This English version of *Erinnerungen eines Doniuschwaben* by Georg Basch was translated by Henry Fischer and edited by Glenn Schwartz. It is published here with the kind permission of his family, represented by grandson Wolfgang Basch. (Tranlated portions of his message are reproduced below.) It tells the story of a Zichydorfer through the early twentieth century, the First World War, the inter-war period, the Second World War, the post-war ordeal of the Donauschwaben people, and the construction of a new life in Germany.

"Dear Mr. Schwartz,
You really surprised me with your letter... Nice that there is interest in the life of our grandfather even in English. On behalf of the Basch family, we grant you permission to publish the book in English… Kind regards, Wolfgang Basch."

Cover Page

Georg Basch

RECOLLECTIONS OF A DANUBE SWABIAN

Oswald Hartmann Verlag Sersheim

About the Author

Georg Basch was the son of an estate manager and was born on May 22, 1908, in Zichydorf in the Yugoslavian Banat. Following public school (1914-1918) in his hometown he attended high school in Szeged (in present day Hungary). As a result of the situation following the First World War, the changes to national boundaries curtailed his education in Szeged. He continued his education in Temeschburg (now Timisoara in Romania formerly known as Temesvár). From there he went on in his studies in Gross Betschkerek (now Zrenjanin in Yugoslavia). Because of the lack of the possibility of a German high school education in Yugoslavia he had to forgo an ongoing education and left school in 1923.

He now began to work at home and joined in his parents' agricultural endeavours. In 1929 he performed his required military service. In 1932 he became the chief clerk of the agricultural co-operative in Zichydorf, the Farmer's Aid Society. In 1942 he was conscripted into the Prince Eugene Division but was considered non-essential and was released and returned home. Later he was conscripted once again and served in the Florian Geyer Division and became a prisoner of war in October of 1944.

His family suffered greatly in Partisan camps for several years while Georg Basch himself was deported to forced labour in the Soviet Union in December 1944. After five years he was released and sent to Germany in March of 1950. In August 1951 he was reunited with his family after

seven long years of separation. The family found a new home in Germany, the land from which their forebears had come approximately 170 years earlier.

In 1955 he joined the Organization of the Germans from Yugoslavia~~Swabian District in Augsburg where he became a member of the Board of Directors in 1959 and its president in 1966. For about ten years he served as the president of the Board of Directors of the Bavarian Organization.

In 1984 he was awarded the National Service Cross by the government. Georg Basch lives in Augsburg with his family.

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Series
Danube Swabain Prose
Number 3

Basch, Georg
Reflections of a Danube Swabian

ISBN 3-925921-05-0

Published by Oswald Hartmann Verlag Sersheim
Photographs: Private
Bound by Oswald Hartmann Verlag Sersheim
Printer: Sprenger, Vaihingen an der Enz

Printed in West Germany, 1989

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Part One

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Foreword

The recollections of Georg Basch document not only the life experiences of a Danube Swabian and his family but is also provide a reflection on the historical events that took place in Southeastern Europe from 1914-1944. Georg Basch was an eyewitness of the downfall and destruction of the Dual Monarchy and its last Empress, Zita, died at the time of the publication of

this book. He lived through the division of the German settlement areas among three different nations and the beginnings of their development; then the onrush of the Second World War swept over him and his family that resulted in the destruction of the German population in Yugoslavia at the hands of Tito's Partisans. This was followed by his deportation to slave labour in the USSR; his release from the living hell of that "workers' paradise" after five years and repatriation to Germany, the homeland of his forebears; his reunion with his family followed by new beginnings and reconstruction of their lives.

All of the stations on his journey were over rocky ground, often bloody with thorns along the way that the author shares in a rather simple and easy to understand manner. These recorded memories bear witness to the history of the Germans in Southeastern Europe known as the Danube Swabians. Naturally this publication is but a small mosaic of the events in this region of Europe, but it does document in simple terms what took place before 1945 and its impact on the German population in Yugoslavia.

All of this is of great importance and significance as the successor states of the dismembered Dual Monarchy, above all Yugoslavia, attempt to hush up the results of the pioneering work of reconstruction and the cultural advances made by their German populations over several centuries. They are to be wiped out as a people and from history.

It is therefore fortunate that there are eyewitnesses like Georg Basch that record their life experiences and preserve them for future generations. Many such reports together form a mosaic that witness to the living history of the Danube Swabians over their three hundred years history in Southeastern Europe. The author deserves our thanks and commendation for his efforts in doing so.

This book needs to be widely distributed. May the younger generation embrace it so that they may learn of the victimization of the Danube Swabians in Southeastern Europe and the toll in blood it has cost us.

Münich in April 1989

Franz Blantz
President of the Organization of the Danube Swabians in Bavaria

THE SCHOOL YEARS

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At the age of ten years, I entered first grade in the public high school in Szeged. At that time the city had a population of 115,000 and was the second largest city in Hungary. In August 1918 I lived in the student home called "Konvict" in the Danube Swabian community of Gyertyamos (Gertjanosch) on Kalvaria Street while attending school there. This community in the Banat (now located in Romania) had a similar student home in Szeged which allowed them to send their students to school there.

Hungarian was the language of instruction because of the Magyarization process carried out in the previous century. In this institute I studied along with German students, sons of farming families as well as Hungarians. There were also the children of well to do parents from Bulgaria and Turkey. At that time there were five student homes in Szeged with approximately one thousand students. Each had a distinctive colour of its own in terms of its uniform. We wore green, those from "Eisenbahn" (literally train station) blue, those from DEMKE (southern Hungary) yellow and in addition to them red and white. In this way you could identify the student home of other scholars by the colour of the centre piece of their caps. We went to the public high school for instruction in the forenoon. Following our mid day meal, we took an escorted walk in the "Mako erdő," (oak forest). We were also allowed to bathe in the Marosch River. That is where I learned how to swim. I had good relationships with the international students. Later in the afternoon we did our homework under supervision for two to three hours.

Until November 1918, the end of the First World War, we went to school unhindered by what was going on in the world beyond us. A group of soldiers that had returned from the war smashed in the windows of the stores and looted them. The rioting soldiers also attacked us. In order to restore peace, French occupation forces, most of whom African, were stationed in Szeged.

When I came to Szeged in August 1918 Hungary was intact. In November of the same year Austria-Hungary was divided up by its neighbours Romania, Serbia, Italy and Russia and the Czechoslovakian Republic emerged. Hungary's population shrank from twenty-one million to ten million, while Austria was reduced to eight million. The new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians was formed shortly afterwards.

As a result of this redrawing of national borders the 1,500,000 Danube Swabians living in the former Dual Monarchy and part of the "breadbasket of Europe" were torn apart from one another. They were forced to live in various states. My hometown, Zichydorf, became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in November 1918.

Towards the end of 1918 the Spanish Flu epidemic broke out. This resulted in a school holiday.

In December 1918 because our school had been closed because of the epidemic, as a ten-year-old I boarded the train to Temesvár to return home. I had no passport or other papers with me. At Szőreg, which was at the border with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes I hid under my seat. Three farmers' wives with long dresses sat on the seat and I was able to cross the border undetected.

Beginning in January 1919 I studied for my first-grade high school graduation at home in Zichydorf with a private instructor. We had to travel 70 kilometres by wagon to Gross-Betschkerek for me to take the necessary examination. Travel by railway did not function very well then. In Siegmundfeld which was close to Gross Betschkerek we spent the night with a farmer and the next day we went to a relative in Gross Betschkerek where I would take my examination. We finished our exams in two days. A girl from Zichydorf travelled with us and she was also successful in passing the public-school examination.

I began my second-grade high school studies in August 1919 in Temesvár which was still under occupation by the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. I lived in a student house once again in the secular section of the seminary where priests were trained under the direction of Bishop Julius Glattfelder (Csanader Diocese) in the inner city. I attended the high school operated by the Piarist Order.

The seminary was a very large building and built in the shape of an "E". The main building had three wings forming the letter "E". In the non-secular wing, there were five classrooms for over one hundred students preparing for the priesthood. These students did not have to pay their tuition fees or residential costs. That was also true of the fifty theological students each of whom had a room of his own. Bishop Dr. Julius Glattfelder provided for their upkeep and education.

We travelled by streetcar to the Piarist high school in the inner city, around three kilometres. Near to our institute, one could the ruins of the former fortress walls of the inner city of Temesvár. Every Wednesday we went to the nearby "Hungaria Bad" to go swimming. The swimming pool was in the manufacturing quarter of Temesvár.

In the Spring of 1919, we went on a tour of several Swabian villages by train travelling in freight cars. We spent two days in Lovrin, Orzidorf and Alt-Beschenowa. One or two boys were billeted with one of the families in the village. We had a great time that I remember fondly. In our high school all our professors (that is what we called our teachers) were priests including our gym teacher.

We had one teacher who taught natural history who was well over the age of seventy. During his classes he shared various life experiences and his personal history. On one occasion he shared this story: A man lived in a rented room. He always shaved by the window with his shaving cream and straight razor. At that time there were no other options. The people who lived across the street facing his window had a monkey. This monkey observed him. The monkey pantomimed all his actions while shaving which mad the man very angry. One day the man made a gesture of slitting his throat using the blunt side of his straight razor. The monkey did the same without using the blunt side of the razor and slit his throat and died a bloody death. Now the man finally had some peace.

It was not long before we no longer enjoyed this idyll in our lives. In October 1919 Temesvár was ceded to Romania in a border exchange. I was once again in a foreign country. We had to learn Romanian alongside of Hungarian. To spend my Christmas holidays at home I had to cross over the border again. There were four of us students who wanted to enter the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. There were two from Karlsdorf (Baumgärtner and Schomogyi) and two from Zichydorf (Alexander Sheer who died in Austria in 1985 and me). Whether the two from Karlsdorf are still alive or not is unknown to me since we have never met since 1920.

As an eleven-year-old I was the youngest among the four of us. The others were from fourteen to sixteen years of age. We went by train from Temesvár as far as Deutsch-Stamora close to the border with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. We then travelled by horse and wagon to the border crossing at Klein-Gaj around three in the afternoon. The border patrol officer told us that we had to return to Moravica which was about ten kilometres away to get our permit to cross

the border stamped by the Border Commander there. The border patrol officer also told us that with the stamped document we could proceed to Zichydorf that was about nine kilometres from Deutsch-Stamora. We circled around the border town of Klein-Gaj. When the border patrol was out of sight, we headed for Zichydorf. We had to cross over large thinly frozen water puddles twenty metres wide and twenty centimetres deep.

On their return journey after the Christmas holidays the boys from Karlsdorf used a different border crossing. They got caught and were beaten and then allowed to go on to Temesvár. My father drove me within two kilometres of the border. I then went on foot towards Deutsch=Stamora. When I was about ten metres from the border a Romanian border guard stepped out in front of me and shouted, "Stai!" (stop). He was in a trench, two metres wide and about one and half metres deep and from that vantage point he had a clear vision of the border without himself being visible to others. The border guard called me to approach him and asked for my passport. I only had a student pass to travel on the railway in Romania. He took it and turned it upside down indicating to me that he could not read. He then pointed to the stamp on the document with one finger and read the words, "Romania mare si tare," then added, "Bun, megre!" (Romania Is Great and Powerful. Good, now along with you.)

Following the end of the school year in June 1920 a relative of ours in Deutsch-Stamora hitched two horses to his wagon and tossed a plough onboard and headed for the border. Close to the border he stopped at field of corn and hitched the horses to the plough, and I led them towards the field. Once the border patrol passed by, I headed for Zichydorf and my relative drove back to Deutsch-Stamora and returned home from working in his fields.

I attended grade three level classes in the high school in Gross-Betschkerek which were conducted in Hungarian. Along with seven other students from Zichydorf whose ages were between twelve and eighteen I lived in "Engel Konvikt" which accommodated two hundred students in all grade levels. All of them were from the Yugoslavian Banat. We did not have far to go to go to school. Our school was quite close to the central square where the church and County Administration office were located. At that time there was a short spur line with both passenger and freight cars from the main train station in the centre of the city to the central square and the beloved main shopping street of Gross-Betschkerek and then on to Kleck, Kathreinfeld, St. Georgen and Hatzfeld (Zsombolya. The train ran through the city for about four kilometres with the loud sound of the ringing of bells. It was only in the mid 1930 that the spur line was diverted around the city.

In Gross-Betschkerek alongside our high school with its eight grades there was also a trade school, a private school and another private school associated with a convent. There was a great deal of excitement in 1920 when we wanted to go home to Zichydorf for the Christmas holidays by railway. Our train left the main railway station shortly before four o'clock in the morning heading from Gross-Betschkerek to the main station in Werschetz. We did not sleep the night before the trip home afraid that we might miss the train. We had to take a roundabout way of about five to six kilometres to be able to reach the main station on time. The train station was about one thousand to twelve hundred metres distant as the crow flies but there was no bridge over the Bega River. We arranged with a canoe owner to take us across the Bega at two o'clock in the morning.

We were all so glad that things worked out for us. In today's world it is hard for people to imagine what this meant to us.

Towards the end of the school term, we German students were told that we would not be eligible to return to class. We had to make arrangements elsewhere. That is how I came to Hatzfeld for my grade four classes.

Precisely at that time in 1920 the well known private German high school with eight grades was founded in Hatzfeld. The Yugoslavian Department of Education allowed for the founding of the school with the stipulation that "the city of Hatzfeld (Zsombolya in Hungarian and Dzombolj in Serbian) provide for the upkeep, clothing, food and education for two hundred Serbian children from former Serbia in the south who were orphaned as a result of the First World War.

These costs had to be covered by the parents of the students in the high school. This meant that in addition to the nine hundred German students from the Banat and the Batschka there were also two hundred Serbian students as well. We had a Serbian rector, Dr. Siskovic, a Serbian professor, Dr. Jagic, a Russian woman who was the professor who taught French, Madame Cekmareva, and the German professors were Fiedler, Galle, Welsch, Lichtfuss, Buchmann, Henz, Kunst, and others.

Despite its short lifetime from 1920 to 1923 this private German high school in Hatzfeld educated numerous Danube Swabian students who had formerly been attending Hungarian schools. Among the most prominent among them was the now deceased Dr. Joseph Trischler. Most of the students are no longer living, a portion of which died on the frontlines during the Second World War.

Six young people from Zichydorf who had been studying in Gross-Betschkerek transferred to Hatzfeld and were overjoyed to be able to do their studies in German. They were Michael Faul (grade seven), Jakob Ulrich (grade seven), Georg Faul (grade seven), Karl Kaiser (grade six), Joseph Türk (grade five) and Georg Basch (grade four). The first three were able to complete their matriculation in Hatzfeld while Kaiser and Türk did so later in the Serbian high school.

Dr. Michael Faul became a lung specialist and has a practice in Munich. Dr. Jakob Ulrich became a famous surgeon and the chief medical officer of District Hospital in Ebersdorf in Thuringia. He died on January 8, 1987, at the hospital in Caprino am Gardasee. The veterinarian Georg Faul was the director of the Veterinarian Services in Gross-Betschkerek in occupied Banat from 1941 until the expulsions in 1944. He died May 6, 1982, in Schwäbisch Gmünd/Strassdorf. Karl Kaiser was a major in the Prince Eugene Division and at war's end in May 1945 along with numerous other officers of the Division were liquidated by Yugoslavian Partisans. Dr. Joseph Türk was medical director in Gaaden bei Wien in Austria and died at the beginning of 1980 in Gaaden.

There were two student homes in Hatzfeld. One was called: "Zappe" and had two hundred students in the various grades. It was on the same street as our high school.

The second was called: "Neidenbach" and was located on the main street close to the hardware store of Robert Manzin. There were around two hundred students in this residence as well

including some from Zichydorf, Franzfeld and Nakodorf and many others from the Banat and Batschka,

In "Engel Student Home" in Gross-Betschkerek there were still numerous Hungarian students. There were also children of Danube Swabians whose parents assumed a Hungarian identity. In Hatzfeld there were three or four White Russians as well as Danube Swabian students.

The Lenau Federation was founded in the Hatzfeld high school by those who were determined to maintain their German identity, language, and culture. Through the efforts of the Federation our German identity was strengthened and deeply planted within us. Since no German high schools existed in Hungary after 1920 many of the children of the Danube Swabians were drawn to assume a Hungarian identity. Hungarian became the only language of instruction in the educational system. It was only after the end of the First World War that the Danube Swabians in the Banat and the Batschka became more consciously aware of their German heritage. This led to the founding of the German Swabian Cultural Association as well as the German Literary Society. Up until now there was only a Hungarian Literary Society. These German associations gave rise to German theatrical enterprises. In 1924 the Tegernseer theatre company put on a performance of "Jolanthe" in Zichydorf which was very well received.

A very fine German was taught in our high school. Foreign words in our speech were not to be tolerated. Our German professors always said, "For every foreign word there is a German equivalent."

There were also outside activities in which we were engaged. Here is one example: the history of the Kingdom of Serbia from 900 AD to 1920 was translated into German by two students who possessed good writing skills. They were the future medical doctor Michael Müller from Nakodorf in the Yugoslavian Banat who died in Austria a year ago and me. This assignment was done outside of our normal schoolwork The students also had cultural opportunities as well. There was a student orchestra with twenty participants. The play, "The Priest from Kirchfeld" was performed by the boys and girls from the upper grades of our school.

At the end of grade four we had to pass our mid-term matriculation in order to advance to grade five. There were fifty-six students in our fourth-grade class which included three girls. In our grade four class there were about ten to twelve pupils who would not go on with their education. My neighbour who shared bench number four with me was the later Dr. Dr. Wilhelm Keilbach, a university professor of theology. He was in Rome for some time, then in Zagreb and finally in Munich where he died several years ago. Keilbach came from Ernsthausen near Gross-Betschkerek. Dr. Sepp Janko who became the "Führer" of the German Folk Group in Yugoslavia also came from there. He was one year ahead of me in the German high school in Hatzfeld. There were several other academics in his grade five class: the jurist Dr. Andreas Rőhm, Magister Fritz Obmann, both of whom were from Franzfeld; Magister Georg Lichtenberg from Kudritz, the medical doctor Lohrmann from the Batschka who married a girl from Zichydorf, the priests Adam and Nikolaus Gabriel from Charleville by Kikinda. Many members of the grade five class were victims of the Second World War and the later expulsion.

Only a minority of the fifth grade in Hatzfeld in those days remains alive. Ludwig Lenner from Charleville lives in Augsburg today; Robert Hauser from Pantschowa lives in Ohirgen, Nikolaus Gabriel who became a priest is retired and lives in Knezevi-Vinogradi in Yugoslavia. His illness has affected him very badly. Nothing else is known about the other members of the grade five class who were my colleagues in Hatzfeld.

The Hatzfeld German high school existed for only three years. What follows are the historical factors at work that led to its closing.

Parliamentary elections were held in Yugoslavia in 1923. The German Party elected eight members of parliament. They were Dr. Kraft, Dr. Grassl, Dr. Krmeling, Dr. Neuner, Dr. Bartmann, Professor Heinrich, Dean S. Schumacher and editor Schauer.

About the parliamentary election in 1923 I offer another insight. Gross-Gaj which was a neighbouring village of Zichydorf was a community with a mixed ethnic population. One quarter of the inhabitants were German, and three quarters were Serbs. There were 102 registered German voters and there were 102 votes for candidate representing the German Party in Yugoslavia. At that time only men had the right to vote. The Germans in Gross-Gaj were very proud of their electoral effort for a long time.

The current Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia Momcilo Nincic was the candidate in the voting district of Hatzfeld and ran against Professor Heinrich who was the candidate for the German Party. This gave birth to the satirical song: “Momci, Momci, Momci, you can’t catch a Swabian this way.” In anger after his loss to Professor Heinrich he orchestrated the transfer of Hatzfeld and its 16,000 inhabitants to Romania in exchange for the communities of Modosch and Pardan.

That marked the end of our school. As a result, more than one hundred students had to continue in their studies in Serbian language schools. Several of the students from Zichydorf completed their matriculation in Pristina in southern Yugoslavia in 1924.

For my part I gave up my educational aspirations and returned home to work along with my parents in their agricultural endeavours.

BEGINNING MY AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS

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In the year 1919 the estates of large landowning German and Hungarian families consisting of 100,000 to 250 hectares were confiscated by the government. The same applied to stables and other farm buildings and machinery. The confiscated land was given to Serbian settlers from Bosnia and Herzegovina in five-hectare parcels of land allotted to each family. In a very short time numerous villages emerged inhabited entirely by Serbs. This settlement programme in the Banat and the Batschka in 1919 was but a precursor for the later expulsion and extermination of the Danube Swabians throughout southeastern Europe.

On the estate owned by Count Csekonits which consisted of approximately 40,000 hectares that lay between Gross-Betschkerek and Hatzfeld there was a spur line off of the main rail line about seventy kilometres in length that served both passenger and freight trains in order to bring products more speedily to the major markets. This rail line began at Gross-Betschkerek and then passed through the Danube Swabian villages of Kleck, Kathreinfeld, St. Georgen, Tschestelek (Csösztelek), Serbish-Cerne, Deutsch-Cerne, Julia Major and ended at the main train station in Hatzfeld. It was the shortest connection between Gross-Betschkerek and Hatzfeld that was primarily used by the Danube Swabians along and somewhat by the Serbs from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Banat no longer belonged just to us.

I gave up my education in July 1923 after completing my fifth-grade studies due to the lack of any possibilities of attending a German high school that were now outlawed in Yugoslavia. I returned home to Zichydorf and began working alongside my parents doing farm work. At that time my father worked as the estate manager of my deceased uncle, Georg Johann Wosching who had died in 1923. The estate had consisted of about five hundred hectares. In 1919 two hundred fifty hectares were confiscated and divided up among Serbian families from Gross-Gaj.

We had 32 hectares of land of our own of which most of it was in one piece. We worked our land with two hired men along with four seasonal workers. Of course, this was a change for me, but it did not matter much to me because whenever I had been home during my school holidays I had joined in the farm work. At the age of fifteen I learned how to use the scythe as well as work with the farm machinery.

We employed a married Hungarian hired man along with two German couples as temporary workers. These married couples each received three joch (four and half acres) of corn which they were called upon to hoe. The work with the horses was done by these men. The seasonal workers had to harvest the ripened corn and cut and bind the cornstalks. They would receive one third of the corn cobs and bound stalks that would be delivered to their homes. These seasonal workers were employed from April until the end of November and worked almost every day. They received a daily cash payment for their work. But if they received the one third from the acreage of corn, they did not receive a daily wage and would receive the final third at the end of the harvest.

Each married couples mowed eight joch (12 acres) of ripened wheat done with a scythe. They received a tenth of the sheaves of wheat. Following the threshing the grain, straw and chaff were delivered to the homes of the workers. As a result, the workers were able to provide enough for a cow and several swine. A married couple earned on average about 1,000 to 1,200 kilograms of grain each harvest and more on a plentiful harvest. In the years after 1936 our workers no longer had to mow the wheat with a scythe. We moved everything with a binding machine thereafter. The workers had to arrange eighteen sheaves in the form of a cross. They were paid based on one such cross of sheaves in every ten from a field of approximately twelve and a half acres at the time of threshing and the grain, straw and chaff were delivered to their homes. During harvest time in Zichydorf there were eight to ten threshing machines that were in operation usually lasting about sixteen workdays. The machines went from one farm to another. The operators of the threshing machines were paid 35 to 45 kilograms of wheat, oats or barley per day depending on what was harvested.

When working with corn, the workers earned up to two thousand kilograms of corn or more depending on the yield that year. Each harvest the seasonal workers earned enough straw, cornstalks, and chaff to feed a cow and had fodder to feed their swine. During the winter they could butcher one or two of their swine and sell others for breeding stock. It was hard work but, in this way, they had a reliable income.

In 1924, along with my father, I attended the agricultural fair in Neusatz (Novi Sad). It was the capital of the Danube Banovina that consisted of the Yugoslavian portions of the Banat, Batschka and Baranya. At that time Neusatz had close to 60,000 inhabitants and was the centre of the activities of the German Folk Group in Yugoslavia. It was the headquarters of German Swabian Cultural Association and the economic hub of the Danube Swabians; the "Central Savings and Loans" and "AGRARIA" the agricultural co-operative which was a consolidation of the local "Farmer's Aid" co-operatives located in one hundred and fifty communities in which Danube Swabians resided. Neusatz was also the headquarters of the firm known as "Jugoagrar" a trading company in agricultural machinery and equipment founded by Danube Swabians. The firm provided agricultural machinery imported from Germany (Reich) to all the various local co-operatives. Before and for a short time after the First World War threshing machines, mowing equipment and such were imported from the USA until German industrial capacity was restored. There were products made by McCormick, Massey-Harris, Johnston, and others. Ploughs were produced by the firm of Sack in Leipzig. After 1926 ploughs were purchased from the firm of Eberhardt am Ulm from their plough works. The Eberhardt ploughs were lighter and did better work. The threshing machines were steam driven and had an elevator that was operated using gears. The machine and elevator were to a great degree quite mobile and went from one farmyard to another. The threshing machines and elevators were produced by the firm of Hoffherr-Schranz in Vienna. Alongside them were also those manufactured by the firm of Clayton Shuttleworth in the USA. Most of the later threshing machines came from various firms in Germany.

The Danube Swabian farmer was far in advance of his Serbian, Hungarian and Romanian colleagues in working his land and in cattle rearing as well as his living conditions and housing. Once you came into a village you could immediately recognize whether it was a German, Hungarian or Romanian community. The Germans whitewashed the exterior of their houses twice a year. The first took place at Easter and the second at the time of their local *Kirchweih* (anniversary of the dedication of their church). This was seldom done by the Serbs and Hungarians and practically not at all by the Romanians. The streets and yards around the homes in a German village were neat and tidy and nothing was out of place.

The *Kirchweih* festival lasted three days and next to Christmas and Easter it was the most festive. On the Zichydorf Kirchweih festival in 1925, on the first Sunday in October, I was one of the Kirchweih "boys". There were twenty of us born in the years 1907 and 1908. Each of us had his girl with whom he danced to help auction off the Kirchweih wreath. My partner at the time was Katharina Merle my future wife. We got to know one another in the autumn of 1923. I was fifteen and she was fourteen years old. We were inseparable and were married on February 11, 1930. My parents and I lived on the estate of my uncle, four kilometres from Zichydorf and in addition to us there were sixteen other families, around eighty persons who lived there. On Sundays my parents and I always spent the day at my grandmother's. I was in Zichydorf every Tuesday, Wednesday,

and Saturday. The four kilometres did not get in the way of my seeing my girlfriend~~despite winter weather~~with my bicycle, by wagon, by horse or on foot.

