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DAS BANAT UND DIE BANATER SCHWABEN

BAND 5

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STADTE UND DORFER

**BEITRÄGE ZUR SIEDLUNGSGESCHICHTE
DER DEUTSCHEN IMBANAT**

Redaktion
Elke Hoffmann
Peter-Dietmar Leber
Walter Wolf

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**HERAUSGEGEBEN VON DER
LANDSMANNSCHAFT DER BANATER SCHWABEN**

THE BANAT AND THE SWABIANS OF THE BANAT

Volume 5

CITIES, TOWNS AND VILLAGES

**Contributions to the Settlement History
of the Germans in the Banat**

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Dolatz

The village of Dolatz lies in the southern Banat, 40 kilometres away from Temesvár between the swampy Temes riverbed and the small towns of Detta and Tschakowa found along the Yugoslavian border. Dolatz already appears in the Papal Schedule of Tithes in 1332 as a Hungarian inhabited community with the name of *Dolch*. The inhabitants had to leave after 1526 or were massacred or carried off into slavery by the Turks if we can believe the old stories that were told about Dolatz. In the 17th Century the Hungarians were followed by Serbian settlers who built their houses along the drainage channel of the swamp. They made their living hunting and fishing and called their community *Dolie*. At the beginning of the 19 Century the Serbian inhabitants left the village and made room for the German colonists who had first arrived there in 1811. It is well known that in the autumn of 1811 German settlers took over the fields that were assigned to them but during the winter months they returned to the villages from which they had come but not before naming the new community Dolatz.

In 1812 the German settlers returned. They came from communities that were then in Torontal County from the villages of Stefansfeld, Lazarfeld, Etschka, Schuble and Setschan. But they were also from communities in Temes County from the villages of Gottlob, Sackelhausen, Neupetsch, Perjamosch, and Grabatz, as well as others. They moved into the 70 mostly ruined clay houses left behind by the Serbs. In 1812 there were 386 persons living in these 70 houses. In the year 1821 there were 120 houses in which 704 persons resided. In the year 1850 there were 272 houses in the community that now had a population of 1,714 Swabians. Forty years later when the One-Child-System prevailed there were only 1,274 German residents in the 300 houses. This trend spread so that in the year 1930 there were 1,075 Germans living in the village's 320 houses and in the year 1940 there were somewhat more Germans who numbered 1,2797. As a result of the war that was lost, some families fled, others were deported to forced labour in Russia, which was later followed by the deportation to the Baragan Steppes of more families so that in 1960 there were only 704 Germans left in Dolatz. This trend became even more prevalent with the migration of German families to the towns and cities in the vicinity as well as the large scale emigration to the Republic of Germany that set in so that by 1980 the German portion of the total population was reduced to 438 persons and in 1990 after the overthrow of Communism in Romania the German population sank to 290. In 1995 there were 21 inhabitants of German origin who still remained in this once flourishing Banat Swabian community of Dolatz.

In 1814 the village of Idwar with its twenty houses that had belonged to Dolatz was transferred to the Count and owner of the Domain of Banlok. The first community centre was built in 1859. The first notary was Josef Kwatschek. The present-day community centre was erected in 1894.

The Dolatz School and Church

The first school, which consisted of a single classroom, in which the language of instruction was German was opened in 1814. A second classroom was added in 1845. A

new school was built in 1856 that had three classrooms and two teachers' residences. This school building was renovated in 1906 and still maintains the same appearance to this day. The community could not handle the costs incurred in repairing the school as well as pay the salaries of the teachers and were forced to turn it over to the Hungarian government and the Dolatz school became a public school run by the State.

