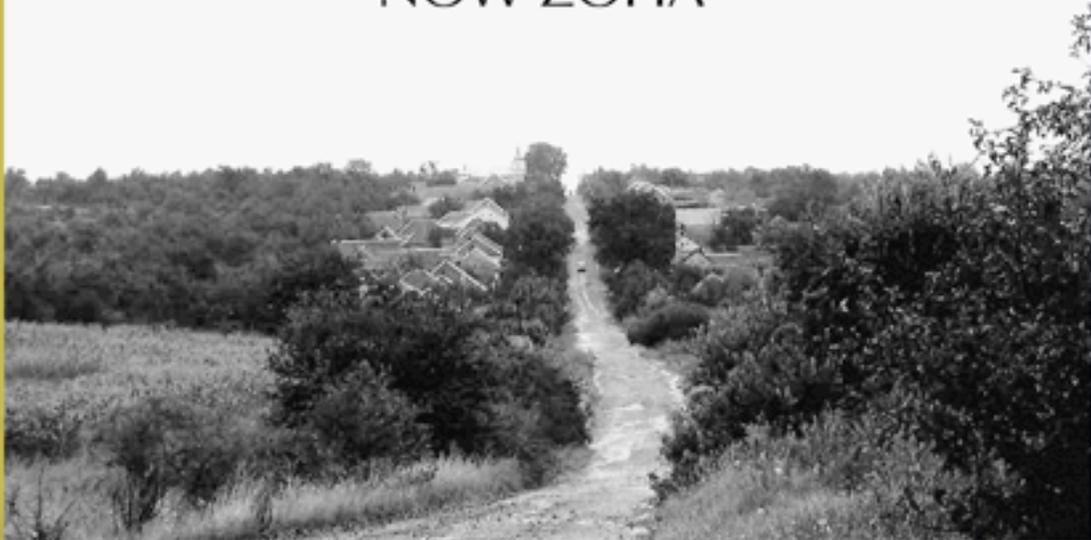


BELARUS

SOPHIENDORF, ZSOFIAFALVA,  
NOW ZOFIA



HUNGARY

MOLDOVA

A COLLECTION OF HISTORIES OF A VILLAGE IN THE CARPATHO UKRAINE

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The photograph on the title page shows the road leading into Zofia. The church is on the left side of the road at the top of the hill. It seems to have been built at the highest elevation in the village.

## THE HISTORY OF SOPHIENDORF, 1804 - 2004

By Madeline Stanley

2004



I am Madeline Stanley, the daughter of Catherine Beckert Zahn who was born in Sophiendorf in 1898. She was the 6th child of my grandparents, Anna and Vitus Bekert. My mother emigrated to the United States in 1911 and never returned to Sophiendorf. She often spoke of her idyllic childhood on the family farm but told us very little about the history or location of the village. I somehow got the mistaken idea that it was a place called "Suffendorf" somewhere in present-day Austria or Hungary. In 1995 I was fortunate enough to meet my cousin Agnes Kozauer Brenner who had lived in Sophiendorf. Agnes very kindly corrected my misconceptions, shared her memories, and put me in touch with other Sophiendorf descendants. In 1999 my nephew Thomas Zahn made two trips to the Carpatho Ukraine, and, with information supplied by Agnes Brenner, found Sophiendorf (now Zofia) and found cousins also descended from Anna and Vitus Bekert. In 2001 and 2004, with Tom Zahn acting as a guide, I had the great pleasure of going to Ukraine to visit Sophiendorf and meet my Ukrainian relatives.

If it had not been for Agnes Brenner and Tom Zahn, it would not have been possible to assemble this collection of histories. I am deeply grateful to them and to the writers who gave permission for their work to be included.

I also thank my husband Conrad Stanley for his interest, support, and the countless hours he spent at the computer organizing photographs and solving technical difficulties.

## THE HISTORY OF SOPHIENDORF, 1804-2004

By Madeline Stanley, Bekert Descendant

2004, Revised March, 2005 and May, 2006

In 1804, a small number of German farmers were invited to found an agricultural village in northeastern upper Hungary on land belonging to the Schoenborns, a noble family of German origin. The farmers they selected were possibly their own peasants from Schoenborn holdings in German states and elsewhere. The land offered for the new village was 12 km from the town of Munkacs<sup>1</sup> on a low hill between the villages of Stanovo and Lalova. This location is now in western Ukraine, but at that time it was in the Hungarian part of the Austrian Empire and under the rule of the Hapsburg Emperor Franz I (Francis I). The village founded in 1804 by the German farmers is now called Zofia, but it was first known by its German name, "Sophiendorf", and later by its Hungarian name, "Zsofiafalva". The surrounding region has also undergone many name changes. Because of its proximity to the southern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains, it has been called "Subcarpathia", "Subcarpathian Rus", "Podkarpatska Rus", "Subcarpathian Land", "Carpatho Ukraine", "Transcarpathia", "Zakarpatska", and more.

To understand how the Austrians came to be rulers of Hungary and why they wanted to establish German settlements, it is necessary to go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Turks conquered Hungary and ruled over a large part of the divided country for more than a hundred and fifty years. They were driven out at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the help of Hapsburg forces, but all of Hungary then became subject to Austrian rule. Prince Ferenc Rakoczi II, a young Hungarian magnate, rebelled against the Austrians. His insurrectionist (Kuruc) army of Ruthenian, Slovak, and Hungarian peasants was driven back and defeated near Munkacs and Kassa. He went into exile, and his vast holdings in northeastern upper Hungary, including his castle in Munkacs, were confiscated by the Austrian government.

At the time of the Rakoczi revolt, there were many Hungarians who supported the Hapsburg monarchy, and these individuals were rewarded. The greatest rewards, however, were presented to foreign nobles.<sup>2</sup> The Schoenborns acquired their Hungarian land in 1728 when Emperor Karl VI (Charles VI) gave Lothar Franz von Schoenborn, Roman Catholic bishop of Bamberg and Archbishop of Mainz, part of the "Mukachevo-Chynadiievo" estate that had formerly belonged to Ferenc Rakoczi II. When the archbishop died less than a year later in 1729, his property was inherited by a nephew.<sup>3</sup>

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1. MUNKACS (Hungarian), MUNKATSCH (German), MUKACEVO (Czech), MUKACHEVO (Russian), MUKACHEVE (Ukrainian), MUKACHIV (Rusyn)

2. Paul Lendvai, The Hungarians, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 163

3. Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi with Ivan Pop, Encyclopedia of Rusyn History and Culture University of Toronto, 2005 18 Feb. 2005 [http://www.rusyn.org/pop\\_schon.htm](http://www.rusyn.org/pop_schon.htm)

Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi, author and professor of history, has written:

*“It was Archbishop Lothar Franz’s nephew, Friedrich Karl von Schoenborn, the Roman Catholic bishop of Wurzburg, who must be credited with reviving the manorial estate in Subcarpathian Rus. The emperor awarded Friedrich Karl the Mukachevo part of the estate as well, and into this expanded property he brought German colonists from the Schoenborn family estates in Franconia to settle lands in Subcarpathian Rus”*<sup>4</sup>

There had been Germans living in Hungary as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century but by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, these earlier settlers had thoroughly assimilated into the Slavic and Magyar populations. The Hapsburgs encouraged much new emigration throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Germans were particularly favored. It was thought that these skillful, hardworking farmers and artisans would not only increase profits for their landlords but would be loyal to the Hapsburgs as well.

Dr. Nikolaus Kozauer, author, professor of history, and direct descendant of the original Sophiendorf settlers has written:

*“Count Schoenborn at once called German settlers . . . to build up the devastated land. They settled in about twenty villages around Mukacevo and made up the major German element in the Carpatho Ukraine. Under the rule of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, other groups of Germans also migrated to the Carpatho Ukraine. . . . The colonists . . . were mostly Catholic, coming for the most part from South German states, because especially Maria Theresa preferred them.”*<sup>5</sup>

The Subcarpathian region was devastated and depopulated because of the long occupation of the Turks and the warfare at the time of their withdrawal. The land was sparsely inhabited by Ruthenians, a Slavic people whose forebears had been established there since the 11<sup>th</sup> century and perhaps earlier.<sup>6</sup> At the beginning of the German colonization movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ruthenians or “Rusny” were not greatly affected by the arrival of new people in their homeland.

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4. Magocsi, web site given above

5. Dr. Nikolaus Kozauer, The Carpatho Ukraine Between the Two World Wars—With Special Emphasis on the German Population, UMI Dissertation Services, 1964, p. 186, 187. Dr. Kozauer lived in Sophiendorf until 1944.

6. The Ruthenians called themselves “Rusny” or “Rus’kyi”, but to others that sounded much like “Russian”. As they were not Russians, the Austrian government called them “Ruthenen”, a Latin form of their name. The English form of “Ruthenen” is “Ruthenian”, but the present day descendants of these people prefer to be called “Rusyn”.

Kozauer has written:

*“The Ruthenians continued to live in the narrow and deep valleys of their mountains in complete poverty and obscurity, having little contact even among themselves.”<sup>7</sup>*

In time the Ruthenians would begin to unite and would develop a strong sense of their own unique heritage. That is another story, but it should be noted that these neighbors were well known to the German farmers. There were other ethnic groups living in northeastern Hungary, but the Ruthenians predominated. Unofficially, Subcarpathia was sometimes called “Ruthenia”

To continue Magocsi’s account of the succession of Schoenborns:

*“(Friedrich Karl von Schoenborn) was succeeded by a nephew, Eugen Franz Erwin von Schoenborn. . . (who) resided in Subcarpathian Rus and was appointed Lord Sheriff (Zhupan) of Bereg county . . . After his death (in 1801) the property passed to the Schoenborn-Buchheim line of the family. . . In the first half of the century, Schoenborn-Buchheim barons brought more German-speaking colonists . . . this time from Habsburg-ruled Bohemia and Upper Austria.”<sup>8</sup>*

By 1804, Hapsburg rule had passed to Emperor Francis I, and the land given to the Schoenborns had passed to Count Franz Philipp Schoenborn. This Hapsburg nobleman had married Countess Sophie of Leyen and Hohengeroldsegh. It was he who invited the German farmers to found the new village south of Munkacs that would be named “Sophiendorf” in honor of his wife.

Kozauer has further described the German immigrants:

*“Sophiendorf was founded in 1804 by Germans from Hessen-Darmstadt, Bavaria, the Austrian Alpine lands, northern Bohemia, and from language islands in Slovakia and Galicia. The dialect which developed was, therefore, a mixture in which the Bavarian and Austrian influence predominated.”*

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7. Kozauer, p. 19

8. Magocsi, website given above

9. Kozauer, p. 207

According to the contract made between Count Schoenborn and the farmers of Sophiendorf, each settler would be loaned 300 forints and given 18 hectares of land. This credit was to be paid back in 10 years.<sup>10</sup> The Hungarian Land Census of 1828 shows that the farmers were also taxed a portion, apparently 2/3, of their annual harvest.<sup>11</sup>

It is believed there were seven families who founded Sophiendorf in 1804.<sup>12</sup> The 1828 census, printed in Latin, lists the names of 21 householders. Among them are Koszauer, Bekker, Sinn, Pfeiffer, and Seiler. It is reasonable to guess that many of the individuals listed in 1828 were of the same seven families who founded the village 24 years earlier in 1804. We know that descendants of these families were still living in Sophiendorf 140 years later in 1944.<sup>13</sup>

Once established in Sophiendorf, the villagers dug wells, cleared fields, and made their farmland productive. They built their houses in two straight rows, one row on each side of the road. When a stone church was built in the middle of the village, the Schoenborn family presented an altar and sacred altar vessels made in Vienna.<sup>14</sup> The villagers brought their expert knowledge and skills with them from their homelands, but it must have taken some experimentation to find out which crops would grow best in the soil and weather conditions of the Carpathian region.<sup>15</sup> It was a land known to be favorable for the cultivation of grapevines, and the German farmers were soon tending vineyards there.

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**10.** Tidor Legotsky, Beregvarmegye Monographiaja, Ungvar, 1881

Legotsky recorded the details of the contract between Count Schoenborn and the original settlers. All references from his book were supplied by Ivan Ilnicki who identifies Legotsky as a well-known historian and archeologist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**11.** Family History Library, Church of Latter Day Saints, Microfilm 0622985, Vagvonosszeira, 1828

**12.** Anton Muller, Ruckschau, Lewisburg, 1954. Ivan Ilnicki supplied the information about the number of original Sophiendorf families from this book.

**13.** The names of all the residents living in Sophiendorf in 1944 are known from a detailed map drawn from memory by Nikolaus Kozauer.

**14.** The information about the original stone church and the altar and altar vessels donated by the Schoenborn family comes from Tidor Legotsky's 1881 book. The church that stands today in Zofia does not seem to be the original building although it is probably in the original location. Legotsky wrote that the church was dedicated in honor of Saint Stephan in 1877. Possibly the dedication was to mark the completion of a new building or an enlarged building.

**15.** Anastasia Giesbrecht and Catherine Jelinek, Sophiendorf, My Homeland, 1986 Anastasia Giesbrecht and her mother, Catherine Jelinek, descendants of the original settlers of Sophiendorf, lived there until 1944. In 1986 they wrote a detailed description of village life as it was during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It includes a description of crops that were grown and the skills that were necessary for a farming family. Their account is included in another section of this book. It is likely that the farming methods and practices they describe had been used for many years and were very much the same as they had been in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At the present time little is known of the life of Sophiendorf for the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The farms thrived, and the little village began to grow. The families were large and extended, and many residents were related. When young people married, they often stayed on in Sophiendorf, building their on homes near those of their parents. In 1870, the village had 50 houses and 255 residents.<sup>16</sup>

The people of Sophiendorf and other villages of German origin continued the traditions, customs, and language they brought with them from their homelands. They were Roman Catholics, and their religious affiliation created a strong bond among them. For these and other reasons, intermarriage with other ethnic groups was rare throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Kozauer has written:

*“ . . .the Germans in the villages stuck together as one people and continued to live and believe as their ancestors did when they came to the country. Many an old custom or habit which was completely forgotten in the old homeland was still faithfully preserved and practiced here.”<sup>17</sup>*

A strong movement for Hungarian autonomy began in the first part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It culminated in The Great Compromise of 1867 which created the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The newly independent Hungarian government began a policy of intense Magyarization, Hungarian became the official language, and after 1879, teaching of Hungarian became compulsory in schools.<sup>18</sup> A new state school was built in Sophiendorf in 1878, and instruction was probably given in Hungarian.<sup>19</sup> It was probably at this time that the village was given its Hungarian name, "Zsofiafalva". It is not known how the changes affected the lives of the villagers. They continued to speak German at home and among themselves, but they began to assimilate into the Hungarian nationality.<sup>20</sup>

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16. Legotsky

17. Kozauer, p. 196

18. Lendvai, p.300, Lendvai writes about the Hungarian Education laws of 1879, 1888, and 1891 which made the teaching of Hungarian compulsory in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools.

19. Legotsky

20. For several decades after the founding of Sophiendorf in 1804, the village was governed by German-speaking Austrians. The Great Compromise of 1867 created the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its Dual Monarchy. The Hapsburg Emperor Franz Josef I was acknowledged to be the Emperor of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and also the King of Hungary. Under this new organization, villages and towns in Hungary were given Hungarian names and some family names may have changed as well. For example, the spelling of the surname BEKERT may have become BECKERT at this time.

There came a time when the villagers were no longer tenants of the Schoenborns but independent owners of their homes and farms. The details of exactly when and how this transition occurred are not known, but it is certain that by the end of the 19th century the acquisition of land became of the utmost importance. The original farms had been divided into smaller holdings as new generations inherited the land. Without additional land to provide sustenance, many of the younger villagers would have to seek their livelihoods in other ways and in other places. This problem coincided with the great wave of emigration from many Central and Eastern European countries that began in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued until the First World War. The people in small villages like Sophiendorf heard about opportunities to make money in the United States, and many decided to go there. The population of Sophiendorf in 1900 was 362. That number surely would have been greater if many people hadn't emigrated.<sup>21</sup>

Many of the emigrants intended to stay only temporarily in America—just long enough to save enough money to buy land at home. Some young women planned to return when they had saved enough money for their dowries. There are family stories that describe life in Sophiendorf at that time as pleasant and comfortable with strong family ties. Those who left for America were not fleeing poverty or persecution. Mostly they were motivated by a desire to make their good lives even better. There are many familiar Sophiendorf names to be found in the ship manifests that record the arrival of the emigrants in America. The name of their village is given as “Zsofiafalva” and their country is Hungary, but their “race” or “people” is usually recorded as “German”.

The outbreak of the First World War cut off the flow of emigration and convinced many who were already in America to stay there permanently. The men of Sophiendorf were drafted into the Hungarian army, but the village itself was not endangered or greatly affected. The major battles of the Eastern Front were fought to the north and west of the Carpathian Mountains. Anna Hardunka, a villager, later told her children that everyone stayed indoors and remained very quiet when the soldiers passed through on their way to the front. Anton Hardunka, Anna's husband, was sent only as far as Ungvar (now Uzhorod) for his military service and was allowed to return home after just a few months. Possibly it was thought that he and other farmers from the small villages could better serve the war effort by producing good harvests.

When the war was over, the Austro-Hungarian Empire no longer existed and Hungary had lost much of its territory. Due to complicated negotiations by Ruthenian-Americans and Czech delegates to the Paris Peace Conference, Subcarpathia, now called the Carpatho Ukraine, became part of the newly created country of Czechoslovakia. The political change did not please everyone, especially Ruthenian leaders who expected more autonomy than the Czechs were willing to give.

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**21.** Georgiy Melika, [The Germans of the Carpatho Ukraine](#), 1989. Melika is a professor at Uzhorod University in Ukraine. He has recorded the Sophiendorf census figures for the years 1900-1989 in his book

Although people from Sophiendorf were still emigrating to America in the 1920s and 1930s, changes in American immigration law limited their numbers. These years were a relatively prosperous time for the village. Nikolaus Kozauer, who was born in Sophiendorf in 1930, refers to it as having been in the time between the world wars, “. . . probably the richest German community in the Carpatho Ukraine.”

During the late 1930s the increasing power of the Nazi Party in distant Germany began to cast a shadow, but the families of Sophiendorf, taken up with their day-to-day cares and the hard work of rural life, were not political and were not at first fully aware of the rising threat. Nazi sympathizers were sent into the villages to gain support from people of German descent. Their message was directed mostly at the young in the guise of attractive cultural activities. There was only one radio in the village, owned by the schoolteacher, and people gathered to listen to the speeches of Hitler and other Nazi leaders. After Czechoslovakia was dismembered in 1938 and Poland was overrun by the Nazis in 1939, Hitler seemed invincible and the propaganda became relentlessly intense. Some individuals in Sophiendorf responded. These extremists probably numbered fewer than a dozen, but a group was formed and meetings were held. The great majority of villagers only wanted to continue living as peaceful farmers.<sup>22</sup>

The Carpatho Ukraine was occupied by Hungary in 1939 with the sanction and help of the Nazi government. The people of Sophiendorf were caught in the tragic years of World War II.<sup>23</sup>

Kozauer has written:

*“The close cooperation of the Hungarian government with the Third Reich . . . had a fatal effect on the Carpatho Ukraine German menfolk as it did on most of the Hungarian German men. . . Germany put pressure on its allies, including Hungary, to help her get their ethnic Germans into the German armed forces.”<sup>24</sup>*

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**22.** Nikolaus Kozauer has written that the old farm population in German communities had always gotten along well with their non-German neighbors and were not inclined to accept doctrines that promoted ill-feeling among the different ethnic groups. Kozauer, p. 149.

**23.** By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Magyarization policy of the Hungarian government had resulted in much assimilation of the ethnic Germans into the prevailing Hungarian culture. When the region came under the rule of Czechoslovakia in 1918, this process was reversed. The Czech government allowed, and even encouraged, German schools and German cultural organizations in what became a successful attempt to reduce the Magyar influence. When the Carpatho Ukraine was returned to Hungary in 1939, the Nazi philosophy had already infiltrated Hungarian-German cultural organizations. One of these, The Deutsche Volksgruppe in Ungarn, took over the cultural activities of the ethnic Germans of the Carpatho Ukraine. In general, Volksgruppe efforts to gain strong support from the residents of the German villages failed.

**24.** Kozauer, p. 155

When the men of Sophiendorf were drafted into the armies, the women and children did the farm work as best they could. In the harsh winter of 1943, units of the German army, having been driven back from the Russian Front, came to camp in and around Sophiendorf. The villagers were required to provide food for the ill-equipped German soldiers and shelter these strangers in their homes and farm buildings. It was uncomfortable and frightening, especially when the evil nature of the Nazi leadership became increasingly apparent.

