

# WERSCHETZ (Versecz - Vršac)

Kommunale Entwicklung und deutsches Leben der  
Banater Wein- und Schulstadt  
Verfaßt und zusammengestellt

von  
Helmut Frisch

(Page 20)

## Climate, Precipitation

An excerpt from Milleker's "History of the Royal Free City of Werschetz" published in 1886.

"Because of its proximity to the south, the favourable climate is conducive for the growth of flourishing grape vineyards as well as melons, rice, peaches, figs and almonds and where the olive tree can find a home.

Meteorological observations made during the years 1866 to 1870 result in the following average temperatures given in Celsius:

		Average Number of Days with precipitation
January	0.50	9
February	1.82	4
March	4.70	12
April	10.20	8
May	14.94	7
June	17.65	9
July	18.37	7
August	17.58	6
September	16.84	2
October	9.65	5
November	2.87	8
December	1.23	11

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Accordingly, the annual median temperature is 9.69 Celsius--in extraordinary years the summer heat rises to 40 Celsius and the mercury drops to -20 Celsius in the winter.

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### **Members of the SS-Division "Prinz Eugen\*\*"**

"What are you doing? High treason has its source in gunpowder and lead."

These are the words of Captain Wamser, a well-known and highly respected citizen of Werschetz, as well as an officer in the Imperial-Royal-Army of the Monarchy at the time he was speaking. The maxim originated at the time of the greatest German military successes and was celebrated in the fanfare of Liszt's (Franz) "Les Préludes" announcing yet another victory. Wamser meant that performing military service in one's own land in the former state of Yugoslavia might be necessary at times.

Whether that applied to those men involved in the Prinz Eugen Division is hard to guess for the battle in which they were engaged was not against a non-existent homeland, Yugoslavia, but rather much more a defence of house and home against ambushes and sudden attacks and a form of resistance against Communist ideology.

Even before the occupation of Yugoslavia by the German Army, the SS made an effort to win over and entice young ethnic Germans to serve in the Waffen-SS in the Reich. In November 1940, Dr. Janko, was informed that the ethnic Germans holding Yugoslavian citizenship who had been recruited into the SS and others would be called up to serve in the Yugoslavian military from the specified age groups were not obliged to obey the Yugoslavian military authorities. For those who had taken their destiny into their own hands and crossed the border illegally and voluntarily allowed themselves to be mustered into the SS in the German Reich--one of them was Erwin Ballia from Werschetz--were naturally not affected.

Immediately after the occupation of the Banat, one of the radical "*renewers*" (Nazis) in the Batschka, the SS-Second Lieutenant and paramilitary director of the German Folk Group, Gustav Hallwax, under the orders of the Waffen-SS Senior Officer, P. Hauser, took over the mustering and recruitment in all of the German communities assisted by four commissions during April and May, 1941 which provided 600 men for the SS-Division "Das Reich". "Information Assemblies with regard to the mustering of the ethnic German youth for the German Army," were also held in the winter of 1941 and the last of the volunteers left for Germany shortly before the conscription and the taking of the oath\*\* by the members of the "Prinz Eugen" Division. It was only in March 1942 when this compulsory form of recruitment was introduced by a decree issued by Janko.

**\*Translator's Notes:** Prinz Eugen refers to Prince Eugene of Savoy, the Commander in Chief of the Imperial-Royal Army of the Habsburgs who drove the Turks out of Hungary in 17th Century.

\*\*The oath in question was pledging personal loyalty and allegiance to the Führer Adolph Hitler who was the head of a foreign state.

Janko declared: "No one from among the men belonging to the German Folk Group from the ages of 17 to 50 years can avoid doing military service for the duration of the war..." Naturally, the legal basis for this regulation was just as dubious as had been the earlier practices of the SS previously. The German occupation authorities in the Banat and Serbia only had the right to accept voluntary assistance on the part of Yugoslavian citizens. This arrangement was contrary to the rights of those affected because it was by coercion. The Reserves and Replacement Office in Gross-Betschkerek, under the direction of J. Keks, was responsible for carrying it out. Under the existing circumstances facing the ethnic German population in the Banat even those who sought to evade military conscription had no possibility of doing so because the German Folk Group leadership gave in to the pressures exerted upon them by the SS, vacillating and excusing themselves from being answerable for what transpired. It is quite evident that even in the minds of the SS-Directorate the regulation was questionable if not invalid. G. Berger (SS-Senior Officer and Head of the Leadership Directorate Office) wanted to do away with it himself in 1943 when he sought to justify universal military service and the formation of the units with Banat ethnic Germans on the basis of the Tyrol "Army Reserves Regulation of 1782!"

