

HANS TABAR:

The History  
of  
**ZERNE**

HOMELAND BOOK OF THE SISTER COMMUNITIES  
DEUTSCH AND SERB ZERNE

*Translation by Fran Matkovich*

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## **Forward**

Early in my youth I decided to write a history of my homeland. However, one needs information to complete this task. I hoped to find this in the archives of the community, the parish rectory, the estate of Count Csekronics and the mother community of Hatzfeld. Unfortunately, my efforts were fruitless. So I gave up searching for old documents and devoted myself to the collection of the memories of older fellow countrymen. In this way I received many a valuable communication of personal memories of the people concerned and oral records passed down from the settlement times. I examined the collection of materials carefully and this became useful for the first time when in 1943 I had to send in a history of the community at the request of higher authorities. Before this time I had already been given the opportunity to verify and complete my collection of materials from similar publications, to the extent that it was necessary for our community.

After the stirring events of World War II and the period thereafter, the thought again occurred to me to write down the details of events and not to let them be forgotten. This was quite a task, which required great commitment and much dedication, but it brought me closer to my goal. My fellow countryman Josef Kampf with his female colleagues was also involved. Additional valuable material was provided by Jacob Nickels, our last vice-notary Anton Kampf, and my countryman Matthias Kampf of Hatzfeld. To them and to all who put themselves at our disposal or in other ways cooperated for the completion of this book, my heartfelt thanks.

The goal of this work is to provide the youth and succeeding generations an image of the fate and accomplishments of their ancestors. But it should also keep alive the thoughts and remembrances of their ancestors.

May this book be granted a good reception and large circulation!

Karlsfeld, 1973

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## The Banat, Our Homeland

Our former homeland was the Banat. It lies in the southern part of the Pannonian lowland plain between the Danube River, the Theiss, the Marosch, and the Siebenburg Mountains. It has a surface of 28,000 quadratkilometers. The population before World War I was 1.5 million.

The land is flat in the west, rolling and mountainous in the east. The history of the Banat is very changeable. No doubt the Romans walked the lands of our homeland, and there were Roman legions stationed there after they conquered Decebal, the king of Dacia, and made the Siebenburgs a Roman province.

During the great migrations, which shook the empire of the Romans to their foundations, Goths, Gepids, and Vandals marched through this region. In 375 it was under the command of the Huns, who founded a great empire under their king Attila (Etzel), which fell into ruin after Attila's death. Lombards and later Avars succeeded the Huns. The latter were totally vanquished by Karl the Great.

In 896 A.D. the Hungarians (Magyars) conquered the Banat. They took possession of the land within the Carpathians, overthrew the resident tribes, and found there a permanent abode. It did not all go smoothly. They harassed the neighboring nations. They led raids into other countries. The tribal princes were always fighting among themselves. Under the first king Saint Stefan, the Magyars were converted to Christianity and there followed more peaceful and more favorable times for the country.

However, the dangers from outside had no end. The incursion of the Cumans and the march of the crusaders through the land caused terrible devastation. Scarcely had the first sign of improvement appeared, when the troops of the Greek emperor Manuel destroyed our homeland.

In 1242 the Mongols broke out of Asia invading Hungary and, of course, also into the Banat and devastated it completely. The Hungarian king Bela IV himself had to flee. After the departure of these wild hordes the country was a picture of total devastation. Only slowly did the people who endured this destruction venture out of their hiding places. A small number survived this sudden and cruel invasion and began reconstruction. Only slowly did the population multiply until a new threat arose. The Turks from Asia having invaded and conquered the lands of the Balkan Peninsula, (1389 Battle at Amselfeld), also invaded the Banat and brought in the plague. The already sparse population was newly decimated. In 1526 the Hungarian King Ludwig II suffered an annihilating defeat at Mohacs and the Turks pressed constantly forward. Their goal was the conquest of Vienna. Only with the help of the Polish King John Sobieski could they be repelled from this siege in 1683. Now came a turning point in the long battle against the Turks. Finally in 1686 Ofen (Budapest) was re-conquered and there followed the liberation of the territories subjugated by the Turks. The triumphant battles of Prince Eugen of Savoy at Zenta (1697) and at Temesvar (Romania) and the ensuing conclusion of peace at Passarovitz (1718) finally brought the Banat deliverance from the Turks. A setback occurred once more in 1737 in the newly outbroken Turkish War. To protect the boundaries from the Turks, so-called military borders were established; these borders were colonized by military farmers. Their task was to protect the land from the constant Turkish invasions.

What did the Banat look like after the Turkish dominion? Where there were blooming villages before the Turkish dominion, there now were ruins and leftover rubble, fruitful fields overgrown by wilderness. Weed, cane, brushwood and forest grew over everything. Here every kind of beast of prey, wolves, wild hogs, birds of prey found shelter. Rivers overflowed their banks, changed their course. Puddles and wild water courses arose. The land became marsh. In the marsh was formed a breeding place for harmful insects. The vapors were not healthy. The inhabitants were nomadic Slav herders, who lived in caverns. The land was very sparsely settled. It made sense, therefore, to colonize it and bring it into cultivation. The first governor of the Banat was Count Claudius Florimund Mercy. He saw as his first task to transform the fallow lands into fruitful farmland through the settlement of colonists. He

had the land surveyed, had the Bega canal built, so that the extensive lands were drained. Then he allowed settlers from Germany, France, Italy and Spain, mainly farmers, to come, to whom he allocated fields and home sites. The Turkish War in 1737 led to a setback in the colonization. Many settlers fled. Others became victims of pestilence.

The second large settlement occurred under the reign of Maria Theresa. These were Catholic Germans from the German Empire and to a smaller extent French from Alsace-Lorraine.

What induced the settlers to leave their homeland? When the empress in 1763 issued the "Kolonisierungs-Patent" (colonization charter) and it became known, recruiters and agents were drawn throughout the land to enlist settlers. The recruitment had good results, especially in the southwestern area of Germany. The settlers were granted an allocation of land, homesites, a fee allotment of timber and firewood, and also freedom from taxation for 6 years. Craftsmen received freedom from taxation for 10 years. For the journey the colonists received daily travel expenses even based on the number of family members. The difficult trip into the Banat went through Ulm, Regensburg to Vienna. Here they received the charters and the travel money to Ofen (Budapest) and there additional travel money into the Banat. The offer was enticing and the decision to move as settlers to distant Hungary, into the Banat, alleviated the problems of that time in their homeland. Due to many wars, the people were impoverished, the tax burdens were huge, the tariffs high, and likewise the rents. The chicanery of civil servants was no less troublesome. All these things together promoted the decision for emigration.

Although many incentives were given, which favored and led to the decision of the colonists, there followed a difficult farewell. Everything that was beloved and dear to them up until now must be left behind. The sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, good friends or neighbors remaining at home were forlorn. The settlers felt the pain of separation twice, for not only did they leave behind their loved ones, but also the homeland that had always given them much beauty and much joy. Many private tears were shed over the trip, for they knew the separation could be forever.

So they set out upon their laborious journey. A murderous climate and a wilderness awaited them upon their arrival in the Banat. With unparalleled courage and diligence they took on the battle and it took ten years before they became master of the perils and made for themselves a new homeland. The battle against epidemics and arduous cultivation of the earth cost hundreds of lives, but their efforts and perspiration were rewarded at the end with success. The Banat became the breadbasket of Europe.

After the liberation it became an imperial province and was administered by the Vienna councilor. His respective regents were the king and queen of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. After the World War I the Banat was divided between Yugoslavia and Romania. Romania received the larger eastern section and Yugoslavia the smaller western section.

## Statistical Data of the Yugoslavian Banat

	<i>Population . . . . .</i>	<i>630,000</i>
<i>(1941)</i>		
	German . . . . .	
130,000		
	Hungarian . . . . .	
90,000		
	Romanian . . . . .	
65,000		
	Serb . . . . .	
215,000		
	Other . . . . .	
130,000		

### *Proportion of Land by Ethnic Group:*

	26.2% . . . . .	
German		
	25.9% . . . . .	
Serb		
	19.7% . . . . .	
agrarian		
	12.7% . . . . .	
Romanian		
	8.2% . . . . .	
Hungarian		
	3.3% . . . . .	
Slovak		
	4% . . . . .	
Other		

	<i>Total Area . . . . .</i>	<i>930,994</i>
<i>hectars</i>		

	<i>Arable Land . . . . .</i>	
633,202.5 hectars		
	Pasture and Meadow . . . . .	
171,903.5 hectars		
	Forest . . . . .	
25,851.75 hectars		
	Wine Gardens . . . . .	
11,927.25 hectars		

	Orchard . . . . .		
1,109.75 hectares			
	Waste Land . . . . .		
66,999.25 hectares			
	<i>Of this the Germans owned</i> . . . . .	265'402.5 K. J.	
	<i>Number of Owners</i> . . . . .	24,398	
	<i>Count of Stock</i> . . . . .		
	Horses	116,000	Pigs
315,248			
	Horned Cattle	315,248	Sheep
222,964			
	Dairy Cows	51,000	Goats
9,768			

## The Reasons for Settlement of the Banat

Since the Banat was freed from the Turks in the victorious campaigns of Prince Eugen with a huge sacrifice of blood, there was a question about the security of the regained possession. Even when the Turks had been forced back into the area lying south of the Danube, there were still constant raids by smaller Turkish troops along the borders. To prevent this and to enable peaceful development in these possessions, proper measures had to be taken.

This led to the decision to settle soldiers as farmers along the boundaries in a wide border patrol. Their task was to avert the smaller Turkish raids. So they were defense farmers and as such under the orders of the border regiments command. Special



privileges were granted to them. This border patrol is known by the name of military frontier.

However in the northern areas even larger troops had to be stationed, for they had to reckon with the problem of much more adverse invasions. The larger troop federations required a large amount of provision, war materials, equipment and other things. These all often had to be procured from distant territories of the empire with great difficulty and effort. So arose the plan for the settlement of the Banat.

The first settlers who received land were veterans, members of the baggage train, and camp followers. First after them came thousands of settlers, mainly from the southwestern part of the empire. By these means the establishment of the military borders, and the settlement of the Banat and its cultivation, the security, but also the provisions for the army were guaranteed not only for the present but also for the future.

Connected to the settlement were the following sovereigns and generals:

1. Emperor Carl VI (1711-1740)
2. Empress Maria Theresa (1746-1780)
3. Emperor Joseph II (1780-1790)
4. Prince Eugen of Savoy
5. General Count Claudius Florimund Mercy

Emperor Carl VI. He was the father of the succeeding Empress Maria Theresa. During his reign the colonization of the Banat began.

Empress Maria Theresa. The largest portion of settlement occurred under her time of reign. Over 50,000 families established themselves in the almost empty territories of southern Hungary. They took upon themselves the development of their lands and strengthened the Germans. The objective was a united state. She limited enforced labor, implemented freedom of the farmers to own property, supported trade and industry, and ordered the opening of schools for the people. During her reign only Catholic settlers were allowed. In thankfulness for the help of the Hungarians in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) she granted them certain privileges. The Hungarian language became the administrative language in the Banat, which was to the disadvantage of the German people.

Joseph II. He also permitted the settlement of Protestants in the Banat, abolished serfdom, granted to his subject freedom of speech and freedom of the press, for which he received the name "Joseph the German". His objective was a monolingual unitary state. To the pain of the German settlers and the placation of the Hungarians he withdrew all of the reform measures on his death bed.

Prince Eugen of Savoy, "the noble knight" freed our homeland from the Turks and saved the West from Islam. He was a very educated, religious and art-loving man, one of the greatest personalities of his era, a triumphant general and a great statesman.

General Count Claudius Florimund Mercy. He was the first governor of the Banat. With him the reconstruction of the Banat was most seriously undertaken. He had the canalization of the Banat completed because of which the dreaded swamp fever (malaria),

which had costed thousands of lives previously, declined. Upon this freed up land forthwith spread out fruitful fields and farmland. He had mulberry bushes planted and brought in silkworms. Even today the village of Mercydorf in the Romanian Banat carries his name.

Furthermore, if on that place, the health of an endangered swamp soon sprang into a rich harvest full of farms and vineyards, then that is also a merit to Count Mercy.

Adam Mueller praised his accomplishments in this way:

“Aus einer Wüste ward ein bluhend Eden,  
Aus Sumpfen hob sich eine neue Welt”

From a wilderness, it became a blooming Eden,  
From swamps there arose a new world.