In 1925 I got my hunting licence. The five-hundred-hectare estate of my departed uncle had hunting rights of its own. Just my father and I went hunting. Often after work I slung my rifle over my shoulder and went to Zichydorf. Often as I went along, I got to shoot one or two rabbits and brought them to my girlfriend. Most Sundays one of the two brass bands in Zichydorf played at the dances. My girlfriend and I seldom missed any of the dances.

Those us who were fifteen and sixteen years old reconstituted the "Big Boys Brotherhood" in Zichydorf. We all knew one another since kindergarten. But now we went dancing at the *Wirtshaus* (pub and tavern). We became interested in girls and formed lifelong friendships.

There is an event in 1924 I would like to share that took place on a Sunday afternoon at the dance held in the Wirtshaus operated by Jost Remilong. The musicians had just begun to play. The girls all stood in a row all around the dance hall and waited for a boy to ask them to dance. I came into the hall and looked around to find a girl to ask her to dance. When I asked a girl who was about fifteen years old to dance, she turned me down. I went back to my table and sat down and tried to figure out what I had done wrong. Three years later in 1927 during a ladies' choice the same girl approached me and asked me to dance. I in turn rebuffed her request and said, "Do you remember what you did to me three years ago? Now we are even!" The girl cried and begged me to dance with her but I was adamant. Now we are good friends and I often ask her to dance with me but once I was firm at the time of ladies' choice.

IN THE MILITARY

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The young men born in 1908 were ordered to register for enlistment into the army in 1928. Those affected were entertained by the entire village hosting a Recruitment Ball. We reported to the army in April of 1929. Along with six other young men from Zichydorf I was assigned to the 6th Cavalry Regiment "Knez Arsenije" stationed in Zagreb which was five hundred kilometres from Zichydorf. On arriving in Zagreb at the army base those among the recruits that had at least attained a fifth-grade education had to provide a sample of their handwriting. Heinrich Guth from Krčedin and I were selected. We were recruits for only a few days and were now both assigned to work in the regimental headquarters. Guth served under the regimental commander, Lieutenant Colonel Wlaisavljevic, and had to maintain the records related to the recruits. I ended up in the communications office of Commander Miroslav Kostic. Within a month I was proficient on the typewriter. I had to type the orders of the day and special orders of the Commander. Our regimental adjutant was Lieutenant Colonel Otto von Egersdorfer a former cadet in the Royal and Imperial Army. The makeup of the regiment included 8% who were Danube Swabians, 30% who were Serbs, 25% Croats, 20% Bosnians, 10% Albanians and 7% Slovenians. Large numbers of the Albanians had gone into hiding in the mountains at the time of receiving their call up into the army. It was only weeks after that they were apprehended and brought to Zagreb under escort by the police.

One day I received handwritten instructions from the Adjutant to transcribe an order which would require the signature of the Regimental Commander. When I finished typing the order and could not find the Adjutant in his office, I took it to the Commander for his signature myself. Shortly afterwards the Adjutant appeared and asked me about the order. As I explained my actions, he shook his head and said that in the future I should not take any such action on my own because only he was in a position to do so and it was his personal prerogative to present such a document to the Regimental Commander.

Several weeks later I was in the office of the Adjutant to take dictation. Captain 3rd Class Boris Gorbatovski, a White Russian, the Commander of the 3rd Squad came into the room. He spoke to the Adjutant in German. He was interested in knowing why his promotion to Major had not been granted after his third effort to pass the necessary requirements. (The Serbs did not want the Russian émigrés to advance to senior officer positions in the army.) Adjutant von Egersdorfer pointed out to him that it was only by a hair's breadth had he himself failed to become a Major. After the Captain left the room, the Adjutant looked at me and both of us had to laugh because Gorbatovski had no idea that understood German. Even though the captain had seven or eight Germans in his squad he never spoke a single word in German to them but only spoke German with the Regimental Commander Vlaisavkjevic (spelled with a "W" previously) when he was alone with his batman (who was also a German).

There were numerous illiterates among the soldiers. One of them was so intellectually challenged that he was brought to the Regimental Commander's attention. He ordered him to report to the communications office and said, "The stenographer will now write a letter to your wife and family." He quickly replied, "My wife chased me out of the house and said she no longer needed to have me around." The Commander said he wondered if the man knew he was talking to. His immediate reply was, "You must be a sergeant like the one who screams at us in our barracks." The Commander laughed.

There were approximately 20,000 soldiers stationed in Zagreb, the capital city of Croatia, in 1929. Every regiment had its own regimental celebration day (Pukovska slava). In the summer of 1929, our 6th Cavalry Regiment "Knez Arsenije" celebrated ours. We celebrated in the riding school and adjacent hall which had been established in the time of the Dual Monarchy. The regimental general staff planned and carried out the celebration. Twenty tables in two rows that were about four or five metres apart from one another were set up in the hall. The tables were bedecked with various drinks like wine, cognac, liquor, and beer. In the centre of each table there was a suckling pig on a platter. These twenty suckling pigs had been ordered at an expensive restaurant in the centre of Zagreb. There were over one hundred officers from other regiments who were invited to the celebration. Beer was served out of a large barrel. When there were only about five or six litres of beer left in the barrel, I told my assistant to stand the barrel on end as if it were empty so that some would be left for us later.

Later in the evening as the celebration came to an end there was still one suckling pig left over. It was only missing one of its forward shanks. Our regimental Commander, Colonel Miroslav Kostic said to me, "Basch, bring the suckling pig to my room right away." I did what I was ordered and brought the suckling pig to the Colonel's room. The room was not locked. Once in the room I took out my knife and cut off one of the rear shanks for myself. It tasted very good. The next

day the Colonel said to me that the night before that there had been more meat on the carcass of the pig. I said, "Yes sir, when I brought it to your room, I know for certain that the only thing missing was one of the front shanks. The Colonel simply shook his head, and I was allowed to leave. While cleaning up the hall afterwards we drank the five or six litres of beer that had been left over. That is how we celebrated our regiment's annual festival.

In the summer of 1928 during a sitting of the national parliament in Belgrade an elected Serbian member (who came from Montenegro) shot the leader of the Croatian delegation. Stefan Radic, his cousin and another Croatian parliamentarian. It caused a great tumult in the parliamentary chamber. It was just like it is today, the Serbs fought to maintain their hegemony in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Serbs and Croats could not get along with one another from the founding of the Kingdom.

Following the murder of the three Croatian parliamentarians in Belgrade the political climate in the Croatian capital of Zagreb between the Croats and Serbs became more and more toxic. Bombs were thrown at various military facilities and police stations. On the anniversary of the murder of the three Croatian elected officials in the summer of 1929 all military and police personnel were placed on twenty-four alert to deal with any disturbances. Those of us in the 6th Cavalry Regiment spent the night in full military gear in the stables with our horses. But the day and night passed without any major disputes between the two sides.

Our Adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel Otto von Egersdorfer was transferred to the 8th Cavalry Regiment in Cakovec in the autumn of 1929. He was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Predrag Stefanovic, a Serb, formerly serving with the 5th Cavalry Regiment stationed in Werschetz in the Banat. He told me that he had participated in a riding contest in Zichydorf in 1927 in which the 5th Cavalry Regiment took part and where he had fallen off his horse.

Also, during 1929 motorcycles became quite the fashion in Zagreb. Most of the officers who could afford it bought one. That was also true of the cavalry officers in our regiment. As a result, they sold their riding horses. The number of motorcycle accidents increased daily. It accounted for the death of two officers in our regiment. In response our Divisional Commander forbade all cavalry officers from selling their mounts to buy motorcycles. Nor could they buy a motorcycle under any circumstances. All officers in the Yugoslavian Army at the time of their enlistment were provided with finances by the government to enable them to purchase a riding horse. When purchasing one the regimental officer had to have the approval of a consultant to do so.

I only had to serve in the military for nine months because I was the only son in my family, otherwise I would have had to serve for eighteen months.

In December, Alexander the King of Yugoslavia celebrated his birthday. On this occasion major promotions were made in the armed forces. It took place on a Saturday afternoon: I was working in the regimental staff headquarters. A telegram came from Belgrade congratulating our Adjutant on his promotion to Captain 2nd Class. The Adjutant ordered me to bring the telegram with its welcome news to his living quarters. When I brought him the news, he was most pleased and asked me to take his uniform to the tailor to add the new insignia of his new rank. Since he was in such good humor, I did not waste this opportunity and expressed the wish that I might be allowed

to go on leave at Christmas. As a result, I was granted leave at home from December 23, 1929 until January 2, 1930. I was able to leave for Belgrade by train on that same night. I was at home by the next afternoon. There had been heavy snowfall along the stretch of railway between Pancevo and Werschetz and our train had to be outfitted with a plough to go on. In leaving the railway station in Alibunar the plough was transferred to another train. For the next twenty-four hours no trains could travel over the stretch of track we had covered. Our train had to backtrack another way to Wladimirovac where we had to overnight on the train. In the morning we were told that the next train for Werschetz would only be able to leave in the evening. At eight o'clock that morning a colleague from Űrmenyhaza a neighbouring village of Zichydorf set out on foot for home. I made the twenty-eight-kilometre trek home by two o'clock in the afternoon. The result of this forced march was that I became sick and could only return to Zagreb on January 13, 1930. On the same day my time of enlistment ended, and I was discharged from the army.

THE WEDDING

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My parents had already bought me a large farmhouse in 1927. In 1928 in addition to a stable for horses an addition was added for cows and beef cattle and a larger shed for agricultural tools and machinery.

In January 1930 the notice of my intention to marry Katharina Merle was posted at the community centre in Zichydorf.

Our marriage took place on February 11, 1930. It was a nice sunny day. The one hundred and fifty wedding guests marched to the large Jost-Remilong restaurant in the community centre to the stirring music provided by the Zichydorf brass band. Following the civil ceremony, the entire entourage proceeded to the church. The church was filled by the wedding guests and a host of onlookers from the village. On the way to the church and later the restaurant there was always the possibility of the bride being stolen but such efforts were thwarted by the groom's men and bridesmaids.

Around eleven thirty the wedding party and entourage of guests arrived in the large hall of the restaurant for the wedding celebration. The tables were already set with food so that guests could begin to eat on their arrival. During the meal the postman arrived with two telegrams. One was from the wife of my departed uncle G. J. Wosching from Meran in the South Tyrol and one from my aunt, the widow Dengl from Arad in Romania.

The dinner consisted of chicken soup and servings of beef, pork schnitzel, veal, and all kinds of baking. Following the mid day meal, the dancing began. In the evening another full meal followed with a similar menu to the one at noon. At midnight my wife and I disappeared. The wedding went on until dawn. In all, our wedding lasted three days. Promptly at eight thirty in the morning on the second day of our wedding a portion of the wedding guests who had remained along with the brass band greeted my wife and I to accompany us back to the restaurant. On arriving back at the restaurant, the dancing resumed for about two hours until all the guests had returned, and the noon hour meal followed. The dancing continued after until it was time for the evening meal. Then we danced again until midnight.

On the third day our unrelenting guests continued to celebrate. There was once again a noon hour meal and a supper. Around eleven o'clock at night on this third day of our wedding it all came to its conclusion. It was a wedding celebration that people spoke of for years to come. It cost our families two swine, one calf, a side of beef, and about one hundred chickens.

After our wedding my parents moved to their own home which was about one kilometre away in the same area. We took over the farmstead in 1930. My wife and I received about forty-five acres of land from our parents. We had two hired men and a household maid. The lot on which our house and stables stood consisted of approximately an acre.

The first year after our marriage there was a bad harvest. The wheat yield, which was our major crop, should have been about 1,200 to 1,300 kilograms per acre but that year it was between 300 and 350 kilograms. We just got by on our earnings. It was just enough to pay our hired hands and the maid. There can be no talk about our paying the taxes. We had to sell a two-year-old cow to raise the money.

AN OFFICIAL OF THE "FARMER'S AID"

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I was appointed the chief purchasing officer for the Board of Directors of the agricultural co-operative that was known as the Farmer's Aid and "Agraria" in Zichydorf in 1931. The "Farmer's Aid" in Zichydorf began its activities in 1932 with the building of a modern hemp factory. The primary first task was to soak, soften and separate the hemp fibres and anchor the hemp in frames when it was pressed down under water. The water was brought from a nearby canal using a series of pumps This process required around two weeks depending upon the weather and temperature. Following the soaking the water was released back into the canal. The hemp which was moist was then removed and the next batch of hemp replaced it. We could carry out this operation in four sets of hemp frames simultaneously. Each hemp grower who was a member of the co-operative bought shares of stocks based on the acreage he cultivated up to a value of 1,500 Dinar that was secured by a loan by the Central Savings and Loan in Neusatz to build the factory and buy the necessary equipment. The loan was repaid at a rate of 250 Dinar a year for five years. And after five years the member received 1,500 Dinar of which 1,000 Dinar was designated to decrease the debt on the factory. Our hemp factory operated on two shifts of workers, a day shift and a night shift throughout the entire year. In the meanwhile, agricultural production, hemp growing, sunflower cultivation and cattle rearing improved greatly after 1931. In the years 1932, 1933 and 1934 one hundred kilograms of corn sold for from 40 to 50 Dinar. In 1932 I bought a binder for 30 tons of corn.

Our son Joseph was born on May 25, 1931, and our son Georg was born on January 3, 1936.

The harvests in 1935, 1936 and 1937 were good. One could feel that the harvesting of hemp, sunflowers and clover was getting increasingly better.

In 1937 I tore down the residential part of our house. The adobe walls were 50 centimetres thick. The adobe was so dried out that the walls could not be knocked down without the aid of a winch.

Working on the walls with a pickaxe showered dust everywhere. In 1937 we built a new house that still stands to this day. It was a long transverse shaped house erected right up to the boundary of the house lot. The front of the house faced the street and was twelve metres in length and housed two rooms each with an area of 22 square metres. There were two central rooms each with an area of 18 square metres, a covered passageway with an area of 15 square metres and five steps down into the courtyard. There was a kitchen with an area of 18 square metres connected to the two front rooms. Attached to the kitchen was a food storage area as well as a bathroom with an area of about six square metres. The construction costs were in the neighbourhood of 120,000 Dinar that I was able to pay from the proceeds of one year's hemp production and two tons of clover. The gateway into the property was improved with the installation of a heavy iron door and latch that weighed about 350 kilograms.

We were able to live in our new house for about seven years before we were expelled. This house with its iron gate remains standing to this day. The latest photographs of it are from the year 1977. During a drive through Zichydorf (now Plandiste) by my sons they photographed it.

In the second half of the 1930s numerous German tourists and hikers from the Reich came to us living in the Banat and the Batschka. They took a lot of photographs and made entries in their diaries and the maps they were carrying. In 1934 the village of Zichydorf rescinded the land use agreement that had been in effect since the time of its first settlement. At the time of settlement each farmer received a session of land that included forty-six acres of which thirty-eight were to be cultivated and eight acres were to serve as a building lot, garden, and pasturage for cattle.

In 1934 I was elected to the Board of Directors of the agricultural association. At that time the decision was made to dissolve the former agreement and that the ownership of the existing pasture lands be added to the individual farmsteads. About three and a half acres of these uncultivated lands were involved. A surveyor from Gross-Betschkerek was paid 100,000 Dinar to measure the lands involved and determine the quality of the soil of each session. For example, the land in question was divided into three classes in terms of the soil. If a farmer received a piece of land that was deemed to be first class, it was less land than that of a farmer who received land that was considered third class. A three-person commission was appointed of which I was one. The other commission members were Joseph Hermann (45 years of age), Franz Paul (42 years of age) and Georg Basch (26 years of age). These commissioners dealt with these matters along with the surveyor (a Serb) both in terms of measuring the plots of land and working out the price to ensure a fair distribution of the land in question. Between Christmas of 1934 and New Year 1935 we were invited to Gross-Betschkerek by the surveyor. At the same time, he had two members of the SS from the German Reich as his guests. He introduced us to them, and we ate and drank together. Naturally we were rather surprised to find ourselves sitting at the table with these SS men here in Yugoslavia. Of course, this was a chess move on the part of the surveyor to gain our support for his proposal for the distribution of the land and the fee involved which was his real intention in inviting us. On the same day we carried out our responsibility to the surveyor for the work he had done. The surveyor did well by us. Thirty acres of the best fields had to be sold for more than 100,000 Dinar to pay the surveyor's bill. The rest of the land was divided among the members of the agricultural co-operative. All those receiving land were given the necessary documents of ownership from the governmental land agency.

An observation: in 1919 approximately three hundred Serbian families from Bosnia were resettled on the estate of Count Karatschonyi. The estate was called "Prädium Bioseg" and covered over 1,200 acres of cultivated fields. It was part of Zichydorf and as a result the three hundred Serbian families on the estate were as well. Our last village mayor, Julius Türk, made use of this situation at the time of local election. Along with the support of some of the Germans in Zichydorf and his many-sided promises to the resettled Bosnian Serbs to secure their votes was able to achieve a majority of twenty votes out of a total vote of over eight hundred. Julius Türk had a total of 425 votes and his opponent received 406 votes. Julius Türk's victory was a result of the support of the Serbian colonists.

As a result, the Serbs were the recipients of numerous privileges. At the time of an illness, they received free doctor's care and the community paid for their medications and still much more.

These results were the grounds for dissolving the age-old agricultural agreement.

The Yugoslavian Election Law decreed that a mandate of 80% was allotted to the victorious party in community elections. The meant that in Zichydorf the victorious party had twenty votes on the community council and the losing party had four. I was one of the four. We were at the mercy of the party in power and could not pass anything on our own. All of these factors led to the dissolution of the former agricultural land use agreement.

Zichydorf was a leading community in the Yugoslavian Banat as a result of its farming, cattle rearing and industries. During the 1920s the Zichydorf cattle rearing co-operative "Hornvieh" was founded. This led to the importation of Swiss breeding stock. With the purchase of such cattle the cattle rearing co-operative received generous grants-in-aid from the government. The co-operative maintained precise records with regard to herds in Zichydorf. There were two cow herds in the community. One herd consisted of cows belonging to members of the co-operative along with the imported steers. The second herd was owned by the community as a whole. On the 25th of March of every year Zichydorf held a breeding stock market. These breeding animals were from 18 to 22 months in age and were examined and certified by a government commission. The sale of breeding stock to better the quality of herds in the villages throughout the country were subsidized by the government anywhere from 3,000 to 10,000 Dinar depending on the quality of the animals being offered.

The Zichydorf breeding stock market was announced in the governmental and public press. Commissions from various parts of the Banat, the Batschka as well as Croatia and Slavonia came to buy them. Fifty to sixty breeding steers were driven to the market and between thirty-five and forty-five of them were sold. The price of these animals was five to ten times higher than a butcher would pay. In addition to their agricultural products the raising of breeding stock was a very profitable enterprise for the farmers.

At the beginning of the 1930s a horse breeding co-operative was founded. I was part of it from its very beginnings and was the secretary of the co-operative. The regional veterinarian, Dr. Szaly from Werschetz, played a key role that resulted in the sale of more and more stud horses with the financial assistance of the government. In this case as well purchasers received from 3,000 to 10,000 Dinar of government assistance when buying these young premium horses. The Zichydorf

stud horse market was well known and famous throughout the Wojwodina because of the first-class quality of the animals. This market received the strong support of the Yugoslavian government. The Danube Swabian farmers through their skills and industriousness were responsible for Yugoslavia reaching a high point in agriculture and cattle rearing never achieved before. There was so much grain produced that even in difficult times there was still enough to export. It was the same in terms of cattle rearing especially slaughter cattle. There were, however, occasional difficulties. The Danube Swabian farmers produced much more than what Yugoslavia would ever need.

Following the expulsion and destruction of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia there followed "the fool's paradise" where hunger and begging became a way of life.

In the first half of the 1930s there was a shortage of bread and meat in the German Reich led to a state of distress. In 1932, we in Zichydorf, as well as all the Germans in the Yugoslavian Banat and the Batschka assembled wheat for shipment to the needy population in the German Reich. In Zichydorf alone, more than thirty-five tons of wheat were assembled and sent to the German Reich as a donation. This assembling of wheat and donating it were done by the local agricultural co-operatives, "The Farmer's Aid" and the central headquarters of "Agraria" in Neusatz. We received a letter of thanks for our donations with the observation that the thirty-five tons would meet the needs of one day to provide bread for the people of Berlin. We were glad that we could help our German countrymen in the Reich. At that time, we were proud of our German heritage and still are to this day without exception.

DIFFICULT TIMES
War, Deportation and Captivity
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We can thank certain circumstances for the fact that we were able to maintain our sense of being German for over two hundred years after our forebears migrated from various regions in the former Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

1. The villages that were established because of their settlement by our forebears were 90% German in population and remained as such until our expulsion.
2. The customs and traditions of their former homelands were practiced and maintained by us until our expulsion and destruction between 1944 and 1949.
3. We were superior culturally, agriculturally, and technically in terms of the nationalities all around us including Hungarians, Serbs, Romanians, Slovaks and Ukrainians. These factors played a role in our expulsion and destruction. Envy and hatred were the grounds for this and that is the whole truth of the matter.

We never forgot that we belonged to the wider concept of the German people unlike our countrymen in the German Reich. I would like to provide an example to make my point. In 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War I was six years old and was in first grade in the public school in Zichydorf. Austria-Hungary, which was then our homeland, had declared war against Serbia because of the murder of the heir to the throne, Francis Ferdinand, and his wife, in Sarajewo by the Serbian terrorist Gavrilo Princip in July of 1914. As an ally of the Dual Monarchy soldiers

of the German Reich were also drawn into the war against Serbia. In their advance into Serbia a detachment of soldiers from the German Reich marched into Zichydorf and stayed overnight. These soldiers were surprised by our ability to speak German and asked us where we had learned such good German. None of these soldiers knew anything about the fact that our forebears had come from various German areas and regions in the past and had migrated here some 140 years before to improve their lives and future of their children. I would never forget this incident.

During the 19th and 20th centuries we belonged to the Hungarian portion of Austria-Hungary. There was a huge effort made at that time to make Hungarians out of the Danube Swabians. It was the so called *Magyarization* and assimilation programme. It first began in our schools. At the end of instruction each day, the pupils in the first to sixth grade classes were ordered, "Az utcan nem sabad nemetül beszelni!" ("Out on the street you are not allowed to speak German!") Any pupil who was denounced for doing so would be punished by the teacher the next day. Under this kind of pressure many Danube Swabians had their names Hungarianized. Often the reason was to improve their position in life or advance in a career in pre-war Hungary. The Hungarian Cardinal, Mindszenti in Esztergom originally had a German family name.

During my tenure as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Danube Swabians from Yugoslavia~~Swabian District in Augsburg I was often confronted with this issue of the Hungarianization of family names. The grandfather of a late arriving expellee from Hungary had his name Hungarianized and as a result he had difficulties with the West German government in proving that he was of German descent.

In both 1939 and 1940 all the reservists in the Yugoslavian army, including the Danube Swabians, were called up for weapon's training. In October and November of 1940 along with ten or twelve other men from Zichydorf we were called up to report in Cib (Tscheb) in the Batschka. We had to dig anti-tank trenches using shovels. The trenches were two and a half metres wide, ten metres long and three and a quarter metres deep, level on the north side and steep on the south side so that the tanks would more easily lurch down into them. These tank traps were spread from one community to another. The Yugoslavians anticipated an attack by the enemy from the north. We were divided up into groups of ten men. A German professor worked next to me, with his hands full of blisters doing this uncustomary work with a spade and shovel. Despite the hard work we could still find some humour in it all. In speaking to the professor, I said that our efforts were rather useless. The Germans were coming with airplanes. The professor cynically replied, "When these trenches are finished a wire fence will be set up to catch the German airplanes." Once we had our thirty days call up for weapon's training behind us we were released to go home near the end of November. At that time military discussions between the Berlin-Rome Axis were underway in Budapest. The foreign minister of Yugoslavia also took part in the conference voted to join the Axis powers. When he returned to Belgrade after the conference he was arrested and removed from office.

In the entire country, as was also the case in Zichydorf, Serbian patriots marched carrying the Yugoslavian flag and chanted the slogan, "Better a war than a Pact." Whenever any of us in our community met such a demonstration and did not remove out hats to honour the Yugoslavian flag there were thrashings and fist fights.

On Palm Sunday, the 6th of April 1941, German warplanes bombed the Yugoslavian capital city. Even though Zichydorf was 90 kilometres away from Belgrade we could see the fires raging through the night following the bombing raid.

On Wednesday, the 9th of April 1941, the drummer went all about Zichydorf and announced that all army reservists between the ages of 21 and 50 years of age were to assemble in the marketplace at four o'clock with enough food rations and necessities for eight days. In response to this announcement around 500 men from Zichydorf assembled in the marketplace among which were about 25 to 30 Hungarians. At five o'clock we marched off in the direction of Belgrade in four columns. When we were two kilometres from Zichydorf marching towards St. Janos, a neighbouring Romanian village, a mounted police officer from Zichydorf met us and ordered us to turn around and go back home. With that, the war was over for us.

On the morning of Good Friday, the 11th of April 1941 German soldiers went into action and crossed the frontier with Romania moved on through Gross-Gaj and then on to Zichydorf. On the outskirts of Zichydorf there were about 60 to 70 Serbian reservists stationed in trenches. On seeing the approach of the German forces most of them withdrew back into the centre of the village and begged the Danube Swabians to give them civilian clothes. Many of them escaped captivity as a result. The minority of the Yugoslavian reservists who had remained behind in their trenches opened fire at the column of marching German soldiers. Even though the German column proceeded marching in their direction and firing at the Serbs none of their own were hit by their return gunfire. The defenders under the command of a Yugoslavian reservist Lieutenant suffered three losses including the Lieutenant himself. The German soldiers were from the "Gross Deutschland" regiment and suffered no losses or wounded in their takeover of Zichydorf. At the marketplace in Zichydorf they were welcomed as liberators.

Wine was brought hastily poured into watering cans and distributed among the soldiers. They were also offered Easter eggs, baking, and shanks of ham. For us Danube Swabians this was a day of rejoicing finally freed for the oppression we had been experiencing. Following the bombing of Belgrade, the Yugoslavian authorities took away our hunting rifles and radios. Several days before the German troops marched in Zichydorf the Serbs who had been settled on the Biozeg estate had requisitioned our horses and wagons. They took four of my horses and two wagons to transport Serbian reservists to Belgrade.