Even those "who were volunteers from the very first hour" were not responding out of sense of moral obligation as it was impressed upon them at the Information Assemblies where Germany, the Motherland, at war with Russia was portrayed as being in great danger indicating that anyone who evaded serving in the military would be cut off from the German community. This was always the red herring in National Socialist propaganda: whoever does not think in the spirit of Nazism is not an honourable German. Moreover, many younger countrymen when they found themselves in Germany made the bitter discovery that there were two kinds of Germans: some with the air of masters of the earth about them because they were Reich Germans and they themselves who were "the booty and spoils of war" kind of Germans.

None of this led to the establishment of a large formation of "armed home defence forces" as the Folk Group Leadership had hoped originally but rather resulted in the assembling of the 7th SS-Volunteer-Mountain-Division "Prinz Eugen" commanded by the much beloved--later called "Papa Phleps"--a Romanian German\*\*\*, SS-Brigadier Major General, Waffen SS, Artur Phleps.

Rivalries between some of self-serving and self-promoting SS authorities and Dr. Janko were to be ongoing despite his journey to Berlin to voice his complaints and where he received the formal responsibility for the recruitment while his political influence on the Division "Prinz Eugen" was only minimal at best.

In summary form, the troops of the "Prinz Eugen Division" were organized into two regiments with four battalions in each; connected with the SS-Directorate that armed them with heavy weapons. There was a reconnaissance unit, a Flak-Flak unit and two tank companies. On March 1, 1942 under Order #1268/42 the SS-FHA was established.

\*\*\*He was a Transylvania Saxon

Both of the regiments were only partially motorized and in their later engagements they were supplied with pack animals that were kept secret from the men until the last moment.

The 1. Regiment was installed in the comfortable barracks in Werschetz. The Regimental Headquarters staff under the command of Colonel Artur Broser, another Romanian German, occupied the bishop's palace. The Greek-Orthodox bishop was given other quarters in a government building.

A cadre of senior officers and their subordinates were in charge of the training. They were officially: Führer and Unterführer and came from the Reich along with just a few from Romania. The members of the Division were recognized for whatever rank and grade they held as reservists in the Yugoslavian Army.

The SS-Division was overwhelmingly made up of ethnic Germans. The vast majority who were conscripted into military service were Danube Swabians from the Banat. Early in 1942, the Folk Group Leadership replaced the individual "voluntary declaration to serve in the military" with an inclusive group "voluntary declaration." From this point of time onward, the members of the Division were duty-bound to report for active and regular duty at the call of the SS-Reserves and Supply Office. The ethnic Germans served under the military regulations of the German Army and the same punishment for non-compliance would be imposed by the Division commanders. Thereby, the claim that the soldiers of this Division served in it on the basis of their own free will and voluntarily is totally refuted even though the wilful misunderstanding of the issue has not changed in the least. The proclamation issued by Dr. Sepp Janko, the Folk Group Führer, on March 1, 1942 runs as follows:

"The German Army took our villages and homes under their protection in the early spring of last year.

Germany's soldiers are fighting a perilous battle to save all of Europe from Bolshevism. In our land too, the Bolsheviks enemy has raised his head in the past months and weeks to make our roads and streets unsafe and burn down our villages. German troops in union with us have dispelled this threat for all law abiding citizens in the country.

For that reason I call upon you, all men from the age of 17 to 50 years that when the year of your birth is called up to report to your mayors and then in Belgrade at the District Office of the Folk Group for armed service to protect and defend our homes. No one who is healthy can excuse himself from his duty. German compatriots show yourselves worthy of your fathers by brave actions and deeds."

These are the objections raised by the Serbian Prime Minister Nedić.

"Until January 1944 approximately 20,000 men in the Banat and Serbia were called up for military service of whom 600 were with the German Army and an estimated similar

number with the Banat police, customs officers and other police units, more than 15,000 however, belonged to the Waffen-SS. The casualties suffered at that time numbered 917 men or over 4%."

(H.-U. Wehler)

"...I came to Werschetz. On the evening of the same day we came to Werschetz by train and arrived at the railway station shortly after midnight we were greeted by our future trainers and were accompanied by them to the barracks. We assembled ourselves on the basis of where we came from and moved into our quarters for the night. Early at 7:00 o'clock we were awakened. At 8:00 o'clock we reported in and were greeted by our Company Commander (Captain G., a Viennese). After our welcome we were divided up according to height--then the training began. At our first session it was made clear to us that we were to belong to the SS police...