## The Settlement

In 1753 68 Serbs, among them a few Romanian families, came into the territory of our homeland community as settlers from Boldur Reid, which they left because of the constant threat of water danger. Boldur Reid was in the vicinity of the future community of German Saint Michael (Deutsch-Sankt-Michael) in today's Romanian Banat, near the community of Csene. They settled on the black bar jutting out of the flood area, where Csekonic's stud farm (Menes) later stood. From there came the first name Crna Greda (Black Bar). Later the settlement was moved to the place where the Serb church stands today. Since the earth was still black they named the place Crnja (Zerne). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century there stood a settlement there called Olesch or Olasch, which was destroyed by the Turks. In 1775 the Serb church was built there.

In 1700 our ancestors were settled just west of the Serb village by Joseph of Csekronics. Even before the settlement there were a few German families there. In the beginning there were only 55 houses. The first settlers came without exception from the neighboring community of Hatzfeld. From the origin of the settlers we had the

Hatzfeld street name information( Trierer ~ , Mainzer ~ , Luxembourger ~ , Lorraine Gasse). New settlers streamed constantly out of Hatzfeld, Heufeld, Mastort, St. Hubert, Soltur and Charleville. In 1800 there were already 218 houses and 112.5 sessions (A "Session" is a land measure of 35 to 47 acres, depending on the source.) of community land for farming, grazing and gardening, and, in fact, 89 whole ones, 43 halves, 6 quarters, and 4 eighths. In 1800 Zerne received 167 acres from cross country: for the pastor, the school, the butcher's stall, even 4 acres for the church yard, and 6 acres for the inn.

From the beginning The German and Serb settlement was composed of two political communities with independent administration.

Upon settlement every colonist received a home site and a 600 square fathom wine garden, which was first chartered in the year 1856. They rented the fields, which remained the property of the estate.

The lords of the manor were:  
General Joseph Csekronics,  
Count John Csekronics of Zsombolya of Janoval  
Count Andrew Csekronics of Zsombolya of Janoval.

The lease must be paid with money, natural produce and hard labor. The farmers often had to deliver the produce all the way to Becse on the Theiss River. At that time many had to give up their fields because they could not keep the heavy commitments.

Later on the Hotter (community meadows) were newly surveyed and the community of Deutsch Zerne was given 17,000 Joch( A yoke is the area a yoke of oxen can plow in 1 day – about 1.44 acres). The land register of the community consisted of 2 sections. To the first section belonged 3000 Kat. Joch (1 Kat. Joch = 1600 square fathoms); to the second section , 14,000 Kat. Joch. The first part was held under the possession of the farmers; the second part, the manor farmyards (majorok), the German wine gardens and the 140 Joch clover gardens were under the possession of the nobility.

The community of Serb Zerne had a 4500 Kat. Joch field. The population consisted of farmers, tradesmen, merchants, and cottagers.

In Deutsch Zerne there were 140 farmers. Each one leased 25 Joch of farm land from the manor lords; actually, 17 joch farm fields, 7 joch meadows, and 1 joch clover gardens. After the introduction of rotation of crops the order of plantings in the individual fields of the manor lords was prescribed and had to be strictly observed. The lease required the following requirements, in addition to the amount being no longer exactly determined, every farmer was obliged to mow, dry and gather into haystacks a 2 joch field of vetch, to reap and set on their backs a 4 joch field of wheat, to import 300 backloads of wheat, in the Fall everyone had to till a 4 joch field and dig in root vegetables and hemp. The farmer was also allowed to sell his lease but only to a person who the lord of the manor would accept. He could will it to only one of his children.

After the families became very rich in children, they were very short of land for building; therefore, they extended the main street to the south. Until then it extended only to the houses of Christoph Grun and Johann Bischof. For this reason the southern part of the main street is named "Neue Gasse" (New Street). Already in 1850 they began to extend the double street to the Serb Zerne district in the south, where previously there were wine gardens and a Serb churchyard. This Serbish Zerne area inhabited by Germans was named after a former higher court judge, Ferenczyutca ( in the common tongue Ferenc-utca). This accounts for the large German population in Serb Zerne. Upon the former churchyard land the German school building for Serb Zerne was built. There lived mostly poorer people who earned their livelihood as day laborers, servants at the manor, or as groups at harvest and threshing. To each fellow was awarded a 1 joch corn field and a ¼ joch field of potatoes. Many of these groups were familiar. The group leaders were Johann Tabar (Tschak), Michael Grun, Michael Heschel and Josef Killberger. Another portion of the population of our sister communities, who were in the area to procure horses, carriages and farming tools, worked on the manor field for an agreed amount of the harvest (contract). They maintained a piece of clover field. There a considerable number of artisans also found work and a good livelihood.

## Our Sister Communities

### Geographic Locations, Conditions, and Appearance

Our sister communities lay in the northeastern part of the Yugoslavian Banat at the Romanian borders. The distance to the borders was 3 kilometers. The district of Julia Major, belonging to the Count Csekonic's possessions, lay directly at the boundary, also on the Betschkerek country road which passed through our community of Hatzfeld. In the Romanian area 5 kilometers from the frontier lies the beautiful German municipality of Hatzfeld, from which came the largest proportion of our pioneer ancestors. In the north were our neighboring communities of Heufeld, Mastort and Ruskodorf, somewhat further northwest, the so-called French villages of St. Hubert, Soltur, and Charleville. In the south were the neighboring communities of Hungarian Zerne (Nova Crnja) and Vojvoda Stepo, in the north, Klarija, in the southeast, Hetin.

The terrain of our communities was flat; they lay on a fruitful plain, where there were neither mountains nor rivers nor streams. The fruitful terrain provided abundant crop yields.

The climate of our homeland was temperate in the character of a continental climate. The summer was hot and sparse in storms, often with hailstorms, which at that time caused limited damage to the crops. The winter was not too cold and didn't last too long. At most the annual precipitation resulted in a late fall and spring. It happened that whenever the water table was high the fields were under water and considerable damage occurred.

In fact both of our communities built a large settlement of which the eastern area inhabited by the Serbs and southwestern area inhabited by the Germans formed the Serb-Zerne community. However, the western area formed the community of Deutsch Zerne. So occurred the anomaly that groups of houses in the Serb-Zerne community's property, which were inhabited by Serbs, belonged to the community of Deutsch Zerne; and also some isolated German houses in the community property of Deutsch Zerne belonged to the community of Serb Zerne. A strange situation had been allowed because of the land tenure at the settlement.

The relationships to each other between both population groups were good, proper and benevolent until the end of World War I. The

change in political circumstances, the deliberate arousal of national feelings and passions, the partitioning of the Csekonic's possessions among the Serb volunteers (Dobrovoljci) and colonists, the development of two great Serb colonies on the community property of Deutsch Zerne, and the blatant attempt of the administration, to strengthen the Slavish element – without consideration for the interests and the living contingencies of the long-time residents of the German population – had to lead to the clouding of good relationships. With the numerical rearrangement of the population areas in Deutsch Zerne, whereby the Serbs achieved the majority, there arose violent altercations over the community political property so that the community seat was relocated to the colony of Vojvoda Stepo and the name of the community became Vojvoda Stepo. Only with extreme difficulty did Deutsch Zerne become autonomous again.

By and by in the course of time passions cooled down again and their relations with each other improved, so that especially in the hard times of World War II order was generally maintained and they tried to provide protection to each other.

Our communities had straight parallel-running lanes, which were joined by cross lanes. They were immaculate, especially in the areas inhabited by the Germans. On both sides along the pavement was planted a row of trees, mainly acacias, which during the blooming season emanated a lovely fragrance. The footpaths were paved all the way through with fire bricks so that one could also walk easily in bad weather. The houses were without floors, the roofs covered with tiles. In earlier times the walls were made of rammed earth, later they were constructed with kiln bricks up to the base height and much later completely with kiln bricks. They also filled the area between the walls with clay. The main gable faced the street. The house extended to the courtyard; on the courtyard side was a wide gangway, which, in many cases, was threaded with wine grapes or other vines; it was usually slab-built. The farmer's house consisted of the following rooms: Towards the street was the parlor. It was only used occasionally and was the showroom of the house. Inside towards the courtyard, where the house entrance was, the kitchen was located. Next followed a small room which served as a living room and lounge. Here most of the life of the family was spent. Then came the pantry, the storage house of supplies, which often was used as the second kitchen.

The rooms almost always had wooden floors. Last of all followed the stalls for the cattle. In the attic the grain was stored; in the cellar, potatoes, wine, etc. That is the general picture of a farmer's house. Well-to-do people, who wanted to have more living rooms, extended the house along the street, so there arose the "Winkelhaus" (crooked or angled house).

In the courtyard space, parallel to the main building, there was an auxiliary building. Here was often found the summer kitchen followed by the wagen and supply shed. In the farmhouse were also found supplies of straw, hay, chaff, corn husks, pig stalls, and the corn storage "kotarka." The property was surrounded by a fence, which was made of wire, wood or slats. On the street side it was terminated with a brick wall, infrequently with a wooden fence. The houses and rooms were beautifully plastered inside and outside. The living rooms and the hallway were painted. Order and cleanliness dominated over all on the streets, in the house and the courtyard, so that everything gave a pleasing impression.

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## Community Administration

A short time after the settlement of our community we had to address some problems so that proper order would reign in our settlement. Every settler had obligations to assume, the fulfillment of which had to be monitored for the common good. That was the task of the court of law. In the fore was the supreme judge, and there were the following members: the lower court judge, several jury members and an orphanage superintendent. To them was entrusted the administration of the community. The supreme judge obtained the unlimited power of the establishment and therefore, they all had great respect for him. The election results were as follows: The lord of the manor had the right to recommend three capable citizens for these positions and the vote took place by acclamation. Whoever had the most votes was elected. In the same way the remaining members of the town council and the aldermen were elected.

The members of the town council helped the judge in the execution of his office. The treasurer managed the finances. The orphanage



superintendent watched over the fate of orphans and their assets. The lower court judge (a community servant) had various community services to provide. He also kept order and had to proclaim the orders of the town council with drumbeats and loud cries.

The town council and the aldermen held their meetings in the community house. The community officials produced the written deliverables. At the head stood the notary public. His deputy was the vice notary public.

In the first decades after the settlement of Zerne, as the laws and police duties were still not exactly defined, the town judge had a lot of power and authority. If someone should get themselves into debt, a misdemeanor, play some monkeyshines or commit petty theft, the judge had the right to impose heavy penalties. The culprits received as punishment arrest or the bastinado (whipping). At the whipping he had to lie on a bench in the presence of curious onlookers and receive from the judge the number of strikes with a hazel stick that had been assigned to him. After the refinement of the laws and police duties the town judge was allowed to declare only very small administrative penalties. The militia, which kept the peace at night and protected the goods and chattels of the inhabitants, was no longer necessary; the constabulary undertook these duties.

Our community belonged to the district seat of Hatzfeld (Zsombolya). The district judge and Finance Office were also there. In 1924 Hatzfeld became part of Romania in a boundary treaty between Yugoslavia and Romania, and the communities of Modosch (Jasa Tomic) and Pardan (Nincicevo) were annexed to Yugoslavia. From then on our district location was Jasa Tomic and the district court and finance office were in Grossbetschkerek.

In the course of time the name of the community was changed several times: Deutsch-Cernya, Nemet-Czernya, Nemetcsernye, Nemadka-Crnya, Deutsch-Zerne, Crnja, Czernya, Csernye, Srpska Crnja.

The official language was Latin (predominantly) until 1830, Hungarian from 1830 to 1849, German from 1849 to 1881, Hungarian from 1881 to 1918, and Serbian from 1918 to 1945. As far as can be determined the following town judges served in the years from 1886 through 1944:

1. Nikolas Schleimer	Haus Number	63
2. Jakob Schweininger	" "	252
3. Johann Michels	" "	64
4. Johann Weissmann	" "	55
5. Nikolaus Schleimer	" "	63
6. Josef Kreps	" "	80
7. Josef Frauenhoffer	" "	276
8. Johann Schafer	" "	32
9. Johann Stiebel	" "	46
10. Anton Schulz	" "	53
11. Josef Neumayer	" "	249
12. Anton Stiebel	" "	260
13. Jovo Milic	Vojv. Step0	
14. Johann Retzler	Haus Number	256
15. Peter Stein	" "	49

In Serbisch-Zerne the Serb portion of the population determined the town judge. The last one was a German, Anton Kremer, who became a sacrifice to the partisans. During the Yugoslavian times the judge was usually appointed.