The Schwarz family owned and operated the small store that was directly across the road from the church. This father, mother, daughter, and four sons were the only Jewish family living in Sophiendorf. They were well-liked and admired. Agnes Kozauer Brenner, who was a child living in Sophiendorf at that time, recalls the shock and sorrow of the whole village on the day the Schwarz family was taken away by German soldiers. News of their arrest spread quickly, and many people gathered on the road to watch helplessly as guards took these neighbors away down the hill. Farewells and prayers were called after them, and many people wept. The Schwarz family turned to wave many times until they were finally out of sight. Brenner remembers her mother Margaret Kozauer saying, "Today it's them. The next time it will be us."<sup>25</sup>

On October 18, 1944, the villagers were summoned from their work by the ringing of the church bells. A German sound truck had entered Sophiendorf, and German soldiers were announcing that the Soviet army was coming. The terrified people were told that they must evacuate by the next day, October 19, or risk being killed by the Russians. They had good reason to believe this warning.

Dr. Lonnie R. Johnson, historian and author, has written:

*" . . . Nazi anti-Soviet propaganda was apocalyptic and atrocious, and it encouraged evacuation or flight. On the other hand, plundering, looting, murder, and the mass rape of German women were characteristic of the conduct of the victorious Red Army."<sup>26</sup>*

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**25.** The Jews who lived in the region of Munkacs were rounded up by the Nazis in May of 1944 and transported to Auschwitz where most of them were murdered. Agnes Brenner's father, the elder Nikolaus Kozauer, had been drafted into the German army. He later saw one of the Schwarz sons in a German prison camp and was able to sneak a little food to him.

**Update:** February, 2006 - After this book was completed, quite by chance we were fortunate enough to locate Dr. Jacob Schwartz, the youngest Schwarz son. He told us that his father and stepmother, Isador and Rivka Schwarz, were killed in Auschwitz. Their daughter and sons were sent to German and Hungarian labor camps. The four sons were Leibe (Leopold), Hershe (Herman), Aaron (Meyer), and Yankel (Jacob). The daughter was Reise (Elizabeth). All five siblings survived the war, emigrated separately to the United States. They now have many descendants.

**26.** Lonnie R. Johnson, Central Europe, Enemies, Neighbors, Friends, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 233

The villagers were told to go to the train station in Munkacs where they would be transported west. The refugees were mostly women, children, and the aged. Nikolaus Kozauer, Agnes Brenner, and Catherine Jelinek have each written eye witness accounts of the terror and confusion of that day and also of the severe hardships they and their families endured in the following years as “displaced persons”.<sup>27</sup>

Ivan Ilnicki, a child living near Sophiendorf in 1944, is now a retired teacher and writer living in present day Zofia. He remembers what took place in the village after the October evacuation. He quotes the professor and author Georgiy Melika who recorded that 181 people were evacuated and 80 remained in the village.<sup>28</sup> In November and December of 1944, Ilnicki recalls, local Ruthenians and other people began to move into the vacant houses. Ilnicki also remembers that some German families returned in 1945 to find their houses occupied. Nikolaus Kozauer has written about his uncle Jakob Kozauer who returned to his home and family in the village planning to resume his prewar life. He was dragged from his house and brutally beaten by partisans. He died from his injuries the next day.

The Carpatho-Ukraine was annexed by the Soviet Union shortly after World War II and became part of Ukraine. Sophiendorf was now called “Zofia” and the surrounding region “Zakarpatskia Oblast.” In 1946 the Soviets ordered all German families still in Sophiendorf to leave. They were taken to Tuman, behind the Ural Mountains in Siberia.

The expulsion of people of German descent and the appropriation of their property was carried out in many places in Central and Eastern Europe in the immediate post-war years. Many were imprisoned simply because their surname was German. It was not a question of individual guilt or innocence in those troubled times. Being of German descent was cause enough for a completely innocent person to be punished for the war crimes of the Nazis. It didn’t matter that you had personally done no wrong or that your ancestors had left their German homelands hundreds of years before.<sup>29</sup>

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**27.** Agnes Brenner, Memories of World War II, 2002. Anastasia Giesbrecht and Catherine Jelinek, Sophiendorf, My Homeland, 1986. Dr. Nikolaus Kozauer, World War II Remembrances, 1964.

**28.** Georgiy Melika records the census figures for Sophiendorf from the following years:

1900 – a total of 362 residents; 305 were of German descent

1910 – 352/328 of German descent

1921 – 366/339       "       "

1930 – 356/312       "       "

1944 – 80/ 181 were evacuated from Sophiendorf

1989 – 440/0 (no Germans in the village)

**29.** Johnson, p. 231-239  
(footnotes continued)

In Zofia, those of German descent were allowed to stay if they had a spouse of Slavic descent. Before the war, Johannes Beckert, a Sophiendorf farmer of German descent, had married Elizabeth Horomaj who was Ruthenian. Beckert, his wife, children, and mother were able to stay in their home. Nikolaus Kozauer has said that some of the houses that had belonged to German families were given to Ukrainian veterans as rewards for their military service against the Axis powers.

Ivan Ilnicki moved to Zofia with his mother after the evacuation and lived there during the Soviet years. He has written how the farms that had formerly been privately owned were organized in 1949 into a "kolkhoz", or collective farm. At first it was not successful, but in 1960 many other villages were included, and it became a much larger Soviet state farm specializing in the growing of grapes and other fruit. The Soviet government helped considerably by providing farm machinery, farming specialists, and other assistance. This larger farm was much more successful, and life slowly improved for the workers.

Ilnicki has written:

*"Around that time, the Secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Krushchev said, ' . . .to turn Zakarpatska into the land of gardens and wineries.' The government supplied the funds to plant more than 300 hectares of gardens in a few years. All the lands to the west of Zofia (all the way to the Irshavsky highway) were planted with plum and apple trees. <sup>30</sup>*

New buildings were built in Zofia, including a new school. Students were given opportunities for higher education. Some old homes were taken down, and others were rebuilt. Saint Stephan Church stood unused for a while, then became a library and social center. Activities for the villagers included concerts, films, dances, theatre performances, and other events. There were jobs available in the surrounding area for people who didn't work at the farm. Health care was provided and old age pensions were promised. The Communist system denied some of the personal freedoms enjoyed in capitalist countries,

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**29.** (continued )

Dr. Alfred de Zayas, The Expulsion of Germans, transcript of speech, 1999, 5 Aug 2004  
[http://meaus.com/expulsion\\_of\\_Germans.html](http://meaus.com/expulsion_of_Germans.html)

Karpatendeutsche Landsmannschaft, Road of Suffering of the Carpathian-Germans 1944-1946: A Documentation, 1983, Foreword by Dr. Thomas Reimer

**30.** Ivan Ilnicki, The Village of Zofia, 1944-1991 and Zofia Near the Carpathians: The Destiny of a German Village, 2002. After moving to Sophiendorf as a child shortly after the 1944 evacuation, Ivan Ilnicki grew up in Zofia and lived there with his family during the Soviet years. He married Magdalena Beckert, daughter of Johannes Beckert. Ilnicki became a teacher and later a school administrator. He also served in the (continued on next page)

but Ivan Ilnicki describes the era as being a happy and secure time for the residents. Some people, he says, now think they had good lives under communism but didn't realize it back then. It's understandable that some people, especially the elderly who have lost their savings and the pensions promised by the Soviet government, would feel this way.<sup>30</sup>

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, Ukraine became an independent country. At first the Ukrainian people were very hopeful, but the economy of their country was greatly weakened by the sudden change of government, environmental issues, and corruption in high places. Recovery has been very slow, and there have been too few opportunities for poor people to improve their lives. It is hoped the "Orange Revolution" of 2004 and the recent election of Viktor Yushenko as President of Ukraine will bring prosperity to the country and help villages like Zofia thrive again.

The year 2004 marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Sophiendorf / Zofia. Following is a description of the village as it appeared on its bicentenary:

At this time, Zofia is a quiet place with neat houses standing behind fences on each side of the one long road. Many are in very good condition, but others need major repairs their residents cannot afford. The old church is very well kept by a Orthodox congregation and is once again being used for worship.<sup>31</sup> There are elevated gas pipes lining the road, but not everyone can pay for a connection. There are wells at regular intervals; some people must draw water and carry it home in buckets. Traffic on the rough road is very light, just an occasional car, truck, or horse-drawn wagon splashing through the mud puddles and scattering the ducks. The road is in poor condition because there is no money available for resurfacing. It's very pleasant to walk in the spacious and scenic fields in back of the houses. The ground is elevated, giving a beautiful view of the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. It is very quiet in the fields, surely much quieter than in past days when many people were at work here. There are grape vines everywhere; grapes have always grown well in this place.

The people of Zofia are very friendly, but a little surprised to see a foreign visitor. Perhaps they wonder why a stranger would be interested in their little village. The visitor tries to picture what this place was like when it was known as Sophiendorf, then as Zsofiavalva, and finally as Zofia of the Soviet collective farm. It is fascinating to think of all that has happened here and all that this place has meant to so many people—so much happiness and so much tragedy. Zofia is beautiful to those who understand its history. The old cemetery is a short walk from the church. The names and dates on the stones and grave markers tell some of the story, but there is still much to learn.<sup>32</sup>

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**30.** (continued from previous page)

Soviet military and later became a regional leader of the Communist Party. Ilnicki has supplied the information about life in Zofia under the Soviet government. He spends summers in Zofia where he owns a house. His histories of Sophiendorf/ Zofia are included in this book.

**31 and 32.** These notes are on the next page.

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**31.** The church bells were removed from the steeple, possibly when the roof was being replaced. There are three bells hung in an open shed that is located ground-level on the side of the church. We cannot be certain that these are the original bells of St. Stephan's , but it seems likely they are. Tom Zahn noticed that the smallest of the three has a Latin inscription that seems to be from the 18th century. Unfortunately, the writing is barely legible.

**32.** The records from St Stephan Church, which would have supplied the names and dates of the German residents of the 19th century, were lost after World War II. It is believed they were deliberately destroyed. Father Eugene Segedy, the last Roman Catholic priest to serve at St Stephan Church, may have had some church records in his possession in the late 1950s. At that time Agnes Brenner wrote to Father Segedy for the church documents she needed to be able to marry, and the priest was able to forward these to her. Father Segedy was then living with the family of Peter Mueller near Mukachevo. Father Segedy died in the 1960s and the disposition of any records he might have had is not known. In 2002, Ivan Ilnicki asked the officials of the Catholic Church in Mukachevo if any records existed, but they were unable to help. Thomas Zahn and Ivan Ilnicki have each attempted to research Ukrainian archives that are stored in Mukachevo, but these are not accessible at the present time. For now we must rely on family stories and the inscriptions on the markers in the cemetery. Some of the graves had been marked with metal plaques that gave names and dates, but most of these have been stolen in recent years. Fortunately, Thomas Zahn had already photographed some of the graves in 1998.

## **HISTORIES OF SOPHIENDORF, NOW ZOFIA**

BY IVAN ILNICKI

Mukacheve, 2004



Ivan Ilnicki is a retired school principal. During the Soviet years, he served in the military and later became an assistant head of the District Committee of the Communist Party.

We who are descended from the German farmers of Sophiendorf are very grateful to Ivan Ilnicki for his interest in the history of the village and his willingness to record it. His knowledge, research, writings, and photographs have been of immeasurable value in helping us to know and better understand our heritage.

Ilnicki went to live in Zofia in 1945 when he was a ten year old boy. He later married Magdalena Beckert, a daughter of Johannes Beckert and Elizabeth Horomaj Beckert. Magdalena and Ivan Ilnicki and their children lived in Zofia. Magdalena is now deceased, and Ivan lives in Mukacheve, but he still spends much time in his house in Zofia. When we mailed him a list of questions about the village, he responded by writing a brief history which covered the years from 1804 to the present. We then asked him to record more about his memories of the time after World War II, and he wrote a second history which gives a more detailed account of the Soviet years from 1945 to 1991. The following pages contain both histories.

Madeline Stanley  
2004

## ZOFIA NEAR THE CARPATHIANS: THE DESTINY OF A GERMAN VILLAGE

Ivan Ilnicki, Historian  
Mukacheve, 2004

Translated from Ukrainian by Maria Slaba

Zofia, one of the youngest villages of our land, will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2004. The village was founded by seven German families that came from Hesse-Darmstadt in Germany. It is situated on the big hill between the villages of Lalovo and Stanovo, about 10 km. from Mukacheve. The village was established in honor of Countess Sofia von Schoenborn, the wife of Franz Philipp von Schoenborn. The permit to build the village was granted by the Mukacheve City Council. Count Schoenborn gave every immigrant family a credit of 300 forint for 10 years to build a house, and every family was also given 18 ga of land. The Germans of Zofia were in touch with many families of the Austrian Empire and the migration of German families continued. In 1828, 21 families lived in Zofia. Among the first people who came were the families of Nicholas Pfeifer, Joseph Kozauer, Sebastian Bekker, and Uhim Lykach.

The Schwaben, the name given to Germans by local people, were experienced farmers.<sup>1</sup> Tivodar Legotsky, a famous archeologist of the 19th century, wrote in his book *Beregvarmegye Monographiaja* (Ungvar, 1881) that in 1870 there were 50 houses in the village and 255 residents. They owned 527 ga of land that belonged to the Verhnie-Schoenborn Church Union. The people of Zofia at that time had 24 horses, 232 cattle, 30 female pigs, and 19 bee houses. There was a church built in the village, and in 1877 it was named in honor of Saint Stephan. The altar and all other church objects were made by the hands of Austrian masters and given to the people of Zofia as a gift from the Schoenborn family. In 1878, a certified school was opened in the village. Every year, every inhabitant of Zofia was required to pay taxes to the Schoenborn family in the amount of 20 forint.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the people of Zofia began to emigrate as did many other people from the Carpathian region. They went to Canada, The United States of America, and Argentina. Four daughters of Vitus Bekert left for the United States. His oldest son Vitus, who was in the Hungarian army during the war, was caught by the Russians in 1918 and kept as a prisoner. He returned to Ukraine in 1921 and became a teacher in Bilku. Olena Beckert, one of the younger Vitus's daughters, later married the famous composer of the Carpathians, Mykhailo Svitluk. Two of their sons now live in Uzgorod.

The people of Zofia were divided into the rich and the poor. The rich families were buying the surrounding land using the money that they brought from overseas, and later they would lease that land. The landowner would take 1/3 of all the collected harvest from the land. The land was fertile because they took good care of it. Organic fertilizers were made and brought from Mukacheve. Most of the families had horses and other inventory. The village had a mill.

1. It was common for people of German descent to collectively be called "Schwaben" even if their ancestors had not come from the Schwaben District of Germany

It was very beautiful in the springtime when the whole village was in bloom. Almost every family had its own honey bee production. The following families were considered wealthy: Shimon Lehner, Vitus Beckert, Lorenc Jelinek, Joseph Visychek, and others. They each owned about two ga of land, horses, mules, cows, and pigs. Their homes were very nice inside and out. Some people even had two or three servants.

From the day of the village's establishment, the people of Zofia had seen six different governments. Nevertheless, the Germans preserved their traditions that had roots going back to the 17th century. They especially liked church holidays and also weddings and youth gatherings (Pig dances - Shvaytancz, Falangu ). The village had its orchestra with accordian, saxophone, and drums. Before World War II, during the 1930s, the father of the famous composer Ishtvan Marton was at the school in Zofia. The church had its own musical instrument, an organ, which is in the music school in Uzgorod at the present time. Village life in Zofia was rich.

The fall of 1944 was a tragic time for the people of Zofia. The following is a description of the events from eyewitness Agnes Kozauer Brenner:

*“ . . .on October 20, 1944, German soldiers came to our village and told us that we had just two hours to leave. . . We poured the wheat, rye, corn, etc. into the chimney chute. We let the cattle. . . loose so they could feed themselves. . . We left Sofiendorf that day by wagon and oxen in the rain and darkness. . . ”*

The later destiny of these villagers was harsh. According to Georgiy Melika, a professor from Uzgorod University, 181 people left the village and 80 stayed. He wrote about this in his book, *The Germans of Carpathian Ukraine*. During November and December the inhabitants of the surrounding villages of Zybivka, Ganderovutsi, Zavudov, Pistrialovo, and Stanovo started to move to Zofia. Others came from Oleniovo and Yakivske (Svaliavsky District), and Kanora (Volovetsky District). Most of these people were poor. In July of 1945, some German families that left Sofia in 1944 started to return to the village, but because their houses were taken, they went to live with their relatives or friends. At the beginning of March, all Germans were sent to Tumen, Siberia.

The destiny of the twenty families that never left the village was very different. Some of the young German people married Ukrainians, and others moved to Mukacheve. In the 1990s, some emigrated to Germany. The last two families of Uriy Jelinek and Motes Hytiy left the village in 2001. At the present time, there are no German families in Zofia.

In the spring of 1945, the village committee headed by Ivan Gyda who had moved from Pistrialova, divided the land among the new inhabitants of the village. Each family was given about 4 ga. But the migrants from other villages had no inventory to work with on the land. The harvests were poor. In the spring of 1949, a collective farm was organized in the village, and people joined it. Zofia's collective farm was poor and did not perform well compared to others in the district. People were paid with products according to the days that they spent working on the farm. Later, people from Zofia left the collective farm to look for work in Mukacheve. Many people were able to make money at the coal mine in Berezuno.

In the beginning of the 1950s, the collective farms of Zofia and Zybivka were integrated, but the lives of the villagers did not improve. Only in 1960, when the farm was reorganized into Radgosp "Lalivsky", did life improve a bit. The Radgosp was created by integrating the collective farms of Lalovo, Zybivka, Berezunka, Zofia, Novoselutsia, Yablynovo, Zalysz, and Zavudovo. The Radgosp specialized in growing fruits, especially grapes.

While working at the Radgosp, the villagers received a monthly pay of about 70 to 400 rubles. Mechanics and cattle farm workers earned higher salaries. Good harvests of fruits, grapes, wheat, and potatoes were collected. About 50 people from Zofia worked at different offices in Mukacheve. Also, many people went to the eastern part of Ukraine as migrant workers. The village had a working school, day nursery, and cultural establishments. Many changes took place in the construction of new buildings. About 25 houses with straw roofs were demolished. Other German-built houses were repaired, and about 50 new ones were built from scratch. In 1945, there were only 67 buildings; now the village has 110 buildings. More than 20 children from Zofia received higher education, and almost everyone attended high school and community college.

In spite of all the progress, in the last 13 years the village has been declining. Hundreds of people don't have permanent jobs. The mortality rate is higher than the birth rate. Seven houses are unoccupied, and many old people live alone. All the cultural establishments are closed.

During Soviet times, there were no religious services at the village church, but it is now an active Orthodox church. Gas pipes have been installed in Zofia. People have not lost their hope for a better future.

## THE VILLAGE OF ZOFIA: 1944 -- 1991

By Ivan Ilnicki  
Mukacheve, 2004

Translated by Maria Slaba

The fall of 1944 was a tragic time for the residents of the village of Zofia. The following is from the memoirs of Agnes Kozauer Brenner who witnessed the events:

*“ . . . On October 20th, 1944, German soldiers came into the village and told us that we had just two hours to leave. The Russians were advancing, we were told, and we were in danger of being shot. . . We poured the wheat, rye, corn, etc. into the chimney chute. We let the cattle, pigs, and chickens loose so they could feed themselves. We loaded the wagon with feather ticks, food, and clothing. We left Sofiendorf that day by wagon and oxen in the rain and darkness. . . ”*

The refugees later went through much hardship. Georgy Melika, a scholar from Uszgorod National University, has written in his book *The Germans of Zakarpatsky Ukraine* that there were altogether 181 people who left the village on October 20th.

October 26th, 1944 is considered to be the day that Mukacheve and all the surrounding villages were liberated from the German invasion. There were no fights in Zofia or the surrounding villages. The Red Army came from Irshava towards Mukacheve.

One part of the Hungarian Army (Hungary was on Germany's side) was running back between Zofia and Novoselutsia towards Dilok. At the time I was ten and lived in the village of Stanovo. I saw Hungarian soldiers run into the village and ask for civilian clothes to change from their army uniforms. On the meadow that was called Legit, Hungarian soldiers left horses, wagons, and weapons. I took two horses home, but later the Soviet Army took the horses from me. Only a few people were allowed to keep the horses.

A small group of Red soldiers was running after the Hungarian soldiers. On the western side of Zofia, near the grape fields, one unknown soldier was buried.

According to Georgy Malika, only 80 people were left in the village. The following families lived in Zofia after the war: Joseph Schin, Ivan Chychvar, Motes Hardunka, Joseph Visychuk, Mukhailo Kubl (Kyli), Ivan Bekkert (Vitus), Anton Bekkert (Nikolstoni), Mukhailo Hytiy, Lorenc Hardunka, Lorenc Jelinek, Ivan Kozauer, Joseph Kereshkeni, Anton Schin, Uriy Elinek, Anna Placer, Milon Schin, Ivan Kyshnir, Albert Lykach. Some of these families had left, and then came back home.