But the enthusiasm for that among us was not particularly evident; most of the men did not want to go ahead with the training and reported that they were sick. The matter came to the attention of Captain G. G. sent for six physicians and had the entire Company physically examined after which twelve men were released for health reasons. Then it was noted that we were all physically fit men and our training could proceed without any more hindrances.

After six weeks of training we were to swear the oath. For this occasion, our Battalion Commander from Belgrade, Major J put in an appearance--J made a short speech about the sense and intent of the oath and added that after the performance of the oath a man could not hide behind his mother's apron or his wife's skirts. Then J. asked if anyone believed that he could not take the oath and told them to raise their hands. About sixty held up their hands. To the first man in line who was named Bischof he asked him why he could not take the oath. B answered: for economic reasons. J. replied: You will get a hired hand to take your place. Now about thirty of the sixty hands remained raised. The next was asked and he answered: I don't see very well. Answer: You'll get glasses. Still one hand remained raised. Question: What is your problem? Answer: Flat feet. Answer: You'll get arch supports. We swore the oath and were then conducted to the office to immediately sign a declaration that we had sworn the oath. A large proportion of the men did not want to sign the affidavit and distanced themselves from the office. They had to sign it the next day and were scolded by their trainer: Bigwig, traitor, etc.

(From "The Life Experiences of the Farmer, Peter Kaip" from Ernesthausen/Banatski Despotovac; handwritten original of December 14, 1958, 4 pages. Conscription of the Ethnic Germans born in the years 1919-1920 in the autumn of 1941 to police duty in the Banat; Incidents taken from the Training Company in Werschetz...)

The Division Prinz Eugen primarily fought against the Tito Partisans--alongside of the Croatian "Ustaschi" and "Domobranci", the "Zelen Kadar" as well as the Muslim Division "Handžar. They were put in place in the middle of the war and served in the Balkans without interruption. They endured great difficulties and witnessed gruesome atrocities. The Division was placed in the midst of various other nationalities living in

Yugoslavia with religious differences, namely the Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats and Moslem "Turks" (Bosnians).

General of the Waffen-SS, Phleps commanded the Division with great personal distinction--not in spectacular battles but in stubborn, dogged, persistent fighting--with mixed results. He had nothing of the experienced fighter about him. He was not an elite or elegant officer. The high esteem in which he was held by his superiors and the boundless respect of his mountain troops was more than enough for him by far. His one minor weakness that was often mentioned was his love of Weisskirchen red wine--along with the garbage scow from the dump in Pantschowa that picked up the dregs that were left over. Phleps gave of his best for the sake of his beloved homeland: Transylvania.

The first engagement of the "Division" was in the Serbian Kopaonik Mountains. Here the farmers from the Banat were transformed into mountain fighters. After the stationing of the Division in the Agram (Zagreb) region (at the end of 1942) it was prepared for greater undertakings. "Operation: White," in the vicinity of Karlovac in the Slunj-Bihač District was carried out in severe snowstorms until March 1943. That was followed by "Operation: Black," at Mostar. Despite the difficulties, the advance on Nikšić and the occupation of the town was due to the support provided by the Italians. The subsequent battles were made more difficult by the rocks and rubble strewn about the mountain terrain. The planned encirclement of the Durmitor-Massif was unsuccessful. The distance between the fighting troops was just too great and some places they were 7 kilometres apart. The quarters and accommodations for the troops in Sarajevo were under the direction of the new commander, General von Oberkamp who became Phleps Corps Commander.

Following the downfall of Mussolini, a portion of the Italians withdrew and others lay down their weapons. Consequently the Division took over the defence of the coast of the Adriatic and also became involved in the fighting in Herzegovina. Hard battles were fought at Metković, Split, Dubrovnik and the Pelješac peninsula--the latter is particularly mentioned in reports of the German Army.

The next Bosnian engagements at Zenica and Travnik took place at Christmas 1943. The encirclement "Operation: Snowstorm" failed and the major column of Partisans was able to break through. Their pursuit (Operation: Forest Frenzy) was through snow drifts up to two metres high. On reaching Livno the operation was called off.

Under the leadership of General Kumm, the Division was rewarded with a rest and recreation break in February 1944 in the Mostar region. Then they were stationed in the vicinity of Sarajevo where new battle tactics were used, abandoning encirclement, to giving chase to the enemy instead. It was followed up by a special parachute drop called "Operation: Knight's Move," (a term from playing chess) in the vicinity of Drvar which was the headquarters of the Partisans. Subsequently, in August 1944, the Partisans left Bosnia for Serbia. On the occasion of "Operation: Rübzahl," in the Durmitor-Masstif it once again resulted in heavy fighting. From Užice it went on to Požega-Topola.

