

# *The Internment - Camp Jarek*

*(from December 1944 till April 1946)*

*translated by Sieghart Rein*

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<u><i>Table of contents</i></u>	<u>page:</u>
<u><i>Introduction</i></u>	<u>2</u>
<u><i>Camp Jarek 1944–1946</i></u>	<u>3</u>
<u><i>The Necrology of Camp Jarek from 44 communities (1944-1946)</i></u>	<u>4</u>
<u><i>To the Pictures</i></u>	<u>7</u>
<u><i>Names of the Commandants of Camp Jarek</i></u>	<u>9</u>
<u><i>Several Reports of Survivors (Short Version)</i></u>	<u>10</u>
<u><i>Georg Haug from Jarek Reports</i></u>	<u>10</u>
<u><i>The Camp Physician, Dr. Hans Müller</i></u>	<u>11</u>
<u><i>A Fellow-Countryman from Schowe Reports</i></u>	<u>11</u>
<u><i>A Fellow-Countryman from Futok Reports (Futok Heimatbuch)</i></u>	<u>12</u>
<u><i>”My Second Life” by Susanna Harfmann</i></u>	<u>13</u>
<u><i>The Farmer Jakob Pleesz</i></u>	<u>13</u>
<u><i>Katharina Haller from Neu-Schowe</i></u>	<u>14</u>
<u><i>The Camp through the Eyes of A Child (Short Version)</i></u>	
<u><i>Account by Mrs. Agathe Dorth-Prochaska</i></u>	<u>15</u>
<u><i>Here Follow Just A Few Accounts (Full-Length Version)</i></u>	<u>17</u>
<u><i>Georg Haug from Jarek</i></u>	<u>17</u>
<u><i>A Statements of Farmer Jakob Pleesc</i></u>	
<u><i>from Schajkasch Sveti Istvan, District Titel</i></u>	<u>22</u>
<u><i>The Camp through the eyes of a Child (Full-Length Version)</i></u>	<u>24</u>

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## **Introduction**

The Danube Swabian village Jarek in the Batschka was left by nearly all of its 2,000 inhabitants on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944, in several treks. They fled ahead of the advancing Russian army and from the partisans. The inhabitants, who had no horse and cart, were brought in trucks of the German military to Neusatz (Novi Sad) on the Danube and evacuated in ships. Only very few families and several old people stayed behind, who did not want to expose themselves to the exertions of fleeing.

The deserted village, into which the entire harvest had been brought, was completely plundered in the following weeks, and already on December 4, 1944 the first Danube Swabian inhabitants of the neighboring villages, who had not fled, were admitted to the newly established "Internment Camp" Batschki-Jarak.

The reason for this so-called internment were the "Avnoj Laws," which were enacted in November 1944 in Jajce and which are in effect yet today. In these laws all the possessions of the Danube Swabians were expropriated and the Danube Swabians were deprived of all civil rights and declared outlaws.

Camp Jarek has acquired a woeful notoriety. From December 4, 1944 till the closing of the camp during Holy Week 1946, between 15,000 and 17,000 people were interned here, of whom approximately 6,500 lost their lives due to starvation, illnesses and mistreatment by the partisans, and were buried in mass graves. It involved primarily the aged and children, as well as persons unable to work, who were brought here from other camps of the Batschka, Gakovo and Krushiwl. Thus it can justifiably be said that the Camp Jarek was an extermination and death camp.

Many of the Jarek families and old people remaining at home lost their lives in the camp. This number was increased as a result of several families, who at first had taken flight, returned again to Jarek at the first available opportunity and who, of course, were immediately put into the camp. The survivors of Camp Jarek were transferred to other camps after its closing. From where many a person succeeded in fleeing to Hungary. However, many survivors were able to emigrate to Germany only in the fifties of the last century.