In November and December of 1944, people from other villages started to move to Zofia, mainly the poor from Zybivku, Zavudova, Handerovutsi, and

Stanovo. Others came from Pistrialova, Oleniova, and Ykivskogo in the Svalavsky District; and Kanora in the Volovetsky District. My mother, without my father who had gone to war, moved to Zofia in March, 1945 and lived in the back room of the house that belonged to Anton Lykach.

In July 1945, some families began to come back to the houses they had left. After they found that their houses were taken by people from other villages, they were forced to stay with relatives or friends. The families of Anton Lykach, Ivan Kyshnir, the wife and child of Albert Kyshnir, Agnes Hardunka, Joseph Lehner, Ivan Kozauer, and others came back to Zofia and lived there for awhile.

On the day of "Fashing" in 1946 (the day before Catholics begin Easter Lent) Soviet soldiers arrived and ordered all German families to be packed and ready to leave within one hour. That night German families were taken from Mukacheve to Tumen, behind the Ural Mountains in Russia. Some Germans came back to Zofia after 10 or 15 years, settled in Mukacheve for awhile, and later emigrated to Germany.

In the summer of 1946, an undercover KGB agent organized an anti-soviet group among the Germans. Later he gave all their names to the Soviet government. Everybody was arrested and sent to trial. Among the convicted were Joseph Kereshkeni, Ivan Chuchvar, Fedir Kubl, and Joseph Vischuk. After Stalin's death in 1953, they came back home from the labor camps.

Joseph Kereshkeni and Ivan Chuchvar are buried in Zofia. Joseph Visychuk and Fedir Kubl emigrated to Germany in the 1990s. The destiny of the rest of the Germany families (around 20 families in 1946) was very different. At present, there aren't any German families in Zofia. The last families, those of Uriy Elinek and Motes Hytiy, emigrated to Germany in 2001. There are a few children and grandchildren of German families that stayed in Zofia due to marriages with Ukrainians. Among them were Magdalena Kozauer Ilnicki, Maria Filip Shepental, Svitlana Filip Shribuk.

## THE MAIN OCCUPATIONS OF ZOFIA'S RESIDENTS

In the spring of 1945, the village committee, headed by Ivan Hyda who moved to Zofia from Pistrialovo, gave land to the new residents of Zofia, about 4 ga to each family (1 ga = 1000m x 1000m). Motes Hardunka, a permanent resident of Zofia, was the main person who divided the lands in the village. People who had moved in would receive the lands that had belonged to the people whose houses they had taken. The land was fertile, because the Germans had taken good care of it; they had fertilized and watered it. The new owners were poor and could not afford to buy fertilizers, and they did not have tools. They had to use cows to cultivate the soil. Their harvest decreased significantly. In 1947, the Soviet government sent a plowing machine from Mukacheve's MTS (Machine Transportation Station), but still, most of the time the lands were worked by hand.

In the spring of 1949, a collective farm was organized in Zofia. Almost all residents of the village voluntarily applied to be a part of the collective farm. Mykhailo Yacyr was selected to be the head of that farm. The main office was situated in one of

the rooms of the private house that had belonged to the Bekkert family (Nicklostoni). All of the inventories and farm animals were kept nearby the house that now belonged to Himuch. Its previous owner had been Mayer, a German. Zofia's collective farm was poor -- a few horses and cattle. People worked as many days as they wanted. They did not receive any monetary compensation. At the end of the year it was calculated how many days they worked in one year, and according to that they would receive different amounts of potatoes, corn, wheat, etc. People were allowed 0.2 ga for their personal use, so they would grow all the necessary fruits and vegetables for consumption. Due to this situation, many of Zofia's residents were trying to make money elsewhere, especially in Mukacheve. There was a wood coal mine open in the nearby village of Berezuna. and many people were trying to get jobs there.

In 1950, two collective farms *Taras Shevchenko* in Zofia and *Red Soldier* in Zybivka united into one farm called *Taras Shevchenko*. In 1953, the city halls of Zofia and Zybivka joined with the main office in Zybivka (called *Forogash* before 1945). From 1955 on, Dmitro Szugan, born in Stydene, Myszgirsky District, headed the office. During the next ten years the collective farm became economically stronger. It consisted of 300 sheep, 100 cows, and 10 pairs of horses to cultivate the land. Zofia had 3 pairs of horses.

In 1960, eight poor collective farms of Lalovo, Berezunka, Zofia, Zybivka, Novoselutsia, Yablynovo, Zalyz, and Zavudovo were reorganized into a "radgosp", a Soviet state farm property estate. The radgosp was called *Lalivskiy*. Its main office was first in Lalovo and then in Berezunka. Around that time, the Secretary of the Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, said, ". . .to turn Zakarpatska into a land of gardens and wineries". The government supplied the funds to plant more than 300 ga of gardens in a few years. All the lands to the west of Zofia (all the way to the Irshavsky highway) were planted with plum and apple trees. The village forest, called *Mokosh*, was destroyed.

In Lalivsky Radgosp there were five wineries/ grape gardens. Zofia belonged to the Zybivsky District, and in the village itself there was one team that took care of all wineries. For many years, Gafia Vupovska and Fedir Popovuch (still living) were the supervisors of the team. Fedir gave me a lot of information. A good part of land that belonged to Zofia was taken away; 100 ga of the Firoh Meadow was given to Radgosp Mykachevkuy, and some of the Simnioh meadow went to Zybivka and Lalovo.

The life in the radgosp went better. Workers began to receive wages in the range of 70 to 400 Russian rubles. Milking people, mechanics, and tractor/plow drivers and other drivers had the higher salaries. Most of the land was now cultivated by machines. The radgosp had many tractors, plows, mowers, other farming machines, and about 100 different cars. It had its own factory for the primary processing of grapes and fruits. This factory was in Berezunka, near the mines. More than 100 different specialists worked in the radgosp: agrarians, zoologists, economists, veterinarians, engineers, accountants, and many others. The land was worked the right way and was giving generous harvests. Zofia's team was sowing around 350 ga of wheat, 150 ga of corn, 50 ga of potatoes, 50 ga of beets, and other. The harvests were the following: 30-40 centners (1ct = 100 kg ) of wheat from 1 ga, 45-50 ct of corn from 1 ga, 100-120 ct of potatoes from 1 ga, 300-400 ct of beets from 1 ga, 100-120 ct of apples from 1 ga, 70-80 ct of plums from 1 ga, 50-60 ct of grapes from 1 ga.

The radgosp had over 2 to 3 million rubles in revenues, so it could fund the construction of many social buildings. However, there was almost nothing built in Zofia.

The residents of Zofia worked on the cattle farm in Lalova and Zybyvka. Nania Kozauer worked in the Lalivsky farm as the milkmaid. She was recognized as being an exceptional worker. She milked 25 cows with the help of a milking mechanism, and every cow gave about 2500 - 3000 liters of milk annually. Other residents of Zofia worked in the radgosp as tractor drivers, drivers, winemakers, milkmaids, and other. Zofia's team, headed by Gafia Vupovska, was one of the best in the radgosp. Gafia was honored with many medals, but she died very young. Fedir Popovich was also a good and intelligent team leader and earned a lot of respect from people.

Not all of the people of Zofia worked in the radgosp. Many worked in different businesses such as the Mykachivprulad plant, the Kirov factory, cargo companies, building companies, sewing factories, government organizations, and offices. Most of the population of Zofia did not work in the radgosp, but in Mukacheve.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the economy collapsed. People now say that they had a good life under communism, but they did not realize it back then. 1991 to 2003 became the years during which people fought for survival.

## EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND CHURCH LIFE

In 1945, a school was opened in Zofia which was for the first to the fourth grades. The first teachers of this school were Anton Shvardak and Katerina Nastun. (She did not have a higher education). There were very few school-aged children at that time: about 3 to 5 students in one class. For many years Martha Dovganuch (Tsubere), Gabriel Holish and his wife Marie also taught in the school. At present, the teachers are Hanna Onac and her daughter.

After finishing four grades in Zofia, the students continued to study in schools in Lalovo, Zalyzansk, Stanovo, or Mukacheve. In Mukacheve there were many schools: teacher's college, agrarian and commercial colleges, and community colleges. During the Soviet time, it was mandatory to graduate from high school. Hundreds of children from Zofia received higher and professional education from 1945 to 1991. In the 1950s, parents used to say to their children, "If you don't want to study, you will work on the collective farm". Among Germans who received higher education were: Ivan Bekkert (doctor), Joseph Kereshkeni and his sons Alexandr and Victor (economics and finance), Milon Schin (German studies), Hanna Placer (biology), Ivan Chychvar (history), Margarita Hytiy (Ukrainian studies), Mykhailo Kubl (music teacher). Many children from Zofia who received higher education worked as teachers, engineers, agrarians, and managers of large offices and governmental organizations. The author of this text worked in a raykom (district committee) of the Communist party as an assistant head of the district; he was also a school principal. Ivan Chychvar was the head of the District Office for Education and Culture and was also a school principal. Joseph Kereshkeni was the head of The Financial Bureau, and later the head of the Tax Revenue Bureau in Mukacheve. Mariana Payk was the senior district accountant for the Educational Department. Gafia Lah was a school principal.

It is important to mention that there was a working library combined with a cultural and recreational center in Zofia. At first they were housed in the Gasthirschaft, a Jewish building, but later the former Catholic Church was used. It was a tragedy to use the church building. When the number of Germans in the village decreased, the Ukrainians did not put pressure on the government to give the church building to the Orthodox community. That is why it was decided to use it for other purposes. The recreational center served as a concert hall, movie theater, dance floor, and also housed many cultural groups ( theater, vocal, poetry, art, and others). At the present time, the building is being used as an Orthodox church.

The village has many traditions. On October 14th, people celebrate Zofia's church holiday known as *Pokrov*. Traditional weddings last for two days -- Saturday and Sunday. Usually, not only the relatives of the bride and groom are invited, but also everyone in the village (about 200 to 300 people). To house that many people, the owners of the house, usually the bride or groom's parents, build a *shator*, a temporary large tent built from wood and tarpaulin. They decorate it with rugs, flowers and traditional banners. There is always a band playing; lately the music is disco. All of the food is prepared at home, usually one bull, pigs, and chickens are killed before the wedding. The guests always give money (25 to 50 rubles), chickens, eggs, sour cream, etc. All presents are brought before the wedding so the parents know how many people will be at the wedding. Just before the wedding the bride and groom go to everyone's house to personally invite them by bringing a written invitation.

Dance nights and parties were part of a good tradition in Zofia during the early Soviet years. During one of the parties, when the anniversary of the collective farm was being celebrated, there was a fire in the village. Seven buildings were destroyed by the fire, mainly the ones being used to keep cattle. The fire was in the lower left side of the village, and the cause was not found.

People were friendly and liked the Soviet government. Every week there was a dance night at the recreation center. All the residents of the village attended these dances because most of the people that moved to Zofia were young. The musicians played for no money, only for shots of vodka. The following played in the band: Mihal Kubl (violin), Ivan Onac (flute), Ivan Bekkert (accordian), his father Ivan Bekkert (drums). Sometimes, the dancing took place in the backyard of Andres Hardunka and Mihal Faust. There the young brothers Lorenc and Mihal Hardunka played accordion and saxophone.

After 1988 the church building was given to the Orthodox community for religious services. Every week there is a holy mass in the church, but only about 30 or 40 people attend it -- a very small number for a population of 500. A new place for dancing has not been found, so now it takes place only once a year, on October 14th under the open sky. The village library moved to the house of the librarian. Almost no one visits the library, because it does not get any new books.

The cultural level of Zofia's residents is declining. There are many unemployed; some are drunks, thieves, and hooligans. Not only do they rob the fields, but they also steal from their neighbors. For the past few years, many people died at a fairly young age in Zofia, mainly from alcohol abuse.

## CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BUILDINGS

During Soviet times, the government built no new buildings in Zofia. Only the village school was renovated substantially. Also, the house of Shimon Lehner, a former German resident, was used for a birth and gynecology center. Later it was turned into a day care center for small children. Now, it cares for 25 children.

There was much private construction in Zofia. Twenty-five old thatched-roof houses that had belonged to Germans were demolished. Among their owners had been Albert Lykach, Johanne Kyshnir, Joseph Winkler, Mihal Kubl, Shoni Pfiefer, Joseph Mayer, and Anton Bekkert. Completely new houses were built in their place by the German families. Only about 20 houses stayed the same as they were before 1944. Almost 50 new houses were built between 1944 and 1991. The main building materials were cement and bricks. Now, Zofia has 110 residential houses, and according to the census, 490 people live there.

In 1945, the first phone line was installed in Zofia in the the main village hall which was the house of Johann Slavek. Electricity was brought into Zofia in 1956-57. In 1970, the main roads were covered with asphalt. Gas pipes were installed in 1998.

In the 13 years since 1991, nothing new has been built in Zofia. Seven houses are empty (Plaster, Pfiefer, Schin, Hytiy, Fayst, Lykach, Shelelio, and Vupovska families). The value of each of those houses is about \$1,500, but people do not have that much money. Only older people live in some houses, mainly lonely women. The mortality rate is many times higher than the birth rate. Because of the lack of money, not everybody can afford to have a gas pipe connected to their house. Among the people who are making somewhat good money are my nephew Mykhailo Ilnicki, the son of my brother Mykhailo. He has his own stores. His mother Maria Kozauer is doing well too. One young resident of Berkalo also does well for himself by bringing appliances from Hungary and selling them in Mukacheve.

Last year, the renovation of my father-in-law's house (Johannes Vitus Bekkert) began. His wife sold that house in 1980. The current owner lives in Germany.

### NOTES:

(1) The following lists the marriages of the children of German families:

Ivan Chychvar married the Ukrainian village nurse Maria. They now live in Mukacheve

Perbi Hardunka married Motesa Hytiy, and later they emigrated to Germany.

Joseph Visychuk married a Ukrainian girl from Mukacheve; they emigrated to Germany

Mykhailo Kubl married Placer, a resident of Zofia. He worked as a school teacher in Mukacheve.

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Feri Kubl married a Hungarian from Mukacheve; they emigrated to Germany

Montsi Kubl married Ivan Hyda, a Ukrainian. After his death she emigrated to Germany. She died there in 2003.

Itsa Kubl married a German in Mukacheve.

Gisela Kubl married a Ukrainian in Mukacheve.

Hanes Filip married a Ukrainian from Mukacheve.

Joseph Bekkert (Niiklostoni) married Ulia, a Ukrainian. He is deceased.

Hanes Bekkert married a Ukrainian from Cherveniovo

Muhael Hytiy married a Ukrainian from Stanovo. He is deceased.

Margarita Hytiy, daughter of Muhael, married a Ukrainian from Zybyvka

Mykhailo Hardunka married Hanna, a Ukrainian from Romochevutsia.

Maria Kubl married Uriy Jelinek and emigrated to Germany in 2001.

Ivan Schin married a Ukrainian from Mukacheve and emigrated to Germany

Ivan Kyshnir married Maria, a Ukrainian from Almasha. (He died tragically.)

Joseph Kyshnir (brother of Ivan) married Tamara, a Russian. They live in Mukacheve.

Albert Lykach's daughter married my mother's cousin from Mukacheve. She emigrated to Germany

Anna and Erica Placer married Ukrainians. Erica emigrated to Germany

Milon Schin married a Ukrainian teacher. They lived first in Zofia, then in Mukacheve.

He later emigrated to Germany and died there in 2001.

The following are the marriages of the brothers and sisters of my wife, Magdalena Bekkert:

Ivan Beckert married Maria Kapystiy, a Ukrainian

Anna Beckert married Anton Schin. After she died, he emigrated to Germany and died in 2001.

Terezia Bekkert married Miroslav Chvasta from Svaljaba. They emigrated to Germany in 2004 with their children and grandchildren.

Wilhelm Bekkert married Gesli Jelinek. He lived in Mukacheve and died there.

I personally knew everyone on this list. I was present at the weddings of most of them.

Ivan Ilnicki

## SOFIENDORF, MY HOMELAND

BY KATHARINA JELINEK AND  
ANASTASIA GIESBRECHT

1986



**THE JELINEK FAMILY IN GERMANY (late 1940's)**  
Josef, Katharina, Children: Erika, Maria, Anastasia

Katharina Jelinek, the daughter of Anna and Anton Hardunka, was born in Sophiendorf in 1921. She married Joseph Jelinek, and the couple had three daughters also born in Sophiendorf: Anastasia (1940), Erika (1941), and Maria (1943). The family was forced to leave Sophiendorf in October, 1944 and eventually found a new home in Canada. A fourth daughter Christine was born in Canada in 1953.

In 1986, Katharina Jelinek recorded her memories of Sophiendorf. Her daughter Anastasia Jelinek Giesbrecht wrote *Sofiendorf, My Homeland* ("Sofiendorf" is also a correct spelling) from her mother's recordings. It was meant only for the extended Jelinek family, but Anastasia very generously gave us permission to include excerpts from her mother's memories in this collection. We thank her and her family most sincerely.

The following pages include the first three chapters of this family history. They give a wealth of information about life in Sophiendorf between the two world wars and go on to tell of the severe hardships endured by the young family after they lost their home and became "displaced persons" in 1944.

Madeline Stanley, 2005

## SOFIENDORF : HISTORY OF THE JELINEK AND HARDUNKA FAMILIES

Written by Anastasia Giesbrecht from  
tapes recorded by her mother,  
Katharina Hardunka Jelinek, 1986

My name is Anastasia Giesbrecht. I am the daughter of Josef and Katharina Jelinek. I would like to tell you the story of their life history as of today, the Christmas holidays of 1986. I would like to begin by telling you about the village where they lived. It was called Sofiendorf. Sofiendorf was founded in 1804 by Germans from Hessen-Damstadt, Bavaria, the Austrian Alpine Lands, Northern Bohemia and from language Islands in Slovakia and Galicia. The dialect which developed was therefore a mixture in which the Austrian and Bavarian influence predominated. The village was named in honor of Countess Sofie Schoenborn and was twelve kilometers north of Munkachevo. It consisted of one long stretched out street of eighty-six homes enveloped by large beautiful fruit orchards, and, with the exception of one Jewish family, was one hundred per cent German. The community had a brand new school and a very nice church in which Mass was said once a month. Due to the very fertile soil, all the farmers were quite prosperous. Sofiendorf was probably the richest German community in the Carpatho Ukraine.

I would like to describe how the village of Sofiendorf was laid out. The main street went from east to west. On each side of the street were houses placed on lots of land. From one end of the village to the other was about one kilometer. It was built on a slope so in the winter, but only when there was snow, the children enjoyed sliding down the street on their sleds. There was a Roman Catholic church in the center of the village. All the people of the village were Roman Catholic. The priest would come to Sofiendorf once a month to say Mass. The other Sundays, the people would attend Mass at the other villages, some of which would be only a half mile away or perhaps two to six miles away. To go to church in the neighboring villages the people always walked. They never did ride with the wagon and horses or oxen. Perhaps the animals needed a rest on Sunday, too.

The school was quite large as it consisted of two rooms. One side was the teacher's house. The other side was a large classroom where over sixty students got their education. One teacher taught all the children of the village. Most of the time the children would sit on benches with tables in front of them. Most students went to school until they finished grade eight. This is what my mother did, although my father, who was born ten years earlier, only went to school until he was twelve years old. The basic reading, writing and math were taught in German. But every student also learned Ukrainian, Hungarian and Czechoslovakian. Since there were Hungarian, Ukrainian and Czechoslovakian villages in the neighborhood, the learning of these languages was very important.

We will begin this story by talking about my great grandparents, Vitus Beckert and his wife, Anna Beckert. Vitus was born in 1867, and he died on August 15, 1932 at the age of 65 of a heart attack. He lived in Sofiendorf but worked in the surrounding villages and towns as a building contractor for schools and other large buildings. He was married at a very early age, at 17. His wife, Anna Weiss Beckert, was also very young when she was married. She was only 14. Between them, they raised nine children. She died on December 31, 1945 and was over 90 years old at her passing.

Anna Beckhert Hardunka was the second child of the family. She was born on February 20, 1886, and died on April 9, 1960 of cancer. In 1904 she married Anton Hardunka. They owned some farm land in Sofiendorf, but not enough to make a living, so in 1908, they emigrated to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. in order to save up some money to buy more land. They left their two-year old daughter Anna at home with her grandmother in Sofiendorf. Grandfather worked in the steel mills, while Grandmother worked in the cigarette factory. After the second daughter Margaret was born in 1910, Anna worked from her home as a laundress and seamstress. They both worked hard and saved their money.