After the Russians reached the Danube at Turn-Severin in September and the Romanians had joined them as our enemies the battle around Niš began. The retreat from there resulted in major casualties in the Division and then they regrouped in the Jastrebac Mountains. The now legendary "Hunger March" was accompanied by heavy gunfire on the part of the Partisans--the Bulgarians (who were also in retreat) reported that the Division had been destroyed. They had to secure the retreat of Army Group E coming from Greece without an opportunity to regroup around Kraljevo. After a difficult night march over the mountains half of the officers and one third of the troops were lost.

The bridgehead at Kraljevo (35 kilometre long front) was held by the Division until the end of November 1944 that made possible the passage of 350,000 troops and 10,000 trucks and vehicles from Greece. For this heroic action the Division Commanders received the highest award given in the Balkans: The Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords. The systematic withdrawal of the Division began at the end of 1944 in the direction of Višegrad-Sarajevo, crossing over the Drina and marching to Brčko. From there the Division went in the direction of Vinkovci passing by Otok which was under attack and then fought on the front in Srem. Eventually, the Division rushed to the attack up on the slopes of the Fruška-Gora and remained there until the major Yugoslavian spring offensive took place in 1945.

At the end of January 1945, General Kumm was relieved of the command of the Division and his successor, General Schmidhuber, ordered the march towards the Paput Mountains (where huge supply and maintenance facilities had been built) to provide security and support to the German Army's flank during the major offensive in the region of Lake Balaton-the Danube-and Drava Rivers. After the occupation of Našice and Virovitica the Division went to Zenica, after which, in April 1945 it set out towards Dobož and Derventa and then finally went on to Brod.

Following the retreat from Jastrebarsko, on May 8th the last order was issued to the Division: unconditional surrender. Following that there was the further withdrawal to Gurkfeld. On May 12th the last roll call took place and then the regimental band played the German National Anthem for the last time. Many men stood there with tears in their eyes. This was the end of SS-Division "Prinz Eugen".

On May 15th the troops were disarmed by heavily armed Partisans at Krainburg. Thorough body searches were carried out and the march into captivity began, the so-called "Atonement March" (also known as the "Hunger March") of all of the German soldiers still left alive throughout Yugoslavia.

Even after laying down their arms, the remainder of the Division had to endure gross abuses at the hands of the Partisans--a portion of them were released from prison camp and were subsequently interned in the death and labour camps with the ethnic German civilians. Several groups were condemned to long term imprisonment while others were executed immediately after their trial--and so may these words that are written be to the honour of all of the dead and survivors of the Division.

(Alexander Scheer: Excerpts from Otto Kumm's: "Vorwärts Prinz Eugen" published by Munin-Verlag, Osnabrück, 1978)

In conclusion, a press report on the inauguration of the Division as well as an eye witness account of a man from Werschetz who lived through the end of the Division:

"On May 9th, 1942 the festive taking of the oath of the men of the Banat that were called up to form a unit of the Werschetz Regiment of the SS-Division "Prinz Eugen" took place in the courtyard of the military music school. Shortly before 10 o'clock the columns of men were formed and stood before the flag bedecked speaker's lectern. The Regimental Commander, Albin Franz Scherhauser gave the speech in which the central thrust was the sentence: "In us, the spirit of the old frontier border guards has come alive again." After pointing out the importance of the day and the virtues of the soldiers, such as, "loyalty, blood and honour" it was followed by the singing of the "Songs of the Nation" (German National Anthem and the Horst-Wessel-Song) to end the celebration." (A summary of an article in the "Banat Beobachter" (Banat Observer))

"...I came to the 7th Mountain Artillery Regiment, Battery #1, Function 'z.b.v.' (for special disposition). We were in Werschetz for around six months where we were trained by twenty-year-old Germans from the Reich who were SS men with a series of titles: Lance Corporal with battle experience, EK 1 (Iron Cross First Class) and with a certificate for having been wounded in action. All of these designations had to be acknowledged when speaking to them just like the Amen at the end of a prayer.