In accounts of their experiences the survivors described their ordeals in Camp Jarek. These accounts were in part published in the book "*Leidenswege der Donauschwaben.*" In the Jarek Heimatbuch "*Zammegetraa,*" Heddesheim, 1994, several reports by Michael Schmidt and Gustav Morgenthaler were recounted abridged in the chapter "The Camp Jarek." The following pages are taken from this book.

Our website should also serve as a platform for other survivors, where they can upload their accounts and experiences. Please contact me for this purpose ([inge.morgenthaler@hog-jarek.de](mailto:inge.morgenthaler@hog-jarek.de)).

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## *The Camp Jarek, 1944 - 1946*

(Source: *Heimatbuch "Zammegetraa", OA Jarek, Heddesheim 1994*)

The AVNOJ<sup>(\*)</sup> Decrees which were adopted on November 21, 1944 in Jajce, assumed the cooperation of the ethnic Germans (in Yugoslavia) with the "Enemy" to be proved and provided — as a consequence of this collaboration and support of the enemy — the complete dispossession of the Germans who stayed and those who fled. Immediately following these AVNOJ Decrees ensued the establishment of the concentration camp of Jarek as the first of three camps in the Batschka (Jarek, Gakowo and Kruschiwl).

((\*) AVNOJ – (Anti-Fascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia)

JAREK, the German name, (Serbo-Croatian: Bački-Jarak, Hungarian: Tiszaistvanfalva) was a purely German, Lutheran village. It was founded in 1787 as the last settlement under the Josephinian settlement period, and, in the month of October 1944, had barely 2,000 inhabitants. These — with a few exceptions, for example, old people and two other families — had fled on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944 all complete with horse and wagon, on tractors with trailers, by trucks and then aboard ship on the Danube. An entire farming village, with an agriculture that produced in abundance, with grain-filled attics (**1\***), with a hardly conceivable amount of livestock in the stables (**2\***), stood suddenly vacant over night, an invitation for pillaging. The Plundering extended virtually from October 1944 across several weeks. Most of it was carried off by Hungarians to Temerin; the inhabitants of the surrounding *salasches* (farms) hardly participated in the plundering.

This vacant Swabian village was considered suited for a collection camp for the aged, sick, incapacitated Danube Swabians and their children remaining at home. It became a death and extermination camp.

Beginning December 1944 the first inmates from various German villages located nearby were admitted. From then on, for 17 months, until the dissolution of the camp in Holy Week of 1946 (some report the dissolution on Palm Sunday), thousands upon thousands of ethnic German men, women and children had to suffer and also die, through the preprogrammed objective of the partisans.

According to various sources the maximum number of camp inmates amounted to approximately 15,000. A fellow-countryman from Futog, who has survived Jarek, speaks of 16,000 to 17,000; one from Schowe of 16,000 to 18,000.

Leopold Rohrbacher estimates the camp inmates on Aug. 16, 1945 at 18,068 (in the book "*Ein Volk ausgelöscht*"); in the spring 1945 at 16,700 persons.

The number of deceased, who died during those 17 months of camp life, is specified by Dr. Josef Neuner at 6,434. Dr. Johann Müller, camp physician, reports of 6,536 dead.

Gustav Morgenthaler, member of the Ortsausschuss Jarek, has through painstaking research compiled the names of the deceased from the various towns. His work is not yet complete, but he too arrives at a number of 5,491 deceased ascertained by name, who died of the inhumane conditions in the camp (see the following table).

**If using the underlying plausible death toll at 6,434, in 17 months an average of 13 persons died daily.**

*(1\*) The last Mayor (Richter ) of Jarek , Nikolaus Schurr, left behind records about the assets left behind. Accordingly cereals left behind were: 1,665 railroad cars at 20 tons each of maize, wheat, barley, oats, and the like!*

*(2\*) Same source: 3,200 head of hogs, 2,220 head of cattle, 1,200 head of horses, approximately 13,000 head of chickens, ducks and geese!*