The Yugoslavian campaign lasted for three weeks before the war ended. Right after the bombing of Belgrade numerous leading Danube Swabians were arrested and were imprisoned in the fortress at Peterwardein. From anywhere from eight to ten days they were freed by German forces and were able to return to their home communities. Our confiscated horses and wagons were never returned to us. Following the end of the military campaign there were units of the German Army (Wehrmacht) and the Waffen-SS that remained in the Banat for a few weeks for rest and recovery.

The Waffen-SS recruited volunteers from 18 to 21 years of age. There were about 20 to 25 of our young men who enlisted and later reported for duty.

After the Batschka was occupied by the Hungarians in 1941, the Yugoslavian Banat was granted a degree of German self government under the control of the occupying German Army.

The Danube Swabian agricultural co-operative "Farmer's Aid~Agraria" had its headquarters in Neusatz in the Batschka. Following the occupation in 1941 the German Army authorities arranged for a central headquarters to be established in Gross-Betschkerek to serve the co-operatives in the Banat. This fine functioning headquarters operated until the occupation of Gross-Betschkerek by the Russians and Partisans on October 2nd, 1944.

The exchange rate of the Yugoslavian Dinar and the German Reichsmark was re-evaluated. One Reichsmark was worth 30 Dinar. At that time (since 1940) I was the Chairman of cattle rearing co-operative in Zichydorf. Along with my Board of Directors I organized an exhibition held in Zichydorf on March 25, 1942. This exhibition proved to be our last bull market. The exhibits at the time included stud horses and breeding mares, bulls and breeding cows, breeding swine and piglets as well as sheep breeding stock.

Our countryman, the veterinarian Georg Faul from Zichydorf, who held a leading position in Gross-Betschkerek contributed greatly to the success of the exhibition. The exhibition with its primary focus on breeding stock was very well received. The exhibition and the bull market had several thousand sightseers and interested parties from throughout the Banat both near and far from Zichydorf. I invited the "Führer" of the German Folk Group in Yugoslavia, Dr. Sepp Janko, to open the exhibition. He had his headquarters in Gross-Betschkerek.

Dr. Sepp Janko came to Zichydorf on March 25, 1942. I greeted him before hundreds of our countrymen who had assembled in front of our community centre and invited him to open the exhibition and market. The "Führer" of the German Folk Group gave a speech. He spoke of the importance of healthy cattle breeding that benefited all their agricultural pursuits. He praised the people of Zichydorf who despite difficult times had the courage to host this exhibition. He thanked the Board of Directors of the cattle breeding co-operative for their efforts. He then officially opened our exhibition. Following the opening we took a stroll through the exhibition and later observed the animals that were on display. Our group included: Dr. Sepp Janko, the veterinarian Georg Faul, two officers of the German occupation forces, the district commissioner for cattle rearing from Werschetz, Grünwald the community notary of Zichydorf, the village's leading farmer Joseph Hermann as well as two of our Board of Directors and myself.

This was the last large agricultural event in our former home village of Zichydorf before our expulsion and destruction. At that time it was well known that all the able bodied ethnic German men in the Yugoslavian Banat were to be enlisted and recruited into the newly formed 5th Mountaineers Division "Prince Eugene". Right at the very beginning of 1942 large numbers of Banat ethnic Germans were called up to attend officer's training school. In April of 1942 all necessary training was completed. The able bodied Banat Danube Swabians (up to the age of 45 years) received their orders to join their unit in the 5th Mountaineer Division "Prince Eugene". The following units were formed: 1st Infantry Division in Werschetz, 1st Infantry Division in Weisskirchen, 1st Artillery Regiment in Gross-Kikinda, 1st Cavalry Squadron in Gross-Betschkerek, 1st Tank Company in Gross-Betschkerek, 1st Veterinarian Company in Gross-Betschkerek, 1st Supply Company in Gross-Betschkerek, 1st Divisional Command in Pantschowa, 1st Division Musical Corps in Pantschowa as well as a Depot Battalion.

All in all, there were around 20,000 men of whom some were released to provide homeland security. Quite early in 1941 there were a few Danube Swabian men who joined the German Army. Most of those assigned to homeland security became border guards and a few served as assistants to the police. There was also a Banat police force who wore black uniforms to maintain law and order in the cities and countryside.

In April of 1942 I reported to the 1st Cavalry Squadron of the SS Mountaineer Division Prince Eugene in Gross-Betschkerek. The first step was training followed by setting up the administration of the Squadron. Karl Kaiser was the SS Company Commander of our squadron and came from Zichydorf and a former colleague of mine. I was assigned to the staff office. Our squadron in Gross-Betschkerek was well equipped. We had enough horses and saddles. Our officers included three Danube Swabians and one German officer from the Reich. All the lower ranks without exception were Danube Swabians. All the cavalrymen were from the Banat. Most of them had spent their active military careers in the Yugoslavian Army.

Since all of us were from the Banat during our training we had our weekends off at home from Saturday afternoon to Sunday evening. On one occasion the squadron Company Commander Kaiser spoke in jest to a Reich German officer: "Let these men who want to have their weekends off report to me at eleven o'clock every Wednesday morning in their regulation uniforms and steel helmets." What follows is a humorous anecdote: One Wednesday when he addressed the men who wanted to on leave for the weekend Kaiser asked one of the riders why he wanted to go on leave. He was a married farmer from the southern Banat. He replied, "Company Commander Sir, my horses are sick, the spring ploughing needs to be done, my wife is all alone, and she needs a man." In response Kaiser said, "You should have told me that right away and I would have made a man available for her." When asked why, the next of these men seeking a weekend leave shot back with, "For the purpose of increasing the size of my family." In response the Company Commander said, "You are granted three days leave. If after nine months there are no results, the three days of leave you will spend three days in the guardhouse." Kaiser ordered me to take notice of what he said.

In our unit we had men from Werschetz and Karlsdorf in the winegrowing region. Whenever they returned from leave, they always brought back five to ten litres of wine. As a result, we always had something to drink during our training and working in the staff office. Whenever our Squadron Commander wanted to have a drink the supply of wine was usually all gone. Kaiser said to me, "After the next leave set aside five to ten litres of wine and take the wine over to my quarters." He lived just across from our barracks. I did what he asked but by the time he came to drink the wine most of it was spoiled. In response Kaiser indicated we should keep the wine for ourselves in that way none of it would spoil. So that is what we did in the future. Whenever the Company Commander wanted something to drink, we made sure a supply was handy.

At the end of August in 1942 the SS-Mountaineer Division Prince Eugene was stationed in northern Serbia. Those of us in the 1st Cavalry Squadron arrived in northern Serbia at the beginning of September. Our first military posting was in Čačak (Tschatschak). We had our first military action in Čačak. Then, from Čačak we were stationed in Gorngi Milanovac.

At the beginning of October our Company Commander Kaiser said to me, "Georg you need to go home. You have been designated as indispensable in the operation of the hemp factory owned by the co-operative." He told me they wanted to have him, but the Division would not free him to do so. So, I made my way to Pantschowa to be discharged at battalion headquarters. My wife brought me my civilian clothes and we drove home together. I was now the managing director of the hemp factory and the Farmer's Aid. Ever since 1931 I was the executive director and chief purchasing officer. Kaiser had been in my new position at the time of his call up into the military. I oversaw preparing the pay roll in the hemp factory and the co-operative as well as the purchase and sale of the hemp and grain. Every Wednesday I had to travel to our central headquarters in Gross-Betschkerek to collect the money from the sale of our hemp and grain products. At that time, we could not carry out financial transactions of this nature using the post office and would have taken too long. Most of these transactions involved about one and a half to two million Dinar. The hemp in our factory was produced for export. Because our factory operated day and night all year round several tons of hemp were marketed every week. In addition, there were also sixty to seventy tons of wheat and sometimes even more. Travelling on the train with large amounts of money I had a packet for safekeeping that was four to five times the size of a normal wallet that was wrapped in paper and tied together with twine. I laid the packet on the seat right next to me. The distance from Gross-Betschkerek and Zichydorf is about 75 kilometres. By train the trip lasts about two and a half hours. During the summer this was no problem but that was not true in winter. The train from Gross-Betschkerek only left for Werschetz at 4:15 in the afternoon. Because of bombing raids, the train travelled without the use of its lights and lanterns. On most occasions, whenever possible, I tried to arrange to share a seat with someone from Zichydorf. One of them once asked me what I had in the packet. Not waiting for my answer, he suggested there could be a gun inside. I had both my pistol and gun permit with me, but I felt I could not tell him the truth. I kept the millions of Dinars with me in my house overnight and the next day I would put the money in the safe at the co-operative. There was a risk involved in carrying so much money with me every time I travelled by train but especially in winter when the train travelled without using its lights. But all in all, things worked out well for me. When Company Commander Kaiser came home on leave, he always made short visits to the co-operative to see me. During one of his leaves in Zichydorf, the 3rd troop of 1st Cavalry Squadron under Commander Ruf from Pantschowa suffered severe casualties.

It occurred in Bosnia during a reconnaissance mission when the 3rd troop was under the leadership of the commanding officer, Zinngraf, a subordinate of Kaiser. The 3rd troop was attacked in a narrow valley by Partisans who were stationed on the heights above. Close to thirty dead and wounded resulted from this attack. Among the fallen was Commander Ruf from Pantschowa, Uscha Bohn from Sartscha and many others. These were all friends and had become acquaintances of mine while I served with them for six months in the headquarters of the 1st SS-Cavalry Squadron and I knew every member of the unit.

But work went on at the hemp factory and the co-operative. Agricultural production was in jeopardy since the men were in the military and in consequence of that the farming families were assigned labour service workers to help in the stables and work the land. These labour service workers came from the surrounding Romanian and Serbian villages and were forced to serve in this capacity. So it was that older farmers who had turned over their land holdings to their son, daily accompanied their labour service workers out to the fields. Ever since the SS-Division Prince

Eugene went into action in Yugoslavia there were men on leave from the Division throughout the year.

In November of 1943 I received a call up notice ordering me back into the 5th SS-Mountaineers Division Prince Eugene for training in the replacement battalion. I reported to military on December 1, 1943, in Werschetz and was assigned to the staff headquarters. I asked my Adjutant, a Swiss Company Commander for a transfer to my former unit, the 1st Cavalry Squadron. I was informed I had to submit a formal request to the Headquarter Directorate in Berlin. A short time later I received a reply. Instead of a transfer to the 1st Cavalry Squadron of the Prince Eugene Division I was assigned to the Replacement Battalion of 8th SS-Cavalry Division Florian Geyer stationed in Warsaw. At the end of January 1944 approximately thirty-five men left Werschetz in freight cars heading to Germany. On arrival in Vienna, we spent the night at the Arsenal. On the next day we continued our journey, each of us to his new assigned unit. The thirty-five men from Werschetz were assigned to approximately twelve units. I travelled on alone to Warsaw. In leaving Vienna we were on a military train. After leaving Lodz there were two sentries at every train door to prevent unfortunate accidents. After arriving in Warsaw, I took the streetcar to the Praga quarter of the city. That is where the Training and Replacement headquarters were located. I would like to mention that the 8th SS-Division Florian Geyer was badly mauled by the Russians in the Kowel region in the autumn of 1943. Two regiments were annihilated and only a few men in the other two regiments survived the massacre. The wounded and men who were sick and others on leave from the Division who had not been involved in this horrific slaughter were all directed to report in Warsaw. As members of the German Army, it was not safe as well as forbidden to go about the city on our own. It could only be done in groups of six to eight men, and we had to be armed with either pistols or rifles. Civilians were not allowed to come closer than 50 metres of the German Army barracks. At the gates to our barracks two sentries stood guard and barbed wire stood in the way of civilians. We had to stand sentry every second day. We stood in place for fifteen to twenty minutes and then marched the circumference of the fencing and repeated this over and over again. The provisioning and maintenance of the troops compared to the Prince Eugene Division was poor.

To our good fortune our performance as guests of the city in Warsaw only lasted two months. The major portion of SS-Division Florian Geyer's units were reformed and sent to southern Hungary and northern Yugoslavia. The Divisional Headquarters were in the city of Baja on the Danube in Hungary. The front-line unit to which I was commandeered was in Essegg (Osijek) on the Drava in northern Yugoslavia, but more accurately Retfalva a neighbouring village of Essegg. While in Warsaw I ran into a former member of the Prince Eugene Division, Company Commander Michael Mayer from Kleck. Mayer was also transferred to Essegg but was assigned to a different unit from my own and I never saw him again.

The 8th SS-Cavalry Division Florian Geyer was reconstituted with 8,000 replacements recruited in Germany. Since I was the only one in my troop who had ever worked in staff headquarters, I was immediately assigned there. We were the lower-level officers of the training squad. Our establishment had four officers and twenty men from the lower ranks: sergeant majors, bookkeeper and accountants, quartermaster, and tailors along with several guards.

The lower-level ranks' training lasted eight weeks. The training participants came from the four regiments in the Division. My major responsibility in addition to normal correspondence was to provide a fourteen-day educational plan for the trainees.

On March 31, 1944, the Hungarian Army with Horthy at its head was overturned by German forces and we marched into Pécs/Fünfkirchen in Hungary. Before that I met a countrymen Dr. of Medicine Ludwig Weber who had a practice in Zichydorf and was now also in the Army. I was in Pécs to the end of September 1944. By that time the Partisans in Yugoslavia had become more and more powerful. The Romanian Germans from the neighbouring village of Stamora had fled from their homes by horse and wagon in the face of the approaching Russian Army. The Romanian Army was shattered, and the German Army was in slow retreat from Romania. The bridge across the Danube at Belgrade was bombed so that the railway line from Belgrade to the Banat was no longer viable.

One morning in Pécs I received a call from Company Commander Dr. Weber, and he said, "Georgie, would you like to join me in going back home to evacuate our families?" Our Squadron Commander named Temmel asked who I was talking to on the telephone. I said, "The doctor. He wants me to travel with him back home to evacuate our families." Temmel indicated that he could not grant me leave only the Divisional Commander had such authority. But Dr. Weber believed he could obtain a pass for me. As a result, Temmel agreed to giving me leave if I finished all the assignments I had begun and that I would be back to my unit in fourteen days. "Take an MPi 42 and ammunition from the storage cupboard with you," he said.

Dr. Weber brought my official pass and promptly at two o'clock we took the train to Essegg in the direction of Belgrade. The train stopped overnight in Sremska Mitrovica. The station was protected against Partisan attack by two watchtowers. At that time trains were not travelling at night because the Partisans were blowing up the tracks night after night. We slept on the train. Towards morning while it was still dark the Partisans attacked the train. We sprang from the coach and lay flat on the ground as bullets whistled over our heads. Except for a few holes on the walls of our coach there was no other damage. The sentries in the watchtowers put the attackers to flight.

We arrived in Belgrade the next day. Because the sleeve of my uniform bore the insignia of the *Edelweiss* that soldiers in the Prince Eugene Division wore an older Danube Swabian asked me, "Uncle, sir, are you from the Prince Eugene? I am from Sackelhausen by Temeschburg and I am looking for my son. We have fled from the Russians. Do you know where the Prince Eugene Division is now?" I told him they were in the vicinity of Niŝ.

Following this short interruption Company Commander Dr. Weber and I went down to the Danube embankment to see if we could discover a way to get to the Banat side. We were lucky there was column of soldiers from the German Army boarding a barge to take them down river and we joined them. We went with them as far Pantschowa. There we caught a ride on a munitions convoy heading to the front lines in the direction of Rotkirchen. While in Pantschowa another countryman, Joseph Rist, serving with the Banat police joined us. As we came to Alibunar (Alisbrunn) we were met by military police who hailed the munitions transport saying, "The front is in short range. Unload the munitions." At that point four or five horses and wagons appeared bearing customs officials from the Romanian border town of Gross-Gaj. The customs officials

had given up their post and were heading back in the direction of Pantschowa. These horses and wagons were from our neighbouring village of St. Janos. Dr. Weber quickly stepped out in front of one of the wagons and ordered the driver to take us to Zichydorf. St. Janos was five miles distant from Zichydorf. When we arrived there the driver told Dr. Weber, we should go the next five kilometres on foot. We let the man, who was a Romanian drive home. We, along with Rist who had joined us, went on foot through what had become a virtual no-mans-land.

My parents had just come to visit my wife and the window stood wide open. I threw my empty knapsack into the room through the open window. My wife greeted me with the words, "Now you finally come home just when the Russians will be here in the next few hours!" It was evening around eight o'clock. The next morning at four o'clock they were there.

The news that Dr. Weber and I were back home, spread like wildfire throughout all Zichydorf. The master butcher, Mathias Fischer came to me and asked me what we should do now. I told him that I had seen the sorrowful sight of refugees fleeing for their lives while we were on our way home. I had seen a train packed with refugees in a station. The people stood in a long line outside queuing up to get some noodle soup.

We waited until the next day for the journey ahead because our wagon was not yet fully packed. On the other hand, right after Dr/ Weber came home he and his wife who was from Vienna and their children fled by joining up with a German Army convoy heading for Vienna. Leaving the convoy Dr. Weber also took Anna Kurzhals and her children with his family and went towards Pantschowa by horse and wagon. They managed to get through but had to leave their horses and wagon behind. I went to the community centre where fear and confusion reigned later that night.

Around midnight seven or eight people left for Pantschowa: Michael Pilo and his wife along with Johann Heinrich. They were also able to escape. I met Michael Pilo in Karlsruhe in 1951 after my release from Russian captivity as well as Anna Kurzhals and her children. The master butcher Mathias Fischer hung himself that night. The merchant Peter Molter wanted to flee with his wagon loaded down with the best clothes in his store. The roads were so bad he never even made it out of town. Our teacher, Libal and a sixteen-year-old member of the local militia left around midnight, but they did not get very far. Libal along with 170 other men from Zichydorf were shot to death at the Stoikowitsch camp in Werschetz in November of 1944.

The last day of freedom in Zichydorf was on *Kirchweih* Sunday the 1st of October 1944. Along with the families and individuals mentioned before who had fled earlier there were ten to twelve persons from our village who left twelve hours before the occupation.

The Russians had already crossed the border into the Banat and the inhabitants of Zichydorf were filled with apprehension as to what would happen next. Following the withdrawal of the customs and security guards in Gross-Gaj the Romanian border was left wide open. Not a single unit of the German Army could be found in the entire region. Zichydorf was left totally undefended.

Several days before the occupation of the Yugoslavian Banat by the Russians and Partisans who were coming from the east and across the Romanian border the official news organization of the German Folk Group in Gross-Betschkerek the so-called "Banat Observer" issued a proclamation

addressing the German population in the Banat. The headline in huge capital letters announced: "WE WILL REMAIN HERE!" This proclamation demonstrates the complicity and guilt of the German Folk Group in Yugoslavia under the leadership Dr. Sepp Janko resulting in a much higher death rate among the Germans in the Banat compared to those in the Batschka.

Shortly before four o'clock, on Monday the 2nd of October 1944 several Russians and Partisans arrived in Zichydorf by horse and wagon from the border community, Gross-Gaj. They were not met with any opposition. This handful of Russians and Partisans took over Zichydorf. Just before dark the drummer announced that the village was occupied and that all weapons and uniforms in the possession of the villagers were immediately to be surrendered at the community centre.

On that Monday afternoon the following inhabitants of Zichydorf were taken hostage in the community centre: Mathias Wagner, Johann Debert Senior, Josef Kaiser, Christian Hasenfratz, Georg Basch Junior, Andreas Remilong, Peter Hũpfel, Johann Frass, Johann Faul and Joseph Hermann. They were told that even a hair on the head of a Russian or Partisan was harmed they would be shot immediately. After about two hours the hostages were released and ordered not to leave their homes.

At the beginning of October my father-in-law, Jakob Merle, was forced to take some Partisans to Werschetz by horse and wagon to Werschetz which was 25 kilometres away since his son-in-law had served in the Prince Eugene Division. While in Werschetz he witnessed a gruesome scene. There was a large wagon with a platform behind it with the bodies of about one hundred German men and women from Werschetz who had been shot and stacked together on top of one another. A Partisan sat at the top of the corpses playing his accordion. At the back of the wagon a woman who was still alive was tied by her feet to the wagon and dragged through the streets of the city along with the dead.

During all the month of October 1944 work in the factory and fields went on as usual in Zichydorf. The corn was harvested, and the cornstalks were delivered to serve as winter fodder. The fields were ploughed, and winter wheat and oats were sown.

In the Partisan Camp

We were totally surprised on November 2, 1944, when around four o'clock in the afternoon a freight train from Werschetz arrived in our community. Around two hundred Partisans detrained and marched to our school. As evening descended the Partisans in groups of four or five men went through all the streets and apprehended all of the German men and older boys between the ages of 14 to 70 from their homes and brought them to the train station where a holding area had been established. If the door of the house was not immediately opened the used their rifle butts to smash their way in. Several Hungarian hired men were also taken by mistake. Several men were apprehended on the street on their way home from working in the fields and dragged from their wagons so that the horses and wagon proceeded on their way home without them.

During this horrendous night of November 2, 1944, our neighbour Marianne Spiess managed to make her way to our house with her one-year-old daughter and sought safety with us. Our hired men had just finished ploughing and I along with my thirteen-year-old son Joseph brought a

wagonload of cornstalks home. Shortly before eight o'clock the Partisans pounded at our bedroom window. My wife said, "Up until now I have not been afraid but now I am." I managed to say, "You always have these kinds of premonitions." I got up, put on my pants to see who was now knocking at the door. The Partisans were already climbing over the iron gate into our yard and were banging away at our kitchen door. This all seemed so weird. I opened the kitchen window and helped my wife, two sons and our neighbour and her child down into the garden below, a drop of about two metres. This garden led to the home of my wife's parents. I was the last to drop down into the garden and hid myself and the others in our corn crib. Just at the time that I made it down into the garden the Partisans broke down both doors and stormed into our house. They fired their rifles at me three times but could not see very well because darkness had settled in. Towards midnight when things had settled down in the village I went over to my wife's parents' home and knocked at their door. The door opened immediately, and my mother-in-law told me they had taken my wife's father earlier in the evening. All six of us went into her house. My sister-in-law was also there with her two sons. She had been afraid to sleep in her house all alone.

We went home the next morning. The cows and horses had been set loose and wandered around. The hired hands had disappeared. Just as I was feeding my livestock three Partisans arrested me and brought me to the camp they had set up at the train station. On November 3, 1944, several other men and teenage boys who had escaped during the night were also apprehended and brought to the camp. Around three o'clock in the afternoon we had to board the freight cars that were standing by. We numbered in the vicinity of 350 persons that included ten Hungarian hired men and were taken to the district capital of Werschetz. As the train set out and we were crossing over the "Grosses-Űberfuhr" from which you could get a glimpse of our home village Rudi Kaiser who had received a medal for bravery and outstanding courage during the First World War began to cry bitterly and said, "Men we will never see our home village again!" How true these words would become for most of the men who heard them.

On their arrival in Werschetz the prisoners from Zichydorf were incarcerated in the Stoikowitsch concentration camp located near the train station. On entering the camp there were four barracks to the right and one to the left. The one to the left was the so-called death barrack. Whoever went there did not have long to live. The barracks housed ethnic German men from Werschetz, refugees from the German border villages of Romania and other ethnic Germans from the surrounding villages. There were also Reich German prisoners of war who were imprisoned there.

On November 4, 1944, the camp inmates were registered based on their status with the Waffen SS, German Army, Military Police, Customs Guards, Banat Police or the German Swabian Cultural Association.

On November 5, 1944, the first one hundred men were taken to the so-called death barrack. There they were forced to undress. Several of them were thrown into huge vats of cold water and otherwise mistreated. When the merchant Joseph Noll saw this, he tried to hang himself with his leather belt. When the Partisans noticed this, they took him apart from the others and beat him unmercifully. These men were loaded on trucks at night and taken to the place where animal carcasses were burned in Werschetz and shot there. These shootings took place for a period of 14 days. During this time the men who were still alive were locked in their barracks. One day just before the first one hundred men were shot, the Partisans ordered 300 hundred men out of their

barracks. We were lined up against a long concrete cistern. There were forty to fifty armed Partisans facing us. We all thought our end was near. For the first one hundred men to die on November 5th it was to be so. They read out the names of those who had served in the Waffen-SS. When coming to the end of the list the Camp Commander asked, "Who else was with the Waffen-SS?" Hans Unger and I indicated we were. Unger had to join those whose names had been called out. I simply stood there alone. A Partisan asked the Camp Commander, "What are we going to do with him?" The Camp Commander answered, "He goes with the next party." I had given up hope of staying alive. I thought of my sons and my wife and trusted that with my father's help with the farm work they would survive. But it all turned out otherwise. I remained alive but my 65-year-old father was shot.

I returned to the barracks with the two hundred other men. The barracks were made of bricks with a concrete floor. Some days we received no food and on every other day we given a piece of bread. We made an opening in the wall at the end of the barrack and set up some piping to let in rainwater to flush out a makeshift toilet. But this system could not be used in terms of bowel movements. To meet that need the Partisans would open the doors of the barracks each morning and asked who needed to relieve himself. On the first day the men rushed to the door but were greeted by the Partisans with rifle butts and whips and in future chose to forgo this opportunity. To meet their need some of the men simply dug a small ditch during the day.

The bodies of our countrymen who were shot daily ended up in them. For that reason, new graves had to be dug almost daily. Whenever necessary, four or five men were taken out of their barrack to bury their recently shot countrymen in these latrines. On most occasions these men returned to our barracks beaten black and blue. The prisoners crept into the darkest corners of the barrack to avoid such work and were often beaten for doing so.

On November 10, 1944, the men who were above 60 years of age and boys between 14 and 15 were to be released and sent home. As this group left their barracks the Partisan in charge screamed at 65-year-old Georg Basch Senior, "Old Basch, step forward!" (This account is contained in a letter from Simon Schneider an eyewitness of the event.) There in the front of the men and boys to be released he was forced to dig a hole. When he was done, he had to kneel and then he was shot in the back of his head by a Partisan. The young boys from Zichydorf who were to be released were ordered to dump him in the grave and bury him. At the same time the 66-year-old farmer Joseph Stuprich was also shot.