In the spring of 1912, Grandfather's father died and he had to go home to settle the estate and hopefully he was planning to bring back his two youngest brothers to America. His wife remained in Pennsylvania but had to return to Sofiendorf in the fall, bringing back her daughter Margaret. The reason Grandfather could not return to Pennsylvania was that Europe was on the brink of the First World War.

The estate was settled and he bought more land and built a house on it and remained in Sofiendorf until 1944. During this time, they had more children, Tony, who was born after Margaret, died of typhoid fever in infancy, John, and Katharina.

On June 1, 1931, at 7:30 a.m., lightning struck my mother's house. My older brother John, who was eleven years old at the time, was sitting beside an iron safe. The lightning came through the side of the house, through the iron safe, and hit him. It then went through the house, through the living room, and came out the window. The room was completely demolished, with plaster coming down from the walls and the ceiling. John was badly burned and became unconscious. There were no doctors or nurses in that village and no one knew exactly what to do. The family and neighbors gathered around rubbing his arms and his body. Nothing helped until someone suggested that they dig a hole and place his body into the soil. This was done. He was placed into the earth and covered with soil, except for his face and his arms. The soil was to draw out the electricity from his body. After about two and a half hours he became conscious. The soil did a good job of drawing electricity from his body, except for his arms which hurt him most of his life. Since his arms were so painful, he was not able to work as a farmer or do a lot of physical work.

John became a very well educated man. He studied and acquired approximately eight more years of education than the average person in Sofiendorf. During his studies at one time he decided that he was going to become a Greek Catholic priest. He studied for six months at this and found that the rules were much too hard for him. Then he decided that he wanted to study and become a captain of the railroads. He got a job working as a captain for the railroads in Debrecen, Hungary, in 1943. At that time he met Etta and they got married in 1943 and lived in Debrecen, Hungary. This city was about six hundred kilometers from Sofiendorf, therefore, his parents and sisters very rarely saw him after he had finished his studies. His mother and father went to the wedding, but no one else. He had two children, Anna and Eva.

The youngest of the children, Katherine, was married on February 7, 1939, to Josef Jelinek. She was seventeen and he was twenty-seven years old. Three girls were born in Sofiendorf, which was governed at that time by Hungary.

## THE STORY OF THE JELINEK FAMILY

Anastasia tells the story from my viewpoint. We will go back in history to my great-grandfather's time. His name was Anton Jelinek. We do not know when he was born, but he spent all of his life in Sofiendorf as a farmer. He died in 1928, when he was in his 70's. He had two wives. He married a widow with a son. She also gave him another son whose name was Anton who was my grandfather. His first wife died and he married again. The second wife produced three other children.

Now I would like to tell you more about my grandfather, Anton Jelinek. He was born in 1875, and was raised with four other step-brothers and sisters in Sofiendorf. He got married approximately in 1901 to Anna Wisuchek. He was twenty-six years old and she was eighteen at the time. They lived and farmed in Sofiendorf and raised five surviving sons, John, Albert, Tony, Josef, and Lorenz. John and Albert emigrated to Canada in 1926 because there was not enough land to share in order for five brothers and their families to make a living. They were looking for a new way of life, a new beginning for themselves. First they worked in Saskatchewan as farmhands. Then they came to the Peace River country, particularly near Valleyview. In the early 1930's they each took up a homestead near Valleyview and started clearing the land and started making a living for themselves.

Tony, Lorenz, and Josef remained in Sofiendorf and made their living as farmers. Tony married Anna Lechner and had two children. Lorenz married Anna Beckert and had two children. Josef, my father, married Katharina Hardunka, my mother on February 7, 1939.

People in Sofiendorf made a living mainly through farming. These are the crops that my father grew on his thirty acres of land. He planted wheat and rye in October, barley and oats were planted in spring. He also grew six acres of potatoes, and six acres of corn. Both the people and the animals ate the potatoes and the corn. About two acres were planted into yellow beets which were shredded up and fed to the cattle throughout the winter. About three acres were planted into sunflowers which produced the oil for the family's use for their cooking all winter long. Navy beans and big orange pumpkins were also grown. The navy beans were for the people, but the pumpkins were fed to the pigs and the cattle

My father also had a large fruit orchard. In this orchard he grew cherries, plums, apples, pears, grapes, walnuts, and strawberries. This fruit was used by the family for their own consumption. Whatever was left over was taken to the farmer's market and sold there. My father made a lot of wine from the grapes, sometimes as much as five hundred gallons. Plums were used to make whiskey, but it was made at a brewery.

Here is a daily menu of what the people would eat. For breakfast, potato or ribele soup was served. Ribele soup was made with tiny dumplings of wheat or corn meal cooked in a milk and water base. The potato soup often had chunks of bacon in it. This was served with heavy homemade rye bread. On Sundays, breakfast consisted of scrambled eggs, bread and coffee. During the rest of the week, chicory coffee substitute was used, because coffee was scarce and expensive. During seeding and harvesting, midday meals were served in the field. The mother or grandmother would go home from the field, feed the animals and prepare a hot meal for the family. This consisted of a lot of pasta, potato and cornmeal pancakes, or dumplings with spring water to wash it all down. Supper was usually eaten at home, in the house. In spring

and summer, fried bacon with potatoes, onions and eggs were served. Sour milk, or yogurt was also a favorite food. After the field work was done in fall, a lamb might be butchered. A pig was well fattened on corn, potatoes and bran and was butchered before Christmas. This pork was cured and smoked so well that it kept without refrigeration or canning, until it was completely eaten. It was kept in big wicker baskets under a straw roof. Garlic sausage, rice sausage, and fest wurst were also made. In summer, meat was eaten only on Sundays. Usually a young chicken was butchered and made into soup or paprikash. Also in early winter, about twenty families would get together, buy a beef and butcher it and divide up the meat. This would be eaten within two weeks.

Here is a description of how some of the clothing was made. During and between the First and Second World Wars, cloth was very hard to come by. Therefore, many of the farmers made their own cloth. They would make linen from the hemp plant, which is another name for marihuana. About an acre of hemp was seeded in the spring. This plant grew to be about five feet tall. It had both male and female plants. After the female plants were pollinated, the male plants were cut down and tied into bundles and stood up as stooks to dry. After the female plants produced their seed, they were also cut down and tied into bundles and stood up to dry. During the time the seed was produced, the small boys of the family had to make sure that the birds did not eat the seed. It was Dad's job to make sure that the birds did not get any seed. He would walk through these tall plants and become very sleepy as the odor was very powerful. But he always woke up and chased the birds again.

After the stooks had been well dried, they were placed in a pond or a ditch filled with water. The plant material was covered with boards so that it was completely submerged for at least a month. Then it was taken out of the water and laid out to dry. After the material had been well dried, it was further processed. Each bundle of hemp was placed on a machine called a *prechl*, which would break up the fibres. The wood would fall out and the fine fibres would remain. After this, the wad of fibres would be about one foot wide and about four feet long. Then it was put through a wire comb, or *hachl*, where it was combed and all the rough materials would be taken out of it. After it had been combed several times it became quite fine and was ready for spinning. This fibre was then spun into thread by the women of the family. Not everyone in the village had a weaving machine like Dad's brother John. John used to do the weaving for his family and also for his neighbors. He would spend up to three weeks in the winter producing linen cloth. For those people who did not have a weaver in the family, women from a neighboring village would come and pick up the linen thread and would weave it into cloth. This cloth was made quite pretty as different colors were woven into it. There were different patterns for tablecloths and for towels. This cloth was about a yard wide and many yards long. It was quite gray looking. If the women preferred a whiter cloth, then the bleaching process had to be done. This was usually done in spring. The cloth was made wet and put out into the sun to dry. The sun would draw out some of the gray color. This process would be repeated until the desired whiteness was achieved. This linen cloth made from the hemp was used to make tablecloths, bed sheets, towels, underwear and dresses.

Sweaters, socks and mittens were made from wool and were completely home-made. The sheep were sheared. The wool was carded and spun and made into thread which the women knitted into clothing. I remember having a snowsuit which was made from natural wool and hemp. My mother had dyed it red. It was quite scratchy.

The weather was so warm in summer that people did not wear shoes from spring to fall. They would go barefoot. They would wear shoes only on Sundays or when going to town. Each person did own a pair of leather shoes for those occasions. In the winter they would wear wooden shoes very similar to the ones worn in Holland. With a pair of woolen socks and wooden shoes a person could be outside all day in the winter because it was not that cold. Some of the young men also owned a pair of leather boots made like riding boots. These were made quite attractively and were worn only in winter.

The lot where my father's house was built was twenty four meters wide and about four hundred meters long. On each side were neighbors. On one side lived my mother's grandparents. On the other side lived her sister Margaret and her family. The barnyard had the following buildings: a large woodshed, a pig barn with a chicken coop on top, and a cattle barn. It also had a large hay shed. This was an enclosed building where all the hay for the cattle was kept. There were several fruit trees in this back yard as well. A big mulberry bush was on one corner of the lot. Apple, plum and pear trees also grew there. Beside the fence was a large grape vine. Beside this grape vine was my sand box where my sister and I used to play in the shade. The bees liked to come to this grape vine as well, and once in a while, we'd get stung. Behind the hayshed was a large fruit orchard. The fruits grown here were apples, pears, plums, prune plums, cherries and walnuts. In front of the house was a flower garden, also cherry, walnut and acacia trees. In the spring, when all these flowering trees were in bloom, it produced the most marvellous scents. It was a real pleasure to see and smell all these beautiful trees.

My father's house in Sofiendorf was about forty feet square and was built of mud bricks and red bricks. The mud bricks were contracted out and were made of mud and straw. They were about nine inches long, four inches wide and four inches high. The walls of the house were about fourteen inches thick. The roof was covered with red tiles. The house was built very strong and was made to last for at least two generations of family living. It also had a wall in the middle made of brick to give it more strength. The ceiling was supported by oak beams. It was built to hold up the grains and fruits and foods which were stored in the loft. Under half the house was a root cellar. In this cellar was kept wine, potatoes, and other root vegetables. The house had four rooms. Two of the rooms had wooden floors and the other two rooms had dirt floors. In the summer the whole house was used but in the winter only one room was heated where the family would sleep and cook their meals. It was not really very cold even in the winter and a person could sleep in the other rooms if they used a feather blanket. There was no electricity, nor running water. There were no electrical appliances to make life easier for the family. The water was carried with buckets from the well in the center of the village. This was a good meeting place for the villagers.

Now I would like to tell you how the outside of the house was finished. The brick walls were covered with a fine mud plaster. After this was dried, another plaster made of sand, cement, lime and water was smeared on. This plaster was dried and sanded until it became quite fine and smooth. Then it was painted. My father's house was painted a light yellow. It had a fresco effect design on it. Along with the red tile roof, this must have been very attractive.

In one corner of the summer kitchen there was a big brick baking oven. The stove was on top where the food was cooked. This baking oven was heated every second

week, and at least six to eight large round rye loaves were baked. First the oven was well heated by burning many big logs of wood. After a thick bed of coals was produced, a pail of water was sprinkled over the coals and with a rye whisk broom, the ashes were swept out of the oven. The brick oven was well heated by now. Each loaf of round bread was placed onto the floor of the oven with a flat shovel. The bread stayed in the oven for at least two hours before it was taken out. After the bread was baked, the oven was still very hot. Sliced apples and pears were placed on the floor of the oven and were left in there to dry. When the mother thought that most of the fruit slices were dry, one of the small children had to crawl into the oven to pick out the dried fruit. My mother had this job quite often. She says it was a very hot, dusty job as there were still quite a bit of ashes in the oven and she would come out very hot and sweaty.

The one Jewish family in the village owned a small grocery and liquor store which was similar to a Red Rooster store. But since the farmers produced most of their own food, very little was bought at this store. This store sold rice, sugar, salt, fresh yeast for making white bread, candies, cigarettes, tobacco, and kerosene for the lamps. Sometimes people would stop in for a glass of beer or a bottle of whiskey. Most other foods that the family needed were bought in Munkach.

Most farmers would grow wheat and rye to grind into flour for their families and to sell. Each family took their grain to a flour mill where it was ground and then brought the flour back again. The sunflower seeds were also taken to the mill where they were roasted and pressed and the oil was extracted from them. This oil was used for cooking all year round.

Now I would like to tell you a little bit about the Jelinek family. In this house lived a family of seven: Grandma and Grandpa Hardunka, my parents Josef and Katharina Jelinek, and the three of us children, three girls. The first daughter Anastasia was born on January 22, 1940. Erika was born on August 5, 1941, and Maria was born on September 7, 1943. When I was four days old I became very ill with a disease we now think was polio. I had a very high fever and was very sick for over a week. I think it was this illness which made my right arm and my right leg weak.

In the farming process all soil was turned with a plow or harrows, using either horses or oxen to pull the plow. Most of the work had to be done by hand with hoes, therefore, the whole family was needed out in the field. The young children were taken along in the field as well and were placed under the wagon to play in the shade. The babies were placed in a hammock where they could sleep. Erika learned to walk by pulling herself up on a large sunflower stock and walking round and round it. I can still remember the song my father taught me, "Hannes Veter, Hannes Veter" which is "Are you sleeping, brother John", when we were riding in the wagon from the fields to the house. When the field work was not so pressing, Grandmother would stay home and take care of us girls. She was also kept quite busy with the livestock and cooking and sewing. My mother would spend most of the time out in the field hoeing the vegetables and grains. Some fields were about three kilometers away and this was too much for us small girls to walk or to be carried. Therefore, Grandmother would take care of us at home.

My parents' farm consisted of twenty strips of land, some of which were close to home and some as far away as three kilometers. Some strips of land were very small and others were several acres. On this land the following crops were grown: grains, hay, vegetables, and vineyards. They also had a share in the community pasture

where the cattle and sheep and horses could be taken and were herded by a herdsman. The villagers also owned a communal oak forest. When it was needed, some of these trees were cut down and sold, and the money was used to buy, perhaps, a bell for the church, a church organ or the building or improvement of a community hall.

Throughout the year my father would own and feed a number of farm animals. Usually he had horses to pull his plow. If he did not have horses he may have owned two oxen or sometimes four oxen. Also two milk cows which were milked, two calves, four pigs, two of which were butchered, and two were sold. Fifty chickens or so were raised for eggs, for meat and for selling. Also about twenty geese were plucked twice a year and the feathers were well used for making pillows and feather bed ticks. Ten ducks were also raised for meat. About two sheep were raised for meat and for their wool. My father was very good at haggling and he would take various animals to the farmer's markets where he could get very good prices for his animals.

## CUSTOMS AND FESTIVALS OF SOFIENDORF

Sofiendorf was a German village of about a hundred homes. Most of the people made their living as farmers, and all of them were Roman Catholic, and therefore, they had a lot in common and were a tight knit community. Many of the customs and festivals that they observed had been brought with them from their Bavarian homeland.

People seemed to have more time then than in our modern society. Although in summer people were very busy in the fields, in winter there was much more time for socializing. It was customary for all the young people of the village to get together on a Sunday night at a particular girl's house for dancing and singing until 11:00 p.m. Accordians provided the music. The next Sunday night they were invited to another girl's house. This way the young people got to know each other. Except for the season of Lent, which was a forty-day period before Easter, this custom continued throughout the winter season.

To break the monotony of the winter, the villagers had a week-long get together. They would choose a week in winter where they would visit each other after the chores were done in the morning, and again in the evenings after the animals were fed. The boys and men would play cards and drink, and the girls would knit, crochet, or do other handiworks. The mothers and grandmothers would bring along their goose and duck feathers and would spend the afternoons and evenings snipping away at the hard parts of the feathers (feder schleisseln). This way only the fluff or down remained. This down was used to make the wonderful, warm feather ticks, and the big, fluffy feather pillows which were so comfortable in the beds.

Butchering a pig in the late fall also became a time for celebration. In our house with my grandparents and parents living together, the job was made easier and faster with many hands helping. In the evening, the relatives and friends were invited to celebrate the swine dance. A big meal was prepared with fresh roasted pork, blood sausage, boiled liver and pickles, cabbage rolls and bratwurst. Nothing on that pig was wasted, from the ears and snout to the intestines. Drinking and singing and partying until after midnight was customary.

On the Sunday afternoon and evening before Ash Wednesday, the whole community got together in the community hall for dancing, eating and drinking. A brass band was hired to provide the music. During the Lenten season, no dancing was allowed.

A great annual church holiday was Kirchweifest (Kirbei), which was a celebration of the blessing of the village church. The patron saint for the Sofiendorf Roman Catholic Church was Saint Augustus. His feast day and the celebration of Kirbei in Sofiendorf occurred on August 20 every year. Each surrounding village had chosen a different month to celebrate Kirbei.

This was perhaps the greatest festival of the year. Friends and relatives from the surrounding villages were invited. Each village tried to outdo the other in the preparation of the feast. Like a wedding, only the very choicest pork was roasted, roast and baked chicken, and paprikash filled cabbage rolls, the best of vegetables and white breads were prepared. There were many choices of desserts, and chocolates and real roast coffee in the end. In other words, the best that everyone could afford, this they brought to the feast.

The men would usually build several leafy huts in the village square where the people would gather for the festivities. Several bands were hired to provide music for dancing and singing all day and into the wee hours of the morning. With relatives and friends coming from the surrounding villages, there may have been over six hundred people there. The host village would provide the excellent foods, wines, whiskeys and brandies, and the entertainment. The nearby invited guests walked, but the ones from several kilometers away came with their horses and wagons.

Quite often two or three young men would put their money together to hire a carriage and driver, someone with very nice looking horses, to impress their girlfriends or fiancées and to escort them in style to the party and then back home again to their villages. Each village had its own Kirbei every month. This was a great time for the young people of all the villages to get together and get to know each other. For every Kirbei in each village, the girls needed to have a brand new dress and shoes.

Since the girls got married before they were twenty (my mother was seventeen), husbands probably were not hard to find. But many times the match between a young couple was more economic than emotional. The parents of the bride and groom had to provide each of them with enough land so that they could make a living for themselves. So, if a young man fell in love with a girl whose family had very little land to share, his parents would strongly discourage him. He had to look for someone whose parents had more property.

Weddings were also great celebrations in the villages. The groom's two best men had the pleasant duty of inviting everyone in the village, and relatives and friends from surrounding villages, by going from house to house, and giving them a personal invitation. Every guest had to bring along his own plate and cutlery. After the meal, the dishes were gathered into a big basket and set aside to be washed the next day.

The bride's family spent the week before the wedding preparing for the wedding feast. A pig and chickens, ducks, and geese were butchered, and much baking was done.

On the wedding day morning the two best men and the bridesmaids, dressed in their wedding attire, and along with a brass marching band, arrived at the homes of the baptism sponsor and confirmation sponsor and accompanied them to the home of the bride for breakfast. The wedding breakfast consisted of rice sausage and white bread and real coffee. Each sponsor brought along her wedding gift, which was customarily a huge, soft feather pillow, with covers of the finest material, and decorated with flowers. After the breakfast, the sponsors helped the bride get dressed.

Just before the wedding service in the church, the wedding party and guests, dressed in their finest clothes, walked ceremoniously to the church, accompanied by the brass band. After the wedding service all the guests walked back again to the home of the bride, and the party began. Just like at Kirbei, only the best foods and drinks were served. The bands played for hours, and dancing, singing, and socializing were the order of the day until after midnight.

The next day the relatives of the bride and groom got together again for a big meal. If the groom was from another village then he took his bride back to that village with horses and wagon and all their gifts and her clothes. The best men and bridesmaids accompanied the newlyweds. Another big meal was held at that village. And so the wedding ended.

## WORLD WAR II

These are my family's experiences during World War II, as related by my mother, Katharina Jelinek. Her narrative is in German, therefore I shall have to translate and perhaps lose something or add something in the translation.

The name of our homeland, our village, was Sofiendorf. By 1940, we had been ruled by the Czechoslovakian government for twenty years, since the end of the First World War. Then the Hungarian government took over. This was a setback for all the people of that region. The money lost its value and was traded on a one to seven basis. We had to trade seven Krohne for one Pengo. What was affordable one day was beyond buying the next. There was always less and less to buy in the stores. A man's shirt cost 120 Pengo, and a pair of shoes about the same. The Hungarian government removed most of the goods to Hungary. Farm goods sold very cheaply and most of the foods went to the armies of Hungary and Germany.

By 1942, one could already hear the sound of the shooting of the cannons all the way from Poland. It sounded like a great thunderstorm. Later on we could no longer hear them because Germany occupied Poland and the front of the war moved on toward Russia.

The German army was very powerful. Perhaps through alliance or through coercion, the men of the lands of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and our home, Carpatho Ukraine, were all conscripted into the German armies to fight against Russia.

By 1943, the war front had already reached mid Russia. At that time Russia asked for help from the United States. Germany had already occupied Italy and had almost destroyed Great Britain with its air weapons. Its missiles were so powerful that they could be sent across the English Channel and blow up the cities of England.