The notaries in Deutsch-Zerne were:

Krebs	Cedomir Kasic
Paul Kalmus	Alexander Vudetic
Nikolaus Lazar	Dusan Kiric
Lambic	Anton Laux
Balogi	Peter Behacker

Vice Notaries were:

Nikolaus Hary	Martin Bremer
Josef Stiebel	Cernai
Milan Stojkovic	Mirko Kopic
Hugo Basch	Petar Vukelle
Paul Wilgermein	Anton Laux
Zarko Savin	Anton Kampf

The town clerks were:

Matthias Kampf	Peter Feuerholz
Johann Roth	Franz Themare
Jakob Nickels	Michael Kampf
Kristof Renye	Matthias Kampf

## Manorial System, Lord of Patronage

The territory of our homeland community was under the possession of the Csekronics family. Since the Banat was freed from the Turks, it came under the administration of the Vienna exchequer, who was anxious to market Banater goods to deserving nobles; for, due to many wars that Austria had to fight, the treasury was empty and had to be filled up. For this reason the territory came in the possession of the Csekronics family. They descended from Croatian nobility, which provided to the imperial army many courageous commissioned officers. One of them, of course, was Josef of Csekronics, the Austrian general. As soon as the Csekronics family took possession of the territory, they considered it their foremost task to settle and reclaim the land. In the course of time fruitful farmland would spring from this wilderness and swampland. As their domicile they chose Hatzfeld in the middle of which they built a beautiful castle, which was surrounded by a wonderful park. Later there arose at the southern outskirts of the community a larger castle built in the English style with a beautiful well-kept park and a forest, which became cherished by the Hatzfeld people as place for outings. A beautiful parkway led from Hatzfeld to this castle (Csito). Just next to Csito was also the burial vault of the count's family, where the family members found their final resting place. Besides these two castles the count's family owned several palaces in the capital city of Hungary, Budapest, and a manor in Enying with a 7000 Joch field in the vicinity of Budapest. Their Banat possession was 33,000 Joch. Three communities were settled there: Deutsch-Zerne, Hungarian Zerne and Csoesztelek (Tschestelek).

14,000 joch of the count's possession belonged to Deutsch Zerne. For easier management tenant farms were built. There lived officers, hired workers, craftsmen, and the other attendants and administered and worked the estate. There also hundreds of inhabitants of the village found work and income. The administrative center of the

property was in Hatzfeld. On the property of the community of Deutsch Zerne were the following tenant farms: Julia Major, Sziget Major, Endre Major, Szollos Major, Konstancia Major, Little Konstancia Major, Little Rokus Major, Leona Major, Sandor Major, Little Julia Major, Margithaza and Facanyos.

Besides farming there were some centers of emphasis for other branches of trade. Little Julia Major and Szollos Major had large dairies, Little Konstancia Major and Sziget Major were centers for pig breeding.

There were schools in Julia Major and Konstancia Major for the children of the employees. In Konstancia Major there was also a church in which the chaplain from Deutsch Zerne held services every Sunday. A doctor was responsible for the medical care of the employees. The pastor and the doctor received a yearly stipend. Besides a wagon and driver were placed at his disposal free of charge. In Julia Major there was a steam mill, large warehouses, electric lighting, large workshops for the maintenance and repair of the farming machines. Also near Julia Major was the manorial stud farm (Menes), the center of the horse breeding for the property.

The individual tenant farms were linked together by wide streets; on both sides acacia trees were planted. Even an industrial railroad connected the larger farms. At Julia Major they had a connection to the Hatzfeld narrow gauge railway – Betschkerek. The nobility had contributed a large sum to its construction. Likewise, they contributed much to the commercial development of all the villages lying on the rail line.

A great deal of attention was also given to the wilderness preserve. There were many small woodlands there. The largest was the few hundred Joch so-named Jagerwald (Hunter's Woods), which especially provided deer and pheasant breeding. There was also the office of the ranger. The whole territory was threaded with trenches, which led to the Bega River. They served as drainage of the earth and ground water and averted the accumulation of water on the farmlands.

Through their investment and cultivation the territory of the manor became a model economy, which was even often inspected by foreign visitors.

Our community had much to thank the manorial system for. They made it possible for our ancestors not only to find a new homeland but they even stood at the side of the community with counsel and action. They had school and church built and they helped on rainy days with open hands, to relieve distress, and prevent perils. For the promotion of education they also built a convent, maintained it, and also paid the sisters for their expenses. Whenever anyone was in personal need and distress, he always found a willing ear and was energetically assisted.

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## The Evolution to World War I

The life of our ancestors in the time of settlement was hard and difficult. In the unfamiliar climate with primitive tools and equipment, in the swampy region with noxious fumes they had to work the earth, which was overgrown with pesty plants and undergrowth. Wild, dangerous beasts threatened their health and life. Varmints wiped out the crops to which flooding of the fields and hailstorms also contributed. One can truly visualize how difficult the work was if one wanted to make a furrow in bristly, overgrown earth with a wooden plow that has weak traction. How long would one have to work a field until even 1 joch is plowed! So, of course, all family members capable of working had to help in the field. In beginning they could not even think of plowing the grounds every year. The sowings took place mostly in the cloddy earth where the seed sprang up with difficulty. When the time came for the maize to be picked, they performed this chore with the pickaxe, for the plow was still unknown at that time. And when the harvest time, the time to reap came, again all workhardy members had to work the fields. Thunderstorms and hailstorms threatened to blast the earth and for this reason haste was necessary. The lord of the manor could demand at any time that the prescribed slave labor be performed on his property; then everyone had to stand and leave their work in order to meet their obligations to the manor lord. When one realizes that they cut their crop with a sickle –in the beginning the scythe was still unknown -- then one can conjecture how long the reaping lasted. If the bringing in of the crops at the manor and at home was finished, then followed the toilsome labor of treading. The treading

on the barn floor with horses, if there was no rainy weather, often lasted from 3 in the morning until 9. As long as the wind blew, the well-trodden corn was flung on high with the chaff, whereby the wind blew away the chaff and the fruit fell below. When these chores were done, then came the time of corn cracking, foliage trimming, and harvesting. The autumn sowing often lasted until Christmas, if the weather was bad. The harvest measure was grown year and year in certain meadows, for the benefits of crop rotation were still unknown. They used the fallow meadow as cattle feedlot. The young cattle stayed there day and night from Spring until Fall; after the reaping they dug it all up like the stubble meadows. To stop thieves meadow guards were elected, who received a fair payment amount in kind. The cowshed manure was at first not brought out onto the fields, because there was no time for that. They brought it into the                      and unloaded it there.

Under these conditions it was really a huge effort for our forefathers to endure in the new homeland. Even though many made the sacrifice and many failed, they still their iron will, their diligence, their perseverance and the firm confidence of a better future made them always take up new courage. In time they could also acquire better tools, implements and machines, which would lighten their load, enable government control of their economy, and make life easier.

Let us review again the most important events:

From 1816 to 1836 there were frequent crop failures caused by floods, hailstorms, rust, locusts, caterpillars and beetles. In 1836 there was no harvest at all. In the years 1831, 1836, 1849 cholera raged and claimed many fatalities. In 1848 the Hungarian Revolution erupted and ended in 1849. It brought no damage or victims in the community. The 1850's were pretty good; except for smaller cattle plagues, it was a good time. The years 1860, 1861—1862 were very dry and there was no water in the wells. In 1863 there was a crop failure. There was neither bread nor fodder. In 1866 the crop froze in the field and in 1868—1869 there was much hail damage. In 1870 the whole field was so flooded that in 1871, 1872 and 1863 it was a swamp. The years 1874—1882 became known as the Rust Years, in which the population suffered much privation. This in 1882 developed into famine and the manor lords had provisions distributed to the people to relieve their destitution. On September 23, 1886 there was a fire in the house of Michael Schulz Number 131.

The quickly spreading flames reduced 40 houses to ashes with the largest amount of supplies and animal feed and brought the greatest misfortune to those involved. Again in 1904 several houses on the New Street were sacrificed to flames.

The years up until World War I saw the inhabitants growing stronger and they seized the opportunity to truly enlarge their possession. The first opportunity was on the Serb-Zerne hotter. The field here was diligently purchased and there were others who bought up to 32 Joch fields. In 1905 the Deutsch Zerne farmers received the fields as a replacement, but not 25 joch, only 17 joch. The clover garden was taken away (140 joch) and the meadows, still 7 joch, remained in lease up until 1911; up until then the lease was paid and slave labor rendered. For the 17 joch the purchase price was 13,000 crown and this amount was amortized for 65 years. Where this farmer's meadow lay, the manor lord constructed Sandor Major farmhouse.

It should also be mentioned that the Deutsch Zerner grazing pasture (140 joch) which spread out into the west of the community was purchased in 1908 by poor people (1-2 joch), leaving merely 30 joch to the community as a stand for the cattle and soil pit.

In 1906 the property of the Erno von Kiss family was parcelled out – he was one of the Honved generals executed October 6, 1849 in Arad – and in 1911 the property of the Duke of Parma, the family of the later Austrian Empress Zita. So it was necessary for the farmers to take every opportunity to expand their property, of which they freely availed themselves. The last mentioned property belonged to the communities of Mastort and Toba. At that time the farmers purchased a 1200 joch field. This newly acquired field property lay farther away from the location, which would have made cultivation difficult. For this reason the property owners constructed farm inns (Puszta, Sallasch, Hodaja) with the necessary servant quarters, stables, working quarters and everything that was necessary for husbandry. Even lodging for the summer stay of the owners was not lacking.

Such farm inns were owned by Zerne inhabitants in 1944 in the following communities: Ittebe, Mastort, Toba, Topola, Vojvoda-Stepo, Klarija and Deutsch Zerne.

## Enterprise, Commerce, Health Service up to World War I

The heavy and difficult work our ancestors had to perform in the time of the settlement and the primitive tools with which they accomplished it demonstrated to us their very early ingenuity. However, development and progress did not stand still. In time there always came more practical gadgets, implements and machines for their use. Around the year 1865 the iron plow displaced the wooden plow. Several years later there were even sharper plows. They didn't only make their work easier, but it also developed that they could work the fields more efficiently, plough in the manure and attain better crop yields. Since they previously cut the grain with scythe and sickle, which costed much time and hard work, the reaper and sheaf binder soon found application. The former was taken into operation in 1905. The crops were no longer trodden laboriously with horses. In 1880 there were already two steam-run threshing machines, whose owners were Johann Tabar (Ferenc-utca) and Nikolaus Frauenhoffer (House Number 197). The threshing was done initially on the common pastures, because they feared fire since many houses had a reed roof. After the turn of the century they were also allowed to thresh on their own farmland. Also at this time they even used straw elevators. In 1900 the first self-propelled threshing machine was also put into operation. The owners were the locksmiths Kremm and Frauenhofer.

Before World War II there were 14 threshing machines, which also threshed outwards. At first the grinding of corn took place in horse-powered mills. The first one was built by the married couple Franz Franz and Annamaria, nee Burghardt. Even a windmill stood on the Serb-Zerne property. Its owner was Josef Krettlér, later Anton Krettlér. Locksmith Johann Tabar built the first steam mill. It was shut down at the turn of the century because the owner moved away. Its site was at the southern end of Ferenc-utca (Ott Franz).

Great significance was attached to corn cultivation. Right after settlement in the Banat it was seeded with a hoe, since they didn't have enough time to work it around and also had no special tools to do this. As they had iron plows then, the field was worked around beforehand and the corn was placed in furrows so that the plants always stood in rows. Soon the light plow also found use. This



lightened their work load immensely and saved them much time. The corn was hacked 2 or 3 times and finally accumulated. During the year the corn crops involved little work. When it was ripe it was broken and placed for drying in the corn sheds (Hambar, Kotarko). It had to be gathered to use as animal feed. While this was done at first by hand, later the chore was done with the corn-gatherer with manual operation, and finally with a motor-run corn-gatherer. Oats, barley, rye, were planted only to a small degree, vegetables and potatoes only for home use. Clover, lucerne, mohair, and root vegetables served as cattle feed. Rapeseed was less often produced, hemp also but not very often, to the extent that the demand in one's own house necessitated.

Wine growing found its way in our village already at a very early stage. Already during the settlement the settlers were provided with wine garden parcels. They were planted with European grapes which they brought in themselves. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the wine pest appeared, and bit by bit it demolished all the wine gardens. For this reason they began the planting of refined grapes with American support. Wine growing soon came to be produced to cover their own individual needs.