Picture
The Former Village School

It was at this time that Hungarian was introduced as the language of instruction. The first classes were taught by one of the farmer settlers named Leonhard Nikolaus. He was succeeded by the following teachers: Simon Schmellebeck, Dominik Dietrich and Johann Lang. When the second and third class were added they were taught by Johann Michelbach, Johann Engelmann, Daniel Basch, Gustav Gettmann, Ladislaus Marsch and Stefan Hess up until the turn of the century. During the time when the Hoffmanns, a married couple, taught the school consisted of six classes. An important personality in educational circles, Nikolaus Pauli, who was born and raised in Lovrin, taught in the German school in Dolatz that had expanded to seven grades in the 1930s. The youth of Dolatz have him to thank for the formation of a powerful football team. One of the teachers, Anni Pless, whose married name became Hartmann, was very well educated and to whom the youth of Dolatz are indebted for the many German folk songs and church hymns that she taught them. Another teacher Georg Ruck occupied himself with working with the Youth Association and the Maiden's Circle that were both sponsored by the Church.

The longest serving teacher was Viktor Fischer who was teaching in Dolatz at the time of the deportation to Russia and became part of it. Following his return from Russia he spent several years in Gilad before he was able to take up teaching in Dolatz again in 1951. He took over the upper grades and taught all of the subjects. He also was involved in many aspects of life in the village and was greatly loved by all. As the organist and choir director he provided the musical accompaniment at the services and assisted with various theatrical performances and musical events. The boarding school in Dolatz was established during the time that he taught here and was for the purpose of accommodating pupils from Gier, Tschawosch and Tolwad who were given the opportunity to attend the upper grades of our school because they were not available to them in their home communities. During the difficult years following the Second World War and the time of the Communist dictatorship the teachers in the German school in Dolatz gave a good account of themselves. In addition to their teaching responsibilities they were involved in organizing cultural and sports activities in the life of Dolatz. Theatricals, German folk songs and traditional dancing were taught by them in a very competent manner and often performed on the stage that the village had erected.

Teachers who taught in Dolatz after 1945 and helped to further the cultural life of the community were as follows in alphabetical order: Theresia Dengl, Sophia Dian, Edgar Elsner, Gertrude Fischer, Elfriede Fischer, L. Kaufmann, Adam Rattinger, Trude Schmidt, Barbara Schirado, Katharina Schag, Anton Tillschneider, Emmerich Wlk and

Anni Weber. Cultural life was given a significant push forward as a result of the impetus provided by Stefan Ludwig Schwarz, the influential author and journalist who was born here. He understood the ways of how to make people conscious of their German customs and to awaken a love for them and further their preservation. While at the same time he sought to deepen the understanding of the village youth in their unique Banat Swabian way of life and expand his literary readership. His influence and literary output had a special place in the overall culture activities of the Swabians in the Banat.

Picture
The Village Church
Consecrated in 1839

The cornerstone of the church was laid by Count Karacsony in 1837 and on March 10, 1839 it was consecrated. In that same year, the priest, Daniel Schwarz, began his pastorate in Dolatz that he carried out until his death in 1868. In his notes, records and memoirs we find interesting information such as the following assertions about the settlement of Dolatz and about the breed of men who were involved, "These Swabian settlers were not very well off in the first years here. We can get a glimpse of their poverty when we consider that two or three families had a single wooden plough between them along with one wagon. None of them had a decent threshing flail. Yet through their industriousness, frugality, consistency and perseverance they soon achieved a level of prosperity. Through their efforts the swamps around Dolatz were drained, the fields were cleared of trees, thickets and shrubs and the land was made arable. And the places where the water birds nested and the wolf found shelter there are now joyous meadows and magnificent fields that have taken over."

Two new steam powered mills with rotating trundles located at the edge of the village went into operation in 1895. A year later in 1896 the first artesian well was drilled that provided the village with good and healthy drinking water. At this time a large portion of the Dolatz forest was cleared and turned into cultivated land and the village sidewalks were paved.

There were men from Dolatz who were victims of the First World War and both of the large bells in the church tower were also victims of the conflict.

In 1925 after the First World War and the annexation of our part of the Banat by Romania there were 43 Romanian families from the vicinity of Knees that were resettled in Dolatz which up until then had been an entirely German village. Following the war an energetic economic and cultural life emerged. Agriculture was the primary industry but the work done and the products produced by the local tradesmen were also significant. Dolatz was well known for its tobacco growing. Tobacco grew quite well here and was of a high grade quality.