In the meantime, the U.S., Canada, England, and Russia joined forces to bring the great German army to its knees. The German army had already reached Moscow, and were there surrounded by their enemies. I imagine, the cold winter, lack of warm clothing and lack of food also contributed greatly to the downfall of the army. Those not killed in the actual fighting were taken as Russian prisoners of war. Some did escape and straggled back to their homelands.

By the summer of 1944, masses of soldiers of German and other nationalities were greatly defeated by Russia, America and England. Those who managed to escape capture returned back to western Europe. During the summer of 1944, these homeless, hungry and foot-weary young men straggled into our village and the villagers were forced to provide them with food and shelter as they passed through. There were soldiers staying at every house and sleeping in the hay sheds. The government horses were kept in the barns while our livestock had to be outside. There was no choice because it was war. Many of the soldiers had just a shirt and pants, not even shoes. Some stayed for two weeks, and then others took their place. This continued until October. We still had to do the field work, but the planes flew so low and even shot at the farmers in the fields. In the evenings they would shoot "Molotov Cocktails" in the air. They hung like electric lamps in the air. The planes flew overhead constantly moving the military and partisans from one part of the country to the other.

One day we were making lekwar (a thick plum jam) outside in a huge copper kettle. This took all day and until midnight until the jam was thick enough. The planes came flying overhead again so we had to put out the fire quickly and run and hide in the cellar to protect ourselves from the bombing. Munkatch, only 12 km. away, was being bombed. The Russians were always coming closer. The people of the villages did not know what to do with themselves. They lived in constant mortal fear. Most of the men were in the armies, and only women, children and old men were left in the villages.

My father was with us, and just by sheer luck, my husband Josef was given a few days furlough. When he came home, father and he butchered a big pig. Mother and I cut all the meat into small pieces and cooked it all up. The bacon meat was fried and the lard poured over the meat. This was prepared and placed in a large pot to take with us in case we had to leave our home. Josef also made a big batch of whisky from plums.

On the last day at home, October 18, 1944, we spent the evening shelling corn, taking it upstairs and storing it. The potatoes and other root vegetables were already in the root cellar for the winter. Only the grapes had not been harvested yet and remained that way. Father and Josef even planted the fall wheat and rye for next spring. We had planned on leaving our homes only until the war front was passed, and then we would return. But that did not happen.

On October 19, 1944, the village mayor and a German officer gathered all the people of the village together by ringing the church bell and informed us that this was the day to leave as the village of Sofiendorf would be burned to the ground. Josef had prepared the wagon. He had made a roof over it from straw, and we packed it with what we thought were the essentials to last for two weeks. A trailer was attached to the wagon to carry the feed for the horses, two oxen, and a cow and a calf.

My parents had decided to remain behind. My sister Margaret's husband was in the war, so father and Josef also helped her and her five children to prepare to leave. Josef took the tin roof off a shed to make her a covered wagon.

When the time came to leave, I went to say good-bye to my grandmother. She was crying. She told me, "You're going to bury your little baby Maria while you are away." Maria was a year old and was very ill with diarrhea. She told me she was not planning to leave but would go to Munkatch to stay with her sister Linnie until the front had passed. And that, as far as I know, is what she did.

When I came back from my grandmother's house, I found my mother standing in the yard and crying. And she said, "You want to leave me here by myself? What will I do?" So Josef told her to come along with us. She grabbed a few things and packed them on the wagon. And so we left our homeland, house and yard behind.

It was the nineteenth of October, 1944 at four o'clock in the afternoon. The weather was cloudy with a slight rain falling, but this did not deter us. The German militia had given orders for all the people to leave as the village of Sofiendorf would be burned to the ground. As we started driving down the street, people from the other houses left at about the same time. It was very sad. Josef stopped our wagon at his mother's house to inquire whether they were ready to leave. Then he also helped his mother and sister-in-law and children to finish packing their wagon.

When we left our house, we gave our key to a neighboring Ukrainian lady and asked her to watch over our house while we were gone. While Josef was helping his mother, I remembered that I had forgotten my coat, and I returned to my home half a kilometer away with baby Maria in my arms. It had been raining quite steadily and I was already wet. By the time I came back to my house, my coat had already disappeared. Obviously, my good neighbor had taken care of my coat.

Now I had to catch up to the rest of my family who were on their way to Munkatch. Slowly and alone, with Maria on my arm, I walked down the muddy street in the gathering darkness. About three kilometers later I finally caught up to them. By then it was pitch dark, and we and everything we had was soaking wet. By then I was so tired that I went to sit in the wagon with the children. I discovered that the bread that had come out of the oven and had been placed into sacks only moments before we left, and had not been properly cooled, was completely squashed because the children were sitting on it.

Josef was leading the oxen, and my mother walked beside the wagon. There was no room for her to sit in the wagon. I managed to stand on the wagon tongue and leaned against the wagon with Maria in my arms. On the road to Munkatch, twelve kilometers way from Sofiendorf, we were actually in a small war front as there was shooting and gunfire all around us. Soldiers and partisans were hiding in the woods and were shooting at each other.

When we finally arrived in Munkatch, the German army told us where to park our wagon near the train station. We were told to unpack our wagon into a cattle car. The oxen, cow, and calf, and the feed for them we had to leave at the train station. The train started to move and all night we and many others rode in that cattle car and by morning we found ourselves back in Munkatch again. The train had to return because of bombed out railroad tracks. That morning I went to milk the cow for milk for my

children when I found, to my dismay, that our cattle had disappeared. The German army had already taken them away.

In the meantime, my father and my sister Margaret with her five children arrived. They were also packed into the same cattle car with us. There were four families in our cattle car with all their trunks and baggage. The only place to sleep was on the car's floor and side by side. For baby Maria, we made a hammock with a bedsheet and a rope. That is where she slept.

The worst of it was there was nothing to eat for the children and the adults, except bread. By the second day we were given black coffee and komis bread so then the children had at least something warm in their stomachs. We were on that train for eleven days. At one place, where the train stopped, Josef was able to buy a small tin heater to use for cooking. But we had no wood. Every time the train stopped we would quickly jump down and look around for some wood so that we could cook some wheatlets pudding for the children. The bread that we had baked on the very last day had become squashed and had moulded, so we had to throw that away. It was of no use to us. We did receive food once a day and we had brought the meat with us so we were not starving.

On the first of November, 1944, we arrived at Leopshitz, Poland. We had driven through several cities and towns before that, one that I remember was Krakov. That is where we were able to wash the children's clothes. But there was no time to dry them so I spread out the wet clothes on our baggage.

In Leopshitz we were placed in a large hall with one hundred-twenty other people. The hall was on the second floor. The first floor was an inn with rooms and a restaurant. Again we were given food which arrived at noon and at the same time we also received bread and cheese for our evening meal. There was also a large stove on which we could cook. Everyone slept on the floor on straw sacks for one month. These straw mattresses had been used by the army and were definitely not clean. We soon found our nights greatly disturbed by lice and fleas. The straw sacks were then removed and were replaced by bunk beds, but the damage had already been done. The people were covered with lice and fleas. This was reported to the hall coordinator so all the people had to go to a delousing room about two kilometers from our hall. The children were done the first day, then the women, then the men. First we had to undress and our clothes were deloused. We each received a bar of soap, and I found myself with thirty to forty other women in a large shower room trying to wash away the lice and fleas. Many people became very sick after leaving the hot showers with wet hair and going immediately into the cold weather outside and walking home for two kilometers. This was in December.

I also became very ill after that freezing walk back to the hall. I developed sores all over my face and both hands. We celebrated our first Christmas away from Sofiendorf in that hall along with all the other people.

After Christmas the refugees in this hall were divided up to live with a number of farmers outside the city, although some did remain in the city. So finally we were separated from the people of our village. My mother came with us and my father was with Margaret. The farmer picked us up in an open sleigh and horses and drove us to a farm near Schnellewalde in January, 1945. We were given a small one-room house. There was no fire and no wood to burn and it was very cold. The neighbor lady

noticed that we had three small children and invited us to her home to warm up. She also gave us hot soup to eat. She told us that Josef should ask the farmer for some wood or coal to heat the house we were to stay at. She invited us to stay until the house became warm.

The old house had not been used for years and years and there was only an old wood stove in it. It did not burn well, produced a lot of smoke right in the room, and took a long time to warm up the house. But at last we were settled in with all our baggage. The next morning my whole face felt as if it had been frozen and it was full of blisters. It was called Gesichtsrose (Face Roses). I could hardly open my eyes my face was so swollen. Josef went to the closest hospital and spoke to a nursing sister, a nun. She gave him a black salve to put on my face and hands, and in a few days the blisters were healed.

The war front came closer and closer. The German army was always in retreat and bombed and destroyed the bridges and railroad tracks as they retreated. All one night we heard the noise of the bombing. It sounded so close I can still remember Josef sneaking around in the small room and peeking out of the frost encrusted windows. It sounded as if the soldiers were ready to break into our little house.

The very next morning Josef and some of the other men went to see the mayor of Schnellewalde and pleaded with him to arrange a train for us so that we would not be killed by the bombing. So two days later, on January 15, 1945, we loaded all our worldly goods into the farmer's sleigh, and he drove us to the train station. There again we met many people from our village and from our area. The train was a passenger train, but most of the windows had been broken and were covered with cardboard, and it was bitter cold.

We managed to buy an old baby carriage. This was lined and filled with a feather tick for a bed for Maria and Erika. Stasi had to sleep on the bench. The next morning her face was swollen and frozen. We spent three nights and two days in that bitter cold train. When the train stopped we were provided with hot soup by some German organizations. By the third day we arrived in Austria. We were again placed in a camp. There were eight families all sleeping together side by side on laid-out boards covered with straw sacks. We were there for approximately three months. Again the fleas and bedbugs disturbed our nights. There were no opportunities to bathe, therefore the entire group soon became covered with scabies.

My sister Margaret had five children. The youngest child, Cecilia, was the same age as our daughter Maria. She developed measles as well as pneumonia. There was no help for her. She died at the age of two.

In the meantime, the associations tried to find homes for us. We were given a room in an Austrian family's home. There was room for only five people and my parents were with us. Josef found a job as a roofer, repairing roofs on old buildings. Eventually we got rid of the scabies. We took a cup of lard to a pharmacy. The pharmacist mixed into the fat some salves. We spread this mixture on ourselves for three or four nights and then washed it off. All the clothes had to be washed with strong soap and thus the scabies disappeared.

At that time, all three little girls became ill with measles. Erika was very ill and almost died. I carried her to the doctor's house at seven o'clock in the morning. As I

got to the doctor's house, she became unconscious. We were taken immediately into an inner room where the doctor gave her some medicine. This revived her and gradually she improved over the weeks. Maria was also very ill. Stasi also had the measles but was not too sick. Gradually, thanks to God, they all recovered their health.

It was the summer of 1945, and I had heard that we could pick some raspberries in the nearby woods. I discussed it with my mother and the children. Stasi, who was five at the time, wanted to go too. Early the next morning I left the three sleeping children in my mother's care and took a container to pick raspberries. But Stasi knew where I had gone and slipped away from the house without my mother's knowledge and wanted to join me in the woods. She took the wrong road and wandered off in a completely different direction. She continued to walk until she came to a farmyard where she asked for directions to Reichenberg instead of Obersberg. So she continued walking in the wrong direction for several miles.

I finally came home with my raspberries to find my two remaining girls and my mother driven to distraction. I went searching around the neighborhood and went running back to the raspberry bushes asking everyone I met whether they had seen my little girl. I could not find her in the woods. I walked home, crying all the way.

When I got home, there she was. My sister-in-law, Tony's wife Anna, had walked to a nearby town about ten kilometers away to go shopping. On her way home she found Stasi sitting in a ditch by the side of the road, crying her eyes out. She was completely exhausted. So she took her hand and led her back home.

We lived in Austria at that farmer's place until the fall of 1945. Life at this time was very hard. Food was very scarce and people died like flies from starvation. The war was already over. On May 5, 1945, American soldiers arrived in Austria, made the German soldiers prisoners of war and took over Austria. The people were very glad that the Americans had taken over and not the Russians.

In the fall of 1945, Josef's boss was transferred to Bavaria, Germany. We were offered his residence. Josef and I and the the girls moved in, while my parents remained at the same residence. Now we both had a little more room. There we lived for about fourteen months.

In the fall of 1946, we were transported to Wurttemberg, Germany, to the city of Esslingen, by the river Neckar. For four months, along with everyone else, we lived in barracks that had been previously been occupied by the military. Then people were divided up according to their skills and trades. Some left the city and went to live with farmers. Others remained in the city and were given jobs according to their skills, trades and education. Josef had reported himself as a roofer so we remained in the city and he was given a job as a carpenter's helper. We lived in Esslingen am Neckar, Fabrikstrasse 48 for four years. We and sixty other families lived on the second floor of a metal factory. Each family occupied one room with bunk beds, stove, table and everything we owned. The toilets were way down the hall on the other side of this large building. There may have been two water faucets where a person could get water in a pail to carry to your room, and then it had to be carried out again. Clothes were washed by hand and hung on a clothes line which stretched from one wall of that small room to the other.

Again we were disturbed by bedbugs and fleas. People from the health unit came over to spray the walls and floors with chemicals.

Food was still difficult to get and there were many long lineups at the grocery stores. I remember buying potatoes one time and cooking them. Instead of turning soft, they turned black. They had obviously been frozen. After waiting for a long time in a lineup, I managed to get a piece of meat which I thought was beef. I was already anticipating the wonderful soup and stew I would make. I simmered that meat all day and by supper time it was still so hard that we could not eat it. We debated whether it had come from an old mule or horse.

By 1947, the food situation in Germany improved. The American army started delivering food from the U.S.A. and people no longer starved.

Also in 1947, the German mark had become so inflated that it had lost all its value. On a particular day all the people of Germany had to line up in queues and hand in their worthless German marks, all the money they had saved. No matter how much money one handed in, each family received only sixty-five marks per person.

Before the valuation day there was hardly anything in the stores to be bought. After the valuation day, suddenly the stores were filled with all kinds of goods. But the people could not buy even the most essential things as no one had much money and the salaries and wages were very small.

Josef spent one winter working in the metal factory for eighty-two pfennig an hour. One kilo of bread cost thirty-two pfennig. It was very difficult to make ends meet, or to save any kind of money. But every working person was able to get work.

That Christmas of 1947, I managed to buy a piece of pork and paid \$3.80 per kilo. Meat was not available for eating every day, nor could we afford it. We ate meat only on Sundays and then mostly beef. I usually cooked up a big pot of soup with this. During the week we ate vegetables and spetzli, a pasta product.

Then in 1948, Josef found work with the Industrial Police. Things became easier then as he was supplied with clothes, shoes, one hot meal a day, and higher wages. He always brought home a piece of white bread or a bun for the children.

Stasi and Erika were already going to school at that time. Maria was attending kindergarten. The children received a bun and cocoa in school every day and sometimes also a can of prem or fish. My main concern every day was to stand in lineups in front of stores trying to get enough food to last my family another twenty-four hours. Quite often, after standing in line for two hours and finally getting to the front of the line, I would walk home empty handed as there was no food left. Many people were already lined up at six in the morning to ensure that they could get some food. Thank God those days are long over.

In 1948, Josef's brothers, John and Albert, applied for and sponsored us to emigrate to Canada. After many months the paper work had been done, and we were on our way in December of 1948 to Hanover to be checked out and approved. We were there for a week. Then we had to wait for approval from the Canadian government. By the end of January, 1949 we received the go-ahead and the ship was to leave at the end of March. So at the end of March, 1949 we sold and gave

away everything we could not take with us and took a train to Hanover. There we were placed in barracks again. We shared one large room with three other families who were also heading for Canada.

At that time, the longshoremen were on strike, and we waited, about twelve hundred of us, throughout April, May, and then they told us by the beginning of June that we would be placed on another ship. Finally, on June 9, 1949, we embarked on the ship, Scitia White Star from the Cunard Line. We left from the Guckshaven harbor, Germany.

When we left the continent of Europe and travelled across the ocean, I left my parents behind in Germany. My brother John and his family were still in Hungary, as far as I knew. My oldest sister Anna and her family decided to remain in the village of Kuchava where she had married and was raising her four children. Kuchava was only a few kilometers from Sofiendorf. My sister Margaret and her family were in the process of emigrating to Pennsylvania, USA. The war had split up our whole family. I hoped and prayed that I would see them again, but it was a very, very sad time. And, as my family was split up by the war, so were millions of other families in Europe. I never saw my parents alive again, as they died in Germany before I could afford to go to them or they could come to me.

We were on the ocean for eleven days. There were good days and bad days. Josef was not able to stay in the same room with me and the girls. All the men and boys slept in a different area of the ship. I was very seasick, and also Erika. Josef, Stasi, and Maria were not affected. They were able to eat each meal in the dining room. For four to five days I was barely able to get out of bed. Josef had to bring me some food and also take care of the girls all day. For several days there was a great storm, where the ship was in the valleys of mountainous waves. One cold and very stormy night the foghorn was blaring and all passengers had to have an evacuation drill, each with his or her life jacket on. We all crowded on deck. The fog was very thick and it was really scary. No one knew for sure whether it was just a drill or if we were really in danger of being rammed by another ship as the fog was very thick. Finally we were told to return to our cabins.

One day Josef led me up to the outer deck to enjoy the sunshine and fresh air. I had been cooped up in a cabin without a window for several days. He took the girls to watch a movie and keep them entertained. After a while I needed to go to the bathroom, but could not go there myself as I was so ill, nauseous and vomiting. Very many people were seasick at that time.

#### END NOTES:

This narrative continues with the arrival of the Jelinek family in Canada and the great difficulties they faced while adjusting to life in a new land. There were many years of incredibly hard work, too little money, and overwhelming loneliness on their isolated farm. Gradually their efforts, courage, and persistence were rewarded with a good life for them and for their descendants. There are now several generations of the Jelinek family living in Canada.

In 1993 Katharina and Josef Jelinek were able to travel back to the Carpatho Ukraine with their daughter and son-in-law Anastasia and Bud Giesbrecht to visit Sophiendorf and relatives who were living in the nearby village of Kuchava.

Madeline Stanley, 2005

## MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

by Agnes Kozauer Brenner

2002



Agnes Kozauer Brenner



The Kozauer family in Germany  
John, Agnes, Margaret, Nikolaus (back),  
Thomas, Nikolaus (the elder). About 1947.

Agnes Brenner, a former nurse, is a descendant of the German farmers who founded Sophiendorf in 1804. She was born in the village and lived there until her family was forced to leave in October, 1944.

It was Agnes Brenner who made it possible for this collection of histories and family stories to be compiled. When we first became interested in our Sophiendorf heritage, we had no idea where the village was located or if it still existed. We didn't even know its correct name. Agnes patiently answered our questions and put us in touch with Sophiendorf descendants who now live in several different countries. She has truly been the catalyst that has held this project together, and we are most thankful for her unflinching interest and encouragement.

Madeline Stanley, 2004

## MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II

by Agnes Kozauer Brenner  
December, 2002

I, Agnes Kozauer Brenner, was the second child born to Nikolaus Kozauer and his wife Margaret Hardunka Kozauer. I was one of seven children--four girls and three boys. Two of my sisters died in infancy, and my third and youngest sister died in Austria during World War II.

My parents owned the largest farm in Sofiendorf, Karpathia. Dad had gone to the United States and worked 16 years for the Bethlehem Steel Company, from when he was 16 to 32 years of age. For those 16 years he saved as much money as possible, even though it meant making many personal sacrifices. For example, instead of renting a private room in a boarding-house, he would arrange to have only the use of a bed for a certain number of hours. All his hard-earned savings were invested into land back in the Karpathian.

When Dad returned home, he continued to work hard and soon became a prosperous, much respected farmer. As was the custom, my maternal grandparents arranged the marriage between my father and my mother. Their wedding took place on August 27, 1927. Although my mother was only 16, she and Dad made a good life for themselves and a loving home for their children. We were always a happy family.

We gave most of our land out to Ruthenians to work, and we also supplied the seed. Our share of the harvest was 2/3, and the Ruthenians received 1/3. It worked out quite well for all.

Sofiendorf at that time was a small German village with a one-room school house, a Roman Catholic church, and one store which was run by the only Jewish family in town. We all knew each other and attended most of the festivities together.

Our ancestors had come to the region about 200 years before, and about five generations had preceded us in Sofiendorf. The government had changed several times through the years. It was Austria-Hungary until World War I, and then it became part of Czechoslovakia. In 1939 it became part of Hungary again. We adapted as necessary but remained German in our language and customs. With the change of regime our money was devalued. From seven Kronen we would get only one Pengo. It took 120 Pengos to buy a shirt or a pair of shoes.

When World War II broke out, our father was drafted into the Hungarian army. We were very happy when they sent him home, telling him that they needed him more at work on his farm with his family. Two weeks later, Dad was again drafted--this time into the German army where he was forced to serve with no possibility of being excused.