Already back in October 1944 the following countrymen who were still back in Zichydorf were arrested and imprisoned in the community centre or local bank: Wilhelm Arneth, Johann Faul, Mathias Keller, Peter Molter, Hans Noll, Tillschneider the station master in Zichydorf, old Tisje Franzvetter and several others. These men were daily abused unmercifully with rifle butts, clubs, and ox-hide belts None of these our countrymen are alive today.

One night the Camp Commander came into our barrack accompanied by two Partisans. The barrack did not possess any lighting. With a flashlight in hand, he ordered the prisoners to empty their pockets and take off their watches and lay them in a basket he had brought with him. In a spot check the Camp Commander found a photograph of one man's child and slapped him across the face with his ox hide belt several times and blood spurted about everywhere.

Fourteen days later during the permanent nightly shootings a Partisan who was a battalion commander came into our barrack and greeted us with these words, “I greet you brothers!” and informed us that the nightly shootings would now cease. “A labour battalion made up of you survivors will be cutting timber in the forests around Sredischte and Kudritz.” The departure of the prisoners from the courtyard of the camp began at four o’clock marching in four columns in the direction of Sredischte and Kudritz. Many of the men were already outside of the camp when the battalion commander changed his mind and ordered the leading column to turn around and return to the barrack. He had second thoughts fearing that some of the men might escape. In the evening the Commander returned to our barrack and informed us, “Tonight you can sleep without worrying for no one will do anything to you.” Up until our departure from the camp none of us were further abused or mistreated.

At the beginning there were about 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners in the camp the vast majority of whom were men who were no longer able bodied to serve in the military or had been discharged from the army as well as older men and young boys between the ages of 14 and 16 years. Among them were also ten to fifteen men from Zichydorf who had been on military leave who had been unable to rejoin their military units. None of these were any longer alive. There were also numerous Reich German prisoners of war in the camp. They would never see their homeland again. The total number of survivors from the camp numbered about five hundred persons. That means between 2,500 to 3,500 men were shot there.

We were in the notorious Stoikowitsch Camp in Werschetz for three weeks without water to shave or wash and were full of lice. Our physical weakness due to malnutrition became apparent when we were forced marched to work. On the forced march some of the men could only make it to Srediste with the help of those beside them. In the camp some men died of physical exhaustion other men went insane in anticipation of what might lie ahead of them. We lay side by side on straw in the barrack. Day after day young half-grown Serbian Partisans came into the barracks and brutalized the Germans they found sleeping on the straw with clubs and rifle butts.

Towards noon the prisoners who survived the march arrived in Sredischte. About two hundred of the men were left there and the others continued to Kudritz arriving there late in the afternoon and would spend the night in the school. For the first time after three weeks, we were given hot soup by some women from Kudritz. Many of the men in Kudritz came to the school to visit us. (The men from Kudritz had not been taken into captivity.) One brought a bottle of schnaps, another brought wine so that some of the prisoners were able to take a deep swallow out of the bottle.

The next day the men went on to the camp at the fringe of the forest. Several of us quartered in the villa of the wine producer Tetz, others were billeted in the former shepherd’s home. Those of us who could not find a place, including me, made do with the former sheep pen. Later we were divided into groups of ten as working groups to cut timber in the nearby forest. My group included Hans Niedermayer and his grandson Mathias Wachtler, Michael Tisje, a young pastor from Heideschütz and a few young boys. We were to cut ten cubic metres of timber daily. At the beginning we were unable to meet that but after eight days we were successful in doing so.

We had warm soup in the mornings, either with beans or potatoes. In the evenings after our return from work we received the same once more. At this point I would like to acknowledge the help we received from the women and girls of Kudritz. They came to our camp each evening with their baskets and satchels with their home cooked meals. The camp was three kilometres away from Kudritz. During the day we often thought of the food the women from Kudritz would bring that evening. They always brought a piece of bacon, ham hocks or sausage that we ate the next day at noon.

In the evening we washed our clothes in a creek. In this way we were able fight off the lice.

While we were there, I had the time to talk things over with Hans Niedermayer about what we had lived through during our stay in Werschetz. We had a pencil and paper and going by memory from house to house in Zichydorf we noted down the names of our countrymen who had been shot in Werschetz. We were able to establish that since November 5, 1944, there were 160 men from Zichydorf who had been shot. Added to that there were eight to ten men from Laudon that also belonged to Zichydorf.

On December 28, 1944, they marched us back to Werschetz and we were put back in camp Stoikowitsch. There our lice companions met their fate through disinfection, and we appeared before a Russian commission. The men between the ages of sixteen to forty-five years were physically examined to determine whether they were able bodied. Those who were fit to work became part of the convoy that left for Russia on December 30, 1944, sentenced to forced labour that also included married women and single girls from Werschetz and its surrounding villages including Zichydorf. Many of them died in Russia. The surviving deportees were finally released five years later and sent to Germany.

But the women and children in Zichydorf and the old men were also to suffer a terrible fate. On November 17, 1944, several thousands of Germans from Werschetz, women, children and old men were force marched to Zichydorf. They could only bring what they could carry. Everything else was left behind never to be seen again. On their arrival in Zichydorf groups of ten to fifteen persons were assigned to each house. The homeowners were responsible for looking after the people from Werschetz assigned to them. Those capable of working were assigned to work in the fields while the elderly and the children had to remain in the houses. That is how they spent the winter.

In the second half of April in 1945 all of the women and children along with the old men were driven on foot out to the cattle pasture and children's playground at the edge of the village. They could only take whatever they were wearing. If a woman wore more than two or more sets of clothing she was beaten unmercifully.

In 1946 my wife was assigned to work in the vineyards in the German village of Kudritz some 20 kilometres away from Zichydorf. Our sons remained in Zichydorf. In the autumn of 1946 the elderly, the men and women physically unable to work and all of the children were taken to the extermination camp at Rudolfsgnad on the Tisza River. Twenty thousand Germans died there of starvation. My mother-in-law died in the camp at Setschanfeld in 1945. My father-in-law died in the camp at Heideschũtz in 1946. My wife, her mother and our sons ended up in Rudolfsgnad.

They were packed in one room with twenty-four other persons. Old men and women and very young children died every day. As time went on there was more room as only fourteen people remained alive. Each day the death cart passed through the streets of Rudolfsgnad and loaded up the dead. Eight to ten corpses were thrown onboard the wagon and taken out to the mass grave known as the "Teletschka". On one occasion my son Joseph, who was fifteen at the time, had to drive the death cart. He did so only one time and could not eat for a week. When the weather was bad the death cart often got stuck in the mud. The four or five of the corpses were unloaded and stood up against the wall or fence around a house. Then the rest of the dead were taken to the "Teletschka". Following that they came back for the others.

My wife went into neighbouring Serbian villages around Rudolfsgnad to beg for some bread for the children. Her mother was aware of her impending death and said to my wife that she wished she could have one piece of bread and smoked bacon to eat just one more time. My wife took off my mother's earring and traded it for a piece of bread and bacon while begging at a Serbian farmstead. She was able to fulfill her final wish. Terrible were the consequences for a woman undertaking such a task if caught by the Partisans. They were thrashed and beaten and in addition were locked up for several days.

In 1946 my son Joseph was bought out of the camp by a Serb from the area around Rudolfsgnad to come and work for him. This is an example of the kinds of private deals the Partisans made to their own advantage at the extermination camp in Rudolfsgnad.

During the winter of 1946/47 all three of them were once more in Rudolfsgnad. In the spring and summer of 1947 my wife and both sons were bought from the Partisans to work in Beschka. In the autumn of 1947, all three of them were sent back to Rudolfsgnad.

In late autumn 1947 my wife and two sons were taken to the coal mining region of northern Serbia. They were assigned to slave labour in Rudnik Kolubara and in this way escaped from the extermination camp in Rudolfsgnad. They lived in the villages of Vreoci and Crljeni. Joseph worked in a charcoal mine while Georg loaded coal. They were there with other Danube Swabians. German prisoners of war from the Second World War were still working there in 1947 and 1948,

While in captivity in the Soviet Union it was in 1948 when I received my first letter from my wife and children after four years of not knowing if the three of them were still alive. When we met in the refugee camp in Merching on August 25, 1951, my family's seven-year painful separation came to an end. Today our four-person family has expanded to fifteen persons, with daughters-in-law, grandchildren, and their spouses and three great grandchildren.

Deportation and Captivity in Russia

We were loaded onboard freight trains in Werschetz on December 31, 1944, along with married women and single young women. Our destiny: slave labour in the Donbas (Ukraine). There was a small stove in each freight car. We left Werschetz towards noon. The convoy stopped in Vatin for quite some time. It was there that I tossed out a letter from the freight car addressed to my wife that she never received. We arrived in Temesvár at night. Sentries who were part of the Russian detachment accompanying us opened the doors of the freight cars and took two or three of the

strongest looking men with them. We were led to a slaughterhouse and each of us had to carry a half of a slaughtered pig on our backs and carry it to an empty freight car. We loaded so much pork in Temesvár that it lasted for the entire journey. Every day we received a piece of pork and a piece of bread. We fried the meat on our small stove. It took several hours before the last of us got to fry their piece of pork.

All the doors and windows were locked from outside. Our convoy stood on sidings longer than it travelled. But we were unable to tell where we were whenever we were at a siding. Once a day, the train stopped out on the open tracks. The sentries who accompanied us formed a large circle in an open field. The freight car doors were opened and everyone both men and women had to enter the circle to relieve themselves. Because we were unable to see anything outside of the freight car, I cut a hole in the wall with an old wooden handled knife. A few days later, one of the sentries noticed the hole in the wall. When we came to a longer halt at a station all of us had to get out of the freight car. He asked us who was responsible for the hole in the wall. Of course, no one admitted doing so. The result was that we all had to show him our knives, both jackknives and ordinary knives that we needed while eating and he confiscated them. But I the perpetrator was allowed to keep mine!

The journey to our destination in Casov-Jar in the Donbas of Ukraine lasted sixteen days and nights without incident. We had become accustomed to some things like sleeping on straw in the freight car. Some still had wool covers. We froze some nights. There were eighteen to twenty persons in each locked freight car weighing ten tons. There was enough room for all of us to lie down during the long journey.

On January 16, 1945, in the afternoon we arrived in Casov-Jar Juzni and had to overnight in the freight car. Juzni was a labour camp and settlement with approximately 5,000 to 6,000 workers, both men and women, carrying out demolition operations. They lived in simple, two storey houses. Four families had to share a single kitchen.

Our accommodations were street level brick barracks with a long corridor in the middle. To the right and left there were small and larger rooms. The Russian men and women workers used the water closet in our accommodations because they had none in their homes.

As we got out of the freight cars in the morning, we saw what we were in for. For a start we had to shovel faeces into wheelbarrows and then take it away. That is the reason why we had spent the night in our freight cars. Because the Russians ate bread made from oatmeal with a lot of chaff and seldom had meat, this human excrement was more like cow manure. There was a lot of chaff in it and it dried out quickly. Then of course there was the smell.

After we cleaned up the rooms the men and women were separated and placed in other barracks. The occupants had to clean their own quarters. In most cases it appeared as if they had not ever been cleaned before. When that was completed bunk beds were constructed out of wood, one on top of the other. These were our beds. We had to sleep this way for a year until by and by we had beds of our own.

After two days, this preparatory work was done, and we were divided into individual working groups. The physically strong men and women were assigned to what was known as the transport group. Using shovels and other equipment this group loaded the demolished debris into freight cars. Other groups worked in the clay pits. Several other groups were engaged in the reconstruction of the ruined city of Casov-Jar.

Most of the inmates of our camp were men and women and older teenage girls and boys from the Yugoslavian Banat, from Werschetz and its surroundings, men from the Romanian Banat as well as Transylvania Saxons both men and women.

The normal working day was twelve hours. Work was done in a daytime and nighttime shift. At the time of a shift change eighteen hours were demanded of the worker. The food and meals in the internment camp had to be purchased by each individual. Those without money got nothing to eat. The unaccustomed heavy work drove many into sickbed. Mostly because of malnutrition the women and older teenage girls failed to have their monthly periods. As early as 1945 the first of the sick and those otherwise unable to work were sent back to Yugoslavia.

Each one of the transport brigades as they were called consisted of twenty-three to twenty-five persons made up of four to five men and twenty women and girls. They were called upon to work for six days and they had the seventh day off. But sometimes it was thirteen days before they had a day off. On most occasions, four individuals in a group remained in their barrack because of illness or injuries. Sundays were just another workday.

On one occasion I worked with my brigade doing some unloading on a rainy night in Krasni. The empty freight cars only arrived around eleven o'clock and they were to be loaded at the time of the shift change at seven o'clock in the morning. Two or three persons worked to load each freight car. It rained all night. The ground became slippery, and it was like walking on soap and the wet weather did not come to a halt. At seven o'clock at the time of shift change many of the freight cars were still not loaded. We had to go on working. The day shift had already come to work and we on the night shift were still working. I could no longer just look on in the way the workers blamed one another for the mess. I put in a call to the central office that was eight kilometres away and reported that the freight trains were all loaded even though that was not true. All of us on the night shift went back to our camp. Towards noon the Camp Commander ordered me to report to him and he said, "Four to six tons of aluminium were found missing in each of your freight cars! You did not load enough! In the morning you will get a shovel and help in the loading." I was more than happy that I did not have to take more responsibility for what I had done. Two days later the Camp Commander called on me again and he said, "Georgi tomorrow you can go back to your brigade." Things like that happened to me three times in the next three years. I long feared being sent to Siberia because of my activities as a saboteur.

During my time spent in the internment camp #1004 in Casov-Jar I lived through a lot. There was a large canteen and mess in Junzi. Borsht, which is a kind of sour vegetable soup, was cooked there for the night shift because there was a shortage of meat. Because I had a telephone in Krasni I often received calls from the canteen because they needed kitchen help from among the internees to prepare for the night shift. I arranged for a woman or one of the older girls to assist them on the condition that within 24 hours she would bring me a meal in Krasni which was two kilometres

from Junzi. When we were to go on the night shift I would ask, "Girls, who is sick?" Naturally many of them responded that they were because they knew they then could work in the kitchen that night. Then I would say to one of them, "Go help in the kitchen. At midnight you must bring my meal back here in Krasni." That is how I got my borsht when I was on the night shift. When we went back to the camp after our nightshift, we passed by Junzi. The girl or woman would join us, and we would enter the camp together. The woman that had worked in the kitchen reported to me and received her money for her shift. In this way all the women and girls were freed from their nightshift working with us and were able to eat their fill working in the kitchen. We sometimes did our loading at the ramp in Junzi and at other times in Krasni. For a short time, I was left in charge of our working brigade because our brigadier (under socialism this was the title of the leader of a workers' collective) had a free day. Alongside of the four brigades of internee workers there was also a brigade made up of Russian men and women. I also had to stand in for their brigadier. The Russians obeyed all my orders without questioning them. They said that they earned more based on my reports than they did with their Russian brigadier. We wrote our reports on paper made from old cement sacks that we had to search for every day.

Whenever we achieved more than our prescribed work quota we earned a premium, either 20 to 40 grams of essential oils or American bacon. The Camp Commander received a list of names of those who qualified from the Central Office. We could redeem these premiums once a month at the government store. When we were on the night shift, I assembled my people after breakfast and went to the government store with them. We had a list of names and the earned premiums to which they were entitled that matched a similar document the government store possessed. The salespersons in the government store, all of whom were women, were poorly paid and attempted to manipulate the scales to their advantage. Fifteen to twenty persons watched the scale carefully and were quick to catch them at it. Upon closer investigation it was proven that the salespersons placed a small piece iron along with the oil or bacon on the scale providing far less of the premium than the person was entitled to. As a result, our people became more vigilant during the weighing procedure. I told one of sales ladies that I wanted to help her. I would make check mark after each name verifying the transaction so that things might move along more quickly. She agreed to that. I only pretended to do so giving just the illusion that I made a check mark on the paper. I did this for four or five transactions. After all my workers had received their oil or bacon to which they were entitled that day I told the sales lady that there were four of five workers who were sick and could not come for their premiums. I said I would like to take their oil and bacon with me. They were the names on the list for which I had not applied a check mark. In this way the sales ladies' plan to defraud us backfired to their own detriment.

For several months I was put in charge of a brigade of twenty-five to thirty Japanese prisoners of war none of whom spoke Russian. There was a Japanese Captain among them, who was a medical doctor and spoke Russian. He did not have to work because he served as my interpreter. I gave him my orders to the Captain in Russian and he passed them on in Japanese to the brigade. There were always three Russian sentries with rifles at the ready who accompanied the Japanese. The Japanese received their noon meal from the field kitchen. It came from the Japanese prisoner of war camp. That was not the case in terms of us who were interned. When the Japanese were willing to work things went well. But often they were amenable to do so.

One day a locomotive improperly positioned a freight car. There were four sorts of aluminum oxide, and the various sorts could not be mixed. To load this empty freight car, the car had to be moved by hand for about ten metres. I explained that to the captain. The captain said the same to the Japanese prisoners. The Japanese all gathered to push the freight car. One of the Japanese shouted, "Push!" in Japanese. However, the freight car did not move because they only pretended to push it. They looked at me and smiled. I had to contact the Central Office to send another locomotive.

When the Japanese worked well, they received an additional 100 grams of rice in the prisoner of war camp. This worked out well for several days until the Japanese discovered that what they received was taken from the allotment of rice for the other prisoners. The next day the field kitchen came with the noon meal for the Japanese. None of the twenty-five men came to get their meal. The three Russian sentries wanted to use force to make the men go to the field kitchen. The Japanese encircled the sentry detail so that they could not move. The field kitchen had to return to the prisoner of war camp with all the unclaimed meals. That was the end of rewarding the Japanese for their good work. They stuck together through thick and thin which was not the case when it came to our own prisoners of war.

It was only in 1946 that we were allotted beds in our rooms. About eight or ten men from our convoy shared a room. On one occasion we had to begin to load aluminium oxide at midnight. The men in our room were assigned to three different transport brigades. Those of us who were on the midnight shift had gone to bed right after our evening meal. I hung my coat that contained my wallet and money at the upper end of my bed. Everyone in the room knew that my wallet was in the inside pocket of my coat. We got up at eleven o'clock to get washed up and get ourselves ready for work. I could not find my comb or my wallet. I immediately told my men that someone had stolen my wallet with its 170 Rubles. Nothing like this had ever happened before. No one in our room had ever stolen anything. We had to go out on our shift but when we came back from our shift the next day I would look into things. In our room of eight to ten men where all in a transport brigade except for one man. The stolen wallet was all the talk during the work shift. After we can back after work, we puzzled about who could have stolen the wallet. The verdict was that it must have been the man who was not assigned to a transport brigade. My men lay hold of the man, one of them had a knife in hand to carry out the verdict. Despite numerous beatings the man claimed his innocence. Since we could not come to any certain conclusion, we lay hands on him and beat him until he urinated in his pants. Two men held the shoemaker in check and the others prepared to join in when he admitted to the theft.

At the beginning of 1947 we worked on a loading ramp in Junzi with my brigade that consisted of three to four men and fourteen to sixteen women and girls unloading aluminum oxide. A Russian oversaw the loading ramps in Krasni, Junzi and Livanewski. He was an employee of the transport division in Casov-Jar where our Central Office was located and where he lived with his wife and their three children in a workers' settlement in Junzi in a dwelling that had a kitchen and one room. He told me that he had been an officer in the Soviet Army and participated in the taking of Berlin. He had carried off some clothing and women's stockings from a home in Berlin and sent them home to the Soviet Union. In one pair of stockings, he had hidden a woman's watch that his wife later found after receiving the parcel.

One night, just after going on night shift to Junzi our Loading Commandant came to me and said, "Georg, you're going to help me carry a sack of coal to my dwelling from here tonight. Then after we'll eat a good meal together." The Commandant also happened to be the Party Secretary of the Communist Party in Junzi where approximately 15,000 to 20,000 workers lived. Our camp was also there.

Towards midnight while my workers were busy doing the loading, we filled two sacks with coal and carried them for about 400 to 500 metres to his home. The dwelling was poorly lit and poorly furnished. His wife lay abed under a Russian fur blanket with two small children in an iron bed. The third child lay beside the bed on a fur pelt on the floor. A small bookshelf made of raw wood with a few books stood in a corner of the room. The Party Secretary placed a kettle with about one litre of sunflower oil on the floor along with some bread. We ate the bread and spooned up the oil. After we ate, we returned to the loading ramp.

The loaded trucks were driven up the ramp that measured three to four metres in height and two hundred and fifty metres in length. The ramp was constructed of wood. During the winter the Russian workers chopped off portions of the ramp with picks and axes to take home to heat their homes. In the spring the ramps had to be repaired.

It was already the summer of 1947. The three loading ramps in Junzi, Krasni and Livanewski were supervised and directed by three comptrollers from the Transportation Department. Two or three times each shift all three of them appeared. This created several problems for us. One of them was also the Party Secretary. The second comptroller lived twelve kilometres away from our workplace. He asked me if I would go home with him on my free day and mow his grass with a scythe. He had to get permission from the Russian Camp Commander who agreed to do so.

This comptroller had become a prisoner of war of the Germans during the Second World War. He had worked on a farm in Niederbayern (Lower Bavaria). It was an isolated farm. The comptroller told me that each Sunday he had to harness two horses and hitch them to a carriage so the farm and his wife could go to church in the next village. The farmer regularly paid him 2 Marks. Whenever he spoke about the time he spent as a prisoner of war his mind seemed to be set on another world. When he was released from captivity in 1945 and returned to Russia and moved in with a woman and her six children. He was dissatisfied with his life in Russia and wanted to leave. He often said to me, "Georgi come let's get out of here. While in Russia I'll take the lead and I'm sure we'll get through. In Germany you'll have to take over." I told him I was homeless because the Yugoslavian Partisans had driven my wife and children out of our house and imprisoned them in an extermination camp, while my 65-year-old father had been shot in the extermination camp in Werschetz. I told him I would be a stranger in Germany just like him because I had never set foot there. I wouldn't for a moment know where I was or where we were going. He seemed to take in what I said and answered, "Whenever you change your mind let me know because I will always be ready to go with you."

At the beginning of October 1947, I ended up in Jama a prisoner of war camp. We never heard from one another again.

The shoemaker went through half of the money he had stolen from me. The money he had left over he had sown into his overcoat. I did not care about the money, but I had two photographs of my sons Josef and Georg wrapped in cellophane in my wallet. They were the only photographs that I still had of my family. The shoemaker had to retrieve my wallet from the toilet and clean it up. Both photographs were unharmed, and I have them to this day. The shoemaker didn't have any money because he did not go after regular work and had tried to get money in another way. He had joined a shift on its way to work but claimed to be sick around eleven o'clock and came back and stole my wallet.

It was still the summer of 1947. I was with a transport brigade back at loading material on the ramp in Junzi. We were on the night shift and while my brigade was busy with the loading of the freight train, I used the cover of darkness to search for something edible to eat in the near vicinity of the ramp. Around two hundred to three metres away from the ramp I found a garden with by a small clay house. There were potatoes, cucumbers and corn growing the garden. I picked one of the cucumbers and returned to the loading ramp. I told several girls that I had found something to eat, and they should go and help themselves. This went along well for two or three nights. The next night the owner of the garden, a Russian, lay in wait. The girls had dug up several potatoes, picked some cucumbers and corn cobs when the Russian chased them and shouted after them. Under the cover of darkness, the girls were able to escape with their loot. On coming back to the loading ramp, they stuffed the potatoes, cucumbers and corn cobs in their outer jackets and went back to work. In the morning, just before the shift was about to end the owner of the garden in the company two policemen came to the loading ramp and asked me if I had not noticed that some of my workers had been missing during the night which naturally, I adamantly denied. They policemen searched through the jackets that the girls had left out on the ramp before going back to work and found the potatoes, cucumbers, and cobs of corn. They confiscated everything and they took the three girls to the camp and turned them over to the Camp Commander stating the charges against them. Meanwhile our night shift ended, and we went back to the camp ourselves.

At nine o'clock in the morning the Camp Commander, a Russian Major, had all the inmates of the camp including our night shift, as well as all others who were not working to assemble in the courtyard. The three girls stood in the centre of the courtyard. The Camp Commander began with a speech about theft and robbery, threatened the girls with exile to Siberia, then scolded and spit at them. At the conclusion of his tirade, he suggested that they should heed my example for he was certain I would never steal. It would have been easy for the girls to say that I had sent them out to steal and they would have a defence. In that moment I thought to myself, "Now it's my turn. The girls are going to betray me." Not a single word was spoken by any of the three of them. They stood as if made of stone in the centre of the courtyard and accepted the scolding and threats with pursed lips. That something like this was possible during our captivity was rather unique. To their good fortune the received only one day of punishment and sent out on the next night shift. One of the girls came from Setschanfeld and two from Zichydorf: Leni K., Katie A. and Evi P. All three of them survived their internment in Russia and are alive today living in the West German Republic.

During my internment I read the Russian daily newspaper "Pravda". In addition to reading about the liquidation of the "Führer" of the German Folk Group in Hungary, Dr. Franz Basch, by a firing

squad in 1946, I also read about the expulsion of the Danube Swabian population living in Hungary.

About that time, I cannot remember for certain whether it was in 1946 or1947, the Soviet government made a public appeal to underwrite outstanding government loans. All Russian workers were ordered to do so. In order to enforce compliance "Natschalniks" (government goons of sorts) were sent to all workplaces to talk individually with the workers to accomplish the government's aims. This government stooge asked the workers about their monthly pay, which was about 1,000 to 1,200 rubles. The sum of up to 100 rubles was to be deducted monthly from their wages. One after another were spoken to sign to underwrite the government loan to the tune of 1,200 rubles a year in twelve monthly payments of 100 rubles. The Russian worker said, "No!" In response the government goon said menacingly, "Fine! Next month you are off to slave labour in Siberia!" Without much further encouragement the worker replied, "Give me the pen to sign up." In this way the government problem was solved. Several months later I read that according to "Pravda" the government loan had been liquidated by millions upon millions of rubles that had been underwritten by the public. The report never indicated the way they had gone about doing so.