In the time of settlement the settlers had been required to carry on the rearing of silkworms and, for that reason, to plant mulberry trees. They thought the settlers could improve their income with this source of revenue. It never developed into anything significant. The fruits were used for distilling liquor (Schnaps).

To make their work always easier to handle, in the course of time always more and more practical implements and machines were brought into use, besides those already previously mentioned. These were: sowers, windrider, wheat-seed-sorters, grass mowers, harrows, two and three share plows, harrows, steam rollers, haystacks, grinders, root cutters, chaff cutters, grape crushers, grape mills, wine presses, etc.

Stock breeding was of no less significance from the farmer's point of view. The half-caste horse belonging to the Nonius breed served as draft animal. It was an arduous horse with swift gait. Cattle breeding was also of great importance. Dairy cows served not only the need for milk and milk products for the population but also to serve the needs of the city. In 1911 in Deutsch Zerne there was

already a milk co-operative, which already delivered milk to Temesvar. Fat stock and calves were also supplied to the cities. Another good source of income for our people was the pig breeding. The most popular pig breed was the native Mangolica. They served not only as required fat and meat needs of the family but also brought much sales revenue. In the last period before World War I the English Berkshire and Yorkshire pigs also came to be widespread in our community.

Earlier there was much interest in sheep farming. Except for the winter months -- the sheep were given over to shepherds for care. During the year they supplied milk and a certain amount of cheese and gave up their wool, and in late autumn the sheep and lambs returned home. For this reason the sheep were of great importance, because our ancestors made various pieces of clothing out of the wool in the winter months. Later, because there was no more pasture areas left, sheep farming was completely given up.

Fowl covered their demand for eggs; their flesh found good use in the kitchen, their quills found use as bed feathers. The rest of the fowl brought welcome sales revenue.

Small business also demonstrated a steady improvement. They were never lacking in the necessary new blood. When an apprentice completed his years of apprenticeship he took to wandering. His wandering years led him into the neighboring cities, often all the way to Budapest or Vienna. This gave him the opportunity to toughen up in his vocation and to expand his mental horizons. So many of them remained permanently away, after which they established their own business, made themselves self-sufficient, and started a family. Those who returned to their homeland after many years, after fulfilling their military obligation, established their own business there. The tradesmen were united together in a guild. Industrious traders provided for the needs of the people with products on offer.

The brick works were founded in 1880. The founders were the locksmith Nikolaus Frauenhoffer, the razor craftsman Kern, the merchant Anton Honig and Josef Kiefer. They stood on the property of Serb Zerne and gave many inhabitants a livelihood.

So much was done for them, even for their health. While at first they took drinking water from their house wells, later deep-seated wells were built for the community; these were followed by artesian wells. The number of artesian wells before World War I was 6. In case of sickness there was a doctor at their disposal. The first doctor was Dr. Murakozy Dezao. He also attended the sick in the leasehold farms of the manor and received from them a payment in kind. The nurses of the convent gave valuable service in the care and nurturing of the sick. In our fond memory was Sister Sarolta of the Sisters of the Cross, who left our area in 1922. In the health service were also the midwives: Katharina Spitz, Maria Engel, Emilie Koch.

In the last century before World War I, the upgrade of transportation contributed in a special way to the welfare of the community. In 1887 they built the Hatzfeld-Betschkerek highway, and on October 19, 1898 the narrow gauge railway was brought into operation. In like manner it connected Hatzfeld to Betschkerek and passed through our area.

For the thrifty and creditwise they established a credit co-operative in 1900; it was a member of the country's credit co-operative in Budapest. Its first accountant was Franz Zahradnyik, a school teacher, later Josef Kassier; the cashier was Franz Kremer, a schoolteacher. After the crash the co-operative ceased business. Much earlier they had built a warehouse at the train station. It served the members and the retail market as a storage for crops. The private banking business of merchant Nikolaus Schleimer also should be mentioned.

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## World War I

On June 28, 1914 in Sarajewo, the Austro-Hungarian heirs to the throne, Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, nee Countess Chotek, were murdered by Serb terrorists, which provoked worldwide outrage. Lively diplomatic activity followed this incident. The unsatisfactory response to the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum from the Serbian side resulted in the declaration of war by Austria-Hungary against the Serbs on July 28, 1914. The war lasted 4 years from 1914 until 1918. With few exceptions all countries of Europe and a

considerable number of countries outside of Europe were involved. Naturally, this war had its own impact on the relations in our homeland and our sister communities. On July 26 followed the area mobilisation and all conscripts up to 40 years old had to report. Due to the rapid enlistment of many nations in the war nationwide mobilisation was ordered at once and a grueling battle flared up on all fronts. Already in the first year of the war there was a requisition for horses and vehicles. Soon even a relief mobile for the wounded was set up in many communities, in 1916 also by ours. On April 30 of the same year the clock was advanced by 1 hour to save electricity and lighting. In August 1916 the Romanians entered the war on the opposing side, and the people of Siebenburg fled in the face of the invading Romanian troupes. So there soon emerged the first treks with the Siebenburg Saxons, who, however, shortly trekked home after their homeland was purged by foes. The longer the war lasted, so much more the difficulties the people had to bear. The church bells were melted down for the manufacture of war materials; the people were called upon to subscribe for war bonds. To prevent the steady rise of the cost of food, they created price ceilings and issued food ration cards. In most instances food was confiscated so that they could feed the armies and the city people. Only 10-18 kg. of wheat was allowed per person per month and 50% corn meal had to be mixed into bread flour. Wheat could only be ground in the mill with a meal pass. Naturally they tried to get around these orders; for that reason, many bread grains were hidden and ground by moonlight. After the men from 18 to 52 watched in the fields, the old men, women and children at home had to perform superhuman feats. To relieve them Russian prisoners of war were assigned to them as workers. Due to fear of the depreciation of money, gold and silver coins disappeared; even nickel and copper coins were hoarded, which led to a change shortage. Hardly anything could be bought at the ceiling price. The black market price, which naturally was significantly higher, was driven this high by the buyers themselves out of fear that the goods would not be generally available. It finally happened that they devolved to barter. The result was that the trains travelled crammed with people from the villages into the cities and people with something to barter travelled in the opposite direction. The city inhabitants needed mostly food, while the country inhabitants were generally in need of textiles, basic commodities, especially petroleum. It came to the point that in many houses they were forced to use tallow lights for illumination.

The great privation in the cities, which rose to a real famine, led to the city children being sent to the country for recovery.

Finally after tremendous war fatigue and signs of decay emerged in the last years of war, the war was ended in November 1918 with the defeat of Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The Serbish army possessed the whole of the Banat. In 1919 the Austro-Hungarian crown was discounted by 20%. In the same year the Serbish army evacuated the eastern Banat, which was occupied by Romania. The line of demarcation ran by the communities of Grabatz, Gertianosch, Grosskomlosch. Ostern and Hatzfeld still remained Serbish.

According to the treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920 Hungary had to surrender the Banat.

That same year followed the currency exchange. 4 crowns were exchanged for 1 dinar.

In 1924 Ostern and Hatzfeld also fell to Romania, and the land boundaries passed 3 km north of our sister community. As a result of World War I we had, of course, no war devastations to lament, but we did have the excruciating loss of 104 fallen in battle.

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## *The Period up to World War II*

The ending of World War I brought enormous changes in all respects. In November 1918 after the truce the first Serbish occupation troops appeared and took possession of our sister communities. Even before their entry there were a few transgressions by the Serbish section of the population. They robbed and plundered the leasehold farms of Count Csekronics. But that lasted only a very short time, and soon peace and order reigned. In 1920 the Peace Treaty of Trianon awarded the western part of the Banat to the newly founded nation, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, to which both of our sister communities also belonged. Tremendous changes were heralded and undertaken. First the property of Count Csekronics was confiscated, and later distributed to the Serbish war volunteers and colonists, and also to the poorer ranks of the local Serbish population. For Count Csekronics there remained only 500 Joch in Julia Major, the stud farm, 82 Joch with the attached house, and Konstancia Major with the hunter's forest. The other leasehold farms were cleared away, sold as building materials and used in other ways. In Leona Major they founded a new settlement with the name Vojvoda-Stepo with 720 homesites. The settlers, war volunteers, came from Bosnia, Herzegovina and Lika. Every family received an  $8\frac{3}{4}$  Joch field. The poor local Serb population, who had no house and field, were settled at Julia Major. The settlement was called Vojvoda-Bojovic. Those settled here received 3 Joch per married couple, and they received  $\frac{1}{2}$  Joch for every child under 12, and 1 Joch for youths from 12 to 18. Both settlements belonged to the community of Deutsch Zerne (Nemacka-Crnja). They experienced a swift recover due to massive support of the state. The number of inhabitants soon formed the majority in the community. At the community election in 1934 the Serbs obtained the majority on the community council; Jovo Milic of Vojvoda-Stepo was elected town judge. On February 2, 1935 they moved the seat of the community to the colony of Vojvoda Stepo, 7 km. away – on the grounds of a community counsel decision, which was made by the administration within.

Now arose the grotesque situation that the Germans were allowed to pay the taxes but the Serbs – who for the most part were free of taxes and assessment – administered the community. In 1936 after a long, difficult struggle our community was separated from the

community of Vojvoda Stepo by decree of the king and it again became independent. The implementation had to wait until 1937. In this reorganization the community received 3000 Joch of land according to the land register. Vojvoda Bojovic with the regions of Little Julia, Szollos Major, and the German wine gardens were attached to Serbish Zerne. The territory of Sziget Major and Little Sziget fell to the community of Klarija, because Serbs from Klarija owned the fields.

The fortune and the development of the community was tumultuous after World War I, but the political change had a disastrous affect on the fate of Germans in our sister communities. The livelihood of many men was abolished or at least complicated. People who earned their living at the manor estate had nothing. The politics of the state was arranged thereafter solely to improve the position of the Serbish element, to make things easier for them, and so to strengthen them. For the national minorities, so also the Germans, their means for existence was taken away, after they indifferently allowed the distribution of estate property as agrarian reform. They deliberately made them beggars and, in many cases, drove them to emigration, which brought about great bitterness. In large numbers they left the homeland where they were treated so stepmotherly and sought the possibility of live in North and South America, the United States, Canada and Argentina.

Of course, the farmer's estate did have the advantage that he could easily pay back his credit debts because of the depreciation of currency. It soon happened though that he came into great difficulty because of a worldwide economic crisis, the fall of crop prices, the property levy, and the war profit tax, which was collected with rigorous cruelty. They were forced to break new ground and to carve out a better means of existence for themselves. The ever-increasing shortage of labor forced him to acquire more and better tools and machines with which an intensive cultivation of the earth would be possible and, thereby, larger yields could be achieved. He applied these yields – since the prices were very low – in his own agricultural enterprise; in stock farming, fat stock, especially fat pigs brought him good revenue. While before World War I they generally bred native Mangolica pigs, which was an excellent fat pig, they now switched to the more sought after in the trade meat pig breeds, like Yorkshire and Berkshire and later to the refined German country pig. These suited their taste and the desire of the times rightly for

better marketing opportunities. Corporate organisations cared for the breed and demanded the exploitation of agricultural and animal products. The co-operatives also provided for the thrifty and creditwise. In our home location were the following co-operatives:

*Credit Co-operative.* Founded 1900. Newly founded 1923. At the re-opening of the agency Anton Stiebel senior especially exerted himself. He was also the first chairman of the administrative board. After his death Gustav Schmidt took his place. Employees were: Josef Kreps as bookkeeper, and Hans Tabar, the school teacher as cashier. Depository trustee was John Stuprich, afterwards Josef Mayer.

In 1928 the German co-operative "Agraria" was founded with the help of "Bauernhilfe" (Farmer's Help) and the other sister co-operatives. Presiding over Agraria were Kaspar Schweininger, bookkeeper, and business leader of Bauernhilfe, Josef Wirth, senior, and cashier Anton Kampf.

*Pig Breeding Co-operative.* President Peter Stein, Secretary Peter Kampf.

*Egg and Poultry Co-operative.* Buyer Phillipp Rausch.

For industry and commerce there came good times at the end of World War I. Brisk building activity, the colonisation of the former property of Count Csekonics, the immigration of numerous colonists increased the need for various goods and furniture. The annexation of Hatzfeld to Romania in 1924 also benefited this development. In spite of the depression an upward movement was noticeable to meet larger demands and to keep pace with the times.

Besides bi-weekly markets 4 yearly markets also took place.