The places where we were stationed included: Užice, Agram (Zagreb), Slavonian-Brod, Bosnian-Brod, Petrograd and Travnik. We remained in the area for some time. There were hardly any enemy contacts and there were no Partisan raids because the artillery did not come into close contact with the front lines. For that reason we suffered no casualties, neither wounded nor dead. We found accommodations mostly in empty houses that the owners had fled or had been forced to leave. But in the future we slept under the open sky instead of on hay and straw with horse blankets.

Our Division was virtually destroyed at the battle of Nisch in October 1944. We fled into the forests and could only save what we had on us. From a distance we observed how the Partisans fell on our wagons and plundered them. Because the cannons were done for, the artillery became the crown jewels of weaponry for the infantry. The end of the war caught up with us in Gurgfeld by Laibach in Slovenia. On May 12, 1945 we left our weapons and began to march in the direction of home as prisoners of war." (Viktor Schulz)



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## **FELIX MILLEKER**

1858-1942, long time curator and co-founder of the Werschetz Museum, historian and archaeologist, author and book distributor, member and honorary member of various scientific academies, associations and institutes both at home and abroad.

In 1886, at the time of the celebration of the One Thousand Year Anniversary of the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, Milleker wrote the two volume, "The History of the Royal Free City of Werschetz," at the request of the municipal council. He was the founder and editor of the "Banat Bücherei" (Banat Library) most of which came from his own pen. Many of his books were also published in Hungarian and Serbian.

His life's work and importance for our hometown are impossible to express adequately. For the information of the reader, the many references to the works of Milleker in this book, the quality and breadth of his work, qualifies him to be considered one of the most distinguished sons of our city as any further study of his work will attest.

He was born on January 14, 1858 in Werschetz, the son of a nail-maker. He attended public school and with the closing of the German Teacher's College in 1872 he went to Szeged where he completed four years of teacher training and preparation. From 1878 to 1883 he taught in Weisskirchen where he was first inspired to undertake his own independent research of local and Banat history by the example of Leonhard Böhm, an author and historian of the Banat. From 1883 until 1925 Milleker served as an effective and well loved teacher until his retirement.

He devoted all of his free time to local history. In the year 1921 he founded the "Banat Bücherei" which consisted of over 75 volumes at the beginning of the 1940s, of which 60 were of his own authorship. In 1940, Irene Elter, undertook the difficult task to uncover and publish a collection of all of Milleker's published works. During her work she came across 116 titles which later also appeared in Willvonseder's Number 209. But there can be no talk of a complete collection of his literary output. On the other hand, the classifications of the Milleker publications that Irene Elter developed were retained by Willvonseder as follows:

1. Pre and Early History, Local and Cultural History
2. History of Literature and Biographical Writings
3. Reports and Supplementary Articles

"The DNB in Belgrade reports: One of the most renowned Pre-Historic experts and research historians in the South East (Europe), the museum director Felix Milleker died on April 26th in Versec (Werschetz) in the Banat in his 84th year...

After decades of work and research, he self-published the thick volume, "The History of the Royal Free City of Versec," as a gift to his beloved hometown which was the best written monograph of a city that appeared in Hungary up to that time...

He tirelessly gathered together all kinds of rich finds from the various cultural epochs of the past for the Versec Museum that he created from virtually nothing. His greatest pride and joy was his collection of weapons and tools of the Late Stone Age, the diversity of which far outdoes any other collection of its kind. The son of Felix Milleker is Dr. Rudolf Milleker, a full professor at the University of Debrecen." (Pester Lloyd May 6, 1942)

"In his workroom at the museum and the library in the city of Werschetz where he lived out his last years--every day from morning to night he sat at his writing desk and just kept on writing. There in the midst of his books and his many handwritten notes, there in his daily workplace that was also his living room our local historical researcher Felix Milleker died...

He was the bookkeeper of the local branch of the Teachers' Federation in Weisskirchen, and then later he was the representative of the teachers on the School Board in Werschetz and served as the Chairman of the District Teachers' Federation for twelve years. In 1911 the Minister of Education awarded him a Charter for his services and contributions to the cause of education. At the same time the School Board in Werschetz gave him the title: School Director.

He was entrusted with the management of the Werschetz school library in 1887. This library was soon converted into a city library which as a result of his care steadily grew and expanded. In the first year of its establishment the library counted 765 volumes and during the first year it reported 662 volumes in circulation. Today it has 60,000 volumes and annual circulation of 35,000 books.