There is something else that needs to be known about the internment camps. One day I received a call from the Director of the Transport Division (which involved 1,600 workers both men and women) and he said to me, "Georgi, our division along with six other designated formations have been invited to a conference by the Senior Director to be held in Casov-Jar tomorrow morning at ten o'clock. You are also included. We will meet at the office of the Senior Director. As ordered, I went from Junzi to Casov-Jar. There I met my director along with six other Russians. A sentry, who was a civilian, held a gun and stood in front of the Senior Director's inner office, a man who lorded it over 20,000 workers both men and women. The office had double doors. The inner door was soundproof. The Senior Director sat at a large desk the largest I had ever seen up until then (the summer of 1947). There was a globe 40 centimetres in diameter on the desk, several maps were on the wall, and very large pictures of Stalin. Lenin and other Russian dignitaries were on display. On our entry we were greeted and invited to be seated on the leather armchairs in the room. They were the only leather armchairs I ever saw during my internment and captivity in the Soviet Union. The Senior Director quickly came to the point. He wanted to deal with the fact that the work quotas of the interned workers were not being met at least from his vantage point. He wanted to know why they could not meet the work quotas when they were already receiving 600 to 800 grams of bread per day. At this point I need to mention that bread was rationed in the Soviet Union until November 1947. It often happened that Russians had to stand in line for one to two hours in order to get their bread ration. When the available bread ran out there would still be 30 or 40 people who would have to go home without any. The saleslady would say, "There is no more bread. There will be more tomorrow." On the black market at that time bread sold for 120 rubles per kilogram. For a normal worker this was unattainable. All eight of us remained silent none of us could come up with a plausible answer. He then addressed the question to me directly. I told him that there were many of the internees who were unaccustomed or fit for such heavy work and became sick as a result. The interned women and girls were not fit for this kind of work. We were with the Senior Director for around thirty minutes, but no one came up with a solution to the problem.

After the conference ended and we were on way back my Camp Commander said, “Georgi,” and then pointed to his left ear, “it goes in here,” and then pointed to right ear, “and goes out here. Come on, let us have some vodka.” That is how we solved the matter. I then went back to the camp in Junzi.

There were ten to twelve men housed in our room, among whom two Transylvania Saxons, three men from the Romanian Banat and one from the Sudetendland. He was a low-level officer of the Waffen-SS who abandoned his uniform for civilian clothes and in this way was able to survive the downfall of the Reich but still ended up with us in Camp 1004 in Cascov-Jar. The rest of the men were from the Yugoslavian Banat. The name of German from the Sudetenland was Kurt. I have forgotten his family name. We became separated from one another at the end of September 1947, and I never heard from him again. That is when I ended up in the prisoner of war camp in Jama, but I will speak about that later.

In the evening, after our day shift ended Kurt and I would sing together in our room after supper. Our room had bunk beds and the others lay down on them and listened to us. The great majority of the men were married and had wives and children back home. Our songs awakened the homesickness they harboured. In their thoughts they were back home with their loved ones. They often asked us to sing something for them. They were so tired from the hard work demanded of them and soon fell asleep.

At the beginning of October 1947, the adjutant of the Camp Commander, a Russian Second Lieutenant, sent word to see him. He said, “Georgi, you were with the Waffen-SS.” My quick response was, “Yes.” At first, he astonished that I had admitted it so quickly. Since I bore the blood type B tattoo on my left arm my lying about it would have been of no use. The adjutant spoke kindly when he said, “Georgi, don’t worry about it, you are being sent to a prisoner of war camp. Things there will be better for you than what goes on here.” The adjutant proved to be right. Three men from among us were sent to the prisoner of war camp in Jama which was one hundred kilometres away where we mined granite. This began a new series of life experiences for me in the Soviet Union.

On our arrival at the prisoner of war camp in Jama, the pants and jackets that we had bought in the bazaar in Casov-Jar were taken away from us. In return we received old torn military clothes. Immediately the next day I went to work. We had to break down granite all day with pickaxes. It was dangerous work because a layer of clay had to be avoided that could crash down on us. I was glad that after several weeks I was transferred to the prisoner of war camp in Krematorsk. We worked there in a foundry. It was deadly work. We had to produce material out of iron ore, magnesium, scrap iron and cast iron, coke and garnet and place the result into two wheeled iron barrows and push them 100 metres to the “Katze” which was suspended from a hoist above the blast furnace. The material was then poured into the 20-metre-high blast furnace.

At that time (November 1947) bread could be bought without a ration card. A loaf of bread was 20 centimetres long and 12 centimetres high and wide and weighed two kilograms. I always bought two loaves (four kilograms) and they lasted to the end of a shift with some left over about one kilogram. I ate three kilograms in the space of two hours while working. Some workers ate as much as four to five kilograms in two or three hours.

The operators of the blast furnaces were Russians but because of illness they became few and so the prisoners of war had to help out. The blast furnaces were set ablaze twice a day. The glowing iron spilled into sand-based gutters for ten metres into a deep standing container wagon wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. It was molten iron that would be made into iron rods or steel. A heavy crust and foam formed on the flowing molten iron. The Russians and I had to remove it with long tongs and discard it. One day when we were working with the tongs mine got stuck. Had the Russian standing behind me not held on to me I would have fallen into the gutter with the fiery molten iron. The Russian was my rescuer.

The prisoner of war camp in Krematorsk was set up in a former electrical works. It was a three-storey building, 80 to 90 metres long and 30 metres wide. It was largely open space right up to the roof. Up on the ridge of the roof there were several openings that were constructed to assist in circulating the air. At one end of the building there were about twenty water faucets over a vat. Around 1,200 men slept in three tier bunk beds in one room. The water faucets dripped constantly. It seemed to be coming and going all night. The men had to go up a wide iron staircase from where our beds stood to go to the toilets. These were the worst accommodations I experienced in my five years in Russia.

One morning in March of 1948 I awoke with a chill. Despite that I wanted to go to work. The shivering became so severe that the tobacco I tried to apply to the cigarette paper fell to the ground. I finally went to the doctor. I was admitted to the military hospital with a 40-degree fever. Previously I had to bathe in cold water that led to the chill. I lay in bed in the military hospital with a lung infection and during the first eight days I had a fever of 40 to 41 degrees. I couldn't eat anything not even some fine white bread. The doctor, who was a fellow prisoner, Dr. Müller from Breslau, gave me injections along with vodka. When the Russian doctor came to see me, he spoke in Russian to Dr. Muller and said that I needed to be taken to where the dying were being kept. In response Dr. Müller said, "The man stays here!" Dr. Ladno said, "Fine but you will answer for it." I lay in agony for one to two hours. As I came to consciousness, I thought to myself, "You survived the shootings in Werschetz and now you are going to leave your bones in Russia? No, not even as a dead person will I stay here!" My will to live won out and I began to improve.

In the fourth week of my stay in the military hospital I was visited by some of my countrymen. It was a Birg from Setschanfeld and Beregsasi from Zichydorf. They came from a much larger prisoner of war camp. They were both wearing new clothes because they were being released from captivity and were being sent to Germany. The sat on my bed and begged Dr. Müller to see if I could be released along with them. They were prepared to carry me along the journey. Dr. Müller sat down next to me on my bed and said, "Do you want to arrive at home, a dead man?" He then added that he guaranteed that once I was well, I would be immediately released. I can't describe in words how I felt as my countrymen went home, and I had to stay behind.

Later, I often thought about my situation at that time. As a prisoner of war, Dr. Müller certainly had no possibility of having any say in the matter of my release. He helped me a great deal just by his encouraging words. Shortly after, my countrymen and the other remaining prisoners were not released but were transferred to our camp. Later they were transferred again to a Romanian

prisoner of war camp. The Romanians stole everything they had. They were only released at the end of 1949.

My return to health moved along quickly. Dr. Müller made me the military hospital's cook. I worked at night. During my illness my feet and thighs retained water. Because I slept on the top tier of my bunk bed, I took a pail with me to serve as a urinal. When I got up there would be anywhere from eight to nine litres of urine.

As the night cook, I only had to prepare breakfast for fifty to sixty patients in the military hospital. I also had to distribute the evening meal. I was allotted one and half to two kilograms of meat for around sixty patients. The meat had to be cooked all night so that no more meat was visible in the morning. My predecessor added some flour and a bit of margarine and stirred it into the broth in the morning. The result was a cloudy thick broth. I baked "Lőffelküchle" (literally spoon balls) with flour and water. The margarine was so watery that the last of the spoon balls were burned to the frying pan. I punched some holes using a nail into a can of American preserves to make some "Riebele" (noodle dough). I worked the white flour and water forming a firm dough along with the preserves poured out of the holes of the can. The resulting "Riebele" were cooked in the soup to be served at breakfast. The patients were very pleased with my new-fangled breakfast.

After a month I was relieved of my job as the cook in the military hospital having recovered from my illness and was well. I could no longer do the job now that I was healthy. The water issues with my legs disappeared and did not re-appear in the next year and a half of my life as a prisoner of war.

In June of 1948 the camps for war criminals were brought into existence in the Soviet Union. All prisoners of war who were in the Waffen-SS; were explosive experts or served as military police as well as men who served in units fighting against the Partisans and yet still others were transferred to these newly formed war criminal camps. Approximately three hundred prisoners from our camp were among them including myself.

One day in June of 1948 we had to assemble in the prison courtyard. We were frisked and the bit we had was taken away from us. On this occasion the last roll call of mail for prisoners that had been received was read out. My name was of those read out. It was the first news I received from my wife and children that I received while in Russia. I began to cry that after four years I finally had word of my family and learned of their situation.

The Russians said that they had no prisoners of war from Yugoslavia and that is why there had been no mail for us. I had written to my countryman Heinrich Schleicher in Oberndorf in Austria, whose address was given to me by his son while I was in the internment camp. Schleicher sentt my letter in another envelop to my wife in Yugoslavia. This contact with my wife and children was from several months past. Whenever a prisoner of war was transferred to another camp, he no longer received any mail. The leadership of the Russian camps destroyed the mail of those who had been transferred. No mail was forwarded. That was also true of any packages sent to prisoners of war. There were several hundred packages in the central post office in Stalino.

Now back to our transfer to the camp for war criminals. We travelled by freight train within twenty-five kilometres of the camp for war criminals. It was late at night when we were "unloaded". The guards told us that we would spend the night in the open field around the tracks. The trucks to take us to the camp would arrive the next morning. We lay down on the ground next to one another and slept like that until the next morning. The trucks came the next day and drove us to Providanka. Up until our arrival it had been a normal prisoner of war camp. After our arrival the prisoners there were transferred to other camps. During the month of July in 1948 more convoys arrived with more so-called war criminals. It would be the best prisoner of war camp I was in while in Russia. Here we earned the most money and operettas like the "Csardas Princess" were performed. In addition to the Germans there were about two hundred Hungarian prisoners of war.

In Providanka I met more men from the Banat who served in the Prince Eugene Division as well as many from the last division in which I served "Florian Geyer". Camp Providanka provided prisoners of war to work in the "Red Star" coal mine and its reconstruction. Many others removed rubble and ruins around the mine.

My first workplace while in Camp Providanka was in the "Red Star" coal mine. We worked in both day and night shifts for twelve hours. In effect that meant fifteen hours each shift: a thirty-minute walk from the camp to the mine shaft and then it was about four kilometres to our workplace, then work for twelve hours and about another one hour walk underground before the final thirty minute walk back to the camp. That amounts to fifteen hours per shift. Along with three other men we had to operate a two-metre-long electric drill pushed along a sled that in total weighed forty-nine kilograms. We had to bore holes two metres deep into the coal seam to break it loose.

One day my drill short circuited and tossed me four or five metres. Following that incident, I decided to do everything I could so that I would no longer have to work in the mine. Shortly after, there was a major accident. There was always the danger that the buttresses would not hold and there were times when the only way to stop a runaway lorry was to stick an iron rod into the back wheels.

A young nineteen-year-old prisoner of war who was captured when he was sixteen worked with us in our section. He was to couple a lorry coming from another section to another that stood waiting to be sent onwards. He leaned on the stationary lorry when another lorry rushed forward at a great speed. Its security system made up of iron and wooden brakes was broken causing it to gather speed. The waiting young prisoner of war was crushed between the two lorries. He suffered extensive abdominal injuries. We laid him out on the ground until we could make a stretcher to carry him to the mine shaft. It took four men three hours to get him there. The young man, however, survived the accident.

After this accident I never went back in the coal mine. That was in August 1948. I would take any other job so as not to have to go back and work in the coal mine again. So, I came to work with various iron workers with various skills engaged in the reconstruction of the destroyed mine equipment and armaments.

We worked with first class steel as well as softer steel. We did not have a set of iron shears and so we had to use an iron chisel and hammer to cut the iron in the proper lengths. Because I could read and write in Russian, I was put in charge of a crew of the twelve to fourteen iron workers. This kind of equipment refurbishing was like child's play for me. The following is what helped me out. We had large numbers of German prisoners of war who were now war criminals who in civilian life had been construction engineers. They directed the reconstruction and there were three or four of them. Each had a building with sixty to seventy prisoners working with them.

One day a German construction engineer, who was a prisoner, came to me with a design and said, "Apparently you speak Russian. Read the captions on this design and translate it in German for me." From the drawing he could figure out what to do but the captions were what interested him. I told him I had a problem with the design. I could figure out most of it, but I did not know what the periods and dashes in the cross sections meant. I translated the captions for him, and he taught me how to make sense of the drawings and designs.

The precast iron that we received in 100-kilogram cylinders that had a diameter of six, eight, ten and twelve millimetres was rolled out and bent and then cut to the right length. All the twelve to fourteen men working under me were from various military ranks, from privates to a captain awarded the golden "Deutschen Kreuz" (German Cross). The officers among the prisoners of war in including the captain had to work in the war criminal camp in Providanka.

We maintained good relationships among us. Whenever the Russian "Natschelnik" (a Communist official) needed money he would come to me and say, "Georgi, have you got thirty rubles for a bottle of vodka? If you do, you can write 140 or 150% production output for yourself today." He always got the money from me. I told the men in my crew that I would give each of them two to three rubles if they would not talk about it. As skilled workers the iron workers received 27 rubles each workday if they met 100% of their quota. Because we usually met 150% of our quota every day, we earned between forty and fifty rubles. As I mentioned previously it was while working in the war criminal camp that we earned the most money. We had a monthly income of up to 1,200 rubles. They deducted 456 rubles monthly for our meals, clothing, and accommodations. We received the remainder in two or three installments and the highest amount was 300 rubles. No installment was ever more than 300 rubles.

The clearinghouse must have come to the realization that the iron workers were never below their assigned quotas. In this regard a Russian construction engineer had to verify and review my report as it pertained to the securing and the laying down of a steel ceiling. The Russian had gone ahead with the work without reference to the weight steel I had proposed or had even seen my report. The woman had decided that what was required to complete the project was 0.6 tons of construction steel while in my report I had stipulated 0.5 tons. Her report indicated the need for 100 kilograms of construction steel more than mine. From then on, I was never questioned again.

From among my twelve to fourteen workers there was a man from Karlsdorf named Joseph Urban who had served in the Prince Eugene Division. During the daytime he worked with us during the night cook in the camp kitchen. On most occasions I gave him lighter work to do. He had to spool bailing wire and wrap to be wrapped around the steel. He could do the job sitting down. He often

fell asleep while doing so. We let him sleep for awhile. We only woke if one of the supervisors appeared.

Two or three times a week I went so far as to allow one of my men to go back to camp even though he did not have a free day. In my report he would be listed as having worked that day.

Four Russian soldiers with dogs served as guards on our march to our workplace and while we were working. When we made the return journey to camp the sentries asked us to sing German marching songs. While we sang our guards marched with us proud as punch.

We had very good relationships with the Russians who worked with us in both the construction projects and in the coal mine. It was not like that at the beginning. They had heard that we were war criminals. For that reason, the Russian civilian workers distanced themselves from us. This lasted for two or three months, and we then had better relationships with them then they had when working with the former prisoners of war. Things got to the point where we war criminals would lend money to the Russian civilian workers towards the end of the month so that they could buy bread. We got our money back when they received their next wages. The Russian civilian workers were paid twice a month. The first was an advance and the second was based on whether they had met their quota or not and if not, they had to put in another eight days of work. That is when the war criminals came to their aid with their loans.

This is the way it was with the Russian civilians: when they had money the first thing they would buy was one or two bottles of vodka. If there was smoked bacon, they also bought a piece of bacon because the two belonged together. Vodka was drunk from 0.2 litre glasses as well as ordinary drinking glasses. I never saw anything else during my time in the Soviet Union. These glasses served as a measure when buying milk, corn flour, sunflower seeds, tobacco, and all kinds of other items. Officially we were war criminals but in the eyes of the Russians we were no longer that. They told us, "You're going to stay here forever. You will never be released to go back home." We in turn said to them, "Then we will eat your white bread and you will only have your barley bread to eat that is moist and heavy." In response they scolded us with the obligatory "Job..." indicating that we were right.

The Russians west of the Urals are a good-natured kind of people. I experienced that myself. One day when it was near the end of a shift, I was ironing on an improvised steel workbench. A rather old Russian about 70 years of age approached me. I asked him what he was doing here. He could no longer work, and his hands were shaking notably. He said he was the night watchman stationed here. He had to do this to live because there was no such thing as a pension and had to earn some money. He had a piece of bread and two tomatoes in his satchel. They were his evening meal. He came up to me and gave me his piece of bread and said, "Take my bread the two tomatoes will suffice for me." He was already old. I was still young and needed to eat so that I could one day return home to my family.

In December of 1948 the prisoners who were eligible for a free day after six or thirteen workdays were ordered to report to the camp courtyard to help with the potato harvest. There were about sixty men from our camp. We were taken by truck to a collective farm where several hundred hectares of the finest potatoes were waiting to be harvested. The ground was frozen, and we had

to use picks and small stakes to dig out the potatoes. They were very fine potatoes. Some were so big that you could make a whole meal out of it. Naturally all of us wanted to take as many potatoes as possible with us back to the camp. We were frisked at the camp gate. The guards on duty filled four sacks of potatoes that they took from the sixty men. Despite that we managed to sneak in another full sack into the camp.

The winter of 1948/49 was terribly cold. We had to work outdoors when the temperature was 40 degrees below Celsius. When it was 40 degrees below at seven o'clock in the morning we waited until eight or nine o'clock. Even if it was 39 degrees below then we had to go to work. It was a dry kind of cold. At that temperature we did not get wet feet because our shoes were frozen and now snow became attached to them.

Twice a year we were physically examined to determine our fitness to work. It went like this: a corpulent Russian women doctor sat on a stool and next to her was a clerk seated at a table who had to write the name and physical status and health of each person. In the winter it took place in the dining hall and in the summer out in the camp courtyard. We had to strip naked and one after another appeared before the doctor. She felt the man from left to right with both hands first from the front and then in German she said, "Turn around!" and did the same from behind. Then came the diagnosis directed to the clerk. It was a matter of 1, 2, or 3 workers' group or oK (not enough strength). The numerals indicated that the men were sufficiently able bodied to work. The oK group were unable to work due to sickness. They were called "Distrophiker".

The men who were designed oK received better provisions so that they could later go back to work. The war criminal camp had about 1,100 prisoners. From the middle of 1948 until our release at the end of 1949 about 80 of the men died. It was only in mid March of 1948 that the deaths were registered. At the burial of the deaf we were permitted to erect a wooden cross with the prisoner's identity number written on it. Afterwards the last resting place of the prisoners of war had more significant memorials erected. In the late summer of 1949, we first heard that the hour of our freedom would soon be sounding.

Every three months we were allowed to write prisoner of war post card to our families, but we could not mention if anyone had died. If we did, the post card was destroyed.

At the beginning of 1949 an election was held in our camp for the position of Camp Elder. It had to be someone who had previously been in a prisoner of war camp. The Camp Elder held the highest position among the prisoners in the camp. He was subordinate to the Camp Commander. The prisoners were free to report any cases of their being mistreated to the Camp Elder as well as their wish or desire to become part of another working group. Three candidates were put forward. The first candidate was a communist from the Ruhr region whose name I have forgotten. The second was a teacher from Witzenhausen whose name was Maraun and the third was Georg Basch from Zichydorf in the Yugoslavian Banat. The voting took place in the dining hall of the camp. The communist from the Ruhr region received only a few votes. Maraun, the teacher received a few more. I received the overwhelming majority of the votes. I don't know the reason why or what was behind their choice that I received the most votes. The Russian major who oversaw the election later said to me, following the obligatory Russian "Job", "You are not a German from the Reich and yet they still voted for you. But you are their choice and democracy rules here." From

that moment on I no longer had to go to work. I was given the office of the former Camp Elder about twelve square metres as well as stipend that was about the same as my former earnings. The duty of the Camp Elder was to take the load off prisoners of war as long as it did not interfere with their work and work schedule. I had to be present when the prisoners of war were being paid to ensure that they received the proper amount. I always had to drive to Stalino with one of the military officers from the camp to pick up the mail and any parcels for our damp from the central post office. That is why I precisely knew all there was to know about the prisoners' mail and parcels. The Russian officer from the camp that drove with me to Stalino always told me, "Georgi take along a bottle of vodka and we can drink it together in my room later. If you give me the bottle all the others will want to have a drink."

Because I could speak Russian quite well, I had to act as translator twice a week in the dining hall after supper at the political lectures that were given. We had two political officers at our camp, one a major and another a second lieutenant both of whom were Russians. In addition, we also had four to five other Russian officers who spoke German quite well who were from the KNVD (Soviet Secret Police) who interrogated the prisoners of war; that is the war criminals. Every evening after work ten to twelve prisoners of war were questioned about their activities in Russia during the war and in which cities they served and were asked what the nature of their duties was. Those who had belonged to the Waffen-SS all had their blood type tattooed on the inside of their left arm. Instead of the tattoo one man had a scar. He was interrogated for hours and locked up until he admitted he had been in the Waffen-SS even though that was not truth. They then left him alone.

Political lectures were given two or three times a week to convert the war criminals to communism. Every evening after the evening meal the day shift had to remain in the dining hall. These educational events lasted about one and a half hours. In most cases these lectures were given by younger second lieutenant. I had to interpret what he said in Russian into German. Most of the prisoners of war fell asleep during these lectures because they were exhausted from working all day. I interpreted like this for months on end without respite.

One evening at the beginning of 1949 the second lieutenant held a lecture. To a great degree his audience in the dining hall had fallen asleep. A rumour was going around in the camp that within a year or two we could count on being released from captivity. Later I could not figure out how to interpret what he meant when he said, "The second lieutenant would love to tell you when you will be able to go home but he doesn't know himself." The prisoners of war who had been listening began to laugh and chuckle. Others awoke and joined in the laughter. The second lieutenant looked at me in total surprise and asked me why everyone was laughing. I replied that I did not know. I had interpreted exactly what he had said. He shook his head a certain sign he was not satisfied with my response. After this short incident the lecture went on as normal but now everyone was wide awake in the dining hall after hearing about going home. After the conclusion of his lecture the second lieutenant had me report to him and he said, "What did you have me say in your interpretation that made the prisoners laugh? You have double crossed me! The NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) officer, Lieutenant Gurin who understands German perfectly was unnoticed while sitting in the back of the dining hall and told me everything." I replied, "Comrade Lieutenant then you do know when."

From that day on I no longer had to act as interpreter at his lectures. My successor was a former Special Combat Führer who was a prisoner of war in our camp. From then on, there was always a NKVD officer present at the political lectures. Shortly after the incident, talk continued to go around in our camp that we would be released soon.

There is another incident I would like to share so that it will not be forgotten. Prefabricated wooden houses from the Eastern Zone of Germany were delivered in 1948 and 1949. These shipments consisted of twenty to thirty freight cars of manufactured partitions. The windows in the partitions were provided with glass. The train stopped on an open stretch of track where a future small city was to be constructed in the future. We were driven to the freight train in trucks at ten or eleven o'clock at night to unload the cargo. Eight to ten men had to unload a freight car within an hour so that train traffic would not be held up. We threw the partitions from the freight cars so that the glass in the windows was shattered. The main point was we finished the job in an hour. The empty freight train could go on ahead. We took many of the wooden panels that had been used in packing the partitions back to our camp to make suitcases. The Russian civilian workers stole many of them as well. We later heard that the Russians could only set up two of every three prefabricated houses. The rest of them disappeared.

Release from our Captivity as Prisoners of War

Towards the autumn of 1949 the Russian Commandant of our camp disclosed that we would soon be going home. He further indicated that there would textile products for sale in the canteen. Everyone should buy new underwear, socks and clothing so that they would not arrive in Germany in rags. In the last weeks before our release the Russian commander was present at every distribution of wages. He said we should gather funds to buy large portraits of Stalin, Lenin and other Russian statesmen to decorate our freight car. The prisoners of war began to buy cigarettes for the journey home. They were the cigarettes without filter tips that the Russians would not buy. Many of the prisoners bought three to four thousand of these kinds of cigarettes and after our release took them with them back to Germany. At the time of our release shortly before Christmas 1949 we received a pair of new shoes, new cotton trousers and cotton jackets. Several days before our departure around 200 of the men from among the 1.100 to 1,200 prisoners of war in camp Providanka were transferred to another camp. Their captivity would last another year or two before they were released through the efforts and intervention of Konrad Adenaur the chancellor of West Germany. The war criminal camp Providanka was dismantled following our release.

Shortly before our departure a Russian lieutenant came up to me and said, "Georgi, give me 30 rubles for a bottle of vodka. You're going home and we have to stay here." I gave him the 30 rubles out of a sense of joy of our release from five years of captivity as a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union.

We were taken by truck to the next camp that had a train station, and we were loaded onboard freight cars. We travelled in the direction of Brest-Litowsk, which we reached after several days. On arrival there we had to disembark along with our luggage because that is where the wide railway lines ended.

In Brest-Litowsk our luggage and possessions were examined once more, and we were interrogated. We were taken a 40-metre-long barrack with rows of tables. We had to strip down naked and place our clothes and self-made suitcases on the table. We had to hold our shoes in our hands. Russian soldiers stood behind the tables in white mantels and searched through our suitcases. Photographs to a great extent were taken away from us as well as many other things. They left us our clothing, laundry items and cigarettes. Three other convoys of prisoners of war arrived in Brest-Litowsk that day and the men went through the same procedures as we had.

Before our train convoy set out from Brest-Lowsk on the normal European track system in the direction of Poland and Germany, 4,000 prisoners of war were all assembled in an immense courtyard for a final round of speeches. The first speaker was a Russian officer who spoke in Russian. On the orders of our Political officer, I had to go to the microphone to speak a few final words in German to the prisoners. It was the first time in my life that I addressed so many prisoners of war. In the name of my comrades, I offered my thanks for our release from captivity. I said that we would never join in a war against the Soviet Union again. Following that we boarded the freight cars and headed across Poland to Germany. On Christmas Eve in 1949 we passed through Warsaw. It was the first time we heard church bells ringing in five years. Our political officers accompanied us until we reached Frankfurt-an-Oder. In Frankfurt-an-Odor we had to register for the Zone where we wanted to go. Those who were without a homeland were to remain in the Russian Zone.