In 1928 the Trade Corporation was founded for the people of German and Serbisch Zerne, and to claim secondary growth in trade and industry, a new school for apprentices emerged. Acting as teachers were: Pavle Zadera, Hans Tabar, Mirko Mitrovic and Michael Kremer. In 1941 they shut it down.

The growth of industry made even further progress between the two World Wars. In the vicinity of the train station there arose a new



steam mill. The builders were Nikolaus Frauenhoffer and Josef Stiebel. Later they passed into the possession of the brothers Franz and Josef Kremer, except that soon they suffered the deprivation of flames.

In 1928 electrical lighting was introduced. The family of Nicka assumed ownership of the operation.

In 1932 the fertiliser mill Lenhardt was built on "Neue Gasse" ( New Street). Not only did they deal with meal tolls but they also exported into the territory of Yugoslavia and abroad. The owners were Martin and Magdalena Lenhardt, nee Hemmert.

Also in the health service was progress noticeable. After the death of Dr. Murakozy, Dr. Harl Nemeth was his successor. After him Dr. Markus Steiner and later Dr. Nikolaus Gerhard took up residence. The dentist was Dr. Darvas. At the end of World War II the following doctors were active in our sister communities:

Dr. Branko Milic,  
Dr. Hans Nicks,  
Dr. Karl Nemeth, Jr.,  
Mrs. Dr. M Nemeth,  
Apothecary: Franz Pronievicz,  
Midwife: Emilie Koch,  
Veterinarian: Dr. Hans Szilagyi.

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## Statistical Information

### Population of Deutsch Zerne

	<u>1900</u>	<u>1935</u>	<u>1914</u>
Germans	2226	1318	1277
Hungarians	662	18	28
Serbs	281	68	89
Romanians	—	5	4
Gypsies	157	292	317
	3326	1701	1715
Number of Germans in Zerne			652

### Causes of Population Fluctuation

- a) The large reduction in the population of the Germans is based on the break-up of the land possessions of Count Csekonic. There followed a large emigration wave overseas. Also the one child inheritance system added to this.
- b) The Hungarians were mostly in the service of count Csekonic. After the break-up of the inn, they emigrated.
- c) The number of gypsies rose due to the high birth rate and the strong immigration. If there was a marriage with a gypsy, and one of the marriage partners originated in our community, the married couple would in almost all cases be resident here. In this manner, in time, their number reached as high as the number of inhabitants in a small village.

What these work-shy rascals exported then in the worst hours of our homeland people by plundering, crimes and beastliness will partially be gleaned in this document.

The ravage of the churchyard, knocking over of grave stones, breaking open of crypts, and the coffins within them, for the most part, goes back to these hateful barbarians.

*Property of Deutsch Zerne in Joch on the Land Register in 1944*

Deutsch Zerne	2428	Mastort	518
Serb Zerne	1512	Heufeld	11
Hungarian Zerne	3	Itebe	601
Toba	77	Soltur	3
Vojvodina Stepo	625	Alexandrovo	4
Klarija	266	Topola	89
Hetin	17	Tschestelek	3
		Hatzfeld	1

All together 6158 land registered joch. That means that the property more or less doubled.

*Number of Agricultural Undertakings in 1937*

a) Up to 5 Joch	107	e) Up to 100 Joch	10
b) Up to 10 Joch	48	f) Up to 200 Joch	2
c) Up to 20 Joch	70	g) Over 200 Joch	0
d) Up to 50 Joch	69		

*Number of Craftsmen in 1937:*

a) German	73	b) Other Nationalities	1
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*Merchant Tradesmen, Landlords, etc.:*

a) German	19	b) Other Nationalities	2
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*Workers:*

a) With Real Estate	122	b) Without Real Estate	54
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*Male and Female Farm Hands*

a) German	31	b) Other Nationalities	57
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*Number of Mowing Machines: 57*

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## The Church, the Cemetery

When our ancestors left their homeland and came into the Banat as settlers, they were deeply religious. They not only performed their daily table prayers, but for the great feasts, such as Advent and Lent, they prayed the rosary fervently with the family or at meetings. In every house was found a holy water kettle, crucifix, and holy pictures decorated the walls of the rooms. The prayerbooks bound with leather with their yellowed pages showed that they were frequently used. Every Sunday and Holy Day they attended church with the exception of one family member, the one who cooked. Therefore it was their most fervent desire to have their own church. In the beginning our settlement belonged to the mother community of Hatzfeld. They attended church there and the registration in the parish was done there. Later a chapel was permitted to be built, in which the church service was held, but already in 1808, our own parish church was built by Josef V. Csekronics. Clay bricks served as building materials. The roof was covered with shingles. The lord of the manor provided the building materials and the artisans. The people provided the hand and grunt work. The community received 4 joch for the churchyard on the western outskirts. On September 1, 1808 the community received a pastor, and on October 18 the church was blessed in honor of the Honorable Josef by Bishop Ladislaus Koszeghy of Remete. Its patronage lord was the lord of the manor at that time. They were Joseph of Csekronics, Count Josef of Csekronics, Count John of Csekronics and the last one, Andreas of Csekronics. The rights and responsibilities of the patronage lord were documentarily predefined. The pastor received a yearly payment in kind from the patronage lord and the patronage lord assumed upkeep of the church. The pastor also received smaller payments from the community, and the community paid the organist and sacristan. After World War I, the newly founded church community undertook the responsibilities of the political community. The question of the pastor's stipend and the upkeep of the church remained outstanding for years, for after World War I the ownership of the property of the manor lord was, of course, divided between the Serb war volunteers and colonists. Because of this they were unable to satisfy their patronage obligations. After extensive negotiations the following agreement materialized: the agrarian authorities relinquished a 50 joch field in the vicinity of brick kiln for

the organist in compensation for the loss of the of the patronage responsibilities of the manor lord.

In 1811 the stone cross and the statues in front of the church were built at the expense of the people. In 1847 the church was robbed and considerable damage was done to it.

The inside of the church was beautiful; especially to be admired was the beautiful main altar and the Marian altar. In the course of years the inside of the church became even more incessantly beautified through new spending by the faithful; the statues built by the Lichfuss family and Nikolas Tines also contributed considerably to it. In longer time spans, missions, which were held recently by the Redemptorist fathers, took place for the strengthening and deepening of the faith. The mission cross of the church entrance commemorates the mission held in 1908. Missions occurred also at the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> years. On prayer days they led processions to the field crosses. One stood in the vicinity of the brick kiln, south of the village, the second on the west side, the third on the north side. The latter was made of marble, and was built by the married couple Franz and Pauline Kremer.

Even in the last decades after World War I, awakened and nourished by outside influences, when a certain tepidity in religious life was noticeable, still there always followed a large flock of believers at the call of the bells for worship. How festive were the church services at Christmas and Easter, but also at other feast days with the participation of the church choir, later the glee club and the brass band.

What an impressive picture did the Resurrection and Corpus Christi processions present! In front of the cross and organized by flag colors marched the school children with their teachers, the singers; the priest followed them under the canopy with the Holy of Holies, the Marian maids, the community leaders, corporations. The shooting and the fireworks were also always excellent. Finally, during Holy Week, an honor guard was formed and pretended to be guarding the tomb. Hundreds of believers participated in the processions, and it was impressive when the closing song in the

church resounded:

*Great God, we praise Thee,  
Master, we glorify Thy strength:  
Before Thee the earth inclines  
And marvels at Thy works,  
As Thou were before all time,  
So Thou remain in Eternity.*

Yes, there are wistful memories when we think back on all of this! Our church remains for us the most beautiful, because it was our church in which our ancestors in their need, their afflictions, their pains, and worries sought and found comfort and relief.

Before its altar we received blessings at the most significant events of our life. From the cradle to the grave she stood open to us; she was the intermediary of grace.

Among the names of our pastors the following were ascertainable:

Dr. John Engels until 1883,  
later canon in Temesvar  
Michael Kaplar, 1884—1901,  
Alois Geiger, 1901—1931,  
later Ecclesiastical Councillor  
Franz Brunet, 1932-1944.

The last pastor found death during the disorders after the collapse.

Our churchyard lay on the west side of the city and enfolded a plain of 4 Joch. It was enclosed by a brick wall; entry was allowed by 2 iron gates. The main paths were paved; they provided order and tidiness for the tombs of the dead; their dwelling place was in the vicinity of the north entrance. Our God's acre, the site where our deceased found their final peace, always presented an impression of being cherished. In the middle of the churchyard stood a large cross, not far from the chapel built by the Honig family.

After World War II heartless and soulless barbarians savagely disgraced this place of peace, broke up and destroyed the crypts,

and knocked over the marble crosses. According to eyewitness accounts, today the cemetery is the site of destruction, overgrown with weeds, the cemetery wall well-worn.

To us survivors their remains only the possibility of loving thoughts of our deceased and prayer for their salvation. But not only on them will we ponder but also on everyone who fell in the wars or found death far from their homeland as prisoners and displaced persons. Last but not least will our thoughts and prayers be applied to everyone who had to lose their life to the partisan mob and its thugs in such a gruesome manner and who was hastily buried on the oppressor's area or anywhere in other extermination camps, or unknown places.

*Lord, give them eternal rest  
And may the perpetual light shine upon them;  
Lord, may they rest in peace!*

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## The School

Immediately after the settlement a school was opened for the children. The school building was first constructed in 1808. Where the children were instructed up until this point of time is not ascertainable. They placed much value on the education of their children, but especially upon their religious education. Our school had a denominational character until 1921, when it – like all the others – was nationalized by order of the Education Administration and even control of the school passed over into the hand of the state. Before this point of time the local parish priest was also the school director, and the school was subject to his supervision. The children were instructed by the school master. This person did not prescribe any special professional education. The requirement that they assigned to him was simple. He must be able to read, write and do arithmetic. Outside of these responsibilities, he had to provide the customary service of the sacristan and bell ringing. His pay was marginal. In the early times they used the school master like an adopted non-commissioned officer or a more-educated tradesman. As a result the achievement of the instruction was also very

moderate, yes low. At the time of settlement, the school regulations from the year 1774 were in force. After this there were:

1. Normal School
2. Secondary School
3. Common or Trivial Schools

In common or trivial schools in the country the following had to be taught:

- a) Religion
- b) Reading: written and printed
- c) Writing
- d) Arithmetic

The 6 to 8 year old children attended summer school. They began after Easter and lasted until Michaelmas. During the harvest time there were 4 weeks recess. In winter there was no school, because the paths were too bad for the smaller children. Besides, most of them could not attend school because of their poor clothing.

The children from 9 through 12 years attended winter school from December 1 until Easter. In the summer months they were to be available to their parents.

For the older children there was refresher school.

The school ordinances, the school laws respectively, changed repeatedly in the course of time. The educational results increasingly improved, especially after the introduction of compulsory education and the better training of the teacher. The first rudiments for the betterment of teacher education occurred in 1774 in Temeschburg, where they instructed the teacher – now no longer the schoolmaster – in a modern manner. In 1844 the operation of this school was closed, but after the events of the Revolution in 1852, they established the Werschetz Catholic College of Education, from which many eminent personalities emerged for the Banat German nationality. With gratitude the older generation long remembered the works of Schoolmaster Friedrich Michels, who has given our ancestors so much on the journey through life and even this generation of schoolmasters listened to him.



The language of instruction was until in the 90<sup>th</sup> year the German language; afterwards until 1918, the Hungarian language; from 1918, the German language; this gradually lost out to the Serb language. In 1941 The German school system was placed under "School Foundation of Germans in the Banat" and the German language of instruction was again adopted.

As was already mentioned, the first school building was constructed in 1808. Later due to the large number of children, a nearby house was acquired for the girls' school. After this building became old and decrepit, in 1911, Count Csekonyics had it demolished and had a **saemtlich** new school building constructed. Due to a smaller number of students in 1928 this building was sold to Schoolmaster Hans Tabar.

In 1918 it was ordered by the school administration that only a schoolmaster could be headmaster (school director), and so, the parish priest, who until then had the headmaster's position, was replaced by a schoolmaster. When in the sister community of Serb Zerne, the number of Germans in the settlement of Ferenc-utca grew appreciably, there arose the aspiration to have their own school. This wish was also soon fulfilled. Almost at the end of the previous century (19<sup>th</sup>) instruction was begun in rented premises; later the school was in the house of Schoolmaster Kremer. However, afterwards the number of children increased substantially, the room was too small and the number of teaching staff was increased; this forced the necessity of erecting a school building. For this purpose the community of Serb Zerne placed the Serb leasehold farm in Ferenc-utca at their disposal, a beautiful site on which a 2 classed school and two teachers' residences were to be built. The German population of Serb Zerne went to work with great eagerness and with heavy sacrifice the school building was erected. Special merits in this regard were awarded to Franz Kremer, Sr. In 1909 they could begin their instruction. The school was a community school and was autonomous. A school commission was to provide for its support.