He was appointed the curator of the newly founded museum in 1894 which position he held right up to his death, for a total of 48 years. The small collection with which he began expanded over the years so that it became one of the most famous and important museums in the South East. There were over 135,000 artefacts from the various periods from the pre-historical Banat, from antiquity to the Middle Ages and Modern Times so that the number of visitors grew from year to year..." (Dr. Ludwig Bauer, in the service of the Press of the German Folk Group in the Banat and Serbia; Grossbetschkerek, May 1942)

"For a long time Milleker embodied Banat German research studies along with a few others. Just after the First World War there was renewed energy and interest. All of his life he was swept up in an independent study and research of the Germans in the Banat that were rooted in a healthy pride in themselves and their homeland. On one occasion he said to me, "There was another "German Brother" (a gentleman from the Reich) here today. This man wanted to write a book about the Germans in the Banat." Instead of encouraging him, Milleker said, "Sir, there are already about 500 works here before us.

Are you familiar with any of them? We are not unheard of, so why should you take the trouble to write about us?"

In the greater realm of German research he wanted the Banat historians to have their own rightful place. Milleker knew quite well that there was a need to work together but he was afraid that premature and untimely assistance could endanger the development of Banat German researchers...

"Because I publish everything with my own money," Milleker writes in a note he penned on November 11, 1939, "I don't have any squabbles with an editor." Whether he was able recoup his money is questionable. Scholars and friends regularly received his publications as gifts. As a result there were only a few copies available for purchase. On one occasion, the German ambassador came from Belgrade to visit him. In the front room he laid hands on some copies of the "Banat Bücherei" that were stacked in piles. The ambassador asked, "Could you tell me please, if you have a good turnover." Milleker replied, "Certainly! I have a rapid turnover when I give them as gifts!"

Milleker lived in two worlds. One was exclusively his own and in the other, the world around him he had to find his own way if he did not want to be alone. It is certain that he lacked opportunities for social intercourse and the exchange of ideas with his equals. Fortunately he was able to be content and overcome feelings of loneliness..." (Eugen Bonomi, in: Errinerungen an Felix Milleker)

Shortly after Milleker's death, the conferment of the Prinz Eugen Prize provided by the Goethe Foundation was bestowed upon him by the University of Vienna. The ceremony took place in the "Atrium" hall on July 5, 1942 in the presence of numerous dignitaries: the Rector of the University, Professor and Dr. Knoll, University Professor Dr. Hassinger, the Folk Group Führer Dr. Janko. Following the ceremony the Director of the LBA, Dr. Ludwig Baurer, the former Director of the Institute for Local Historical Research, Dr. Martha Petri and the University Professors that admired Felix Milleker's work participated in the investiture and handed over the prize to the "loyal hands" of the leadership of the German Folk Group in the Banat and Serbia "in the spirit of Milleker to be utilized to stimulate the aspirations of the German race in the Banat."

The University of Vienna  
Confers  
And by common consent recommends  
the  
Prince Eugene Prize  
of the  
Johann Wolfgang Goethe Foundation  
For the furtherance of Intellectual Creativity  
Among the German populations of the South East Region  
is hereby awarded  
for the year 1942 in memory of  
The tireless ethnic German historical researcher

Felix Milleker  
From Werschetz  
To ensure the welfare of the cultural inheritance  
of his people and homeland  
The fruit of his labours for over half a century  
that he has left behind.

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### **Family Names in Werschetz**

Many of the village homeland books include a complete list of the names of those living in the community in the autumn of 1944. For various reasons that were fully discussed at the Pentecost *Treffen* (gathering) in Chieming that kind of compilation is not possible in this Werschetz book. Consequently the family names are listed in alphabetical order with all names beginning with the same letter appearing together to make it easier to locate them. What follows are the results without any claim that it is fully complete--and the family names are presented in the form that was most typically used in Werschetz:

