of InterChurch Health Ministries, a graduate of the University of Western Ontario and Waterloo Lutheran Seminary.



A model showing the German section of the village as it was at the time of the Second World War. The model was built in the early 1990s. On the left is the train station, gristmill and Birg brickworks. On the far right is the cemetery. To the right of the cemetery is the site of The Colony.

GEORGSHAUSEN
DORFPLAN-ENTWURF V. HEROLD, JOHANN

DORFPLAN-ENTWURF V. HEROLD, JOHANN



GEORGSHAUSEN

FAMILIES WHO LIVED IN THE GERMAN HALF OF THE VILLAGE AT EASTER OF 1941.
ORIGINAL MAP CREATED BY JOHANN HEROLD & HANS LOCH, 1991
REDRAWN IN AUTOCAD BY RAY BORSCHOWA, MARCH, 2008
NOT TO SCALE