In 1942 we could hear the bombing of Poland from Sofiendorf. It sounded like distant thunder. In 1943 the German army was in Russia and Italy. The winter of 1943-1944 was the coldest we could remember. Many German soldiers froze to death because they did not have the right clothing or equipment and were not used to

such weather. Some of them were sent to stay with us to recuperate. We had to take them in, make room for them, and feed them. They slept in our homes and in our stables.

Munkacs, 12 kilometers from Sofiendorf, was heavily bombed in 1944. It was close enough to home to cause our windows to rattle. Finally, on October 20, 1944, German soldiers came to our village and told us that we had just two hours to leave. The Russians were advancing, we were told, and we were in danger of being shot. We were also told that we could expect to return home within two weeks when the fighting would be over. We quickly took the house and farm tools and put them in the water-well for safe keeping. We poured the wheat, rye, corn, etc. into the chimney chute. We left the cattle, pigs, and chickens loose so they could feed themselves. We loaded the wagon with feather ticks, food, and clothing. We left Sofiendorf by wagon and oxen in the rain and darkness. We passed our grapevines as we headed for Munkacs. The grapes were ripe for picking and smelled as if to say "goodbye".

When we arrived in Munkacs, we found that a cattle-train filled with people had left the day before, but it had just returned with the same people still aboard. Heavy bombing of the tracks had prevented the train from getting through, but it would now be leaving again. My mother, with her five children, had to fit in wherever possible. Mom refused when the soldiers wanted to separate our family into different compartments, so they jammed all of us into one badly overcrowded space. We had standing room only, so the children were put on top of the bundles of belongings. The cattle-train took off again.

We had been on the train for four days when we lost the oldest person who had come with us from Sofiendorf. This 75-year old man had been standing in the open doorway to urinate. He fell out when the train rounded a corner. The next day we heard that he had been found dead.

Because of the bombing, the train moved mostly at night and stayed in wooded areas during the day in an attempt to hide from the planes. We stopped in Krakow, Poland for eight weeks where we lived 120 people to a room. We were given straw mattresses which had been used by soldiers, and we quickly became infected with scabies. We were deloused with foul-smelling soap and showers--children first, then women, then men. We had to strip off all our clothes and enter the large, room-sized, communal shower before we could put on fresh clothing.

On January 1, 1945, while we were still in Poland, my older brother Nikolaus was separated from us and required to enter a Hitler Youth school. (Nikolaus has written an account of the terrible conditions there.) The rest of us were sent for a short time to a farm where we lived in one room above a stable. On January 15, 1945 we were taken to Schnellerwald, Cilesia which turned out to be another camp with straw beds and communal showers. It took three days to travel there by train, but it was a passenger train this time. The train was fired upon, and a bullet missed Mom's head by an inch. Thank God it missed her. What would we children have done without her?

We stayed in Cilesia for three months, and then we were sent by train to Raubekeller Obernberg in Austria. This is where we were when World War II came to an end in May, 1945. The war was over, but our heartbreak was not over. On

June 5, 1945, our beloved 22-month Cecilia became ill with measles and pneumonia and died in a damp cellar with no windows. She was very precious to all of us but naturally more so to Mom.

After Cecilia's funeral, Mom told us that she was going away to look for Dad and Nick, and she would not return until she found them. I was left with my younger brothers John and Thomas. At first we heard nothing, but three weeks later, Mom came back with my brother Nick. (Nikolaus has written the story of how his mother found him in Germany after he had been rescued by Salesian nuns.) Our mother and her surviving children were once again together, but we still had no news of our father.

My brother John and I were confirmed by the Bishop of Linz in 1946. Nick was enrolled in high school in Reed. When Austria gained independence in the fall of 1946, we had to move again. This time it was to the Schwert-Muehler Barracks, and later to the Ebersbecher Barracks in Esslingen, Germany. In this place it was possible for me to go back to school, and I was enrolled at the Maedchen Mittle School in Esslingen.

By chance, a lady we had met during our "travels" came to our barracks to visit. She recognized me and told us that our father was working at a farm in the next town. When Mom heard this, she immediately went to see and sure enough, it was Dad!

It was now 1947, and we had learned tht we could not return home to Sofiendorf. Before she found Dad, Mom had applied to go to the United States, but now she began to change her mind. Dad convinced her that it would be better to go. There was not enough food in Germany to be found for any amount of money, and we were always hungry. When the papers arrived, John and Thomas were the only ones able to go with Mom to the United States. Dad was not a citizen, so Nick and I would have to stay with him in Germany for the time being.

In November, 1947, Mom, John, and Thomas, not knowing a word of English, left on a ship for the United States. (Mom had been born in the United States, but had been brought back to Sofiendorf when she was only three.) After they arrived, Mom had a very difficult life for a long time. She not only had to provide a home for her two young sons, but she also worked very hard to save passage money for the rest of her family still in Germany. It wasn't until June 4, 1949 that Dad and I were able to join her and my two younger brothers in the United States. In July of 1950, Nick came too. We were together again after all this time, and we could make a new life.

Now, 50 years later, Dad and Mom are gone. They both died of cancer-- Dad was 70 years old and Mom was 85. Their four children married. Nick is a widower. Mom lived to see her four grandchildren born, and she saw three of them married. She also lived to see her four great-grandchildren. I hope God is good to Mom and Dad. We, their children, are surely thankful to them.

## SELECTIONS FROM “MY ODYSSEY”

By Dr. Nikolaus J. Kozauer

2005



Dr. Nikolaus Kozauer is a Professor Emeritus of Ocean County College, New Jersey. He is a descendant of the original settlers of Sophiendorf and lived in the village until forced to leave in October, 1944. He is the author of *The Carpatho Ukraine Between the Two World Wars--With Special Emphasis on the German Population* (published 1964) which is quoted often in the first section of this book. In 2005 he wrote *My Odyssey*, a work meant for his family and friends. The following pages contain those chapters from *My Odyssey* which deal specifically with life in Sophiendorf during the 1930's and the sufferings endured by the Kozauer family during and after World War II when they became "displaced persons".

We thank Dr. Kozauer for allowing us to include excerpts from *My Odyssey* in this collection of histories of Sophiendorf. All his writings have contributed immensely to our understanding of the history of the Carpatho Ukraine and of Sophiendorf.

Madeline Stanley  
2005

## SOPHIENDORF - (NOW ZOFIA)

(Chapter II from "My Odyssey")

By Dr. Nikolaus J. Kozauer  
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Sophiendorf was founded in 1804 by German settlers from Bavaria, the Austrian Alpine lands, northern Bohemia and the German language islands in Galicia. The dialect which developed was a mixture in which the Bavarian and Austrian influences predominated.

The village was named in honor of Countess Sophie von Schoenborn and was located 12km. north of Mukacevo. It consisted of one long stretched-out street of 73 homes, a grade school, a Catholic church and a general store. The street was lined with Acacia and Mulberry trees and was bordered by drainage ditches. All the people were farmers, quite prosperous, and lived more or less the same type of life.

### 1. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Kozauer family was the richest family in the village. At the age of 16 my father had migrated to the USA and had gotten a job at the Bethlehem Steel Company in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He decided to come back to Sophiendorf in 1927, when he inherited not only half of his parents' farm but also married my mother. With the money he brought back from the USA, he bought up many acres of additional farmland. Almost half of our land the Ruthenians had to work for us as sharecroppers (they got one third of the harvest as payment).

In our fields, we grew sunflowers (the seeds were pressed for oil), corn, wheat, and rye (which we milled into flour), barley, oats, potatoes, sugar beets and hay. Hay served as fodder for the cattle in the wintertime.

In our vineyard, we grew white and red grapes and produced many barrels of white and red wine.

In our orchard, we grew apples, pears, apricots, peaches, walnuts, cherries, and plums. From the plums, we made schnaps (brandy and whisky).

We also raised cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry (chickens and geese) and rabbits.

Every Monday was open market day in Mukacevo. On the outskirts of the city were two large open markets, one for large animals and the other for everything else. There we sold everything we produced and didn't need for personal consumption.

Despite our prosperity, we lived a very simple and, by modern standards, primitive life.

From the street a large gate opened into our large yard, where the buildings were arranged in a horseshoe shape. Starting at the right was our large stable, which housed the calves, the cows, the oxen, the sheep and the rabbits. At the top of the entrance

door-overhang were a number of swallow nests. The swallows kept the cattle insect free.

Next came a wood shed, chicken and geese coops and a pigsty. At the back of the yard was a large barn where we stored the hay and straw as well as the farm machinery. On the roof of the barn, we had a giant stork nest. The storks helped us to get rid of the mice, rats, and weasels.

Halfway to the front, on the left side, was our water well. It was our only source of drinkable water, both for humans and for animals. In the front, on the left side, was our house. It had a kitchen with a wood stove and a large oven in which we baked our own bread. It also had a living room and two bedrooms with wooden plank floors. In addition, it also contained an attic smoke-room (for the curing of hams, bacon, sausages, and other meat products) as well as a wine and vegetable cellar. On the yard side, the house also had a large verandah.

The house, however, had no electricity, and, therefore, no central heating or cooling. That meant no refrigeration, lighting, radio, etc. We had to use naphtha lamps and lanterns, and provide our own entertainment.

Also, there was no indoor plumbing. We had to bring water into the house from our well, one bucket at a time. To take a bath, it was necessary to heat water on the stove, pot full by pot full, and empty it into a tub. You washed up as far as possible, then you washed down as far as possible, and when everyone left the room, you washed everything else. And if Mother Nature called at 2 am during a January snow-storm, you had a major problem on your hands.

## 2. EDUCATION

Sophiendorf had a new grade school, consisting of one large classroom. There were eight rows of desks and benches, one row for each grade, one through eight. We had only one teacher (a male teacher) who taught all subjects and all grades at the same time. When the first graders were writing the alphabet, the second graders were adding up numbers, etc. The teacher was constantly walking from row to row, correcting and instructing. It felt almost like being given private instruction. All lessons were given in German.

The curriculum consisted of the “3R’s” plus Science, Art and the Catholic religion. Other necessary skills like farming, cooking, etc., were learned at home from the parents by a method called “On the Job Training.”

Everyday in the wintertime, students had to bring, in addition to their books, two pieces of wood to school. This was necessary to keep the potbellied stove, which stood in the middle of the room, operating as the only heat source.

Very few students went beyond the grade school. Secondary schools existed only in the city of Mukacevo and the tuition was very high. One had to enter a secondary school at the end of fourth grade.

Since the great love of my life has always been reading, my parents decided that I should attend the Magyar Polgari Iskola (Hungarian High School) because it had

a good reputation. So, at the age of ten, I left Sophiendorf and lived in a rented room in Mukacevo. Once every week, my parents brought me a week's supply of food to live on. I felt so homesick and alone. I had no idea that this would be a prelude to what would occur in my life in the not too distant future, when I would again be separated from my family.

My first year at this school was very difficult for me. All instruction was in Hungarian and I was not fluent in the language. I also wasn't accustomed to the testing system. The tests were all oral tests. All students in a class would line up alphabetically in the hall and would be called into the classroom, one at a time. The teacher sat behind his desk on which was a large glass bowl filled with slips of folded paper. Each paper held a comprehensive essay question. A student would be told to reach into the bowl and take out a piece of paper and read the question aloud. While still standing, he then had to deliver an oral account.

By the end of the second year, I spoke Hungarian fluently and could think only on my feet. But, by now, the absence of my father, who with other men from the village had been sent by the invading Nazis to a camp in the Balkans, had eaten away at our yearly income so much, that my mother decided to transfer me to the Buergerschule (German High School). The tuition was less and I could live in the school dormitory. My mother would no longer have to bring me a weekly food supply.

At this school all instruction was in German and testing was in written form, But I no longer lived alone and had to adjust to sharing everything with hundreds of students. By the end of the school year, the school closed because all the male teachers were drafted into the military. So I returned home to Sophiendorf.

### 3. THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION

We Sophiendorfers were Roman Catholics. We had a beautiful church, St. Stephan, located right next to our school. Our priest, however, had to take care of the spiritual needs of five different German villages. Therefore, he celebrated Mass only one Sunday per month in our church. The other Sundays we had to walk long distances to the other German villages to attend Mass. If the weather was bad, we attended Divine Liturgy at the Byzantine Catholic Church in a nearby Ruthenian village.

Every Sunday afternoon, religious lay-services, consisting of prayer, readings from scripture and songs of praise, took place in church. My grandmother, Anna Hardunka, presided over them. Church attendance was almost complete and natural.

The whole religious atmosphere in our village was one of piety. Every cross-road had a shrine with a crucifix. People stopped doing whatever they were occupied with when the church bells rang out at noon and at six o'clock in the evening, and prayed "The Angelus". One could hardly ever observe a family sit down to a meal without first saying Grace. It was also customary to make the sign of The Cross when passing a church. Even our common greeting consisted of "Gelobt sei Jesus Christus" (Praised be Jesus Christ). And the response was "In Alle Ewigkeit, Amen" (For all eternity, Amen.)

#### 4. CHURCH RELATED CUSTOMS

##### a) Baptism-

To be asked to become a Godparent was one of the highest honors one could receive. Between the baptized person and the Godparent existed a life-long friendship. Every year at Christmas, the Godchild received a present from the Godparent, and at the wedding of the Godchild, the Godparent played a prominent role.

##### b) Confirmation-

Confirmation took place every four years. It was one of the most beautiful events in the life of a young person. He or she received the seal of the Holy Spirit. It always ended with a big banquet, at which the confirmation sponsor gave the confirmed person a gift that was to be cherished for life.

##### c) Marriage-

Weddings took place mostly in May and June. The preparations for a wedding began four days before the event. The relatives of the bride and groom got together, usually on a Saturday, in order to prepare sweets.

On Sunday, the two best men went with an armful of roses and a decorated staff, as a sign of their office, from house to house inviting guests. In front of every house, a pistol was fired. Going inside, they invited the guests individually, in verse form, to the Tuesday wedding.

On Monday, the main preparations began. Bread, rolls, cookies and the wedding cake were baked by the women, while the men slaughtered the calves, pigs and chickens. The men prepared all the meat dishes. They also built a large branch-covered shelter, where the wedding festivities were to take place.

Finally the wedding day arrived. The bride was escorted by the best men. The groom was escorted by the bridesmaids as they made their way to the church where the actual wedding took place. The whole party, including the priest, then went to the home of the bride, where the festivities started. Late in the evening, the bride took a fond farewell and went with her husband to their new home. The others remained behind and kept on dancing and drinking far into the night.

In Sophiendorf, a model family life was expected from every couple and divorce was hardly ever heard of.

##### d) Christmas-

The feast of joy was celebrated in the circle of the immediate family and was not very different from celebration in other countries. Like in the United States of America, Christmas was the favorite holiday of the children. But, unlike in the United States, where the children expect St. Nicholas to bring them presents, it was the

representative of the Christ Child (Christ Kind) who arrived on Christmas Eve. He came carrying a large book and a sack of presents. He was always accompanied by Servant Ruprecht (Knecht Ruprecht) who had all kinds of torture instruments with him. After all the children of a family had assembled, the Christ Child's representative read aloud from the book all the good and bad deeds of each child. If a child had been good, he was praised and rewarded. But, if a child's bad deeds outnumbered the good ones, he was threatened by Servant Ruprecht until he promised to mend his ways. Then, he too received some gifts on probation.

#### e) EASTER-

Easter was a very busy time of the year for the women. They had to bake and cook the Pascha (Easter) meal. They also had to prepare the Easter basket, into which they put paska (Easter bread), ham, sausages, cookies, colored eggs, a bottle of wine, some butter, salt and horseradish. They covered the basket with fancily decorated cloth and carried it to the church on Holy Saturday. There the priest blessed all the food, which was, however, not eaten until Easter Sunday. After church services on Easter Sunday morning, everyone had to first eat a piece of horseradish (bitter herb) in remembrance of the Passover, as described in the Old Testament. Then a colored egg was peeled and divided into as many small parts as there were members in the family. This was eaten in the hope of our new resurrected life in Christ. Then the real feasting began.

#### f) FUNERALS-

When a Sophiendorfer died, a three-day death watch was held at his house. The women of the village knelt around the dead person praying the rosary while the men sat in another room. The woman usually departed before midnight, but the men stayed all night. They did not pray like the women, but talked about the life of the deceased. At the funeral service, almost the whole village participated. There were at least two reasons for this. First, everyone knew everybody else and as a consequence, a death was a personal loss to everyone. Second, a priest came so seldom to say Mass, that attending a requiem was a great privilege.

The coffin, covered with flowers and wreaths, was carried to the church with singing by single men if the dead person had been single. Married men would carry the coffin of the married deceased. While this was being done, a member of the household went around the house opening and closing all the doors, as a sign of final departure.

In the church itself, the requiem was always closed with the singing of a farewell song by the whole congregation. The coffin was then carried in procession to the cemetery, where, after one more blessing, the casket was lowered into the grave. As soon as the service was over, members of the funeral procession gathered for the so-called "Death Meal," where the wine wasn't spared. This was not considered sacrilegious, because the people believed that one should cry when someone enters this valley of tears, but rejoice, when one finally enters Heaven.

#### 4. SECULAR CUSTOMS

There were also three favorite pastime activities during the wintertime, which were not church-related. They were the Schweintanz, Federschleissen and the Merry-Go-Round dances.

##### a) SCHWEINTANZ (Pig Dance)

Almost every week during the winter season, when there was little for the farmers to do, some family decided to slaughter a pig. For such an occasion all the relatives and friends were invited. During the day they made sausages and prepared the bacon and hams, and at night, they sampled their products and washed it down with gallons of wine. Since almost everybody was everybody else's friend or relative, there was a party for everyone almost every week.

##### b) FEDERSCHLEISSEN (Stripping and cleaning of quills -- goose feathers)

Night after night during the winter season, the women of the village took turns meeting at each other's houses to help with the stripping and cleaning of quills. They were served refreshments and exchanged the latest gossip. In the meantime during the week, the men too visited each other at nighttime to clean sunflower seeds or peel corn-cobs. At such gatherings, a lot of singing and joke telling went on. On the weekends the men congregated usually in the Wirtzhaus (Inn) which was part of the general store, where they drank their Schnaps (whisky) and played cards.

##### c) MERRY-GO-ROUND DANCES

At least once a week a dance was put on by the unmarried folk. They took turns sponsoring the dances at their homes. Once in a while, the girls met alone to do needle work and gossip, while the boys met and played cards. There was hardly ever a dull moment.

### THE WORLD WAR II YEARS

(Chapter III from "My Odyssey")

#### 1. THE WAR COMES TO SOPHIENDORF (Also known as Sofiendorf)

On August 23, 1939, Russia and Germany signed a 10-year Non-aggression Pact. Each side promised not to attack the other. A secret provision of the pact called for the partitioning of Poland, according to pre-World War I borders. A week later, when the Germans moved into Western Poland to claim their portion, France and England declared war on Germany and World War II was on.

For the next two years, using Blitzkrieg tactics, the Germans quickly conquered or brought under their control most of Europe, with the exception of England. By 1941, Hitler openly proclaimed that he was creating "Fortress Europe", a self-sufficient,

Nazi-controlled continent, which he called “The Third Reich” (Third Empire). Because of the Non-aggression Pact, we in the east of Europe were left alone. It soon turned out that there were two major weaknesses in “Fortress Europe”. First, Western, Central, and Southern Europe were so densely populated that there was not enough food produced to feed the huge population. It became necessary to resort to food rationing. Second, the same areas were highly industrialized, but not fuel self-sufficient. Hitler tried to solve this problem by creating an Africa Corps under the command of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel (the Desert Fox). They were sent to conquer the oil-rich areas of the Middle East. But British Special Forces, led by General Bernard Montgomery, and helped by the Americans, were soon driving the Germans out of Northern Africa and Asia Minor.

In desperation, Hitler decided to break the Non-aggression Pact and invade the USSR. If he could conquer the Ukraine, the “Breadbasket of Europe”, his food problems would be solved. And if he could get control of the Caucasus oil fields, that would solve his fuel problems. “Fortress Europe” would truly be self-sufficient.

In June of 1941 German troops invaded the USSR. To get to the Ukraine, they had to first come through our area, the Carpatho Ukraine. The war now also came to us in Sophiendorf, because the village was located near the Mukacevo to Hust highway. Just a few weeks after the troops came through our village, all the able-bodied men in our village, including my father, were rounded up and sent to the Balkans to work as auxiliary units.

For the next three years, while I was in school in Mukacevo, my poor mother took my four siblings daily into the fields, where she worked from sunrise to sunset. This was necessary because the family’s yearly income was going down so rapidly.