During our journey out of captivity from Providanka to Frankfurt-an-Oder the Russians provided us with conserved American blood and liver sausage as our source of nutrition.

Those who were without a homeland faced a major problem. We were very happy about our release from our captivity as prisoners of war but where were we supposed to find a new home because an actual homecoming was not possible for us. My wife and both sons were working as slave labourers in the coal mines of Kolubara in northern Serbia.

I registered myself for Bavaria because it lay close to our old homeland in the Banat. We rode in freight trains in the direction of Bavaria. We passed through Leipzig. Along the way we often stopped for long periods of time in small stations to stay out of the way of regular traffic. During these stopovers small children approached our freight cars and said, “Uncle, do you have any bread?” We tossed bread out of the freight cars towards the children. They expressed their joy in receiving our bread that for them was a blessing.

At the border with Bavaria, we all had to get out of the freight cars. Our names were called out and we had to step forward and present our Russian release document. We had to go on foot across the border to Bavaria. There were still three of us held back by the Russians. They were not permitted to journey home to Germany with us.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW HOME IN OUR OLD HOMELAND

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We travelled by train from the border to the camp for returning prisoners of war in Hof Moschendorf in Bavaria. In Moschendorf we were given two pairs of underwear, stockings, a suit,

and coat. Many of our comrades were picked up there by their relatives, parents, wives and/or siblings. Their joy was momentous. Those without a homeland to return to were assigned to several different rehabilitation centres. I along with twenty other men were transferred to the rehabilitation centre known as "Schloss Kleeberg" close by Pocking in lower Bavaria not very far from Passau. Once we were there, we sought to get information with regard to contacting countrymen who might be able to tell us something about our families back home. In this way we were able get in direct contact with some.

As a result, there were some tragic outcomes that some men suffered while at our rehabilitation centre "Kleeberg". A prisoner of war, a Danube Swabian from the Banat found his wife in Austria. She had remarried and in addition to his child she had two children with her current husband. The woman had received official notification that her husband, the repatriated prisoner of war, had fallen in action for the Greater Reich. That was in the summer of 1944. On the basis of that notification, she had some time later married again. Her first husband had been severely wounded during the retreat on the Eastern Front and was left lying on the ground. One of his comrades had seen it and reported his death. The oncoming Russians found him and treated his wounds and he survived. From 1944 to the end of 1949, he had been a prisoner of war in Russia.

At the rehabilitation hospitals the great majority of us were homeless Danube Swabians from the Yugoslavian Banat along with thousands of Danube Swabian civilians who had been taken to slave labour and deported to the Soviet Union. Their families had not had time to flee. The Russians came unexpectedly crossing the nearby Romanian border and did not meet any kind of resistance. In all the Yugoslavian Banat there was not a single German military unit to be found anywhere. Our division, "Prince Eugene" made up of men from the Banat, was in the vicinity of Nis and were sent into action against the Russians and Bulgarians to hold them back to enable the retreating German Army and Waffen-SS from Greece to get through to safety. The "Prince Eugene" also got through but suffered enormous casualties.

Now back to the rehabilitation hospital "Schloss Kleeberg." Through the efforts of the information centre, I received letters from some of my countrymen. In terms of my family, I knew that my wife and two sons, ages 19 and 14 were slave labourers in the coal mines in Kolubara in northern Serbia since being bought out of camp Rudolfsgnad.

We spent nine weeks in the rehabilitation hospital "Schloss Kleeberg". Then we had to go to Griessbach, a city in the same District, for a medical examination carried out by government officials to determine the state of our health and physical condition. I was assessed as suffering 50% in war injuries. As a result, I received 49 Deutsch Marks monthly as a pension. That was my entire income in the first two months after my release from captivity.

We left the rehabilitation hospital "Schloss Kleeberg" in February 1950 and were taken by bus to Passau where I stayed in the Nibelungen Hall of a large theatre complex along with Hans Moser. From there I visited my countryman J. Achtzehner in Rohrdorf bei Rosenheim, as well as the family of Georg and Anna Kurzhals in Karlsruhe to learn what I could about our people from Zichydorf.

Now the question was where to live following our release from the rehabilitation hospital. Since we came from a farming background, we decided to take up farming work in the vicinity of a large city. In many cities like Münich, Nürnberg and several others we late comers after the war could not find living accommodations. We found Friedberg on a map which was close to Augsburg and decided to go there. There were three of us from the Yugoslavian Banat, Joseph Urban from Karlsdorf (he died in 1987 at the age of 82 years in Renchen, Baden), Mathias Sartor from Nakodorf Selesch and me. We had ourselves released from the rehabilitation hospital and went from there to Friedberg. Up until this point we were officially considered to be homeless. This resulted in certain disadvantages for us in that we were not eligible for assistance without a permanent local address.

On a Saturday at the beginning of March we left the rehabilitation hospital and took the first train in the morning heading for Friedberg passing through Münich. In the early afternoon we went to the mayor's office in Friedberg in hopes of getting accommodations. By law, the city was obliged to provide at least a room to every late arriving prisoner of war. I had already been to the Friedberg refugee resettlement office. There they told me that if we did not get a room in Friedberg, we could stay at the refugee camp in Dasing. I made our request for a room to the mayor of Friedberg. We found him in his office even though it was a Saturday afternoon. The mayor asked us how we, that is Sartor and I, came up with the idea of settling in Friedberg. He came up with all kinds of excuses to discourage us. When I further requested his help to be reunited with my family, he said that raised certain technicalities which would make that impossible. Then I said to him, "Mr. Mayor, I am sorry, but apparently you have no sense of humanity or understanding of what it means for a man to be separated from his family for almost six years because of the war. You can stick your room up your hat. (This is colloquial for the English equivalent.)

We went to the refugee camp in Dasing where we lived in the dance hall of the local pub along with fifty-seven other persons. We received 18 Deutsch Marks a week because we were unemployed and had to pay the camp 10 Deutsch Marks a week for our food and lodgings.

We filed our petition for reunification with our families with the American military mission to which the refugee commissioner added, "Presently living in a refugee camp." This was around the middle of March in 1950. Early in May of 1950 I received official permission from the American military government.

During the month of April, Urban and I had gone to the office of the district magistrate in Friedberg to apply for a certificate of equalization which made us citizens of Germany. The official there, a man known as Herr von Walter, regarding our application remarked, "Just be happy that you were in captivity in Russia for so long. We had nothing to eat here either." He said he could not give us the application for the certificate. In response to that, Urban and I went across the Marienplatz to the present-day city hall. The American military government was installed there in 1950. I told the official there how we had been treated at the district magistrate's office. The official representing the military government spoke perfect German. He asked us to show our release papers from our time as prisoners of war in Russia and said, "OK." He then picked up the telephone and called Herr von Walter. He purposefully did this in our presence and ordered him to fill out the necessary documents immediately. When we returned to the magistrate's office, he

filled out our certificates without saying a word nor did he have any questions to put to us. Why not, under the circumstances?

I sent the family reunification documentation to my wife so that she could obtain an exit visa for herself and our two sons. Simultaneously I wrote to the Red Cross in Geneva asking them to assist my wife and sons in their efforts to leave Yugoslavia. The International Red Cross in Geneva informed their offices in Belgrade to investigate and verify my request which they proceeded to do. Despite all these efforts it took until August of 1951 that my wife and sons were able to leave Yugoslavia.

In July of 1944 all the Danube Swabians in what was then Yugoslavia lost all of their rights of citizenship. Those who survived and were allowed to leave provided the new Yugoslavian government in Belgrade with a lucrative source of income. The government demanded a payment of thousands of Dinar per person in order to leave and acknowledgement of their loss of Yugoslavian citizenship. Only after the payment was received was the paperwork begun for their departure. Why would any Danube Swabian want to retain their Yugoslavian citizenship? I never heard of anyone who did.

My wife and our two sons arrived in the refugee camp in Mercheng close to Augsburg on August 25, 1951. Seven years had passed since our separation. It was joy unspeakable to be rejoined with my family. There are no words to describe what I felt. It is something you must experience and live through.

Because of my situation still living in a refugee camp since my release from captivity in Russia in 1950 I drove to Augsburg. My wife and sons because of the family reunification programme were now living with me. I no longer wanted to live in the camp because as a late arriving prisoner of war I was entitled to living accommodations. As a result of a telephone inquiry I made with the government office, my request was granted by the refugee resettlement officials. We were allotted a room that was 22 square metres in size in a brick barrack in Friedberg. Seven other refugee families lived in the barrack, and each had their own room.

With four adults living in one room, I sought to get other accommodations from the Housing Department in Friedberg. The Housing official told me, “Your present living quarters are not within our jurisdiction and so therefore we are in no position to assist you in your request.” I found a dwelling in Friedberg consisting of a room and kitchen, but the square footage did not match our needs as a family. I suggested a trade with another family and went to the Housing Department and presented my proposal. We were four adults, and the other couple had a small child. The Housing Department bristled against my proposal. In response I said that I would go to Münich to the Ministry of Expellees and present my situation to them there. As a result, the Housing Department agreed to the exchange.

A few days later just as I was coming home from work in Augsbug I ran into the chief official in the Housing Department in Friedberg on the street. He told me that the exchange of dwellings was of no real consequence. My reaction was very vehement and made a mess of things. Because of that he made a final ruling against the exchange.

A NEW HOME AND A JOB
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Now we had a room and a kitchen. It was in the Spring of 1952 that we moved into our new home on Aichacher Street. We bought a new bedroom adjoining the barrack for which we made monthly payments of 50 Deutsch Marks. But I was still not satisfied with our accommodations and promised my family to build our own house. It was still in 1952 that I concluded a building loan of 15,000 Deutsch Marks in nearby Wüstenrot.

My wife and I worked side by side in all our undertakings. I proposed making an addition to our house at a cost of 7,500 Deutsch Marks. My wife was to deliver the proposal to the district government offices in Friedberg. The responsible official there declined to accept it because of some questions he had that she could not answer. This happened three times, one after another. For that reason, my wife no longer wanted to go to the district government offices. So, I had to take a day off of work and went there myself with my proposal. The official wanted to do the same thing to me that he had done with my wife. I asked him if he would consider the proposal or not. He glanced at the proposal first and said that I had too much in the proposal in the amount of 500 Deutsch Marks. I changed the proposal to 7,000 Deutsch Marks and signed it verifying the change. In response the official said, "Hand me the proposal. Nothing will come of it anyway."

When I purchased a building lot in Augsburg in 1954 the Building Permit office in Augsburg requested my proposal from Friedberg and I had to change the amount back to 7,500 Deutsch Marks. The officials in Friedberg had little understanding or sympathy for the difficulties of those who had been expelled from their homelands.

Now back again to the refugee camp in Dasing where Joseph Urban, Mathias Sartor and I were living along with other expellees who were from the Sudetenland. We were fifty-seven persons in all who were accommodated in the dance hall of the Gasthaus Fritz (an Inn). During our stay there each week we went on foot to Augsburg, 9 kilometres away, in search of work. From the 18 Deutsch Marks in unemployment benefits that we received we had to pay 10 Deutsch Marks for our food and lodgings. The remaining 8 Deutsch Marks a week were not enough for us to consider using some of it to pay the fare to Augsburg. Finally in July of 1950 both Urban and I were hired for six weeks as temporary workers by the firm of "Thosti" in Augsburg in the building of the first half of a subdivision in the Lechbrücke section of the city. The first thing we did was put a down payment on a bicycle so that we did not have to take the train from Dasing. At the end of the six weeks as temporary workers we were hired permanently by the firm. I worked for the "Thosti" firm until I was 65 years of age. In 1973 I went into retirement on a full pension. In 1971 I was honoured by the firm for my 25th anniversary of working for the firm "Thosti".

In December of 1950 the refugee camp in Dasing was closed. In the new settlement, Mering-St. Afra seven families from the Sudetenland were accommodated in flats. More families were settled in Eifel. The rest including us ended up in the refugee camp in Mercheng. All three of us, Urban, Sartor and I had applied for accommodations in Mering-St. Afra but because we were single men, we were not eligible. I lived in the refugee camp in Mercheng for nine months until I was reunited with my family.

My hourly wage as a skilled worker in the employ of the building firm "Thosti" was 1.47 Deutsch Marks. In the month of August in 1951 in addition to my regular work hours I also worked on Sundays and holidays for a total of 300 hours. All three of us were working. My older son Joseph and I worked for the construction company "Thosti" while my younger son Georg was employed by the Ludwig Bauer Construction Company in Rhederzhausen. My wife did housework.

In February 1953 my youngest son Georg who was sixteen years old had to report that he was unemployed. He had worked for the Ludwig Bauer Construction Company to the end of December 1952. In February 1953 he was hired by the Weitman Company in Kissing. The contractor, Ludwig Bauer, went to the employment office in Friedberg in March of 1953 to hire back the unemployed Georg Basch to work for his firm once again. That is how things worked out. So, I did not let my son go to work for Weitmann in Kissing. The Employment office cancelled my son's six-week unemployment benefits. I raised a complaint about the Employment office's cancellation. Fourteen days later the case came before the labour court in Augsburg. I was asked who had lodged the complaint. In response I said I did myself. As I was questioned about the grounds for my complaint I told the court about my five years as a prisoner of war in Russia, my arrival in Friedberg in 1950, about my family, who were reunited with me in August 1951 in Merching following their internment in northern Serbia. I could not help my family in those seven years. I was not prepared to allow the rights of my son who was a minor to be ignored. It would be terrible to have to allow this to happen once more. The court reduced the withheld benefits to three weeks. My son Joseph took a job with the "Osram" glassworks in Augsburg. At the age of eighteen my son Georg joined him there. Neither of them was ever unemployed after that.

In 1953 we received our first news about my brother-in-law Anton Merle, his wife and two sons. They had emigrated from Austria to Los Angeles, California in the United States of America. They wrote to us that we should come and join them in America, but they could not guarantee us any work. I had already arranged for a loan for my wife and I in the amount of 15,000 Deutsch Marks with the thought of building our own home. That was the reason behind our decision to remain in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Whenever Sepp Urban and I went on foot from our refugee camp in Dasing to Augsburg back in 1950 we would pass by the settlement known as "Ost" in Friedberg where refugees worked diligently building their own houses. We asked them where they got the money so that they could build. They said they had saved 1,500 to 2,500 Deutsch Marks and they planned to do most of the building themselves. This made me start thinking. I said to myself that whatever they were doing we could do as well.

With the four of us adults living in one room with a kitchen in Friedberg in 1953 I was resolved to build a house of our own with all I could muster. I searched around Friedberg to find a suitable building lot. Just below the heights in Friedberg there was a flood. The flood gates were damaged and released so much water that the city workers had to build an emergency plank bridge so that the residents in the houses could get to safety. On seeing that, I decided not to build anywhere near there.

That is why I turned my attention to Augsburg. At the housing development office in Augsburg there were so many local interested parties that someone from outside barely had a chance to build

in Augsburg. The president of the Settler Association, Mr. Hohenner, wrote to me in the spring of 1954 that I could buy a building lot in Hochzoll privately. I went to the developer, Mr. Hupfauer that Mr. Hohenner had mentioned and bought a building lot measuring about 900 square metres. I would have to give up about 150 square metres of it to the city of Augsburg for street development at no cost to the city. The building lot cost 3,500 Deutsch Marks. I had a bank account with the City Bank of Friedberg with a balance of 3,000 Deutsch Marks and paid for the lot almost outright. Then I went to the building and loans department in Augsburg. I offered a proposal for a loan of 10,000 Deutsch Mark as well as insuring the loan. Everything went forward rather smoothly. I received the funds within eight days.

We began to build in the spring of 1955 and on October 1st of that year we moved into our own home with two separate units. We had a special agreement with the Ludwig Bauer Construction Company in Rhederzhausen that allowed us to do much of the work ourselves. Our son Joseph who married Irmgard Halbsguth in August 1955 moved into the second unit.

Before I go on writing I would like to mention an event from the year 1952. When my wife and both of our sons came to join me from Yugoslavia they were acknowledged as late arriving refugees in our new homeland. That meant they had the right to compensation payments to cover the damages they had suffered. When I proceeded to make such a claim at the district governmental office in Friedberg, I was told that no such thing existed. I drove to Münich to see a lawyer, who was also an expellee from the Banat and told him about the matter. The lawyer made an application to the district governmental office in Friedberg and within three weeks my family received their compensation for damages. When I came to the district governmental office in Friedberg I was questioned as to why I had gotten a lawyer involved in my application.

I ran into the same problem again in applying for my prisoner of war compensation payments. On March 9, 1950, I came to Friedberg after my release from captivity in Russia and then went on to the refugee camp in Dasing. In July of 1950 I began to work for the Construction firm of "Thosti" in Augsburg. The compensation for prisoners of war was based on the following criteria: When were you released as a prisoner of war? What is the highest wage you have received since working? What is your current status? Married or single? If married, how many children do you have.

I received my prisoner of war compensation payment for the first time in January of 1957. There is no excuse that this oversight took so long to be rectified.

During the construction of our house, we did a lot of the work. I arranged for an excavator to dig the hole. We removed the topsoil from the 150 square metres for the street widening and carted it in wheelbarrows to the back of our building lot. We covered the area with gravel taken from the excavation.

Because I had acquired iron working skills I could do the sheathing of the ceilings, window frames, and concrete staircases. We whitewashed the walls of the cellar ourselves. Every Sunday and holiday we were working onsite.

At the end of June, we could celebrate the topping off ceremony. For the inner work to proceed faster we hired a mason living in our neighbourhood to undertake the work which he did in about fourteen days during his holidays. Naturally all of this was done in terms of our agreement with the Ludwig Bauer Construction Company. On October 1, 1955, it was with great joy and satisfaction that we moved into our own home.

The whole house was heated by a stove. Except for the kitchen the rest of the house was without one. It turned out that by the end of January 1956 we slept without any heat from the stove and the temperature was -26 degrees. In the mornings you see your breath in our bedroom.

Following the completion of our own home in December of 1955 I became a member of the Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia-the Swabian District in Augsburg. There was no representation of the Association in Friedberg, Bavaria which was the reason for my late joining of the organization.

Part Two
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Following our official applications for the immigration of our families in May of 1950, for Urban, Sartor and I it became even more urgent for us to find a job. We went on a search for jobs but in most cases any openings we heard about had already been filled. At the end of July in 1950 the Employment office found Urban and me a placement as temporary workers with "Thosti" Construction Company for a period of six weeks.

In the last seven months we had had no work so that our hands became blistered. We worked with old shearing tweezers. Our foreman was not pleased with our work and indicated that after our six weeks as temporary workers we would be let go. So, we bought ourselves new equipment because under no circumstances did we want to lose our jobs. I went to see the construction manager and informed him that we had lost our homeland and all our possessions and after five years as prisoners of war in Russia we had only our bare hands to make a life for ourselves. He acknowledged the losses we had suffered and that our jobs meant more to us than just to meet our physical needs but our emotional needs as well. He promised me that after our six weeks as temporary workers he would hire us on a permanent basis. We took every opportunity we could to take on overtime work. We returned to Dasing in the evenings but had our noon hour meal and supper at work.

After working in the Lechbrücke section of Augsburg we later worked on some of the other work sites of the "Thosti" Construction Company. In the winter of 1950/51, we were unemployed. When the construction of the "Osram Glassworks" began we had our jobs back with "Thosti" once

again. At that time Urban and I were living in the refugee camp in Merching. Every day we rode our bicycles from Merching to Augsburg to go to work.

We had to begin work at five o'clock in the morning at the construction site of the Osram Glassworks. No trains ran that early. We normally worked twelve hours daily as steel workers. We had to workday and night to pour concrete around the 15-metre-high glasswork's outer framework in one casting.

I would like to capture the following incident for you the reader. Casting the framework required two steel workers to be present from six o'clock in the morning to midnight followed by two other men from midnight to four o'clock the next morning. One of the two steel workers who worked until midnight lived in Friedberg-West. By the end of his shift, he had drunk so much beer that he could not find his way home riding on his bicycle. What is now the Berliner Allee was then called Lechdamstrasse and was much narrower than it is today and had a ditch on both sides. Because the iron moulder could not find his way home, he lay down in the ditch on the east side and covered himself with his bicycle. Early the next morning I rode my bicycle to work. I saw a man lying in the ditch under a bicycle who was snoring loudly. I did not get closer to him and did not think much about it because it was in the middle of summer. The next day I talked about what I had observed. In response, Werner A. said, "That was me. I couldn't find my way to the Lechbrücke."

On August 25, 1951, my family joined me in Mercheng. During the time I was working on the "Osram" building project I had asked for jobs for my sons beforehand. When the production of "Osram" began in 1952 my son Joseph began to work there. He has worked in this field now for over thirty-six years without interruption. Georg, the younger son worked for the Ludwig Bauer Construction Company in Rhederzhausen until the end of 1953. When he reached eighteen years of age in 1954, he was hired by the "Osram" Company where he worked for ten years. Since 1964 he has been employed by the "Thosti" Company now the Walter-Thosti-Boswau-Construction Company as a foreman supervising the steel workers.

While the "Osram" project was undertaken in 1952 the construction of the National Registered Bank began in Kriegshaber. At that time the cornerstone for the bank was laid in Augsburg.

An atomic bomb shelter was erected on the Hohen Weg in 1953 with concrete walls that were 65 centimetres thick. The shelter ceiling was 130 centimetres thick with 14 layers of reinforcing steel. Concrete was pored with 3 machines, working day and night. Each concrete-worker shift was for twelve hours. The iron moulders, about ten men, began to work on Monday morning at seven o'clock with the reinforcement work. The first shift lasted until Tuesday evening at seven o'clock and they worked uninterrupted during that time except for meal breaks. The worst part of it was working at four o'clock on Tuesday morning one had to fight off the need for sleep. At six o'clock in the morning we washed up and had breakfast. It went on and on like this until seven o'clock in the evening with only a break for lunch. On Wednesdays we worked the regular eleven-hour shifts. Thursday until Friday at seven o'clock in the evening the work went on without interruption except for the necessary breaks. That was one hundred hours a week. It only took a week until the 130-centimetre concrete layer was in place. Miss Marion Filser, the daughter of the building superintendent R. Filser took about twenty-eight photographs of the work in progress. This kind of labour-intensive work would be impossible in today's world.

I have written all of this for the benefit of the younger generation that they might know the kind of work that was demanded of us thirty-five years ago when Augsburg was a city in ruins. If there had been a thirty-five-hour work week not all of the ruins in Augsburg from the Second World War would have ever disappeared. In the first ten to fifteen years following the Second World War an extraordinary feat was accomplished by the efforts of the labour force.

The more than twelve million refugees who arrived in the destroyed remains of Germany did so with absolutely nothing. This flood of refugees was part and parcel of the economic miracle in the Federal Republic of Germany. Each of the twelve million refugees needed the simplest things and various other items. Everything necessary to live and start over again had to be produced. When I came to Augsburg in March 1950 following my years of captivity as a prisoner of war in Russia I stood in total astonishment when I viewed the showcases of the stores and saw all the items that were on display. Everything that was available in defeated Germany simply did not exist in the Soviet Union.

The overwhelming majority of the refugees were determined to have their own home once again. There was no work too demanding that could stand in the way of their goal. It was with great joy and industriousness that we worked day and night. When we had free time, we worked on building our own homes.

In the summer of 1958 construction began on a large warehouse in the Riedlinger Section of Augsburg. I became a foreman back in 1957 and had a crew of six to eight iron moulders who were involved in this expansion. We worked based on a piece work agreement and as a result made good progress. My fellow workers showed a great deal of interest in doing their work because they knew their hourly wage could be increased because of it. Because there was a rush to complete the warehouse I was provided with an additional worker. He had to install steel in the concrete foundation where the iron moulders worked. I had included our additional worker in the piece work agreement. In the monthly payroll report, the additional worker, under the heading of his participation in the agreement, had around sixty Deutsch Marks added to his wages. He came to me and said that he was not a qualified iron moulder like the others and that there must be a mistake to have been paid as he was. I told him that all the workers who worked alongside them were included in the agreement.

I had seven iron moulders as we engaged in propping up the ground floor. This work was done under the terms of the piece work agreement so that I applied my own best efforts working alongside them. While we utilized the length of steel (with a diameter of 26 millimetres) two or three men had to sheath it under the ceiling. Down below two or three men placed it in the proper position and rolled and pressed the iron. I helped with fastening it. While I did so an end of the wire that I was using to do the fastening got caught in a hoop. By pulling the binding wire it became free and struck me in my left eye where it got stuck. I pulled the wire out of my eye and because I felt no pain I continued working. Ten minutes later I realised I could not see out of my left eye. They immediately took me to the emergency department of the Machine Factory Augsburg Nürnberg Company where qualified personnel were always on duty. From there I was taken to an eye specialist, Dr. Bickel, on Volkhart Street. The eye specialist examined me and said, “Your sight is gone!” It was only then that I realised I would have to learn to live with one

eye in the future. Dr. Bickel immediately gave me a reference for an X-ray of my left eye as well as a transfer to the "Vincentimum" hospital in Augsburg.

I drove home from the MAN construction company in my Volkswagen and then I went to have the X-ray taken of my eye and later went on to the hospital. Dr. Bickel was allotted six beds for his use. He also performed operations there.

My eye began to discharge at the hospital. Dr. Bickel attempted to fight the puss with penicillin. Since there was no improvement after four or five days of treatment he said to me, "There is a danger that the right eye, that is healthy, can become infected." It was for that reason my left eye that had no sight, needed to be removed to prevent such an infection. I gave my consent. In the evening of the next day the operation on my left eye was at hand. The nurse gave me two injections and I had to count from 1 to 100. I got as far as over 30 and then I was gone. After the operation the nurse told me that I continued to count while I was unconscious until I said, "100-pains."