In 1921 all schools were nationalised, and so this school lost its autonomy and was annexed to the Serb school system. Administratively, this occurred already in 1919.

The headmasters of the Deutsch Zerne School were:

1. Dr. John Engels, pastor until 1883
2. Michael Kaplar, pastor from 1884 to 1901
3. Alois Geiger, pastor from 1901 to 1919
4. Koloman Zahradnyik, schoolmaster  
from 1919 to 1921
5. Ferdinand Roth, schoolmaster  
from 1921 to 1936
6. Hans Tabar, schoolmaster  
from 1936 to 1944

Schoolmasters of the Deutsch Zerne school were, as far as could be determined:

1. Friedrich Michels
2. Franz Zahradnyik until 1915
3. Jeno Hollos until 1909
4. Koloman Zahradnyik from 1909 to 1921
5. Hans Tabar from 1921 to 1944
6. Ferdinand Roth from 1921 to 1936
7. Gisela Kutschera from 1921 to 1929
8. Jakob Reppa from 1929 to 1935
9. Elisabeth Fulda from 1935 to 1944
10. Hans Habel from 1939 to 1940
11. Katharina Schuhmacher from 1940 to 1941
12. Maria Tanaskovitsch from 1938 to 1941
13. Magdalena Kremer from 1941 to 1942
14. Peter Rettinger (school helper)  
from 1941 to 1942
15. Michael Kremer (retired) from 1942 to 1944

With gratitude should the works of the school sisters be recognized. In 1888 the convent was built by the lord of the manor and occupied by the Sisters of the Cross. The sisters undertook instruction in the girls' school; they provided private instruction in handicrafts for the female youth who had left school, also music, especially piano instruction. The nursing sisters carried on a beneficial service in the care and nurture of the sick. The convent was under the direction of Oberin Gonzaga until 1922. Then the religious order recalled the sisters.

The most renowned sisters (instructors) were:

Sister Elisabeth	Sister Xaveria
Sister Theodoisia	Sister Candida
Sister Aniceta	Sister Olivia
Sister Laurentia (crafts)	

At the Serb-Zerne German school Michael Kremer worked as headmaster until 1919.

The following worked as teacher:

Kern	Hans Tabar
Michael Kremer	Michael Horvath
Franz Kremer	

In Deutsch Zerne there was also a kindergarten from 1888 to 1921. It was conducted by the sisters and closed by order of the Department of Education. In 1941 a kindergarten was built again by the school foundation; this one stood until 1944. There worked: Anna Kampf, Elisabeth Wirth, Anna Sedlak, Karolina Pfaff, Kathe Sedlak, and Margaret Krisch; as caretaker, Anna Schleimer.

The German and Serb elementary school provided successful upbringing and education for a whole decade; for this reason, many students attended higher schools and qualified for the following occupations:

*Until the end of World War I*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Father's Occupation</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. Dr. John Engels	Pastor	Farmer	Later canon in Temeschburg
2. Jakob Schweininger	Pastor	Farmer	
3. Jorenz Stiebel	Executive	Farmer	
4. John Stiebel	Executive	Farmer	Post Office Director
5. Samuel Nicka	Notary	Butcher	
6. John Nicka	Teacher	Butcher	
7. Emil Pronievicz	Veterinarian	Druggist	Director of Serum Factory in Budapest
8. Denes Fabian	Pastor	Goverance	Later Dean
9. Dr. Erno Fabian	Physician	Executive	
10. Laszlo Fabian	Professor	"	
11. Joseph Kreps	Teacher	Carpenter	Later, farmer and bank bookkeeper
12. Nikolaus Kreps	Engineer(Dipl.)	Carpenter	
13. Matthias Csernai	Teacher	Tailor	School Head, Hungary
14. Michael Kremer	Teacher	Merchant	Until 1919 Director of the German School in Serb Zerne
15. Dr. Martin Wirth	Physician	Farmer	
16. Franz Kremer	Teacher	Farmer	
17. Hans Adam	Teacher	Blacksmith	
18. Franz Pronievicz	Druggist	Druggist	
19. Koloman Zahradnyik	Teacher	Teacher	Later, school director in Deutsch Zerne
20. Josef Stiebel	Notary	Farmer	
21. Jeno Holloe	Teacher	Teacher	
22. Geza Michels	Notary	Teacher	
23. Gyula Michels	Teacher	Teacher	
24. Sandor Michels	Teacher	Teacher	
25. Anton Kern	Executive	Shaver	
26. Josef Kern	Teacher	Shaver	
27. Josef Kiefer	Teacher	Executive	
28. Josef Stiebel	Executive	Farmer	
29. Hans Tabar	Teacher	Farmer	Later, School Director in Deutsch Zerne, headmaster in Munich

*After World War I:*

30. Josef Friedl	Engineer(Dipl.)	Locksmith	Julia Major
31. Otto Brichta	Teacher	Metal Worker	Later, mill owner in Tschestelek
32. Bela Hazkoto	Technician	Coach Builder	Julia Major

33. Peter Spengler	Agriculturist	Farmer
34. Josef Nicka	Contractor	Butcher
35. Alexander Hatz	Engineer(Dipl.)	Merchant
36. Dr. Michael Grun	Physician	Farmer
37. Dr. Hans Nicka	Physician	Butcher
38. Dr. Josef Kreps	Physician	Agriculturist
39. Dr. Rudolf Hatz	Physician	Merchant
40. Dr. Karl Nemeth	Physician	Physician
41. Michael Frauenhofer	Dentist	Farmer
42. Josef Mayer	Engineer (Dipl.)	Farmer
43. Magdalena Kremer	Teacher	Butcher
44. Josef Schwarz	Executive	Farmer

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## Family Life, Customs and Morals

The first settlers of our country were, for the most part, families rich in children, 10—12 children was not unusual. While the father as head of the family did his work in the field with the grown children, he directed and managed the household; the mother cared for the still small children, kept order in the house and yard and took care of the bodily welfare of the household residents. If the children could already help, then appropriate responsibilities would be assigned to them and they would be enlisted in cooperation.

Our ancestors were very religious. Every Sunday and holy day the church was visited, with the exception of whoever was appointed for preparation of the noon meal. After the meal on Sunday and holy days, the men gathered in the house or courtyard or in the inn for companionship; the women went with the small children to visit relatives or in the neighborhood, while the grown children went to dance. The relationship of the parents to the children and vice-versa was characterised by love. The word of the parents, especially the father, was highly respected, even after the marriage of the children. All these praiseworthy attributes came to know a change in the course of time. The spiritual movements rising up at another time, which found their circulation by the written word and the press, influenced the thoughts and actions of man. Traditional attitudes, opinions, and values were abandoned as ridiculous and scorned. All of this did not occur without consequences. The earlier deeply religious attitude, the respect for elders – the parents not excluded – suffered greatly, which was also aggravated by the

spread of materialistic thoughts. In spite of this, our people, for the most part, remained true to the inbred virtues, customs and morals of their ancestors and also lived their lives accordingly.

We will begin with the start of the church year:

All public merriment was introduced "*Zu Kathrein*" ( to Katherine): they said "Katherine tuned the violin."

On the evening before December 6 *St. Nicholas* came. But this custom got out of hand by us. That is to say there appeared the "Krampus" who at first scared the children but afterwards gave them gifts.

The most beautiful feast was *Christmas*. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve a group of girls dressed in white trekked from house to house accompanied by the white horse ( a youth trimmed like a white rider with horse) and the black (Krampus, with a bag full of rods) and gave gifts to the children after they sang before the Christ child, which unfortunately was not recorded. After they left the house began searching under the Christmas tree for the gifts. They had to see for themselves whether the long-anticipated wishes were fulfilled. At the evening meal there was wine soup and afterwards poppyseed noodles, poppyseed or nut strudel. At midnight the group went to early morning service. On the first or second day of Christmas the children also received gifts from the godfathers and godmothers. To hodd off sickness from the house no laundry could be done between Christmas and New Year's Day.

*New Year's Eve* they spent in inns, clubs or private houses. The earlier traditional probing into the future with emptied coffee cups, card pitching and melting lead over a flame no longer took place in the later times. At midnight they turned out the light for an instant, for the New Year was here.

*On New Year's Day* making wishes for the New Year took place. One wished oneself health and a long life. So that the wishes would be fulfilled, he was well-watered by the grown children. The children received gifts.

*On Three King's Day*, in almost all houses, cruller's were baked. A coin was baked into one cruller, which the mother placed in front of

the place of the smallest child so that he was a king for the day. On Three King's Day three boys dressed as kings trekked from house to house and sang the Three King's song. For this they received gifts.

At *Mardi Gras* the various organizations presented their dance events whereby the married were offered the opportunity to dance and amusement. The grown youth had dance events every Sunday afternoons and evenings at the inn with so-called free music. During Advent and Lent, and also at harvest time, these events did not take place.

During *Holy Week* -- from Maundy Thursday noon until Holy Saturday morning -- even the bells fell silent; the peal of the bells was replaced by the chanting of the altar boy. Then on Saturday morning they trekked from house to house and received eggs or spending money.

On *Easter Day* the children prepared the Easter nest with great eagerness. In these nests the Easter bunny laid his colored eggs, sweets, etc.

On *May 1* the children stuck elder branches on the windows and doors.

In the evening on May 1 there followed Maypole dancing. This was the privilege of the army recruits of that time. After the youths gathered together, they decorated the several meters high branches, which were previously designated, with branches and ribbons and hung them in front of the church, the community house, the school, the rectory, the judge's house and the homes of other designated citizens. The maypoles remained standing a few weeks; then they were pulled out by the youths playing melodious music; for this the youths received a sum of money from the those honored, which they used to finance their entertainment.

The most beloved folks festival in all of the Banat was, of course, the *Kirchweihfest* ( "*die Kerwei*" or *Church Consecration Feast*). It was celebrated in our sister communities in November on the Sunday after Martinmas (St. Martin's Day). The reason for a feast on this date is thought to be that there should be a feast of joy and thanks for the harvest of the year, since it was brought in with such pain and effort. The bouquets and ribbons on the hats of the Kirchweih boys, the

wine bottles, were symbols of the rich harvest. On these days visitors streamed by from all directions. After the rigorous days of work, it was the most appropriate time for relatives and friends to seek each other again, share joy and sorrows, to counsel each other, and to dedicate time to cheerfulness, fun, and conversation. The Kirchweih lasted 3 days; on this occasion the youth played the star role. For weeks before the boys searched for a girl ("Kerweimenschen") for the Kirchweih. The Kirchweih fellows (Kerweibuwe) gathered together in an association and elected 2 treasurers, a hall and music was sought, and cost was agreed upon with the host and musicians. On the Friday before the Kerwei every Kerwei boy brought his hat to his Kerwei girl to clean (decorate). On Saturday afternoon the guys gathered with the musicians in the courtyard of the community house to get the Kirchweih tree. With the brass band they marched on the church square and set up the tree in front of the rectory. Afterwards they went to the merchant to pick up the decorated Kirchweih bouquet. It was Rosemary decorated with nosegays and silk ribbons, which they brought to the Kerwei girl of the first treasurer. Then on the that same evening the first dance took place, this time, however, without the decorated hat. On Sunday morning every Kerwei fellow visited his girl and received the decorated hat. With this hat on and with the wine flask in the hand, he then called on relatives and godparents and offered them tickets for the drawing of hat and cloth. With this opportunity he received spending money for the Kirchweih days. From the inn the Kirchweih association then marched to the church in front of the 2 treasurers. There they formed a line for the greeting of the pastor. During the Mass the fellows stood in the main corridor of the church. The pastor gave a sermon suitable for a festive occasion. After the Mass he was again honored with a line of greeters. Afterwards the guests of honor were invited: the pastor, the schoolmaster, the municipal administrators, the judge and the notary.

On Sunday afternoon the Kirchweih association left the inn with the musicians and the girls to pick up the second treasurer, then his girl, afterwards to the first treasurer and finally to his girl. There the bouquet was picked up. Now marched the Kirchweih train, the first treasurer in front with his girl, who carried the bouquet, to the church square, where auction of the bouquet took place. During the Kirchweih days they stopped at every street corner and the musicians played a so-called corner song. Around the Kirchweih tree waited a large group of people. At first the second treasurer



climbed on the a barrel previously placed there and officiated at the drawing for hat and cloth. With jesting words the attendees were encouraged to offer higher amounts for the soon-to-be auctioned lottery tickets. The drawing of the winning ticket was done by a child. During the short pause the musicians played.