When my father was still with us, my mother helped out in the fields only during planting and harvest time. Other times she was kept busy with the daily demands of cooking, cleaning, child care, milking, collecting eggs, planting a vegetable garden, canning food, making butter and cheese, and baking bread. She was also responsible for the family’s health, since we had neither doctors nor a hospital. Now she had to do everything herself. Life was very hard.

## 2. THE EXODUS

Nun ade, du mein lieb Heimatland, Lieb Heimatland, ade!  
Es geht jetzt fort zum fremden Strand, lieb Heimatland, ade!  
Und so sing ich denn mit frohem Mut, wie man singet,  
Wenn man wandern tut: Lieb Heimatland, ade!

(August Disselhoff)

Now farewell, my dear homeland, dear homeland farewell!  
We are departing now to a foreign shore, dear homeland farewell!  
I will sing with joyfull fortitude, as one sings  
When one migrates: dear homeland, farewell!

By the middle of October, 1944 the German army came to our village again, being pushed back by Stalin's Red Army. The USA had extended the Lend-Lease Act, which had originally been created to help England, to the USSR. America shipped to Russia 400,000 trucks, 14,000 planes, 12,000 tanks and other war equipment, costing 11 billion dollars. It was with these supplies that the Red Army was able to take the offensive.

The most fateful day for Sophiendorf is still very fresh in my mind. I was home from school and was with my mother, my two brothers and two sisters in the field. We heard the village church bells ringing the alarm. Since we had no electricity, we used the church bells as a siren. My mother immediately picked up my one-year old sister and my three-year old brother. She told the rest of us to follow her as fast as we could. As she ran to the village, women working in the nearby fields were doing the same.

When we arrived in front of the church, we saw a military truck and a German officer with a loudspeaker. He was announcing, "For strategic reasons we Germans have been retreating for weeks across the flat terrain of the Ukraine. Now that we have arrived in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, we intend to make a stand. We do not want to have all of you women and children underfoot. Therefore, you must pack up whatever you can carry by tomorrow, October 19. You must then report to the railroad station in Mukacevo for evacuation."

My mother packed our best clothes (every child was allowed to take along one toy) and important papers like property deeds, bank books, birth certificates and school records. She then also added some food to our wagon. By the next morning, however, she changed her mind. After all, the Kozauers had lived in Sophiendorf for over one hundred fifty years. Besides, how could she go with five young children, not really knowing where we were going or what would happen to us? She was also afraid that my father would never find us, should he return. To add to the dilemma, October 19 dawned as a very rainy, cold day. Our oxen-drawn wagon had no top, and we would have to travel for hours to reach the city. All of the children would probably catch cold and everything in our wagon would be soaked. So we stayed behind, while almost all of the other people left.

During the night, however, partisans invaded our village, looting the empty homes and even setting a few houses on fire. We were very afraid that we would be killed or burned to death. All night long we huddled together in the dark, crying and praying. Toward morning on October 20th, Russian planes flew low over our village on their way to bomb Mukacevo. We saw in the distance the whole sky go up in flames. My mother now decided that we should rush as fast as possible with our oxen-drawn wagon to the railroad station in Mukacevo. It was her hope that the refugee train was still there waiting.

Arriving at the railroad station many hours later, we were informed by an official that the train had left during the night. We all became hysterical and cried loudly in desperation. After a while, my mother took out her rosary. We all joined her in prayer, ". . . Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us now. . ." Before we had finished, a long cattle-wagon train was backing into the station. It was the refugee train. As it had turned out, the railroad tracks, a long way past the city had been bombed in the morning raid. The train had to come back to the station to wait for the repairs to be

completed. Our prayers had been answered. We quickly took our belongings and climbed into a cattle-wagon of the train. Our terrible life as refugees now began.

### 3. REFUGEE CAMP LEOBSCHUETZ

The trip from Mukacevo, Carpatho Ukraine to Camp Leobshuetz in Silesia, Poland took eleven days. The train traveled most of the time only at night. During the day, it usually hid in a forest. Guards, who accompanied the train, cut branches from trees and put them on the roof of the wagons. That way they would blend into the forest and not be seen from the sky. American airplanes were constantly patrolling, bombing or machine-gunning any train or truck they saw. Only when the train stopped for the day, were we fed.

Each cattle-wagon of the train was filled with as many people as could be pushed into it. The result was that we had to develop a system of resting in rotation, with the children being given priority. One corner of the wagon was covered with a blanket on a string. Behind the blanket was a bucket that served as a toilet. A distant cousin of mine, Johann (Jantschi) Kozauer, who was seventy years old, suffered from bladder problems. He could not always wait for his turn behind the blanket. One day he decided to partially open the sliding door of our wagon and thus relieve himself. Just then, the train made a sharp turn and Johann fell out of the train and was killed.

On November 1, 1944, we arrived at Camp Leobschuetz. It turned out to be a single large building with two outhouses. It had once been a theater. The chairs had all been removed. On the cement floor, they had put row after row of straw mattresses. As we were marched into the giant room, carrying our bundles, we were assigned a small space on the floor mattresses. It became our new home.

The first morning in camp, we found that we were all infected with lice. The lice had been thriving in the straw mattresses and came onto our bodies during the night. The mattresses had previously been used by soldiers and were not decontaminated before we used them. We were marched for about half an hour to a building that had separate shower rooms for the men and women. There we had to strip and wash ourselves with disinfectant soap and then take a shower. In the meantime, our clothing was being washed and the mattresses replaced. Because we had to walk back to the camp with wet hair in below freezing weather, many of us started to suffer from all types of respiratory illnesses.

Day after day, we just sat on our mattresses on the floor and talked. Three times a day we had to line up for food. Breakfast consisted of a tin cup full of "Ersatz (substitute) Coffee" It was made of roasted barley and chicory, and looked brownish. Because there was no cream or milk or sugar, it tasted bitter and none of us children liked it. For lunch and supper, we each received a tin cup full of either cabbage soup or bean soup. Every second day we also received a slice of dark bread, the thickness of three fingers and a slice of liverwurst, the thickness of two fingers. The liverwurst was made of meat byproducts and wood fibers. It tasted like it too. Everyone was constantly hungry.

Since there were no special provisions made for the young, the elderly or the sick, they were the first to die off in alarming numbers. The Darwinian theory of "Survival of the Fittest" now became reality.

#### 4. KINDERLANDVERSCHICKUNGSLAGER

On December 1, 1944, a German officer came to our camp. He announced to the assembled women, "No one knows how long this war will last. In the meantime, your children are growing into illiterate adults. How are they going to make a living? To remedy the problem, we will now take all your boys from age ten on up and send them to a boys' camp to be educated."

This order did not affect my two younger brothers because one was only nine and one was four-years old. I, however, was fourteen. Together with the other boys over the age of ten, I was now taken by a military truck to a camp called Kinderlandverschickungslager, which was located in the Austrian Alps. It overlooked the city of Salzburg. My mother was not told where they were taking me, and I was not allowed to write to her. All contact between my family and me was cut off.

The truck arrived at the camp in the late afternoon. The camp itself was enclosed by a high wall. The entrance gate was also the exit gate. The main house had a dining room, two bathrooms, and two large bedrooms with row after row of triple-decker, numbered bunk beds. They had straw mattresses. Each bed also had a pillow, a blanket and a pair of dark shorts. By the door there was a list of our names and our bed numbers posted. It also instructed that, in alphabetical order, two different boys would be responsible everyday for the clean-up, before inspections would take place.

After a cordial greeting by the Jugendfuehrer (youth leader), we were each given a sandwich and a cup of tea, then ordered to go to bed. The night, however, turned into a nightmare.

The bedrooms had no heat, and we had only one blanket per person and a pair of black boxer shorts. Outside it was snowing and inside the temperature must have been close to freezing. All of us were shivering under our blankets. This was, for most of the boys, the first time they were away from their mothers, in a foreign country, and afraid of tomorrow. Needless to say, there was much crying and sobbing in that wretched place.

It must have awoken the Jugendfuehrer, who slept in a nearby single room. Around 2 a.m., the lights in our bedroom were turned on and the Jugendfuehrer shouted at us, "Get out of your beds, you crybabies. I am going to make men out of you, even if it kills you." Then he ordered us to go out in the snow, barefoot and half naked, to do pushups. By the time we were allowed back in, our extremities (toes, fingers, ears, etc.) felt frozen. No one could get warm enough to sleep that night.

The next morning, we made our beds and stood in front of our bunks for inspection. Because of our exposure to the elements during the night, many of us had runny noses or were coughing. When the Jugendfuehrer saw this, he got furious and took his anger out on the two boys who had clean-up duty. Somehow they had overlooked a few straws under one bed. He made them kneel down, put their hands on their back and push the straws with their noses out of the room. They had to proceed down a long hallway leading to the outside and then along a snow-shoveled path to a dunghill in the back of the yard. When they came back, their noses were bleeding and had no skin. Their lips were cracked and their eyes were almost swollen shut. All of this happened on just the first morning in the camp.

In the afternoon, the Jugendfuehrer asked us to line up and come one at a time to his office so that he could get to know us personally. When my turn came, I knocked on his door, went in and closed the door. I greeted him with the customary greeting used in our village of Sophiendorf. I said, "Gelobt sei Jesus Christus, Herr Jugendfuehrer (Praised be Jesus Christ, Mr. Youthleader)". He got red in the face and shouted, "Don't you ever use that greeting again, if you know what's good for you. From now on greet everyone by raising your right arm and saying 'Heil Hitler (Hail, Hitler)'. Now get out of my sight". From then on, there wasn't a day when we were not physically or mentally abused.

We soon found out why we were brought to this camp. The number one problem the Germans had in the last year of the war was manpower shortage. They lowered the draft age down to sixteen, but the casualties at the Russian front were so numerous that they could not replace them. So they came up with the idea of bringing east European boys from the various refugee camps to youth camps. They would brainwash them with Nazi propoganda and train them militarily. When they reached the age of sixteen, the boys would be sent to the Russian front as cannon fodder.

Every morning we started out with German language instruction, since not all the boys spoke German fluently. From nine to twelve o'clock, we were taught Nazi philosophy. Over and over we were told that the survival of the Third Reich was the highest good and, because of that, the State had the right to demand from us any sacrifice. This would include the supreme sacrifice, our very lives. The State did not exist for our benefit, we existed for the benefit of the State, therefore, we should never complain. We should stoically carry out all orders.

Every afternoon we were given basic military training and, in the evening, we were shown Nazi propoganda films. Discipline was very strict. Any infraction of the rules or orders cost one a demerit.

The way they controlled us was by rationing our food. Each meal consisted of a bowl of soup and a slice of black bread. For supper, however, everyone also received one boiled potato.

At suppertime, the names of the boys with demerits were read aloud. Anyone was allowed to challenge such a demerited boy to one round of boxing in a small ring which was set up in the dining room. The challenged boy could refuse to fight, but then he would have to forfeit his boiled potato to the challenger. He would also be publicly proclaimed a coward. If he fought and won, then he could keep his potato. If he fought and lost, then he also lost his potato to the challenger. Since everyone was constantly hungry, there were always plenty of challengers.

I was involved in such a fight only once. One day I had a terrible cold and didn't react quickly enough to an order by the Jugendfuehrer and promptly received a demerit. I could have forfeited my boiled potato and taken the abuse, but I foolishly thought only about the hunger pains I would suffer if I lost my potato. Therefore, I decided to fight for it. The challenger, much taller and heavier than I was, caught me with a left hook and broke my nose. Since we had no doctor at the camp, my nose healed incorrectly. Even to the present day, I can get very little air through my right nostril.

Luckily for all of us boys, the war came to an end on May 8, 1945, before any of us reached the age of sixteen.

## THE POST WAR YEARS

(Chapter IV from "My Odyssey")

### 1) VAGABOND LIFE

On May 8, 1945 (V-E Day), we made our beds as usual and stood in front of our bunks ready for inspection, but the Jugendfuehrer never arrived. After a while, some of the more daring amongst us went to look for him. They not only did not find him, but there were no grown-ups anywhere to be found in the camp. When they turned on the radio in the Jugendfuehrer's room, they found out that the war was over. Apparently, fearing arrest, the grown-ups just disappeared.

Who would feed us? Who would tell us what to do? We all went out to the walled-in front yard and just hung around. Shortly after eleven o'clock, seven tanks came up the mountain road and stopped at our gate. The tank hatches opened and out came dark-colored American soldiers with sub-machine guns. We all started to scream and run around in mortal fear. We could not escape because we were walled in and the tanks blocked the gate. We had been shown numerous propaganda films in which we saw American soldiers blacken their faces and then go out and scalp people. We thought we would now all be slaughtered. The soldiers, however, instead of coming at us with knives, held out chocolate bars. The first boy courageous enough to approach a soldier did not take the offered chocolate bar. He touched the soldier's hand to see if the color would come off. The soldiers just laughed, put the chocolate on the ground, went back to their tanks, and departed. One could almost hear a collective sigh of relief among us.

In the early afternoon, some boys left the camp, saying they were going to search for their families. Soon others followed them. I stayed until late in the afternoon because I did not know where to go. Finally, I thought to myself, since the Russian frontline moved from the East to the West and the war had come to an end when Germany had been conquered, chances were that if my family survived the war, they were also moved ahead of the frontline from the camp in Poland to a camp somewhere in Germany. I should, therefore, look for them in Germany. Since I had no money, I concluded that I would walk to the railroad station in Salzburg and hop on a freight train to Germany.

When I came to the station, I saw freight wagons in the railroad yard. On the invoices posted on the wagon doors, it stated: "Destination - Nuremberg, Germany". I tried to open the door to one wagon, but it did not move, and when I turned around, a policeman grabbed me. He told me to get out of there or he would arrest me. As I walked slowly away, he started to walk in the opposite direction. When he was out of sight, I quickly ran back, trying again to open the wagon door. Before I could do it, he grabbed me again, shook me and shouted, "If you try it one more time, I will beat you black and blue before I arrest you. I give you just one more chance. Now disappear before I change my mind."

Unbeknown to me, a German soldier, standing on the station platform, observed everything. When I passed him, he motioned me over to him and said, "You are

doing it all wrong, boy. Stay around until it gets dark and I will show you how to get into that wagon.” Not knowing what else to do, I agreed. It turned out that he was a runaway soldier from the Russian front trying to get home to Berlin.

When it got dark, we walked back to the railroad yard. The soldier managed to pry open the wagon door. The wagon was filled with horses. In one corner there was a pile of straw. We crawled into the wagon, closed the door and made our way among the horses to the straw pile and sat on it. The soldier showed me how to hide under the straw should there be an inspection, and then we just waited. Around midnight, an engine was coupled to the wagons, and the train started to move toward the Austrian-German border.

At the border, the train stopped and through the cracks in the wooden wagon walls, we could see large campfires and American military police with rifles. Soon we heard wagon doors being opened and closed. We crawled under the straw pile and the soldier told me to hold my hands over my mouth so that I would not make any noise. Suddenly, our wagon door opened and a beam of light from a strong flashlight hit our hiding place for a few minutes and then the door was closed again. A short time later, the train crossed into Germany and did not stop until it reached Nuremberg.

When we got out of the wagon in Nuremberg, the German soldier said goodbye to me. He wanted to find a freight train going in a north-easterly direction toward Berlin. I decided that I might as well begin to look for my family with Nuremberg as a starting place.

I soon found out that there were over 10 million refugees in post war Germany. There were refugee camps in almost every town and city. Not wanting to miss any camp, I decided I would walk from camp to camp in my search. I was spending a lot of time walking through the countryside. Whenever I got tired and hungry, I stopped randomly at a farmhouse and asked for handouts and permission to sleep in a barn. Sometimes I was treated nicely and at other times, I would be cursed and chased away. A few times dogs were sicked on me and I was bitten. After a while, I concluded that it was just too dangerous to continue my search in this fashion. I resolved to bypass the villages and not stop anymore at farmhouses. I would try to live off nature. I slept next to rivers or forests. I ate berries, stolen vegetables from the fields and fruits from trees. Because of the poor diet and unsanitary conditions, I soon developed rashes all over my body. I also began to bleed from my gums and my hands shook uncontrollably. I knew instinctively that I could not survive the coming winter on my own. I had walked now for more than two months from camp to camp, and found no one from the Carpatho Ukraine. Walking was obviously too slow a process. I was still in the south of Germany.

Once again I decided to try my luck with hopping on freight trains and just go from city to city. Besides saving time, I would be able to sleep on park benches and receive free food at soup kitchens.

## 2) MONASTIC LIFE

One day as I was making my way out of the railroad station in Bamberg, I was stopped by two Salesian nuns. They came to the station everyday to pick up orphans and lost children. They asked me where I was going. When I told them my

story, they told me to follow them to their convent. In the convent, they took me to the kitchen, and one of the nuns served me a plate of soup. As I tried to eat the soup, my hand was shaking so much that before the spoon reached my mouth, there was no soup left on it. I tried several times with the same results. Seeing my dilemma and without a word of criticism, one of the nuns got up and poured the soup into a mug with handles. I was finally able to drink it successfully.

This took place late in the summer, and I was still wearing the same clothes I wore on May 8 when I left the Kinderlandverschickungslager. The clothes were filthy and smelly. The nuns gave me a pile of clean clothes and took me to a bathroom where they filled the bathtub with hot water. They told me to take a bath. This was easier said than done. The rashes, especially those on my back, had been oozing and the shirt had been glued to my skin. I now had a choice of either separating the shirt from the skin very slowly, and suffer pain for a long time, or jerking it off, and suffer greater pain for a short time. I decided on the 'quickest torture' but with the shirt came off a huge portion of my skin. I cried out in agony. The nuns came running to the bathroom and when they saw my bloody back, they gave me a sponge bath, and put some ointment and gauze on my back. They had to help me to get dressed.

After a while, they told me that they were only able to keep girls at the convent. They offered to take me to a Carmelite monastery on the other side of town, where lost boys and orphans were housed. At the monastery, I was given more medical care, three meals a day and a warm place to rest my weary head. With the passing of many weeks, my tortured body began to heal. New skin was growing on my back, my gums stopped bleeding and my hands became steadier. There is no doubt in my mind that those two Salesian nuns saved my life.

In an effort to reunite families that had been separated by the war, big city newspapers published lists of refugees' names with their present locations. This was a free service and was made available once a month. The Carmelite monastery sent the names of all of us boys to the Sueddeutsche Zeitung (South German Newspaper) in Munich. This made it possible for some boys to be reunited with their families. Oh how fervently I prayed that my mother would come for me too. But as time went on, I sadly concluded that my family did not survive the war. Loneliness was overwhelming, as I was losing hope.

### 3) THE END OF THE SEARCH

Late in the fall of 1945, my mother suddenly stood before me. Then she told me the following complicated story of what had transpired since we had been separated:

On January 15, 1945, just a little over one month after I had been separated from the Leobschuetz Camp in Silesia, Poland, the camp was closed. All the people were taken by train to Camp Schnellerwalde. This was in Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia. During the journey, my mother was almost killed. Two American planes attacked the train. Machine gun bullets came through the car walls and missed her by a few inches, hitting people behind her.

The new camp was like the camp in Poland, except that the straw mattresses were put on wooden boards on the floor. The major problem here was that the camp had only two toilets. That meant that the lines to use them were extremely long, both night and day.

Three months later, this camp was also closed and the people were moved again. This time the destination was Obernberg, Austria. The refugees were split up and put into small satellite camps. Our family was put into Camp Raubekeller. This was a large, damp, concrete cellar with no windows. On the wooden planks of the floor, there were only rows of straw on which to sleep. It was in this camp that our family suffered its most terrible loss. On June 5, 1945, my two-year old sister Cecilia died. The causes of death were malnutrition, pneumonia, and measles.

Fearing that my other sister and my two brothers would also die from contagious diseases, my mother went to see the mayor of the town. She begged him to save her children. She also insisted that he find the location of the boys camp to which I had been taken on December 1, 1944.

Eventually, my family was assigned to a small, second floor apartment in the center of town. My mother also managed to find a job as a kitchen worker on a nearby American military base. At last, she felt, her children would no longer be in danger of starving to death.

Later in the fall of 1945, she received information from the mayor about the Kinderlandverschickunslager outside Salzberg, where I had been taken. She immediately made arrangements to be replaced as the kitchen worker by Agnes, my 12-year old sister. Agnes would also be responsible for the care of 10-year old John and 5-year old Thomas. The boys would be confined to the apartment while Agnes worked. It was a grave responsibility for such a young girl, but mother could think of no other way. She then boarded a train, rode to Salzberg, and walked up the mountain road to the camp.

By this time, some of the adult personnel, including the Jugendfuehrer who had disappeared on May 8, 1945, had returned to the camp. They had learned that the American occupation forces were not looking for them. Some of the boys, after failing to find their families, also had returned to the camp. They had nowhere else to go.

My mother confronted the Jugendfuehrer and asked for me. He had no helpful information to offer her. He had heard from some of the boys that I may have gone to Germany to search for my family.