***The "necrology" of the Camp Jarek from 45 communes (1944 -1946)***

<b><u>Those who died in Camp Jarek were from the following towns:</u></b>	
<b>Altker</b>	<b>70 Persons</b>
<b>Apatin</b>	<b>27 Persons</b>
<b>Banoschtor</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Batsch Sentivan (Prig. Sv. Ivan)</b>	<b>18 Persons</b>
<b>Beschka</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Budisava</b>	<b>18 Persons</b>
<b>Bukin</b>	<b>391 Persons</b>
<b>Bulkes</b>	<b>655 Persons</b>
<b>Batschko Novo Selo</b>	<b>373 Persons</b>
<b>Charlville</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Neu Futog</b>	<b>76 Persons</b>
<b>Alt Futog</b>	<b>163 Persons</b>
<b>Feketitch</b>	<b>12 Persons</b> (only 3 are registered by name)
<b>Gajdobra</b>	<b>332 Persons</b>
<b>Neu Gajdobra (Wekerledorf)</b>	<b>186 Persons</b>
<b>Gospodjinci</b>	<b>7 Persons</b>
<b>Indija</b>	<b>10 Persons</b>
<b>Jarek</b>	<b>31 Persons</b>
<b>Kernei</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Kischker</b>	<b>182 Persons</b>
<b>Kulpin</b>	<b>10 Persons</b>

<b>Kutzura</b>	<b>76 Persons</b>
<b>Kula</b>	<b>96 Persons</b>
<b>Miletitch (Srpski Miletic)</b>	<b>6 Persons</b>
<b>Nadalj</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Neu Pazua</b>	<b>3 Persons</b>
<b>Obrovac</b>	<b>127 Persons</b>
<b>Neu Palanka</b>	<b>218 Persons</b>
<b>Deutsch Palanka</b>	<b>376 Persons</b>
<b>Schabalj</b>	<b>61 Persons</b>
<b>Sajkasch Sveti Ivan</b>	<b>24 Persons</b>
<b>Sekitsch</b>	<b>46 Persons</b>
<b>Setschan</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Sonta</b>	<b>2 Persons</b>
<b>Schowe</b>	<b>507 Persons</b> (8 Persons are not ascertained by name)
<b>Titel</b>	<b>48 Persons</b>
<b>Temerin</b>	<b>40 Persons</b>
<b>Torschau</b>	<b>270 Persons</b>
<b>Tscherwenka</b>	<b>135 Persons</b>
<b>Towarisch</b>	<b>1 Person</b>
<b>Vukowar</b>	<b>28 Personen</b>
<b>Weprowatz</b>	<b>103 Persons</b>
<b>Werbas (Alt und Neu)</b>	<b>601 Persons</b>
<b>Petrovaradin</b>	<b>12 Persons</b> (it was, however, to have been over 20 Persons)
<b>Tschib/Cib</b>	<b>144 Persons</b>
<b>altogether ascertained by name: (to date: 1989)</b>	<b>5.491 Persons</b>

The community of **Bulkes** has the highest number of deceased in Camp Jarek to lament.

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(This text on **page 6** is only in German – translation is following soon.)

Die Aufarbeitung dieser historischen Ereignisse und Präzisierung dieser Zahlen ist noch im Gange. Jedoch dürften ohne Zugang zu den gewiss noch vorhandenen Unterlagen und Akten an Ort und Stelle der Öffentlichkeit keine glaubhafteren Zahlen mehr vermittelt werden.

Jarek, 14 km nördlich von Novi Sad (Neusatz) gelegen, war mit dieser Stadt durch eine gute Straße verbunden. In Nord-Süd Richtung wurde diese Straße - Hauptgasse genannt - von der Kreuzgasse durchschnitten. Die Lagerinsassen befanden sich in allen Gassen und Häusern des Dorfes, mit Ausnahme der Hauptgasse. Diese - in ihr standen die großen und geräumigen Häuser der reichen Bauern - war dem "Wirtschaftsbetrieb" vorbehalten. In der Hauptgasse wurde auch die Traktorenstation errichtet. Sie war im Wirtshaus Isele, Haus Schübler und Haus Schlosser Gieß.