Adelmayer, Adler, Allgaier, Anfang, Arnold, Awender,  
Bader, Barwan, Bassler, Baumann, Behr, Becke, Berwanger, Biebert, Binder, Boiger, Braun,  
Breinich, Bruck, Burghardt, Burk,  
Cramer,  
Decker, Deutsch, Ditsch, Dittinger, Dorn, Dressl,  
Eberhardt, Eder, Eisinger, Elsner, Engler,  
Fasching, Firneis, Fischer, Frank, Frisch, Frühauf,  
Gergen, Geringer, Gröber, Groß, Grußmayer, Grünwald, Gumbinger,  
Haag, Habschied, Hagel, Hanga, Hauser, Heegn, Hell, Hennemann, Herzog, Hess, Hett, Hock,  
Hoffmann, Hönich,  
Jacker, Jäger, Janeck, Janzer, Jerausky, Jerschensky,  
Kanz Kemkemmer, Kemmler, Kempf, Kern, Kirchgässner, Kirchmayer, Kirchner, Klier, Krämer,  
Krein, Kreuz, Kormann, Kölzer, Kuhn,  
Lauer, Langer, Lederer, Lehr, Leidl, Lendle, Lengauer, Loffl,  
Mahler, Marck, Maurer, Mayer, Menzer, Merckl, Mertes, Milleker, Müller,  
Neumann, Niedermayer, Nimmerrichter,  
Oswald Oster, Ostheimer, Otz,  
Pallman, Past, Persch, Pinter,  
Ravelhofer, Rappelhofer, Rektewald, Renger, Richter, Rittchen, Rittinger, Römer,  
Sauter, Schön, Schröder, Scherter, Seemayer, Seitz, Sessler, Stark, Stein, Stemmler,  
Thier, Tittiger, Thomas, Thor,  
Ullmann, Urban,  
Waldherr, Wamser, Warmuth, Watz, Weifert, Weigand, Wernert, Wettel, Wersching, Wiener,  
Wohlgemuth,  
Zachari, Zeh, Zeller, Zentner, Zichler, Zinser, Zwölfer.

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At first glance, the size and scope of what follows may appear unusual. While the three-fold division of the book is intentionally thematic the contribution made by these diverse testimonies which follow certainly qualifies them to be included. They are intentionally separated from the rest of the book and its content dealing with our beloved city that in effect came to an end on October 2, 1944. What happened afterwards will be brought to our awareness in the form of the quotations which I have selected to include to which I can attest is factual evidence provided by eye witnesses.

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### **In the Stojkowitsch Camp (Telep)**

Karl Zoffmann (carpenter) who was a slave labourer in Stojkowitsch Telep reports that he experienced the following: The people were forced to stand in the barracks, pressed tightly together, so that they were unable to move. In response to the slightest movement one could be shot. The guards had a free hand and had the power of life or death over the camp inmates. One night they set up machine guns in some of the barracks and opened fire. When the firing ceased, the survivors had to carry out the wounded and laid them on one side and then the dead on the other. The wounded were shot immediately and the survivors had to bury them on the spot. The Partisans did not know of the possible consequences and a few days later the earth began to rise and the graves had to be dug deeper and the bodies had to be buried again. The women Partisans came into the barracks and began to kick those who were severely ill and those who were weakened by hunger until they died. Permission for leaving the barrack to go to the toilet was at the whim of the sentry on duty. On some nights it was forbidden or one was allowed to go and then shot on the spot."

(An excerpt from the "Dinda-Report" - Amm. d. V.)

"What I report here still remains a vivid memory. After the mass shootings on the Dreilauffer Street, the men in our neighbourhood were obligated to report at the town hall every day. There they were assigned to do work. On a day at the beginning of November they were sent back home because there was no work for them.

Gathering in Rückert Janni's yard afterwards the men discussed whether they should proceed with gathering grapes in their vineyards. That is where the Partisans came to take them away.

It became known that they had been taken to the Stojkowitsch-Telep along with many other men. We women brought food to the camp for them towards evening. The posted

sentries permitted us to hand the baskets of food through the window of the barrack. They swallowed down the food quickly. If one of the men risked to talk to us he was struck by the sentry with his rifle butt either in the face or wherever else he decided to hit him. We women were forced to watch. But some words were shared and exchanged. My husband told me that every night more and more men were taken out of the barrack and shot immediately outside. Later we learned that men were taken away in groups and where shot at the *Wasenmeisters* (a site associated with brushwood).

On the tenth day, I along with the other wives, were sent away by the sentries. "The men are not here!" They said. We would never receive any further word about them."  
(Reported by Marie Biebert neé Lenhardt and written in September 1981.)

"We went to the town hall in six columns and from there by way of Residenz and Panschowa Streets to the Stojkowitsch Camp complex of houses that were named after the former owner, a Serbian merchant. A physical search took place at the entrance to the great hall whereby money, watches and anything else of value was taken away from us. For food we received a bowl filled to the brim with water with corn kernels floating in it. We would also use the bowl for drinking purposes because there were no cups. In the hall there was only a bit of straw and the floor was full of dust and chaff. We lay down on it in our clothes, packed close together on the floor but only a few were able to sleep...