After the operation I remained in the hospital for a few days. Because it was raining outside, I took a walk on my floor. To smoke you had to go outside. One day I watched as an older nurse with a watering can was pouring some brown liquid in a tub of flowers. I asked the nurse what she was doing. She answered that the flowers had lice and she was pouring a remedy on them to destroy them. I in turn said to her, "Sister I will smoke a cigarette and blow the smoke on the flowers. But I know that is not allowed here." The nurse answered, "Go ahead and smoke I'd like to see if that would work." So, I lit up a cigarette and blew the smoke over the flowers and the lice began to fall off. When the nurse saw that, she said to me, "As of today you can smoke here by the flowers. If anyone says anything to you, just say that Sister Genoveva has ordered you to do it." I was allowed to smoke on the floor and the nurse no longer needed a remedy to kill the lice.

There were two old men with me in my room, both over eighty. I had just turned fifty-one at the time. My accident at work had occurred on October 8, 1959.

My eye surgery was soon healed. By then I had found out how to live with sight in only one eye for the future. I had to see Dr. Bickel once a week for observation and after care. Towards the end of November 1959 in speaking to my eye specialist I said, "Esteemed doctor I would like to go back to work." He looked at me and said, "You can stay at home the entire month of December." I responded, "My eye will not grow back in even if I stay at home that long." On December 1, 1959, I returned to my job with the firm of "Thosti" and MAN in Augsburg.

Towards the end of the 1950s the stocking factory owned by Inhaber, Father and Son, makers of "Bellinda" located in Altenstadt by Schongau was built by "Thosti AG". I had passed my driver's licence III Class in 1957 in Augsburg and bought a used 1950 model Volksvagen. So, it made no difference to me that I was transferred to work on that construction site as the foreman of the iron moulders engaged there. The construction was done in separate sections. We began construction in the spring. By autumn the first section was completed.

At that time there were very few foreign workers. We had a Russian who was a former prisoner of war and did not want to return to his homeland and a Croat from Yugoslavia. The Russian as

well as the Croat were both in my work crew because I could speak the Russian and Croatian languages. Both were glad when I spoke to them in their mother tongue. The Russian said to me, "Georgi, I will do anything you ask of me. But please don't scold me." The Yugoslavian was 1.95 centimetres tall, young and robust. He always told me he was like a small crane in our working group.

One Saturday afternoon in August, we had just driven towards home in Augsburg, when we ran into a heavy thunderstorm. The storm uprooted the waiting room from its foundations in a railway station along the railway line between Schongau-Landsberg in the vicinity of Schongau and sent it flying for about ten metres. It hailed so heavily that the potato plants in the fields were reduced to finger length sprouts out of the earth. As we drove to work in Altenstadt on the Monday after, there were hailstones up to 30 centimetres deep in the ditches alongside the road. The storm also caused damage at our construction site. Cement pillars were torn down and steel girders lay about.

A year before my crew of iron moulders had been assigned by my firm "Thosti" to the Keller and Knappich Construction Company in Augsburg operated by Karl Peter Branner. I had a very good working relationship with Branner right up to my retirement. Branner also had quite a career with "Thosti". In the 1960s he was the chief construction engineer with Prokura. Branner went into a well-earned retirement at the age of 65 in January 1986.

Towards the end of the 1950s Branner came to see me on a construction site and said, "Basch, gather your crew and drive to Pang by Rosenheim and the autobahn bridge at Inntal. It is being built by "Thosti" and you will be involved in its construction." At that time, we had just finished a major construction project. With the completion of the building my foreman's wages were extended but at a higher rate. I told Mr. Branner, "I will go on to Pang as long as I have full authority as the foreman and that my wages will not be reduced from what I earned previously on this last big project." Branner replied, "I will see to that immediately. I'm going to see Dressler." On the same day Branner, the construction engineer, informed me that my position as foreman was assured. As a result, I drove my Volkswagen to Pang taking along three of my iron moulders to work on the Inntal Autobahn bridge. This occurred either in 1957 or 1958.

At the beginning of the 1960s the firm of "Thosti" had a working agreement with two other larger firms to build a skyscraper for MAN's administrative headquarters. It was a great undertaking made of steel and concrete. On the eastern side of the twelve-storey building there were three steel pillars reinforced with concrete with 72 steel door frames in each with a diameter of 26 millimetres. There were three support beams for each pillar that were 2 metres high and 1.80 metres wide with a diameter of 26 millimetres. In the first of these of which there were twelve the diameter was 26 millimetres and the top row they were 32 of them with a diameter of 26 millimetres.

The building inspectors of the city of Augsburg, Mr. Wenninger (now deceased) and Mr. Tüchert, who had just recently begun to work with the Construction Control Board of the city of Augsburg came to survey our work. Mr. Wenninger speaking to Mr. Tüchert said, "Take a look at this shearing. We have never seen anything like it. Augsburg and you most likely never will in the future." Following their inspection of the shearing I accompanied the gentlemen from the Construction Control Board to the office of our construction company. Mr. Wenninger, in speaking to the members of the front office said, "I would like to commend Mr. Basch for the

outstanding work that he has done." In response I replied, "Mr. Wenninger, I didn't do it. It was my men who did it." The construction manager, Mr. Branner, replied, "That's just so much prattle. If you had not asked the best of your men, they would have never done it." Naturally I was pleased by the commendation and extended it to my iron moulders.

In 1964 the "Thosti" firm built a repair shop and service station on Haustetter Street on a very large lot for the firm of Mercedes Benz who were in Türkheim. Immediately beside it our firm built the head office of the plumbing firm of Richter and Frenzel of Augsburg. This left no room for the expansion of the headquarters of this plumbing business in the Altstadt district of Augsburg.

The construction work for the firm of Mercedes Benz was our only project at the time. I was there with my iron moulder work crew of eight men. Because the planning for the project was behind schedule my crew began to work on the neighbouring work site instead, building the headquarters of Richter and Frenzel. There were also four to six carpenters from our company working with us almost daily. Because the iron moulders had to sheath 1,000 cover plates for the various run off canals from the excavation, we also worked on Saturday mornings until noon.

One Saturday in the forenoon a large Mercedes passenger car appeared. The passengers were returning from a vacation in Austria. Both got out of the car and approached me. The gentleman informed me that he was the General Director of the Mercedes Benz Autoworks in Türkheim and therefore also our boss. I introduced myself and I informed the General Director about our work. We spent some time discussing the work we were doing. His wife said, "I tried to prevent my husband from visiting the construction site because he will be visiting it again next week, but I could not talk him out of it."

During our conversation I learned that the officials in Türkheim had been informed that the work in Augsburg was sluggish due to a shortage of workers. In response to that I told the General Director that that was not the case but rather that the planning was behind schedule. Following my explanation the General Director said, "Give my greetings to the architect and Director Dressler for me and tell them of my intentions to be at the building site at nine o'clock tomorrow morning." The General Director then remarked about the standing water in the excavation for the building. It was the end of May and it often rained. He asked me, "What are you doing about the water?" I told him the water had been pumped out for several days, but the architect had ordered us to stop because it was too expensive. The General Director suggested, "Is he going to wait until the water dries up?" He reminded me once again to convey his special greetings to the architect.

I called our construction engineer, Mr. Branner, and informed him about my conversation with the General Director and my fear that I had done something wrong. Branner told me," The worst that can happen is that you might have to go to another work site."

The General Director was at the construction office in Augsburg on Monday at nine o'clock along with the architect, Director Dressler, construction engineer Branner and the construction manager of the architect. The construction manager of the architect was found to be at fault and had to give up his job and leave the firm within the hour. Towards noon after the General Director left, Director Dressler came to see me, shook my hand firmly and said, "You did well in what you did".

I said to him, “Esteemed Director, “It is not always good to tell the truth.” Director Dressler said in response that in this case it was the right thing to do.

The real guilty party in the matter was the statistician who only allotted three or four of the foundational materials we required daily. That was far too little for the large construction effort in which we were engaged. This whole situation changed immediately following the visit by the General Director. Now the construction could proceed once more.

During that time frame a sports arena was built in Augsburg. One Saturday my work crew and I came to help with the sheathing of the sports arena. The construction itself was under the leadership of the son of Dr. Helmuth Brückner, the Director of the “Thosti” firm. As for practical experience, he worked with me as one of my iron moulders for a few days during the construction of the Pfisterhaus in the Grottenau sector of Augsburg. We got along very well. When Helmuth Brückner saw me at his work site he greeted me warmly and said that I was the right man for the job. He wanted to see what he could accomplish. As I shared this with the chief construction engineer Branner he commented that Brückner would run into a brick wall without me. I very well understood what Mr. Branner meant. This close relationship between us exists to this day without ever being interrupted.

Between 1969 and 1971 the “Thosti” firm built the Congress Hall in Augsburg. I had to carry out the iron moulding tasks with my crew of workers. During the construction of the Congress Hall, we had Yugoslavian “guest workers” on the work site. There were two men in my work crew. They were young men under thirty years of age, who at the time of the massacre of the Danube Swabians had been little children.

At that time, we had been forced to leave behind our agricultural pursuits and industry intact. The new inhabitants of the Danube Swabian villages and towns could not do the necessary work that was required, and everything fell apart. That began with the orderly well maintained fertile fields, the houses and the business operations and buildings. We didn’t know what to do with all the extra yields in the fields and the annual increases of our cattle herds. The new lords of the manor had to obtain grain and agricultural products from elsewhere or they would have starved to death. So now they had to come to the hated Germans in the Federal Republic for work. They did so whether legally or illegally to escape from starvation in communist Yugoslavia.

It was 1971/2. The firm of “Thosti” maintained billets in Pfersee for their 200 to 300 “guest workers”. In the summer of 1972, at five o’clock in the morning, I had to accompany Mr. Bőlzle from the payroll department to Pfersee to search for any illegal Yugoslavian “guest workers.” We always came unannounced. We always found eight or ten illegal Yugoslavian “guest workers” who stayed there or stayed overnight who did not belong to the “Thosti” firm’s workers. They quickly disappeared and were soon replaced by others.

My last work assignment before retirement was in Neusäss. It was residential block of 75 to 85 houses with underground garages. At this work site we provided barrack accommodations for our twenty to thirty “guest workers” from Yugoslavia. Because I had such a good command of the Yugoslavian language, I had to take over the supervision of the facility. One day the “guest workers” quarrelled among themselves that resulted in one man stabbing another with a knife so

that he had to be taken to hospital in Augsburg. The police in Gersthofer took over the case. Because of my knowledge of their language, I served as the interpreter during the police interrogation. The victim was sent back to Yugoslavia following his convalescence in the hospital.

In May of 1973 on reaching the age of 65 years I went into retirement.

Now I had more time to devote to the work related to my position as president of the Association. At that time, I was elected to the Board of Directors of the Bavarian District of the Association. I have been the president of the Board for the past ten years.

I also need to mention that in 1971 the firm "Thosti" in Augsburg celebrated the 25th anniversary of employment of eleven of its employees that included me. We each received 1,200 Deutsch Marks which was tax free, as well as a wristwatch with an inscription, a basket of fruit, and three documented citations from the Bavarian Ministry of Labour, the curator of the Bavarian Labour Association and the Bavarian Trade Union. There were other medals and awards and a paid vacation. A celebration took place in the forenoon in the firm's headquarters with the entire Board of Directors present. A festive meal was served at the Gunzenlee restaurant with all the trimmings. Every man celebrating his anniversary received a photo album with over twenty photographs taken at the celebration. It is a beautiful and satisfying feeling to experience such an honour. I wrote to the Board of Directors of Firm "Thosti" to thank them for the honour bestowed upon me. After that work went on as usual. I still had eighteen months to go at work until my 65th birthday when I began receiving my pension. I have lived in retirement for the past sixteen years. It is a great feeling!

ABOUT THE COUNTRYMEN'S ASSOCIATION

(Pag111)

At the beginning of December in 1955, I joined the Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia in Augsburg. The president of the Association at that time was our countryman Anton Heim of Kolut in the Batschka. He was the first president and co-founder of the "Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia in the Swabian District" in Augsburg.

We gathered once a month on Sunday afternoons in an establishment on Anna Street for various information sessions. There was a great deal of energy and ardour on the part of our countrymen. The work of the Association began and was undertaken with a great deal of enthusiasm. In 1959 I was elected the chairman of the Board of Directors and president of the Association.

Once a month, on the forenoon of a Sunday, the members of the Board of Directors met with the members of the Association to collect the monthly membership fee of 50 Pfennig (cents). In the afternoon the collected membership fees were handed over to the treasurer.

The major theme of our gatherings was the restitution of our losses. In response to our first evaluation of our lost property and other possessions to the Restitution Department in Stuttgart by the representatives of our Association they were presented with a proposal to provide 400 Deutsch Marks per hectare of land. That was only a fraction of the real value. Included in the 400 Deutsch Marks evaluation were the farm buildings and all the livestock. All outstanding loans had to be

acknowledged before restitution could be approved. Following several years of negotiations, the evaluation was increased from 700 to 1,600 Deutsch Marks based on the productivity of the land involved.

We began to work with the Restitution Department in Stuttgart in 1960 regarding working out an agreed upon evaluation. The rate per hectare was established for individual villages or regions. The land value in Zichydorf was established at 1,340 Deutsch Marks per hectare that also included the farmstead and livestock.

A working group was established for each village by the Restitution Department in Stuttgart following interviews with many of the former inhabitants. Depending on the size of the village these working groups had from three to five members who were former landowners. The members of the Zichydorf working group were Georg Basch of Augsburg, Peter Singer from Bietigheim, Adam Hazenfratz from Gottwholshausen bei Schwäbisch Hall and Georg Wiegert from Augsburg.

We began our work on April 3, 1962 and had our first meeting with the Restitution Department in Stuttgart. The initial task of our working group was to validate and verify the accuracy of the claims made by applicants from our village in terms of their farmstead and agricultural landholdings. The Commission appointed by the Restitution Department in Stuttgart was made up of the chairman and two other members of the Department along with the four of us from the Zichydorf working group known as GAK. This means that seven persons were engaged in the work of determining whether the submissions of the land and property claims of the villagers of Zichydorf were valid and needed to be addressed. This involved 343 claims in terms of farmsteads and 135 claims about landholdings. In the years from April 1962 until the end of 1968 another 100 new claims were made for damages or made corrections to their former claims.

We began our work in Stuttgart on April 3, 1962. What we worked on first were the claims regarding farmsteads. It was by necessity that there were four members of the GAK from Zichydorf. We had to identify the claimant before a decision could be made about the value of the farmstead. Then we had to ascertain the size of the landholdings of the claimant. There was always one of the four of us who was familiar with the land in question. In effect we were able to put together the acreage of all the various sections of land associated with Zichydorf. There were only a few cases where we had to question a claim when a claimant included some meadows as part of his agricultural land in his application to the Restitution Department in Augsburg. In other cases, we would ask a claimant to identify the owner of the neighbouring land to his own. In this way we were able to better determine the size of his acreage. In most cases the Restitution Department in Stuttgart accepted our determinations. After the Zichydorf GAK submission was submitted with regard to the size of land claims another verification without our involvement was required by the Restitution Department. Only after this procedure was completed were the applicants informed of their decision.

It was only after that decision was made that the Restitution Department in Stuttgart could act further. An application for restitution based on the law regarding it only applied to applicants who were residents of the Federal Republic of Germany no later than December 31, 1952. Any of our countrymen in Austria or who had left Austria and emigrated to the United States or Canada

without ever having lived in the Federal Republic of Germany could not apply for restitution. Numerous countrymen from Zichydorf were affected by this stipulation.

In the time frame from the 3rd and 8th of April in 1962 we worked on about 500 applications for restitution. We had the full co-operation of our countrymen which made it easier for the GAK to complete our work in the time frame indicated.

In the years 1962 until 1968 we were called upon to work on new applications or corrections to former ones in conjunction with the Restitution Department in Stuttgart. The Zichydorf GAK now only had two members: Peter Singer from Bietigheim and Georg Basch from Augsburg. I would like to share an experience from that time. It had to do with piece of land and a house. The applicant failed to mention the size of his landholdings. We used the size of his neighbour's piece of land because according to all our reckonings all of the sections of land were 1.438 square metres. When the applicant received the decision from his local restitution office, he informed them that the size of his landholdings was only 1,418 square metres which was 20 square metres less than indicated. The local restitution office sent their decision back to Restitution Department in Stuttgart with the notation that the applicant claimed that his landholdings were less than mentioned in their decision. It was a whole year later on February 15, 1963, when the Zichydorf GAK was back in Stuttgart to deal with some new inquiries and work on some corrections. The 20 additional square metres really had no bearing on the value of the compensation the applicant was offered. The calculation turned out the same as before. The applicant had delayed his restitution payment for a year over it. If the matter had dealt with his house the 20 square metres would have played a role but in terms of his landholdings it meant nothing.

I was elected to the Board of Directors of the Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia the District of Swabia in Augsburg in 1959. We held one or two dances annually in Augsburg. The Faschingsbällen (Mardi Gras celebrations) were the most significant events of the year. The Faschingsbällen (in the 1950s and 1960s) in the famous Alten Turnhallein Lechhausen dance hall was always packed with our countrymen. Sometimes there were so many attendees that by 8 PM only those guests who had bought their tickets earlier were allowed to enter.

At that time most of us were busy most of the time building our own homes so that there was little time to organize more events. In addition to their work in factories and construction sites they worked on building their own homes. There were also many of our countrymen in Augsburg who migrated elsewhere. Some went to Münich while others went to the United States and Canada. Our older countrymen died and the younger generation who had survived the expulsion as well as those who been born in Germany were fully integrated into their new homeland.

In the year 1959 there were 240 members in our register of membership. In the second half of the 1950s many migrated, and many others died. Of the 240 registered members by 1960 only 100 or so remained. Many of them also left the Association after their house was built and they had secured good employment. All this needs to be acknowledged. Our members were always fewer and fewer. In the last ten to fifteen years our total membership numbers slightly over fifty families.

Our then president, Anton Heim, died in 1966. He was born on June 28, 1914, in Kolut and later lived in Gakowa. He died suddenly at the age of 52 years. Heim proved to be the man of the hour. He brought to birth the Association of the Germans of Yugoslavia along with the help of other countrymen in Augsburg in 1951. That is also the case with the formation of the Swabian District of the organization in Augsburg of which he became president until his death in 1966. He had his hands full with so much to do to fulfill the wishes of our countrymen as members of the Association. In the second half of the 1950s the work towards restitution for our losses in Yugoslavia began. Some evenings he worked late into the night on individual claims for our countrymen. His unexpected quick death left a huge gap in the Association in Augsburg. He was also the founder of the Trachtengruppe (traditional costumes worn in the Danube Swabian villages) of the Germans in Yugoslavia which is now known as the Danube Swabian Folk Costume Society. Anton Heim gave himself to the service of his countrymen.

Following the unexpected death of our first president in December of 1966 I took over his position. I was a member of the Board of Directors at that time. Anton Heim was president for fifteen years while I have been president for twenty-three years. In 1991 the Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia in Augsburg will celebrate its 40th anniversary.

By the end of the 1960s the work associated with the restitution efforts were to a great extent completed and most of our countrymen were economically secure. Our Association organized various dances on special occasions after 1967 as well as day trips by bus so that our countrymen could see some of the outstanding features of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Our first trip involved two buses and we went to the island of Mainau on the Bodensee (Lake Constance). This trip was a huge success. The second trip took place in 1969 when we went to Rheinfall near Schaffhausen in Switzerland. After 1969 we organized two bus trips a year: one trip in May and another in the autumn every year. These trips usually lasted two days. In May of 1970 we travelled to the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) and on to Baiersbronn/Obertal. In the autumn we went along the Rhine to Rũdesheim and stayed overnight at Osterspay am Rhein. On our second trip to Obertal in the Schwarzwald in 1971 we left by bus early in the morning and headed for Strassbourg. We had an older couple with us who had received their passports two weeks earlier before the trip and were told not to forget to bring their passports with them. After leaving on the trip, they realized they had left them at home. At the Rhine bridge at Kehl we mentioned it to the French officer at the border. The border control officer looked at the two of them and asked the husband if he had any papers or a letter that he had received which the man answered negatively. Then the Frenchman asked him if he had any money. This countryman of ours took out his wallet and handed it to him. The border official said, “Get going!” and we were able to get to Strassbourg.

In 1973 we drove for two days to Bőchingen by Landau in the Pfalz (Palatinate). Our Danube Swabian countrymen who called themselves Southeastern Germans built the House of Southeastern Germans in their free time and voluntary donations in Bőchingen that we were going to visit. The president of the museum of the Southeastern Germans, our countryman Theodor Walter, performed many services on behalf of the Southeastern Germans in Landau and vicinity. He was awarded the Service Cross of the Federal German Republic.

When the building of the museum, House of the Southeastern Germans was completed, it received a grant from the government of the Rhineland Pfalz. This 30,000 Deutsch Marks grant enabled them to immediately add an addition to the museum. This museum of the Southeastern Germans is well worth seeing.

Between 1973 and 1979 we were in Bőchingen five times. I must mention that Jakob and Kati Schleicher as well as Hans and Eva Betscher from Fũrth/Stadeln participated in every one of our trips from 1971 to the present. Another fact about them is that they live 160 kilometres away from Augsburg.

To this day we continue to carry out two bus trips every year. These trips have taken us almost all through Bavaria, the Schwarzwald, the Rhineland Pfalz, France, and Switzerland as well as Austria. In 1977 we made a three-day trip that included a voyage by ship down the Danube from Passau to Vienna. We boarded the boat named "Passau" at Ybbs at one o'clock in the afternoon and at four thirty in the afternoon we were in Nussdorf in Vienna. On these trips we saw many beautiful things in the Federal Republic as was in neighbouring lands and found many new friends. Many Germans from the Sudetenland as well as lifetime residents of Augsburg participated in our trips.

On September 18, 1988, we were in Weismann in the Coburg region. By then we had undertaken 39 bus trips. Through our dance events we made friends with many of the lifetime residents of Augsburg. That was the case in the 1960s in terms of the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour of the federal government, Mr. Stefan Hőpfinger and his beloved wife. At that time, he was also the Secretary of the diocese. We had watched his rise in politics and supported him. He was elected to the city council of Augsburg and then to the Bavarian parliament in Münich. After two legislative periods in Münich he was elected as the Christian Socialist Union party candidate in Augsburg to the Federal parliament in Bonn. For several years Mr. Hőpfinger served as the parliamentary secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Services. Despite his high office, Mr. Hőpfinger maintained his friendship with the Danube Swabians. If there was a possibility for him along with his wife to take part in our activities, he did so despite his many faceted responsibilities and appointments. All of this gave expression to the lasting friendship he and his wife earned among the Danube Swabians. For that reason, I would like to express my warm thanks and appreciation to him and his wife. I wish him ongoing success in his efforts and the difficult tasks he undertakes for the welfare of the German people.

On August 20, 1967, I wrote to the Federal Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia in Sindelfingen about the issue of some local associations desire to host the 11th "Treffen" (Gathering) of the Danube Swabians in Sindelfingen on the 9th and 10th of September 1967. It was to include participants from the communities of Zichydorf, Georgshausen and Gross-Gaj. I wrote the letter on behalf of our Association as its president and indicated that the event would include about 100 to 150 participants from the above-named villages. In Mr. Wolf's reply to me he indicated that arrangements had been made for the event with the "Golderner Stern" (Golden Star) restaurant on Bahnhofstrasse in Sindelfingen. I made a public announcement of the event in "Donauschwaben" (a magazine) in the hope of attracting the interest of persons from the three communities.

In a letter dated August 23, 1967, Mr. Wolf indicated he had made the arrangements for us with the restaurant but then later, on August 30. 1967, I received notice of its cancellation because the Swabians from the Romanian Banat were holding their conference there the day before. The "Donauschwaben" had already published my announcement. As a result, Mr. Wolf arranged for setting up additional tables at the city convention centre for the participants from the three communities.

Our countrymen came to the event but arrived at the Golden Star as previously announced. There were more than one hundred persons. I asked the restaurant owner to let us use the private guest room on the ground floor that could only accommodate abut fifty people. Over one hundred of our countrymen gathered there with some sitting and others standing. In protest we did not go on to the city convention centre in Sindelfingen. We had our noon hour meal served in two shifts. Upstairs on the first floor there were only twenty persons present for the Swabians from the Banat event. There were over one hundred empty chairs. This is a matter that I still cannot forget.

As long as the "Day of the Danube Swabians" was held in Sindelfingen the village of Zichydorf was always very well represented. These gatherings provided an opportunity for our countrymen to meet after not seeing one another in years. Now 45 years after our expulsion and flight many of our older countrymen have died. Many of them would never miss attending the Treffen.

Today there are still these village gatherings. These gatherings have their appeal and provide the one annual opportunity to meet with their old acquaintances from their former home villages.

The best attended Treffen events took place in the late 1950s in Ulm sponsored by Federal Association of the Germans from Yugoslavia. In 1956 or 1957 there were an estimated 20,000 of our countrymen there from the German settlement areas of Yugoslavia. Many of our countrymen from the United States and Canada along with those in the Federal German Republic attended these gatherings.

THE ZICHDORF KIRCHWEIH CELEBRATION IN BIETIGHEIM

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In the 1960s our countryman from Zichydorf, Peter Singer, who lived in Bietigheim undertook the task of organizing a Zichydorf Kirchweih celebration. It was a daunting task, year after year, to organize such an event from scratch (colloquial). Singer eventually had success. Over the years, more and more countrymen came to the Kirchweih celebration. The women of Zichydorf made a Kirchweih wreath that was like the ones they had made back home in Zichydorf (1943 was the last Kirchweih in Zichydorf). The Kirchweih festival could not take place in 1944 for on that Sunday the Partisans and Russians occupied the village.

Michael Wosching who was from Zichydorf also helped in the preparations for the Kirchweih celebrations. He lived in Bietigheim. The Zichydorf Kirchweih wreath was one of a kind in the whole of the Banat. It was in the shape of a heart attached to a pole with two coloured streamers, one rose and the other light blue. The wreath consisted of numerous artificial flowers that surrounded a mirror implanted in the centre.

The Kirchweih festival in our old homeland was the most joyous celebration of the year. It lasted three days. On Kirchweih Sunday the Kirchweih wreath was brought to the marketplace around noon, twelve o'clock, where the Kleinrichter (a village employee that made public announcements to the community on behalf of the local council) stood on top of a large wine barrel and auctioned off the wreath. The Kirchweih lads (older teenage boys) had an advantage in the bidding where their bid of 1 Dinar was valued at 100 Dinars while other bidders had to pay the full price. For example, if the Kirchweih wreath was auctioned off at a price of 150,000 Dinars, a Kirchweih lad paid only 1,500 Dinars. Before the wreath was auctioned a hat and a kerchief were first offered to begin the bidding. Following the auction of the Kirchweih wreath the leader of the Kirchweih lads danced with his chosen partner for the day followed by all the other couples while the Kirchweih wreath was set on the large wine barrel.