Sehr viele Häuser waren auch als Verwaltungsgebäude für das Lager und als Unterkunft für die Wachmannschaften reserviert. Alle Wertgegenstände wie Möbel, Kleider, Wäsche, Geräte u. ä., die von den Plünderungen übrig blieben, wurden ebenfalls in bestimmte Häuser eingelagert. In die noch verbleibenden restlichen Häuser wurden die Menschen dann hineingepfercht und litten unter menschenunwürdigen Bedingungen.

Der Jareker Mühlenbesitzer Georg Haug, selbst Insasse des Lagers, hat Einzelheiten detailliert geschildert: „Der Anblick des Ortes (Februar/März 1945) war ein Jammer, so auch der Anblick der Menschen. Einfriedungen, Bretterzäune, wie Zaunstützen waren zu dieser Zeit fast alle weg und verbrannt.

In den Zimmern, die im Durchschnitt ca. 5 x 6 m Größe hatten, lagen 15 - 20 und noch mehr Menschen in einem Raum, die wenigsten im Besitz einer Decke. Sie lagen mit den Kleidern in Stroh eingewühlt, so wie es vorher in unseren Schweineställen bei den Schweinen zu sehen war. Fast alle waren schon verlaust und verdreckt, es gab keine Klosetts, weil die Türen und Sitze in diesem strengen Winter schon verbrannt waren. Die Verunreinigung wuchs, weil ja in einem Haus mit 3 Zimmern 40 bis 50 und noch mehr Menschen waren, und die Gefahr für die Gesundheit wurde immer größer.

Die Verpflegung war sehr schwach, gegen Frühjahr (1945) verschlechterte sich die Situation. Wir erhielten in einem Schöpfer "Bohnensuppe", in der 2 bis 3 Stück Bohnen waren. Schlimmer war das Los derer, die von weit her ins Lager kamen und nicht zur Arbeit gingen. Sie verhungerten im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes, die Leute spürten gar keinen Hunger mehr, sie schlepten sich heraus an die Sonne und schliefen dort in der Nacht für immer ein."

Der Jareker Friedhof lag an der Südseite des Dorfes. Die ersten Toten des Lagers wurden ohne Sarg einfach in die Gruben hineingestoßen. Das ging so weiter, selbst als täglich etwa 8 bis 10 oder 12 Menschen starben.

Als aber täglich 30, 40, 50 oder mehr Leute starben, wurden sie in Massengräbern verscharrt.

Auf diese Weise entstanden sechs oder sieben Massengräber mit einer Länge von 60 bis 70 m, die vom Totenhaus her unter der letzten Gruftreihe beginnend, in Richtung auf die Häuser liefen.

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From the **Camp Jarek** here the following **5 Illustrations** (which are sadly in no good quality).



*Illustration 1 — The remains of the former Jarek cemetery (in 1966).*



*Illustration 2 — The cemetery grounds with the remaining tombs (in 1966).*



*Illustration 3 — The mass graves ("laid out" from December 1944 to April 1946), which were joined to the former cemetery in seven rows (1966).*





*Illustration 4 — View from cemetery to the village Jarek (1966).  
(In the background there are the mass graves.)*



*Illustration 5 — Goats romp about on the remains of the ruined graves.*

*(The last picture originates from Prof. Walter Neuner  
(at the place already cited, p. 75).)*

Cows, pigs and sheep subsequently grazed in this area, which had been long since overgrown. Nowadays it has been, at least partially, already built-over.

The camp inmates were strictly watched. Altogether there were 14 guard posts, which were occupied day and night. They controlled all entrances and exits. The names of the responsible "commandants" regrettably exist only partially.