After this drawing followed the auction of the bouquet. Exciting moments for the fellows and girls, but also for their parents, even if ther daugthers or sons were not the owners of the bouquet. The drawing happened in the following manner. The first treasurer climbed on the barrel and gave his Kirchweih speech – while the musicians played a march. This speech was scheduled for many years by the Schoolmaster Michael Kremer – who had a tragic ending. The speech consisted of humorous allusions and hilarious occurrences of the day, which would put the attendees in good humor. After every stanza, the musicians played a corner piece. Note here that members of the Kirchweih association had to pay the full declared price plus one tenth of the difference between the declared price and the cut-off price, whereas a successful bidder outside of the group had to pay the full cut-off price. It turned out that there was never a bidder outside of the association, for that would truly have been an expensive amusement.

At the end of the auction the successful bidder presented the bouquet to his girl. Now the lead dancer pair danced three short dances around the Kirchweih tree, and after this the other fellows lead their girls to dance. Then the whole association marched from the church square – in front of them was the lead dancer pair with the bouquet – to the notable dignitaries and the nearest relatives, to honor them with a Rosemary sprig with silk ribbons, whereupon they were presented with money. The evening meal on Sunday was received at the home of the female lead dancer, on Monday in the house of the male lead dancer. After the meal they marched with the musicians into the dance hall. The first dance (3 pieces) now belonged to the lead dancer pair; also on the succeeding Kirchweih days these members of the association were fetched from their home and led to the dance hall.

On Wednesday morning the fellows removed the Kirchweih tree and buried a sealed flask of wine at the spot where the tree stood, where it remained buried until the next Kirchweih. They took the Kirchweih tree on their shoulders and with the twanging of a funeral march

brought it to its place in the community courtyard. So ended the Kirchweih feast.

### **The Marriage**

After military service it was the time to think of marriage. If a fellow was not promised to a girl before that, then he looked around at the possible girls. If his choice was agreed upon, then the parents got together. The parents on both sides met in the house of the chosen one and negotiated the dowry. If they agreed, then the promise (betrothal) of the young was made. This happened in close circles; only the parents on both sides and their counsel (marriage witnesses) assisted. The betrothal took place in the house of the bride's parents and on this occasion the agreed-upon dowry was put into writing in the presence of witnesses. The transfer of the dowry usually followed the marriage ceremony.

Usually the marriage took place three weeks after the betrothal. It was celebrated with more or less pageant according to the means of the parents. If the number of guests was small then the marriage celebration would be celebrated in the house of the bride's parents; if the number was large, then it took place in an inn. The marriage at the registry was usually done in the morning only in the presence of the witnesses, but the church marriage took place in the afternoon. If it was a large wedding, 200 or more persons participating, then the marriage train marched to the church with music. The children went in front, then the bridesmaids with their partners, the bridal pair, after them followed the marriage witnesses, the married women, and finally the parents of the bride and groom. The pastor executed the marriage, gave a speech, and gave the blessings. Usually while still in the church the elated participants wished the young couple well, the train was formed, and they marched to the house or into the inn for the wedding meal. At the meal the bridal pair sat at the head of the hall, next to them, the witnesses. During the meal speeches were given, in which best wishes were expressed to the bridal pair, children also recited poems on this opportune occasion.

At the bride dance, the bridegroom led the bride to dance; then all of the guests asked the bride for a dance. At midnight the veil and crown of the bride were removed and then the bridal pair symbolically stepped into the circle of those who were married. An

earlier custom, to steal the bride's shoe or to kidnap the bride herself no longer happened in recent times. Either before or after the wedding the guests presented the bridal pair with a wedding present.

The wedding –proffered with the finest food and drink –lasted well into the early morning, frequently into the afternoon hours of the next day.

### **A Few Marriage Conventions from Old Times** **By Matthias Kampf, Hatzfeld**

Josef and Maria Barbara Kampf, nee Henika, were also among the early settlers. Their house and grounds were determined to be worth 380 florins. They disbursed 150 florin. They had to pay 22 florin yearly for taxes, deliver 20 Pressburger measures of grain (47 kg = 1 Metz), 12 measures of wheat, 5 measures barley, 3 measures of oats, make two long trips on the River Theiss, work 2 Joch for free, and still pay and carry 80 days of manual labor for the manor lord.

On Tuesday, May 2, 1792 Josef Kampf and Maria Barbara Henika, as well as Josef Stiebel of Eichstatt and Anna Kampf, were married. Josef Kampf received from his parents Johann Peter Kampf and Anna Katharina nee Hartenacker 100 florin in cash, two horses together with cart, a completely equipped wagon, a plow, a harrow, and a windmill. His bride received from her mother Maria Elisabetha Henika nee Lindenbaum, 80 florin cash, a cow, a trunk, a table, a bench, a chest of drawers, an iron skillet, an iron pot, and a bed. When she went as a settler to Deutsch Zerne, she had 10 children.

Anna Kampf received from her parents Johann Peter Kampf and Anna Katharina Hartenacker 80 florin cash, a cow, a trunk, a table, a bench, an iron skillet, a completely assembled bed. Josef Stiebel had 180 florin when they went as settlers to Deutsch Zerne. Josef Stiebel died on September 10, 1799 and was 33 years old. His wife Anna Maria Stiebel, nee Kampf, married Peter Tines from Charleville on January 7, 1800.

Josef and Anna Stiebel, nee Kampf, had two boys and a girl; the girl Magdalena was married to Daniel Koch.

### **The Christening**

This joyful feast was celebrated by the family on one of the next Sundays after the birth of a child. On the way to the christening, the godfather and godmother preceded; the midwife with the child followed them. After the christening was over, they went home; on the way sugar was given to the gathering children, often there resounded joyful shots, which were fired by relatives or good friends. At the christening feast (the child's party) that followed relatives, the midwife, the godfather and godmother participated. During the first six days after the birth the woman in childbirth received a meal brought to the home alternately from the household of the godfather or the household of the godmother. It was also customary for the godfather and godmother to give gifts to the godchild at Christmas and Easter.

## **The Burial**

If the sorrowful event occurred that a family member passed away, the dead person was laid out in the parlor. From the time of lying in state until the burial, relatives and acquaintances came to the wake to say their prayers at the bier of the deceased, whereby they expressed their condolences and consoled them. The burial proceeded at the earliest 24 hours after the death occurred. After the church ceremony in the church courtyard took place, the funeral cortege was set in motion. In front was carried the tomb cross, there followed the cross, flags, altar boys, the cantor, the pastor, in many cases the choir, musicians, after that the men and finally, the women. The funeral cortege moved to the pavement, while the hearse travelled in the street. Behind it went the grief-stricken family. In many cases, before the burial, a vesper of the dead was held for the salvation of the deceased in the church; then they continued to the graveyard. When they arrived there, the pallbearers lifted the coffin out of the hearse and carried it to the excavated grave or to the family vault, where the dead were buried after the church ceremony. Usually, six weeks after the burial, a requiem mass was read for the salvation of the deceased.

Great reverence was shown to the deceased of a family. This resulted in the routine that they paid a visit to their grave at every praying opportunity to offer a prayer. Their graves were marked

with grave stones of marble, and the grave mount was planted with flowers. On All Saint's Day the graves were decorated especially beautifully. The graveyard looked like a flower garden.

### **Schwaben Pranks, Jokes, Droll and Bawdy Events**

The people of our country were serious persons, but they were not lacking in humor and they were always ready to make fun of the weaknesses and bloopers of their fellow men but also their own, not infrequently in an earthy manner, but not with offensive intentions.

*Here are a few examples:*

*Told to Hans Tabar (Mayersch) and others:*

*You all know that Cousin Matz had a vineyard, and you also know that he had wine. But I know that he always liked the wine at the inn better.*

*In the spring cousin Nani put the young kitten into a sieve as we used to do back home and covered it with an old sweater. Since she had to go to work in the vineyard and didn't want cousin Matz to find the money, she stuffed it into the sleeve of the sweater.*

*Cousin Matz was sitting in the Gang, smoking a cigarette, when the kitten suddenly started crying. Cousin Matz went into the stable where the cats were to see what happened.*

*There was a cat in the arm of the sweater and it couldn't get out. As he was getting the cat out, he found the money.*

*Quickly he went to the inn to drink a few glasses.*

*In the evening, cousin Nan came home, looked for the cat but also for the money. The money was gone. She went into the house and said, "Matz, did you take the money out of the sleeve of that sweater?"*

*Cousin Matz said. "What money? I didn't find any money!"*

*Cousin Nani said, "But I had put it into the sleeve of the sweater!"*

*Cousin Matz said, " The cat must have eaten it."*

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*Before the first World War the Socialists marched through the village on May 1 with a red flag and music. The home of their society was in the Neue Gasse. The society representative was Comrade Matz. When it was time to march, the chairman, cousin Mischko said: "Matz, go out there and count how many are here!" It was known that cousin Matz could not count very well, He went out, remained there a while, came in and notified the chairman: "You are all here."*

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*Mischko was a poor man and had a bunch of children. One of his children was sick and died. He went to the pastor and requested a funeral. The pastor asked: "Should I come to the burial with the new or the old coat?" Of course, with the new coat the burial costs more.*

*Mischko said, "If the new coat pleases you more, you can put it on. I will only pay for the old one."*

*How they became of one mind, we did not hear.*

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*Brother Mischko and brother Jakob were good Friends. They both really enjoyed drinking Schnapps as well. Brother Mischko was a blacksmith. In the Fall, the farmers delivered the bounty, and since many also had a vineyard, they also brought along a bottle of schnapps. Sister Amei, brother Mischko's wife, had set the bottle in the pantry. There was already a whole row of liter bottles of schnapps. But brother Jakob came to visit nearly every day. Then brother Mischko would leave the anvil idle and they drank schnapps. Sister Amei didn't care for this, but she didn't say anything in the beginning. But it eventually became too annoying, and she scolded the "schnapps brothers." Since this didn't help, she hid a liter of schnapps in the attic granary. But brother Mischko also kept track of the bottles, yet couldn't find the missing one anywhere. Finally he found it. When sister Amei went out, he went in the attic, and sure enough, there it was in the grain. Out with it! And since brother Jakob also came again to visit, it was also emptied out right away. Brother Mischko filled the bottle with water and brought it back to the attic to its place. The schnapps was all gone, And when New Year's Day came near, brother Mischko asked sister Amei, "Did you also bring schnapps home so that one can offer something to the well-wishers?" "Yes, I have already planned ahead, since you*

*boozers have drunk it all away." On New Year's morning, brother Jakob came to give his best wishes. Sister Amei goes in the attic, brings the bottle and offers it up. They both drink, look at each other, then brother Mischko says, "Amei, I think you made a mistake, this is Holy Water." "I think you are drunk or crazy," says sister Amei. "No need to get upset. The bottle was not corked well and the spirits have evaporated," said brother Jakob. Sister Amei didn't even believe the pair, but what was she to do? She had to go buy another bottle.*

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*Brother Joschko loved to go to the inn, the schnapps and wine always tasted good to him. On one fall evening he was also again at the innkeeper's and caroused happily. Several from the fire department also still showed up at the innkeeper's to drink a "spritzer\*." When they then had drunk their wine, they wanted to go home. When they came out of the common room into the vestibule - there were still two doors, the one went into the dance hall, the other led outdoors -- brother Joschko came out of the dance hall and says, "It's cloudy and dark like being in a sack, can't see any moon or any stars."*

*He had mistaken the door.*

*Surely the innkeeper had scolded the other day like a roof sparrow.*

*\*(Spritzer: Wine with seltzer.)*

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## **Associations, Miscellaneous**

Various organizations and corporations provided for the support of social and cultural life, professional interest, diversion, art and security of the people. For the most part they had a very high membership.

1. The *Kasino* (club room) was the organization of the upper class. It was founded in the 1870's. It had a respectable library and was at the disposal of Magyarisation. The club also had a stage where merry stories, one-act plays, and theater events in



Hungarian and German were enacted. In its rooms festive events took place. Also the opportunity was provided for many games, like chess, billiards, and cards. Magazines and daily newspapers were also available. After World War I the organization merged with the Agricultural Association.