In preparation for the Kirchweih festival all of the houses in the village were freshly whitewashed. The young single girls and the women had a new garment for the occasion. Many guests came from Werschetz as well as other villages in the Banat. In the evening dances were held in three or four locations. The Danube Swabians not only knew how to work but also how to celebrate when the time came.

When entering a village, one knew immediately whether it was Danube Swabian, Hungarian, Serbian, Romanian or Slovakian because the cleanliness and tidiness of the houses of the Danube Swabians was not to be found among any of the other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia.

When the Kirchweih festival was held in Bietigheim in 1987 it was also closely tied to the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of Zichydorf and over four hundred former residents of Zichydorf were in attendance. They came from the Federal German Republic, the Democratic German Republic, Austria, and France but also some from the United States and Canada. That many Zichydorf countrymen had not been together in one place since our expulsion and flight from our home community.

Up until now it remains the most beautiful and rewarding homeland festival of all. Several hundred pewter tablets engraved with a picture of the church in Zichydorf and the notation 1787-1967 were presented to all who attended.

OUR GOLDEN WEDDING

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On February 11, 1980, my wife and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in the company of sixty invited guests. The celebration began with a mass in the church in Hochzoll a suburb of Augsburg. This was followed by dinner at the "Brückenhof" restaurant on the Lechbrücke in Hochzoll.

Mr. and Mrs. Hőpfinger were among our guests who participated in the celebration. He was the representative of the Christian Socialist Union for Augsburg in the Federal parliament at that time.

Also present were Jakob and Kati Schleicher along with Hans and Evi Betscher from Fürth/Stadeln and Georg and Annusch Kurzhals from Pforzheim and their granddaughter from Paris.

The original Danube Swabian brass band "Edelweiss" led by Sepp Teller from Giengen/Benz made a surprise appearance at our celebration and played for us for an hour so that we and our guests could dance. The "Edelweiss" brass band played at all our Association dances in Augsburg with one exception. After dinner we were busy dancing. In the meantime, coffee and cake were served, followed by the evening meal. It was the best celebration we had known since our expulsion from our old homeland.

AWARDED THE FEDERAL SERVICE CROSS

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On June 2, 1984, I was awarded the Federal Service Cross along with a written citation by Richard von Weizsäcker the Federal President of Germany. On October 18, 1984, the Chief Magistrate of the city of Augsburg, Mr. Hans Breuer, presented me the Federal Service Cross during a recognition ceremony in the City Hall. At the same time, Mr. Luitpold Schlosser from Augsburg-Haunstetten also received the same medal.

Chief Magistrate Breuer also held an honorary dinner with invited guests. After the dinner I asked Chief Magistrate Breuer if I could speak a few words. Naturally of course he consented. I said, "Highly esteemed Chief Magistrate and worthy ladies and gentlemen, I take great pleasure in receiving this high honour. And it brings me further pleasure that a simple ordinary man like me could receive such a high honour. That is only possible because we live in a freedom loving state. I would like to encourage all of you to use all your strength to see to it that this freedom we have will survive. I thank you all." I received a great deal of applause. Chief Magistrate Breuer looked at me and said, "This spontaneity on your part is not something I had expected." At that time, I was 76 years old and surprised by what the Chief Magistrate said about my short speech. The event lasted for about an hour and a half.

THE CELEBRATION OF MY 80TH BIRTHDAY

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On May 22, 1988, I celebrated my 80th birthday with about sixty guests. The celebration took place at the "Brückenhof" restaurant on the Hochzoller Lechbrücke in Augsburg. My entire family of sixteen persons took part. But other guests were invited as well. The engineer, Franz Blantz, from Kirchdorf am Inn by Simbach, the president of our Association in Bavaria, came to Augsburg along with his wife. Others from out of town included Jakob and Kati Schleicher and Hans and Evi Betscher from Fürth/Stadeln and the entire Board of Directors of our Association in Augsburg along with their wives as well as other friends from Augsburg. After the evening dinner we danced to the music of the three-man band "Schmuttertaler."

On this occasion of my 80th birthday Franz Blantz spoke on behalf of the Association of Bavaria about my career in our Association and the national Association and presented me with a birthday gift on their behalf.

My countryman, Fritz Aller, a building contractor, spoke on behalf of the Association in Augsburg acting as the current president expressing appreciation for my activities and efforts as president in the past and presented me with a birthday gift, a picture of Spitzweg in Zinn. After him Dr. Scheurer spoke and offered his best wishes on my birthday. He was followed by Mr. Willi Reisser a lawyer and member of the City Council of Augsburg. He spoke about a major article that appeared on January 2, 1986, in the "Augsburger Allgemeinen" (newspaper) which printed 350,000 copies. It dealt with my life experiences from 1920 until the present day. Mrs. Magdalena Peter spoke about my activities in Augsburg.

Following the five speeches, I spoke a few words of appreciation and that I was very happy to have such high praise from so many on reaching my 80th birthday.

The final speaker was my grandson, the jurist Wolfgang Basch who spoke about the wonderful years of his youth in the embrace of the Basch family to which the rest of the family added their applause. We danced until midnight to the music of the jolly "Schmuttertaler". This is the way another fine celebration came to an end.

THE 80TH BIRTHDAY OF MY WIFE KATHARINA BASCH

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On May 7, 1989, we celebrated the 80th birthday of my wife Katharina Basch née Merle. She was the daughter of Jakob Merle and Magdalena Merle née Günther of Zichydorf. Her father died in the extermination camp at Heideschütz in 1945 and her mother perished in the camp at Setschanfeld in 1946.

In the years 1919 and 1920, my wife attended school in the Catholic convent in Gross-Betschkerek in the Yugoslavian Banat. My wife and I got to know one another in the autumn of 1923. She was fourteen and I was fifteen years old. Before our marriage on February 11, 1930, we were inseparable as one said in the Banat.

The celebration of my wife's birthday took place in the "Brückenhof" restaurant in Augsburg. There were sixty invited guests. These guests included: Stefan Hőpfinger member of parliament for many years and parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Services and his wife Sofie, Willi Reisser the Chief Magistrate of the City Council of Augsburg and his wife, the medical doctor, Gaspar Scheurer and his lifelong wife, the entire Board of Directors of the Association of the Danube Swabians from Yugoslavia Swabian District in Augsburg and their wives and the Schleichers and Betschers from Fürth and many others.

The three jolly "Schmuttertaler" musicians played at the dance that followed.

There were many nice birthday presents. The room where the celebration took place was bedecked with flowers. Our sons Joseph and Georg videotaped the celebration for the benefit of the future generations of the Basch family.

PART THREE

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Picture
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The caption for the picture reads: 59 students at the Hatzfeld Private German High School (Grade Four) in January 1922 at their junior matriculation.

Front row lying down: Bock and Paul Kruch. 2nd row from left to right: Westhof, F. Obmann, K. Jahraus, Flieg, Kartje, Hepp, Walzer, Modosi. 3rd row from left to right: Ferch, Lohrmann, N. Schiro, Georg Basch, W. Keilbach, Frl. Szalay, Director Siskovic, Prof. Lichtfuss, Frl. Schira, Wenzl, Krier, Michels, Badenburg, H. Fiedler, 4th row from left to right: Fritz, Weismann, Wartenfeld, R. Haiser, Adam, L. Lenner, Gabriel, Frl. Heinrich, Gg. Wolf, Wersching, Schira, Wagner, Sterz, Stadtfelder, ?, 5th and 6th row from left to right: Bőss, Sagstädter, Weber, Merky, Hartl, Hans Wehner, Lichtenberg, Jos. Klein, Arkadin Loran, A. Rőhm, Fr. Wehner, Adam Hild, A. Baitz, Blickling, Beck, Dippong, Dietrich, Al. Hauber, Fertig, Hasselberger, Weber, Lippert.

Picture
(Page 130)

The caption for the picture reads: Kirchweih in Zichydorf, October 1925. Sitting in the first row, the first couple to the right are Katharina Merle and Georg Basch as a Kirchweih couple.

Picture
(Page 131)

The caption reads: The 11 young men in this photograph taken in 1923 were the Kirchweih Lads in Zichydorf in 1925

Standing from left to right: Johann Feimer, Georg Basch, Michael Kurzhals, Georg Wiegert, and Kristian Hasenfratz. Sitting from left to right: Hans Wachtler, Nikolaus Hemmert, Adam Noll, Joseph Wachtler, Joseph Stőber and Anton Merle.

Picture
(Page 132)

The caption reads: Katharina Basch née Merle at the age of 19 in 1928

Picture
(Page 133)

The caption reads: Georg Basch as a 20-year-old in 1928 in Zichydorf

Picture
(Page 134)

The caption reads: In the enlistment into the military in 1928 those born in 1907 were not included. Those who performed their military service in the Yugoslavian Army were: Standing from left to right: Adam Noll, Georg Wiegert and Joseph Stőber. Seated from left to right: Kristian Hasenfratz and Georg Basch.

Pictures
(Page 135)

Top Picture: the caption reads: Georg and Katharina Basch née Merle in 1938

Bottom Picture: the caption reads: Joseph (10) and Georg (5) Basch in 1941

Picture
(Page 136)

The caption reads: The opening of the Cattle Breeding Fair in Zichydorf on March 25, 1942

To the right Dr. Sepp Janko the Folk Group Führer in the Yugoslavian Banat, behind him M. Luffy and next to him Georg Basch the President of the Cattle Breeding Co-operative in Zichydorf.

Picture
(Page 137)

The caption reads: Attendees at the event in Zichydorf on March 25, 1942

Picture
(Page 138)

The caption reads: A young breeding bull in Georg Basch's farmyard in Zichydorf

Pictures
(Page 139)

The top picture: The caption reads: Katharina Basch doing slave labour in the coal mine at Kolubara in Northern Serbia 1949-1951

The bottom picture: In Camp #1004 in Casov-Jar in the Soviet Union in 1947. Seated: Georg Basch. Standing: Kurt ? from the Sudetenland.

Pictures
(Page 140)

Top Picture: The caption reads: In the refugee camp in Dasing in 1950. From left to right: Georg Basch, Josef Urban, Matthias Sartor.

Bottom Picture: The caption reads: Georg and Katharina Basch née Merle in front of their house in Friedberg in 1953

Pictures
(Page 141)

Top Picture: The caption reads: The Basch Family in front of their home in Friedberg 1953

Bottom Picture: In the Friedberg Park 1953. From left to right: Georg Basch Junior, Georg Basch Senior and Joseph Basch

Pictures
(Page 142)

Top Picture: The caption reads: Work Crew at the MAN Construction Company in Augsburg in 1953. The second from the right is Basch and 5th to the right is Urban.

Bottom Picture: The caption reads: The Basch family building their own house in Augsburg 1955

Picture
(Page 143)

The caption reads: The Basch Family in 1978. Standing from left to right; the Jurist Werner Basch, Käthe Basch, Georg Basch Junior, Irmgard Basch, Joseph Basch. In the middle: Katharina and Georg Basch. In front: Wolfgang and Jutta Basch.

Pictures
(Page 144)

Top Picture: The caption reads: Golden Wedding Anniversary Kati and Georg Basch 10.02.1980

Bottom Picture: The caption reads: The Basch's home as it appears today

Picture
(Page 145)

The caption reads: J. Wolf receives the money raised in support of the House of the Danube Swabians in Sindelfingen in September 1983. From left to right Peter Singer, Georg Basch, Georg Kurzhals, Jakob Wolf

Pictures
(Page 146)

Top Picture: The caption reads: The Chief Magistrate of Augsburg Hans Breuer presents Georg Basch with the Federal Service Cross at the city hall on 18.10.1984

Bottom Picture: The caption reads: Augsburg City Hall 19.10.1984. From left to right: Joseph Basch, the Jurist Werner Basch, Georg Basch Senior, the Chief Magistrate Hans Breuer, Jutta and Thomas Aichner

Pictures
(Page 147)

Top Picture: The caption reads: The Basch married couple in their home on his 80th birthday on May 22, 1988

Bottom Picture: The caption reads: 22.05.1988 from left to right: Martin Scheibele, Mrs. Blantz, the engineer Franz Blantz the president of the Association of the Danube Swabians in Bavaria, Georg Basch, Kati Basch, Kati Schleicher.

Picture
(Page 148)

The caption reads: The home of the family of Georg and Katharina Basch in Zichydorf built in 1937. This photograph was taken during a visit to the old homeland in 1977.

APPENDIX
(Page 149)

A formal address given by Georg Basch
on the 200th anniversary of the founding
and settlement of Zichydorf
in conjunction with the Zichydorf Kirchweih celebration
in Bietigheim-Bissingen on September 26, 1987

Honourable ladies and gentlemen, dear guests, and my dearly beloved countrymen from Zichydorf!

We have gathered here in Bietigheim today to simultaneously celebrate our annual Zichydorf Kirchweih festival and the 200th anniversary of the founding and settlement of our never to be forgotten home community of Zichydorf. Two hundred years ago our forebears founded our beautiful home community of Zichydorf named after the Hungarian Count of that name.

To begin with I would like to provide the following information for our guests and the younger generation who are the offspring of our countrymen from Zichydorf who were born here or in our former homeland about its location. Our home community was in the Yugoslavian Banat betwixt three rivers, east of the Tisza (Theiss), north of the Danube (Donau) and south of the Maros (Marosch). Near to our Banat rivers were the Temes and Bega rivers as well. The Bega flows

from Temesvár to Mündung and connected to the Tisza through a system of canals and is navigable by ship. Zichydorf was on the railway line between Gross-Betschkerek and Werschetz, 70 kilometres south of Gross-Betschkerek and 25 kilometres north of Werschetz, the centre of the wine trade which was also our District capital. Our home community was situated on the Great Hungarian Plain in Torontal County, a portion of what was called "the breadbasket of Europe." Today most of the former German towns and villages now have other names. Gross-Betschkerek is now known as Zrenjanin and our Zichydorf is now Plandiste,

Zichydorf was a market town with 3,200 inhabitants at the time that the expulsion began.

My very dear and honoured ladies and gentlemen let us now go back to the founding of our home community of Zichydorf. It was founded in 1787. Our forebears came as farmers, tradesmen and labourers recruited by the Austrian Empress Maria Theresia and her son the Emperor Joseph II.

They came from various regions of the future German Reich: Alsace-Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate (Pfalz), Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Northrhein-Westphalia, Hessen and some from Austria. After they spent days on the so-called "Ulmer Schachteln" (a type of barge) on the Danube they eventually reached Apatin where they were taken over by the immigration officials there and were assigned to various newly surveyed regions between the Danube and the Tisza and east of the Tisza. It was the deserted uninhabited region that the Turks had conquered after defeating the Hungarians at the Battle of Mohács in 1526.

At the beginning of the 18th Century this region between the Danube and Tisza and east of the Tisza including Temesvár was retaken from the Turks by Prince Eugene of Savoy and his Christian armies. As a result of his victories at the Battle of Zenta and Peterwardein, Prince Eugene, in a sense, was the creator of the future settlements in the region.

The authorities in charge of the settlement provided our forebears with an adobe house made of earth along with some furniture and household necessities like a bed, one straw filled mattress, one table, some chairs, and an oven to bake bread. Farmers were allotted four horses, an open wagon, one cow, one spade, one wooden plough, one hoe and one session of land. One session was 32 Katastraljoch (almost 45 acres) while one quarter of the land in the village was left for meadows and pasturage.

Our forebears were faced with a deserted, unfertile swampland that first had to be reclaimed and cleared. It is no wonder that it was said, "The first to arrive faced death, the second generation dealt with needs of all kinds and the third generation had bread." At the beginning many died of cholera, followed by swamp fever. Entire families were wiped out due to these diseases.

My dear esteemed ladies and gentlemen it was not the bad and inferior people who left their homeland two hundred years ago to find a new and better life. Through diligent industriousness and perseverance our forebears triumphed over all the obstacles of those first 40 to 50 backbreaking years. As things improved, flourishing and prosperous Danube Swabian towns and villages emerged, and the region became the "breadbasket of Europe" once more.

In 1896 the first harvesting machines appeared in Zichydorf manufactured by several American companies like McCormick and Massey-Harris along with threshing machines that could output twenty-five tons a day. It was hard and heavy work during harvesting and threshing and it began at two o'clock in the morning and went on until seven or eight o'clock in the evening.

Except for the intense efforts of the Hungarian government to Hungarianize us, all in all, it was an idyllic world for us up to the end of the First World War. At the beginning of the 20th Century in the year 1900 itself the teachers in the local schools forbade the pupils to speak their German mother tongue when they were out in the street. Whoever was caught doing so received a punishment in school the next day. With the downfall of the Dual Monarchy after the war in 1918 the future destruction of the Danube Swabians in the former Kingdom of Hungary began although no one knew it at the time.

In 1918 the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes came into being. The 1,500,000 Danube Swabians in former Greater Hungary were torn apart and divided up in three national states. One third of them remained in what is today's Hungary, one third in Yugoslavia and one third in Romania. Prior to that Hungary had a population of 21,000,000. Present day Hungary has slightly more than 10,000,000 inhabitants.

Following the First World War, in 1919 Hungarian and Danube Swabian large estate owners had their land confiscated and could retain only 250 hectares (600 acres). The confiscated farmland in Yugoslavia was divided up and given to colonists from Bosnia and Herzegovina who were resettled in the Banat and the Batschka. Each family was awarded four to five hectares of land at no cost. They also received the necessary seeds at no cost.

My dear esteemed ladies and gentlemen, the free seeds that the Yugoslavian government provided to these settlers were never sown but traded for alcohol. Through the settlement of these more than 100,000 hectares of confiscated land with Serbs from the Balkans in 1919 would become the preliminary step that would eventually lead to the end of the Danube Swabians.

After the First World War, no economic restraints were placed on the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia. That came later and when it did it was devastating.

In terms of government service things were different. Only Serbs were considered for such positions. There were no longer any German middle schools in the Banat that were financed by the Yugoslavian government so that the Danube Swabians were forced to fend for themselves.

In 1920, a private German high school, with eight grades, was founded in Hatzfeld in the Yugoslavian Banat. All its 16,000 inhabitants were German. This high school was financed by the city of Hatzfeld and the parents of the over nine hundred Danube Swabian students. To get permission for this private German high school the city of Hatzfeld had to provide board and lodging, clothing and an education for 200 Serbian war orphans from the First World War from former Serbia. The Serbian students went to school in the morning while the 900 Danube Swabian students went to school in the afternoon.

Many of the Danube Swabian children who attended the Hatzfeld high school came from the Batschka. One of the most prominent of them was the now deceased Dr. Joseph Trischler. That was the case until the year 1923. In that year the German town of Hatzfeld and its 16,000 German inhabitants was exchanged for the villages of Modosch and Pardan because of a border adjustment and became part of Romania.

This border adjustment had a political prologue. The Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia, Momtschilo Nintschitsch, representing the Radical Party in parliament, was defeated in the last parliamentary elections by Professor Heinrich of Hatzfeld representing the German Party. It was this issue that gave birth to the sarcastic song, "Momtschi, Momtschi, Momtschi, you just can't catch a Swabian like that."

This is how the city of Hatzfeld, and its 16,000 German inhabitants were handed over to Romania. It was the end of the German high school. These events are mentioned because numerous students from Zichydorf attended the high school in Hatzfeld and in the future became doctors, veterinarians, and academics.

My dear honourable ladies and gentlemen, following these remarks about the question of the Danube Swabian schools, I would now like to return to the history of our home community. From the beginning of the 20th Century Zichydorf developed rather noticeably. As early as 1910 the electrification of our community was carried out. Electric lights were installed in our homes and stables. All of the streets in our community had streetlights unlike the communities around us with Hungarian, Serbian and Romanian populations. Following the First World War there were many young men and women of marriageable age. On some days during 1919 there were as many as three marriages that took place. The local governing council divided up land to provide 100 building lots to accommodate the newlyweds. From 1919 to 1926 this resulted in the construction of more than 100 new houses. The construction was largely done by local tradesmen and workers. By the time that the expulsion took place there were 700 houses in Zichydorf.

My dear honoured ladies and gentlemen, I would like to make some remarks about the following episode that took place 135 years after our forebears migrated to the Banat from the various areas of what is now Germany so that it will never be lost to memory. This is the example I have in mind to share. In the summer of 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, military units of the German Army allied with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy came to Zichydorf on their march to fight in Serbia. I was in grade one in our local school, and I will never forget what happened. The soldiers from the German Reich were astounded to find entire communities in the Banat where the population was German speaking. They asked us, "Where did you learn to speak such good German?" None of them had any awareness that our forebears had left their former German homelands to come to the Banat about 135 years earlier. According to my understanding there were only a few sparse references about their migration in the Institute for Germans Living in Foreign Lands in Stuttgart. How quickly our forebears had been forgotten.

My dear honoured ladies and gentlemen, dearly loved Zichydorf countrymen, my desire for you is that you treasure the traditions and customs of our former homeland and never forget them. Even after 160 years of living in the southern stretches of the Great Hungarian Plains we preserved

our German mother tongue unlike those who left for America, and we owe that to certain circumstances.

Firstly, the population in the villages established by our forebears were overwhelmingly if not completely German speaking.

Secondly, prior to our expulsion and extermination, the German settlers and their descendants were culturally and economically far in advance of their neighbours whether they were Hungarians, Serbs, Romanians, or Slovaks. These factors were the grounds that led to the inhumane slaughter and expulsion of our Danube Swabian countrymen from our old homeland. The Danube Swabians always took pride in their German identity and continue to do so to this day without exception.

My very esteemed ladies and gentlemen, the "Holocaust" of our Zichydorf countrymen began on Monday, October 2, 1944. Zichydorf was not defended militarily. Early in the morning, around five o'clock, several armed Partisans arrived on horse drawn wagons from the neighbouring village of Gross-Gaj and occupied the offices in the community centre and issued an order to the drummer to announce their occupation of Zichydorf. All men on leave from the German Army were to immediately deliver their uniforms and weapons to the community centre. Ten citizens of Zichydorf, that included me, were ordered to appear at the community centre and on arrival there we were designated as hostages. If anything should happen to a Partisan, we would be shot.

Shortly after that seven or eight of our Zichydorf countrymen were locked up in the community centre and were abused and mistreated daily. None of these countrymen are alive. Some of them were shot, the others died because of their ongoing torture.

On November 2, 1944, a freight train arrived in Zichydorf from Werschetz with around two hundred Partisans onboard and they marched to our school. In the evening, after six o'clock, the two hundred Partisans swarmed through all the streets of Zichydorf in groups of four or five men under the guidance of someone familiar with the community and they apprehended and took hold of every male between the ages of 14 to 70 years of age from their homes. They were imprisoned in a warehouse shed adjoined to the train station and spent the night there. There were around 350 individuals involved. In the afternoon of the next day, they were forced to board the freight cars, with fifty in each car. At four o'clock in the afternoon the freight train left for Werschetz. As we passed over the bridge, we could still get a good glimpse of Zichydorf and our countryman, Rudolf Kaiser, who had received countless medals for his service in the First World War began to cry bitterly and managed to say, "Men, we will never see our home again." Rudi Kaiser was right. Within fourteen days 170 of our Zichydorf countrymen were shot to death in the camp at Werschetz known as "Stoikowitsch" simply because they were German. They were buried in the place where animal carcasses were burned. These gruesome facts are virtually unknown in official government circles in the Federal Republic. These were our brothers, fathers, in-laws, sons, and friends from 20 to 65 years of age, who could be alive today had they not been brutally murdered. Among them were 150 civilians and only 18 to 20 who were on leave from the German Army who had been taken by surprise by the Partisans' arrival.

On November 17, 1944, when nearly half of the 30,000 inhabitants of the city of Werschetz were German, the German women, children and older men were deported to Zichydorf and after a long march on foot they were assigned to the houses in groups of ten to fifteen persons.

Between Christmas 1944 and New Year 1945, thirty-seven young women from Zichydorf, both married and single, who were between the ages of 18 and 28, were delivered to the camp known as "Stoikowisch" in Werschetz. There along with thirteen young teenage boys and men from Zichydorf who had survived the shootings were deported to slave labour in Russia in freight cars on the night of December 31, 1944. The journey lasted for sixteen full days until they arrived in Casov-Jar. Of the fifty deportees from Zichydorf, two married women, two single girls and one man died in Russia. The last of these deportees, both men and women, were released and sent to the Federal German Republic in December 1949. Many of these late arriving deportees were able to be reunited with family members who had survived but, in most cases, it would take years to do so.

On April 24, 1945, all of the women and their children as well as older men 65 years and over were forced to leave their homes. They could only take what they were wearing. They were all confined to the houses on Street #1 that was set up like a camp and were forbidden from entering their former houses. Following that they were allotted to various camps. The aged were sent to the extermination camp at Rudolfsgnad in the Banat where they starved to death in utter misery. Those who were able to work ended up in the labour camps at Heideschütz, Setschanfeld, Kudritz and Oletz where most of them gradually died of malnutrition and overwork, just because they were German.

As a result of the Second World War, in the years from 1942 to 1948 our village of Zichydorf suffered the deaths of 700 hundred of its inhabitants. Of these deaths, over 500 persons were civilians who lost their lives because they were Germans.

My dear honoured ladies and gentlemen, with this kind of death toll we certainly outweigh the losses suffered by similar communities in the former German Reich. The survivors among our Zichydorf countrymen, of this attempt at our total extermination, are now scattered all over the world. The largest group now live in the Federal German Republic, in Austria, the United States of America and Canada.

The Danube Swabians, an industrious and work friendly people, have made a life for themselves in their new homelands and have become fellow citizens with those among whom they now live. Our Danube Swabians, who had to endure such a terrible fate, will just never give up. That has been demonstrated many times over since the settlement took place two hundred years ago.

My very dear and honourable ladies and gentlemen, beloved Zichydorf countrymen, on this 200th anniversary of the founding and settlement of our former beloved homeland community we want to remember and revere our dead who suffered so much in the inhumane manner of their deaths.

I ask all of you who are present here today, in the friendliest manner I can muster, to share in a minute of silence to honour all our dead...I thank you.

For those of us who survived, let this 200th anniversary celebration become a special memory of our unforgettable Zichydorf.

I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for your participation in this celebration and never forget our beloved Zichydorf. I thank you all.

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