The stress was so great that Mother broke down and cried. The secretary to the youth leader said to my mother, "Wait a minute, Mrs. Kozauer. The German newspapers publish once a month a list of lost refugees. I have a few German papers on file." As Mother paged through the papers, she came to the Sueddeutsche Zeitung. What joy she felt as she saw my name along with the address of the Carmelite Monastery in Bamberg. She took the very next train to Bamberg, and that is how she came to be suddenly standing before me. It was a moment that both of us thought must be the highlight of our long ordeal. We had no idea what wonders were waiting for us.

#### 4) THE MIRACLE

Mother and I gratefully thanked the monks at the Carmelite Monastery and said our goodbyes. At the railroad station in Bamberg, Mother wanted to buy tickets. Wanting to show her what a good vagabond I had become, I persuaded her to follow me. We went to the railroad yard and I found some wagons ticketed to go to Austria. I pried open a wagon door and found that it contained building material. We crawled in and closed the door. We sat there just talking and talking. Eventually the train started to move and did not stop until we reached the German-Austrian border.

At the border, the train stopped and armed American military police searched every wagon. They found us and many others and brought us into a large interrogation room. My mother had the proper legal papers for herself. Of course, I had nothing. A German-speaking American official told my mother that she would have to fill out some papers for me. It would be necessary to wait for court approval before I would be allowed to cross the border. In response to my mother's question about the time needed for this court approval, the official replied, "Oh, about three weeks or so". We thanked him and walked out.

How could my mother stay away from her other young children, leaving them alone for another three long weeks? Life had been difficult enough, and she was determined not to let me out of her sight again. With fear and trembling, we decided that the only way to cross the border was to sneak across.

We would have to travel a dense and unfamiliar forest, walking first to the west and then turning south to reach Austria. The weather was very cold and the night dark. How could we hope to find our way through these bewildering surroundings? Mother was determined to reunite what was left of her family. She now turned to the only source of comfort she knew -- prayer.

Entering the forest with some moonlight breaking through the trees, mother held my cold hand as she prayed the Rosary, over and over, putting her faith in the Virgin Mary's protection. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a woman in a long dress appeared. Fixing us with a solemn gaze, she said simply, "Follow me". In silence she led us south through the woods in a zigzag route for about twenty-five minutes. We were too stunned and too grateful to ask any questions. We just instinctively trusted her. Suddenly she stopped and pointed ahead. In the distance, we could just make out a glimmer of lights. It was an Austrian town. Still holding hands, my mother and I turned to thank our silent guide, but she had disappeared. Where had she gone? Was it possible that a desperate mother's prayer had been answered by some divine miracle?

We later learned that the Austrian-German border which we crossed that night, was heavily infested with minefields. The zigzag path that we followed through those dark woods, with the assistance of the mysterious lady, had been the only safe route. We never would have found the path on our own.

Believing that Our Blessed Mother had answered her desperate prayer, my mother dedicated her life to the daily recitation of the Rosary. Until the day she died in 1996, she always ended her prayers with, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, thank you for helping and protecting my children and me. Amen".

When we came into that Austrian border town, we immediately went to the railroad station where Mother bought two tickets. We left for Obernberg to be united with my sister and two brothers. A short time later, I registered to attend the Hauptschule (Senior High School) in the nearby city of Linz. How wonderful it was to have a family and go to school again.

That Christmas we went to the Mette (Midnight Mass) as a family. On the way out of the church I was drawn to a Nativity display. As I looked at the Christ Child in the manger, the thought came to me that here was the Son of God. He too became a refugee like me when he had to flee with His mother and foster father into Egypt to save His life. He even got lost (in the temple) like I did (in the monastery). So many parallels were evident to me, that I never felt closer to Jesus than at that moment. A few minutes later an old lady came to the manger and greeted me with the familiar "Praised be Jesus Christ." Tears welled up in my eyes because it brought back to my mind the greeting dispute with the Jugendfuehrer. I responded with a grateful heart, "For all eternity, Amen." Everything was going to be all right with the world again.

#### END NOTES:

The Kozauer family was relocated again in June of 1946 -- this time to Esslingen, Germany. They did not know if their father, the elder Nikolaus Kozauer, had survived the war or where he was until September, 1947 when he was finally reunited with his family.

The Kozauer family wanted to return to their home in Sophiendorf, but they learned that they would be subject to Stalin's Penal Code of 1942 which stated that persons who came under Nazi control outside of their domicile for a specified period of time would have to undergo ten years of rehabilitation in a gulag. They also received the terrible news that Jakob Kozauer, a brother of the elder Nikolaus Kozauer, had been beaten to death in the street in Sophiendorf by partisans. Jacob had returned to his home and family expecting to resume his former life as a farmer. Nikolaus and Margaret Kozauer realized they could not return home, so they decided it would be best to apply for emigration to the United States.

Because Margaret Kozauer had been born in the United States, she was told that she and her two youngest children were eligible to return. The United States government would advance the transportation costs, but this was a loan which would have to be repaid. Again the Kozauer family was separated. In 1947 Margaret and her sons John and Thomas went to the United States. They lived in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania where Margaret worked hard to repay the government loan and earn enough to bring the rest of her family to the United States. The elder Nikolaus Kozauer and his daughter Agnes arrived in 1949, but it wasn't until 1950 that the younger Nikolaus Kozauer was able to emigrate and once again be reunited with his family.

The early years in the United States were very difficult, and the elder Nikolaus Kozauer especially missed his farm in Sophiendorf. Eventually, the family overcame the hardships of life in a new land. In "My Odyssey" Nikolaus Kozauer writes about how his mother insisted that her children develop whatever talents they had to the fullest, no matter what sacrifices had to be made.

The descendants of Margaret and Nikolaus Kozauer are still living in the United States.

Madeline Stanley, 2005

(continued on next page)

## **WELTANSCHAUUNG EINES KARPATHEN - DEUTSCHEN FLUECHTLINGS**

Irgendwo bin ich am Wege,  
mich mir selbst ganz zu ergruenden,  
nach des Daseins erstem Aufschrei  
fragend Ziel und Ursprung finden.

Bin am Weg mit leeren Haenden;  
weiss nun sicher nur dies Wissen:  
Dem Verstande bleibt verborgen,  
was wir nicht begreifen müssen.

Durch den Raum, durch alle Zeiten,  
winkt - der war und wird und ist--  
mir unfassbar, -- und ich glaude:  
Vater unser, der Du bist!

Nikolaus J. Kozauer

## **LAMENT**

Wir hatten eine Heimet in Sofiendorf, Karpatenland,  
Mit ihr verknuepft in Liebe uns ein festes Band.  
Dort lebten wir, von allen fern, ein schoenes stilles Glueck.  
Das Herze voller Sehnsucht, denkt immer noch Zurueck.

Es kam die Zeit mit tausend Wunden,  
Das Schicksal, es hat auch uns gefunden.  
Bezwungen war vom Unheil unser Glueck,  
Und niemehr gibt es ein Zurueck.

Nikolaus J. Kozauer

(English translations follow on page 67)

(Translation of poems on page 66)

**PHILOSOPHY OF A CARPATHO-GERMAN REFUGEE**

Somewhere I am on my way,  
To thoroughly get to know myself.  
After my existence's first outcry,  
To find my destination and my origin.

I am on my way with empty hands,  
I know only for sure this realization:  
To the mind remains hidden,  
What we do not have to understand.

Through the space, through all times,  
Works - He who was, will be, and is -  
Incomprehensible to me, - and I believe:  
Our Father, who art!

Nikolaus J. Kozauer

**LAMENT**

We had a home in Sophiendorf, Carpatho Land.  
With it unites us, in love, a robust band.  
There we lived, apart from all, in quiet happiness;  
The heart, full of yearning, still remembers its blissfulness.

The time of a thousand wounds arrived by us.  
Unknowing destiny took charge of us.  
Vanquished by calamity was our happiness,  
And never will there be a return to blissfulness.

Nikolaus J. Kozauer

# Sofiendorf in 1944

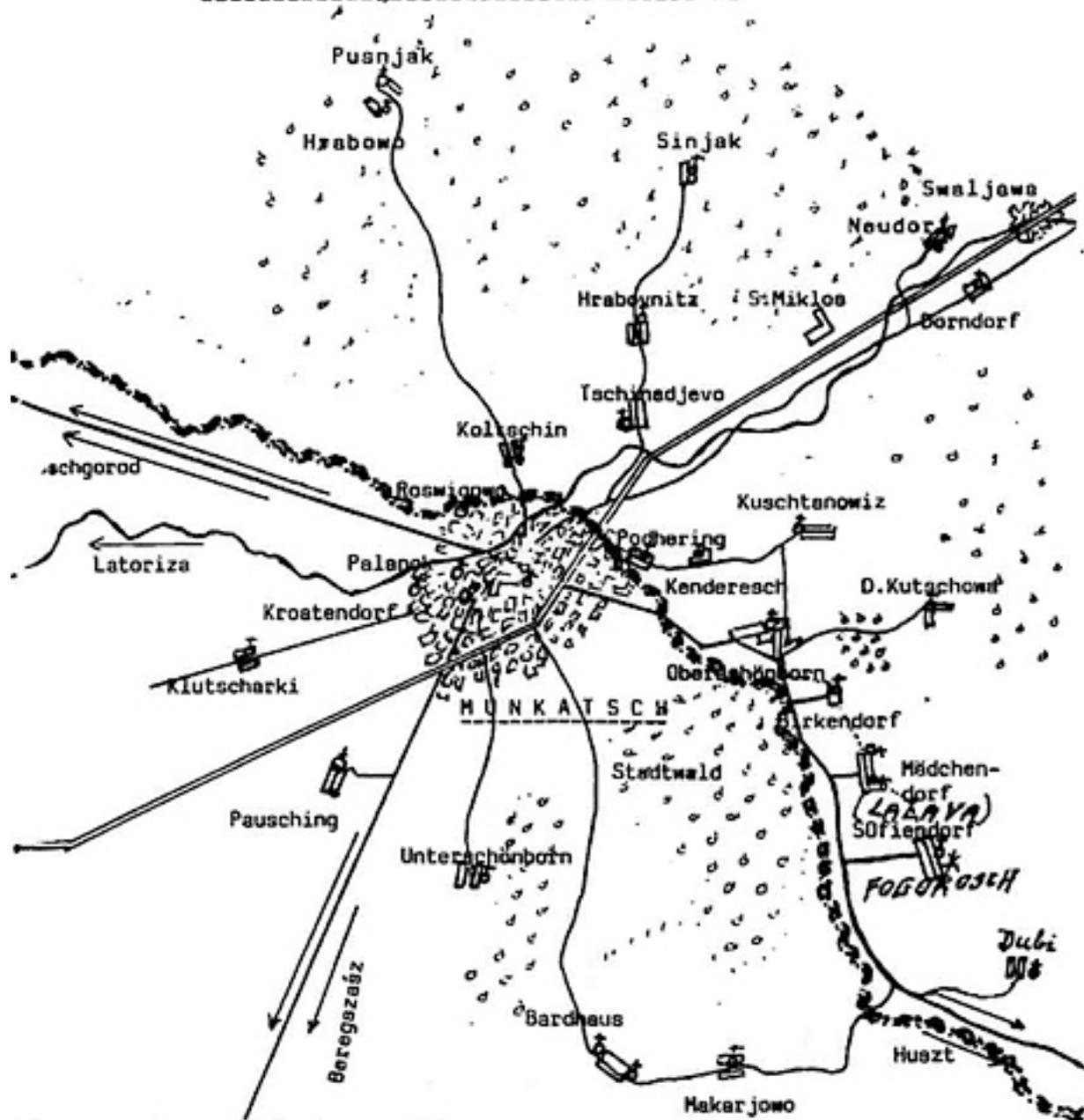
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*the German language Island: around Mukacevo*  
Die deutsche Sprachinsel um Mukatsch



Map, courtesy of Nikolaus J. Kozauer

*Die widernatürliche Grenze vom 8.10.1938 bis 6.3.1939*



The Carpatho Ukraine is located west of the Carpathian Mountains, east of Slovakia, and north of Hungary and Romania. On this map, it is shown as a shaded-in area of Western Ukraine

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LANDESKONSKRIPTION 1828

HUNGARIA  
COMITATUS BEREGLIENSIS

*Sophiendorf*

MICROFILM 0622985

VAGYONÖSSZEIRAS, 1828

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## THE TAX CENSUS OF 1828

by Madeline Stanley, 2003

The following is a summary of the last few pages of the tax census taken in Sophiendorf for the year 1828. This final part of the census was titled, "Observationes" and, like the rest, was recorded in Latin. It has been translated by Mark Clauser. Mark was not able to give a word-by-word translation because of the poor quality of the microfilm image, faded ink, unknown abbreviations, and difficulties with 19th century handwriting and 19th century agricultural terms. He was able to tell what the document was mostly about because many words were clear even though whole sentences could not be read. In the future, perhaps someone will be able to examine the original document in the Hungarian archives and interpret it with greater accuracy. For now, we are glad to have the indistinct microfilm image even though it leaves many questions unanswered. It should be remembered that much in this summation is speculation on my part; I have phrased my sentences to indicate this.

The tax assessor came to Sophiendorf in February, 1829 to record the harvest of 1828. He worked at this for three days -- February 10th, 11th, and 12th. He made a list of 21 male villagers, probably all the heads of households. He counted the number of oxen, milk cows, sterile cows, steers, and horses. The farmers are listed in a column titled "Inquilini" meaning "Tenants". The fraction 2/3 is written beside all 21 names under a column titled "Procreatio Seminaturae" meaning "Grain Production". This probably refers to the amount of grain due to the Schoenborn landlords. The villagers were probably allowed to keep 1/3 of the grain harvest for themselves. This tax census shows that the Schoenborn family had an efficient administrative structure in place to protect their investment, and the Sophiendorf farmers were carefully monitored by its agents.

On February 14, after the assessor completed his work, he apparently sat down with several men who represented the community. It seems that the purpose of this meeting was to allow the tenant-farmers to explain the problems they had had during the growing season of 1828. Very likely the farmers were trying to convince the assessor that these difficulties should be considered when taxes were levied. Their "observations" were recorded by the assessor.

The document "Observationes" begins with a formal introduction of which the following words can be read:

*“. . .as much as you wish. . .these things are under the jurisdiction of the excellent family Schoenborn, looking from the time you were brought in. . .and to those inhabitants. . .from the original roots.”*

(There is also a reference to an "island", but its meaning is unclear.) The passage seems to be an acknowledgement that the farmers being assessed were of the seven original families that were brought to Sophiendorf in 1804 by the Schoenborns. It is possible that the men who attended the final meeting with the assessor were heads of these original families, and, as such, were spokesmen for the small community.

There follows a list of names of the men who were present at the meeting: Nicolaus Pfeifer, Joannes Kotzauer, Jacobi Dumes, Carolus Vitzissek, Augustine Sinn, Francis Vagan, and Joannis Szlavik. (Spellings are likely to be wrong because of the early 19th century handwriting.) Joannis Szlavik is not listed as one of the 21 heads- of-households, so this may have been the name of the official who was the tax assessor. Possibly there were others present, but the bottom of the previous page where they may have been listed is illegible. After the names are listed, it says:

*"We have noted the following things."*

The document then goes on to record the difficulties faced by the farmers.

The vineyards are mentioned first:

*"The people of this possession have a measure of what is being earned from the cultivation of the vineyards."*

Next, "a certain higher place" or "an elevation" is described. The farmers say that the higher elevation has clay soil and is, therefore, sterile or barren. They seem to be explaining why grapes cannot be grown there.

A particular place called "Avena" is mentioned as an area that is planted in the spring. ("Avena" can mean "a foreign place".) A reference is made to a sickle; perhaps this refers to the shape of the land. Something must be done or applied to this (sickle-shaped?) piece of land every three years to keep it productive.

Storm damage is reported:

*"On account of storms. . .it hardly brings back the (value?) of the seed."*

The location of some rented land on a ridge is then described. There are several place names mentioned as reference points; one of them is Munkacs. It then says:

*"In the territory of this possession is (proper name?) . . . fields have a capacity of 14 measures. . . we hardly receive a classification individually. . ."*

In this section, the farmers are perhaps saying that the assessment should not be based on the agricultural yield of the area as a whole, but on individual fields.

Next, there is something about seeds. Once the leaves are separated, there is some kind of problem with the measure and the way the seeds are weighed.

The name "Avena" is written again. The seed-beds of this place produce only one "measure", apparently not as much as expected. There is something about the measure of the land compared to what is produced. The measure is 1/4 of the size of a field that an ox can plow in one day. This is followed by some calculations that seem to be about seed. We were not able to figure out or even guess about the difficulty the farmers were describing.

The document goes on to discuss the pasture land:

*“In the meadows. . . there are pebbles (or gravel). . . the cow. . .in this place is milked for seven months or 310 days. It gives indeed one and one half (measures?) of milk.”*

There is more about cows, but the writing becomes too faint to read.

On the final page, the document seems to be summing up. There is more about the damage caused by storms and rain:

*“The inhabitants of this possession. . . the crops were already ripe. . .damage to them”*

The farmers say that some of the damage was caused by evil-doers. Mark Clauser first translated this as “vandalism” but then said that the meaning was more accurately “witchcraft” or “black magic”. The farmers seemed to think that they had an enemy or enemies who would injure them in this way.

The assessor finishes by saying that he has recorded these “public objections” about “natural things”. He records the date as February 14, 1829. Seven or eight signatures and two seals are at the bottom of the page. The names are unfamiliar, and most of them seem to be in the same handwriting.

Names have been traced from  
the microfilm image.

- 1 Nicholas Pfeifer
- 2 Lorenz Kutzauer
- 3 Josephus Mikec
- 4 Jacobus Turnet
- 5 Schreier etusomus
- 6 Joachim Lu hat
- 7 Vidus Koszauer
- 8 Josephus Koszauer
- 9 Carolus Vidzentsete
- 10 Joanny Schöffel
- 11 Josephus Schöffel
- 12 Josephus Timbhl

- 13 Vid Caroli Ulmann
- 14. Sebastian Dekker
- 15 Laukens of Sinn
- 16 Americ of Sinn
- 17 Francis Vagan
- 18 Vidus Math. Schner
- 19 Josephus Kreiff
- 20 Augustus of Sinn
- 21. Maximus Seiler

Ad 9<sup>um</sup> Territorium Possessionis hujus velut elevationi loco situm, procellarum  
imbriumque abrogationi adeo expeditum est, ut Jacobi Possessionis hujus stipulatio  
jam sequens inane fiat, non estque remota nisi legantur, - accedente Male-  
ficio huius etiam eo, quod iam pastus, quem patris possessoriales penitus  
deserunt, huc omnia de patris comparate recessione. Signaturae Cera.  
requiritur localis, ex sylvis, dominiis, cum indulta Domini Territorii  
iter.

Et 10<sup>um</sup>, 11<sup>um</sup>, 12<sup>um</sup> et 13<sup>um</sup> Mahil.

Et 14<sup>um</sup> Praejecturas Publicas vero quidem, naturalia solum et libere  
quocumque suspensio, tituloque hoc habet Lexiconi 14. s. 8.

Signaturae Praejecturas de 14. s. 8. 529

Carolo Burdigi 20. 10.  
Januar. 1829

Al. xij. Nepoli de 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. s. 8. 529  
P. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. s. 8. 529

*Photos*











## DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

We would like to thank Alexei Filipov, Conrad Hoffner, Ivan Ilnicki, Jennifer Stanley, and Tom Zahn who have given us their photographs of Zofia for this book.

1. Going uphill through Zofia. The church is at the top of the hill.
2. There is usually a fence between the house and the road.
3. Ivan Ilnicki is standing by one of the roadside wells.
4. Leaving Zofia. This photo was taken from the other side of the hill in Photo #1.
5. This lady has just been to one of the wells.
6. Lukatsch House, 19th century
7. Popovich House
8. Ivan Beckert House
9. Anton Shin House, 20th century
10. Pfeifer House, 19th century
11. Hardunka House
12. Anton Beckert House, 20th century
13. Elizabeth Beckert House
14. Some people in Zofia own cars, but these vehicles are also useful.
15. Steps leading up to the outer gate of the church.
16. Some people own trucks, but horse-drawn wagons are a common sight.
17. This open shed on the side of the church houses three bells.
18. Tom Zahn is trying to read the inscription on the smallest bell.
19. St. Stephan's Church was Roman Catholic until 1944. It is now Orthodox.
20. - 21. The interior of the church. It is beautifully decorated and well maintained. Photo #21 was taken from the choir loft. The benches are the original ones.
22. The elementary school is located in back of the church.
23. - 27. Scenes in the cemetery. Ivan Ilnicki white-washed some of the stones so their inscriptions could be seen in the photos. The heart-shaped metal plaque in photo #25 has since been stolen along with many other grave markers.