2. *The Agricultural Association* was founded in 1876 and had an exemplary tree nursery, which was managed by a gardener. Refined fruit trees, roses and other gardener's items, flowers, plants, wreaths, etc. could be obtained at any time. They not only covered the needs of our sister communities, but also had customers from other communities. For a long time the nursery was managed by Czanik the gardener, later by his sons Alexander and Josef Czanik. In 1928 it was sold and with the profits a beautiful club house was built next to the community house. In its rooms were daily newspapers from at home and abroad, even illustrated journals. In the large room various events took place and recitals were held. There was also the opportunity to play chess, billiards and cards, and there was also a large lending library at the members' disposal. The last association president was Josef Kampf, his predecessors were Dr. Karl Nemeth and his son Franz Kremer.
3. *In the previous century there was also a Marksman's Club.* The commandant was Nikolaus Weber, the butcher. In remembrance of this club the marksman flag still exists and is found in the church.
4. *The Fire Brigade Organization* was brought into existence on March 16, 1884 at the suggestion of the estate manager Fabian, who also became the president of the organization. The first equipment of the organization was obtained with the support of the lord of the manor. True to the slogan "For the honor of God, for the protection of your neighbor," it was the duty of the organization to protect the belongings of the inhabitants in adversity and danger. The organization fulfilled this duty within the limits of possibility in an exemplary manner up until World War I. Then their occupation was temporarily suspended, since most of them had to march. Those draftees no longer took care over the fulfillment of their duties and the maintenance of their equipment and property. The task of the organization extended over all the territory of the sister

community, and it was called "German and Serb Fire Brigade." During the war the maintenance of the property of the organization was entrusted to the former commanding officer of the fire department Franz Kremer, Sr. According to the by-laws this property devolved to the first Fire Brigade that on the property of one of the two communities. This happened in Deutsch Zerne in 1923. (Since a fire brigade was also started in Serb Zerne, this part of the property organizational maintenance was ceded to it). At the startup they acquired specific gains: Josef Themare, pharmacist, Franz Pronievicz and Johann Bodwen. The first president was Josef Themare, commanding officer, secretaries were Johann Bodwen and , Franz Pronievicz. After the retirement of Josef Themare they elected Franz Pronievicz to the presidency. Professor Hans Tabar became the secretary. In 1928 the flag of the organization was blessed by the apostolic administrator of the Banat, Prelate Kovacs, who performed this act with considerable clerical support. It was a unique celebration at which, besides the community population and many hundreds of guests, numerous fire departments from abroad and many delegations participated. The mother of the flag was the school teacher, Anna Tabar nee Kremer.

The organization also had a music band (the Konrad Band) and a song group. In 1930 at the request of the Banat Fire Brigade Association in our community the county Fire Brigade Association was founded. Our town commanding officer Johann Bodwen was elected the county inspector. The last president of the organization was Franz Brunet, pastor; Johann Bodwen was the commanding officer, Nikolaus Kovacs, his deputy, Hans Schleimer, secretary, Nikolaus Neumayer, adjutant, train captain, Josef Schmidt and Nikolaus Tabar, flag bearer, Nikolaus Gross, Fire Engine Maintenance, Johann Sterz, and Equipment Maintenance, Friedrich Retzler.

5. Already in previous years the song-loving people had formed a singing group, which also served as the church choir. They were always under the direction of the current organists (cantors). The group existed until 1909. In 1921 the Men's Singing Group was called into life. Its first member was Josef Themare. In the beginning the group was independent, but later they joined with the Fire Department song group. The

group soon flourished, hosted song evenings, and Sunday presentations, participated in song fests with various groups, whereby it always presented remarkable events. The chairmen of the group were Josef Themare, Philipp Rausch, and finally, Anton Bodwen. The choir directors were Schoolmaster Michael Horvath, Jakob Reppa and Michael Kremer.

The presentations of these dilettantes enjoyed great popularity. The performance of one-act plays, stories, comedies, and melodramas always found a grateful and zesty audience. Especially to be highlighted in this territory are the efforts of Schoolmaster Michael Kremer, who even brought comical pieces about the rural world, written by himself, into the dialect of the homeland and thereby provoked truly thundering applause.

6. The *Culture League* or the "Swabish-German Culture League," by full name, was founded on the lowlands, and, by and by, it expanded its organisations. In our area it was established in 1920. Its task was considered to be to foster the cultural interests of the Germans. It was also designated to become the legal representative of academic autonomy, whereby it was designated to receive from the state the transfer of the sovereign right over the German schools. Thereby it was intended that the Serbs also possessed school autonomy in the monarchy. These rights were even guaranteed to the leading men of our people by the peace treaty. Afterwards. They would hear nothing of this and deliberately hindered the expansion of our school system. The sanctions of the regime at that time showed how narrow was the prospect of reaching success on the school system. By order of the administration from July 20, 1920 (through 1921) all schools were socialized, ownership of school property by a community and church was illegal, expropriated without compensation and transferred to the hand of the state. Now the state could unscrupulously enforce its criminal intent, of which the chauvinist minister, Pribicevic, availed himself. The primary freedoms we learned about in school were bit by bit taken away, the operation of the Culture League was discontinued and its property confiscated. Later even when the Culture League was allowed again through the battlesome efforts of the German representatives, it

could no longer fully perform the tasks allowed in our area. There was no other alternative than this in any other organization, respectively to relocate groups. The Serbs would simply not acquiesce to the Germans continuing study in their own language. They spied on every cultural event, hassled the leading men, made it difficult to get permission, and caused disruptions. Not until the end of the 30<sup>th</sup> year could the Culture League display a healthy activity. Shortly it became completely absorbed into a country group.

The last chairman of the country organisation of the Culture League was Michael Schulz; the country director was Johann Hepp.

7. Music found support also in *Music-Making in the Home*. Instruments like the harmonica, accordion, and piano found use. In small groups the fiddle was also played. Already in the previous century there was a *music band* under the direction of Bandmaster Muller. They played at dances and at various festivals and family celebrations. This band had dissolved and at the beginning of this century Bandmaster Johann Konrad started a new band. Soon he succeeded in starting a powerful music group of young fellows. They also played at dances and at special celebrations. After World War I they reached the high point of their abilities. They performed many concerts and were sought-after as a dance band. The band was even invited to play on a radio broadcast. Unfortunately this program could not be aired due to adverse circumstances. Due to disputes a part of the group separated and formed a new band under the name "Men's Band."

The *Death Benefit Group* had the task of providing a proper burial to the deceased with the payment of a specific amount to the family of the dead. The amount necessary for this was supplied by contributions of the members.

The president of the group was Johann Stein, Number 86.

#### *Miscellaneous:*

1. In 1898 the Hatzfeld-Betschkerek *Narrow Gage Railway* was built. After the omission of Hatzfeld, Deutsch Zerne became the terminus. But then in the 20<sup>th</sup> year they extended the line

to Klarija, which then became the terminus. This railway kept gaining more importance due to its fast transport of people and goods. To no small extent did the depot of the Credit Co-operative at the railway station contribute to this. The best known station masters were Kardos, Matthias Szigeti and Josef Fuderer.

2. In the previous century there was a *post office* in our sister communities. Mail arrived by us through neighboring Hatzfeld. Later we received our own post office, from which the mail to neighboring Hetin was deployed. The managers of the post office were: Irene von Majlath, Emilie Konstantinovic, Hermine Harlamov, nee Jung, Nevenka Vinkovic, nee Rajkov. Long-standing employees were: Eva Paul, Antonia Kiefer, Berta Hirhager, and Anna Kampf. Postmen in the final years were: Anton Sehr, Sr., Peter Kampf, and Ludwig Bach.
3. The *Rural Police* were in charge of public order and safety and the protection of property. Already in previous years a police station had been built in our sister community.
4. A station of *Finance Control* stood earlier in Hatzfeld. As our community became a frontier town, a station was also built here. It provided the sentry at the border for border traffic both ways and battled against tobacco and border smuggling.

## **World War II**

In September 1939 the political antagonism between Germany and Poland led to the outbreak of World War II. England and France were allied with Poland. Later still other states followed, which took either one side or the other so that Shortly the whole world was aflame. Yugoslavia remained neutral and the government signed the so-called Vienna Pact in Vienna in the beginning of 1941 and committed itself to neutrality. High military circles in the country, which drooled over glory were against this pact and contrived a coup under the leadership of General Simovic and forced the Prince Regent Paul to relinquish his land, in whose place the 18 year-old Crown Prince Peter succeeded as king. The Simovic government even closed a friendship pact with the Soviet Union. In Belgrade mass demonstrations of agitated people took place. With the shouts “Bolje rat, nego Pakt” (Better war than the Pact) the demonstrations degenerated into an unequivocal rally against Germany.

In reply to these incidents the imperial government declared war on Yugoslavia and ordered the bombing of Belgrade. When on April 6, 1941 on Palm Sunday heavy already early in the morning German air force formations roared over our heads, we were certain what was wrong: Germany and Yugoslavia were at war. At lightning speed the affirmation of this news spread even from official quarters, which had a paralyzing affect on the German people. They knew what a dangerous situation this could be for them. Soon followed the first war sanctions. All radios of Germans had to be delivered up at short notice, as well as firearms.

The following men were seized as hostages from both communities and carried off in carts from Julia Major to Peterwardein into the gun turrets of their fortress. With the swift advance of the German military unit they were quickly freed and brought back to their homeland after 8 days.

### **List of Hostages**

Scarcely were the hostages carried off, when armed Sokol youth headed to the scene, gathered all the men that they could get hold of, brought them to the train station and crammed them into two rail cars. For 48 long hours they were held captive there under the threat of massacre. The Serbish pastor from Alexandrovo in the Banat, succeeded in an energetic performance with the guards to get them freed.

Actually, after this sequence of events, quiet reigned in the town, which, however, recognized apprehension for the future. After the rural police left the town and no one was in charge of order and safety, the most distinguished men of both population areas came together and agreed to provide security in both parts of the community with mingled stripes, one Serb and one German and to aid in the reassurance of the population. However, that lasted only a few days, and it appeared at first there was German unity.

In the course of years 1941-1942 German men fit for military service were conscribed as rural police, whose job was to preserve peace and security, but the largest number of them were conscribed into the newly formed "Prince Eugen Division." This unit emerged in the territory of Yugoslavia with dedication and fought shoulder to shoulder with the German Armed Forces. After the surrender this division went into war captivity. The absence of the majority of the men resulted in a lack of skilled workmen. To forestall a production shortage the Serb work force was obliged to render services to the German farming establishments. They were utilized in field work. To provide relief for the housewives, groups of German girls were utilised on the part of the folk's group leadership. One such group was on mission with us. Its leader was Barbara Mayer of Stefansfeld. The girls worked in homes from morning until the early afternoon hours. For they were also allotted a education time, which took place 2-3 times weekly. This was entrusted to Schoolmaster Hans Tabar and Instructor Elisabeth Fulda.

To make an equitable amount of provisions available, commissioners were appointed at the threshing of the wheat to record the level of the harvest results. Even the meat consumption was limited. Textiles could only be purchased with tickets, as well as shoes and accordingly leather goods.

At the beginning of the occupation period there was nothing to be seen of harassment by the partisans. In the course of time they drew attention to themselves. To prevent them they posted the "German team", consisting of those unfit for military service and men in their older years. Their task was to be at the disposal of the police for the mainenance of order and safety in the local plain. If necessary, they could also be used in larger deployments at other locations.

In the summer of 1944 it happened in a rush. Because of the increasing deterioration of the war situation Romania surrendered, the Russians occupied the territory in a rapid advance and the immediate danger was imminent for us all. It was planned that in case of the threat of enemy occupation the German population should be evacuated with their own wagons, but the school children would go with the train. For inexplicable reasons, this did not happen; merely one transport of school children with 2 youths under the direction of School director Tabar and Schoolmistress Fulda could escape in the final hours. You can read about the beginning of this trip in the article "Der Zusammenbruch nähert sich (The Breakdown Approaches)." Concerning the fate of this transport let the following be said here: The many high-quality groceries (meal, fat, ham, bacon) which were loaded into a pack wagon, remained for the longest time in Betschkerek, the others, however many clothes satchels were probably also at Theiss Beach in Aradac. There, of course, the workers refused to carry our things onto the ship on the grounds that they were in service continuously for 3 days and nights and they could no longer continue. After they were pacified with 10,00 dinar and friendly persuasion, they accepted the labor. Unfortunately, I have the justifiable thought that even here a good part of our luggage did not land on the ship, but instead landed in the lakeside woods.