It was during this timeframe that saw the founding of most of the organizations in the community such as the Youth Association, Choral Society, Volunteer Fire Brigade, Sports Association and Reading Circle. The patroness of the Womens Association was

Mrs. Mehr, the wife of the Notary at the time. Her successors were Mrs. Rittinger and Mrs. Elizabeth Ness who was the president of the Maiden's Circle which was founded in 1935 that was concerned with the education and household skill training of the young German girls in Dolatz. In the passing of the years this organization played a significant and positive cultural role in the community and participated in the 200th anniversary celebration of the founding of the community on September 9, 1923 and made a special presentation on that occasion. This organization remained in existence up to the Second World War and during and after it but it took on the form of other organizations like most of the organizations also did as well until they were ordered to close down.

In the Second World War Dolatz suffered the loss of 41 men who were killed in action or remain missing. Following the end of the ill fated Second World War the life of the community fundamentally changed. A difficult time was ahead for the German inhabitants whose legal rights were taken away and their properties were confiscated. In January 1945 both men and women from Dolatz were dragged off to Russia to forced labour to rebuild what had been destroyed. Thirty-one of them never returned and died in Russian labour camps.

No sooner had the survivors returned from Russia when another hammer blow was directed primarily at the German population of the Banat. The result was the deportation of 95 inhabitants of Dolatz to the Baragan Steppes on June 13, 1951 where they were sentenced to work on making this wasteland into a fertile crop yielding territory. After five years of this forced labour and exile the families were permitted to return to their home villages although there were some exceptions that had to remain behind. As a result of the war and persecution that had followed, many families were separated so that those who were affected attempted to get an exit permit to rejoin their family members.

Specific quotas of the number of emigrants were set in an agreement between the German and Romanian governments resulting in great unrest, mistrust and hostility on the part of the German population. Everyone wanted to leave the sinking ship as soon as possible. No one wanted to be the last onboard. Some of our villagers were pressured to pay bribes to State officials - bribes that had to be paid in hard currency i.e. Deutsch Marks. As a result those who were granted exit visas in this way began their new life in Germany deeply in debt. In 1989 there were 373 inhabitants of Dolatz who emigrated to Germany. Among them were 98 who had crossed the border illegally in the face of possible death or imprisonment if apprehended. After 1990 there were an additional 291 from Dolatz who arrived in the Republic of Germany.

The distribution of the families from Dolatz who emigrated to Germany among the various German States is as follows: there are 361 living in Bavaria, 215 in Baden-Württemberg, 42 in Hesse, 40 in the Rhineland Palatinate and ten persons in other States.

The population of Dolatz spoke a Rhineland Franconian dialect.

According to information provided by the last German *Richter* of Dolatz, Johann Oberkirsch, the community covered an area of 6,050 *Joch* of which 3,388 *Joch* consisted

of arable land. In addition there were 250 *Joch* of meadow lands. In 1944 the following information with regard to the cultivated land was reported: wheat, oats and barley were grown on 2,800 *Joch*. Maize (corn) was grown on 2,300 *Joch*. Sunflowers on 300 *Joch*, tobacco on 120 *Joch*. Clover on 178 *Joch*. Hemp on 90 *Joch*. Sugar beets were grown on 60 *Joch*. Vegetables, vineyards and fruit orchards on 200 *Joch*. To cultivate these landholdings the farmers had 450 horses and four tractors.

In the same timeframe in terms of livestock there were 750 cows, 1,500 swine and 1,000 sheep.

The HOG of Dolatz was founded in Dieterskirch in 1978. The founding members were Wenzel Demele, Stefan Pflanzler and Anton Rittinger. Matthias Gildi is the current president of the HOG of Dolatz.

Hans Niedermayer

Picture
The Cemetery in Dolatz
The War Memorial
Is to the Right in the Background