Several Serbian tradesmen came daily in the morning to pick up some of their former co-workers or other competent workers that they brought back in the evening. One day the camp was inspected by a Partisan officer. In a short threatening speech he said everything that had been decided at Jajce. "You are a criminal minority; you fill face a summary court; you have absolutely no rights; you are free as the birds. (The latter is a euphemism for an outlaw). We would soon learn what was meant by a summary court. A Chetnik (a Serb loyal to the King who had served as a guerrilla fighter under General Mihajlowitsch) escorted by two Partisans threw himself on his knees ten steps behind the officer and cried out to him pitifully along with his wife and two children, "Milost! Milost!" (Mercy! Mercy!). The officer turned around. "You plead for mercy, you murderer! You are even a greater criminal than these Fascists. You fought against us, against your own people. You will be punished like all of the Chetniks will be!" He pulled out his revolver and killed the man with three shots."

(Report of Dr. Josef Kobiljak, Sr. and written in September 1981.)

"On October 27, 1944 as well as a few days before the remaining German men were driven out of their homes and brought to the concentration camp, the so-called Stojkowitsch-Telep set up to imprison Germans. Germans living in the villages in the vicinity were also brought to the camp in Werschetz so that about 5,000 of them were packed together there. The camp consisted of only five barracks which could not accommodate the thousands that were there during the first days. But soon the camp was emptied because in the evening hours, day after day, trucks would arrive. Groups of men who had been previously selected numbering one hundred or more were loaded onboard the trucks and taken away during the night. All of them disappeared. Most were taken to the place where animal carcasses were burned and without any basis or process were shot

after being forced to remove all of their clothes. In the month of December 1944 of the former thousands of prisoners in the camp only 350 remained, the majority of who did forestry work in the village of Guduritz and were later sent to do hard labour in the camp at Semlin. The majority of them died there.

(Excerpt from "Ein Volk Ausgel□scht" by Leopold Rohrbacher.)

"I was in Stojkowitsch-Telep twice. On November 1, 1944 my father along with nineteen other German men were taken away from my home community to an unknown destination. On November 3rd it was my turn... We were taken to Werschetz on a night train and after arrival we were taken to Stojkowitsch-Telep. In the midst of blows and kicks directed at us we were driven into a pitch black barrack. Later in the darkness I found my badly beaten father and the other survivors from our village. The next day I could see that they were barefoot and their clothes were in tatters and none of them had any strength left. They told us that two of them had died during the physical abuse they had suffered...In the meanwhile members of the Prinz Eugen Division, Provisional Police and the German Home Defence Force were led out of the barrack. All that remained were the young and very old. My father was also taken away. During the night we heard the sound of trucks leaving the camp and then the sound of shooting...

On November 10th we had to leave the barrack early in the morning and take our place out in the yard. A Partisan carrying a machine pistol approached an old gentleman (rather well nourished) and complained about the treatment he had received from the old man. The older man said he did not even know him. Then he was about to get to know him said the Partisan with a whole string of curses and told him to step forward. After he took a few steps the Partisan shot him from behind. The man fell down dead. The Partisan fired another round of shots at the dead body on the ground. One of his superiors looked rather indifferent about his use of his machine pistol. Persons outside of the camp could be in danger as well...a Partisan waiting nearby took out his pistol and walked away from our column. He ordered a distinguished looking man to come forward. He was obviously a well-to-do Serb and for that reason the Partisan was going to punish him. He had him step forward and turn around and shot him in the back of the neck. The body was simply left there. It was already twilight when two men with spades passed by us, followed by two others with a hand barrow on which my father lay. In close proximity to us they dug a hole in which they buried the three dead men.

On March 25, 1945 I was brought to Stojkowitsch-Telep for the second time. I was now sixteen years old and I came with some friends from our village as well as some boys from Werschetz who had been brought to our village in the winter of 1944/1945. There had been changes made at the camp since I was there previously. We were assigned places (in the barrack) and a barber shaved our heads for hygienic reasons and we were introduced to the camp rules. To my astonishment I discovered a whole bunch of middle aged men who on the basis of my first experience in the camp should no longer be alive. In conversations with them and rumours we heard we learned that they were anti-Fascists who had been brought to the camp shortly before. I remained in the camp for four weeks and worked for the Partisan Air Force in Werschetz daily until August 1945. Later I worked as a driver for the Vinogradska Zadruga where I, along with three friends, was

held in the former house of a German vineyard owner on Ostheim Street. In the early summer of 1946 we and our vehicles were assigned to cart away the furniture being emptied out of the houses of the German anti-Fascists who shortly before had been taken to Stojkowitsch-Telep. In August of that year, I along with my friends succeeded in escaping across the border into Romania.

(Reported by an eye witness who is well known to the author.)