*A short account of their "deeds" follows.*



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## ***The Names of the Commandants of Camp Jarek***

*(Source: Bundesarchiv Koblenz: Sirmien I/1)*

***Dragojlovic, Jana***, born about 1921 in Banostor (Srem), is portrayed as a rude, mean and sadistic woman. Her parents were too good to her and were pro-German. Jana joined the partisans in 1943, was to have had dealings with them earlier. She was the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandant of Camp Jarek for a few months. Here in Jarek she displayed her diabolical sadism upon innocent children and women. She rode with particular delight through the camp, on a horse belonging to a certain Lusch from B. Palanka, where she assailed children playing in the camp yard and unsuspecting women. She delighted in pulling women by the hair and striking them with a riding crop. The children had to go to the meadow or to the edge of the ditch in all kinds of weather and pluck grass; she then rode with the horse over the children and struck their heads wherever she happened to hit. She participated also in maltreating of the German men and women in the camp jail. Her dictum every day as she scanned the death list was: "Far too few have yet died; as many as have already died have to die daily still." The number of deceased was 50 to 80 persons daily. Jana married a Serbian merchant from Temerin. Supposedly she was to have fallen from a motorcycle and has died.

***Mehandzija, Mirko***, was the 4<sup>th</sup> camp commandant of Camp Bački Jarak (Jarek). When it was dissolved, he was sent to Krusevlje (Kruschiwl) with the camp inmates, where he continued to be camp commandant until that camp was also dissolved. Mehandzija originally from Srem; was coarse and brutal. He, like Jana, had women harnessed to a horse cart, and they had to pull the heavily loaded wagon under constant floggings.

***Botic, Mita***, was born in 1930 in Pasicevo (Altker). At the marching in of the partisans she joined them, participating also in the pillaging of German houses. Later on she came into the camp at Bački Jarak, where she conducted the body searches of camp prisoners (women) and also brought action against them and beat them.

***Botic, Mito***, likewise from Pasicevo, brother of Mita, was the opposite of his sister. He was also three to four months "Upravnik" in Camp Bački Jarak. He hampered his sister occasionally, but she did not listen to her brother.

***Djoka*** (last name unknown) originally also from Srem. Third camp commandant of Camp Bački Jarak. A coarse man, but his wife was yet a worse beast than he. When Djoka beat the camp inmates she constantly came and urged on her husband as well as the partisans, they should hit the Germans harder and more yet; "after all it's best to kill all the Germans, then we'll at least have peace."

The cruelties portrayed were the order of the day. As for the lot of the camp people, from the time of their admittance they were exposed to the chicanes of the guards, who were mostly composed of young and insolent kids from Srem; but in part also from the surrounding Serbian villages. They [the camp inmates] suffered from inconceivable starvation; consequently there was typhoid, spotted fever. Lice infestation was unbearable; the health effects were disastrous. It was alleviated only when, in the middle of 1945, DDT powder arriving through donations, got into the hands of the people. Hunger, but especially the fact that the meager fare, moreover served unsalted, afflicted the people severely. Those admitted during the "saltless" months died swiftly; reportedly "like flies."

The guards again and again conceived new chicanes and indignities.

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### ***Here are several Reports by Survivors***

#### **Georg Haug from Jarek Reports:**

"Under the pretext, 'you're going home,' the people had to pack their yet scanty available belongings and report in front of the houses. However, they didn't go home; four partisans came with a white sheet and all of the inmates had to hand over their jewelry and valuables. With the words 'Trazimo minjuse' ('we're looking for earrings') everything that looked like jewelry had to be turned in immediately. Those people who tried to hurriedly hide something were thrashed. The earrings were literally torn from one woman's ears when she was unsuccessful in removing them herself!"

#### **Georg Haug continue the Report:**

"At Easter 1945 the partisans had chosen a special humiliation for the incarcerated clergymen: The Catholic Priest from Temerin (I believe his name was Gaspar Kopping), the Lutheran Pastor Klein from Katsch and the Reformed Pastor Weimann from Schowe were driven to the town hall, whereby they had been bedecked with various green branches and field flowers, like the cattle at the *Almabtrieb* (ceremonial driving of the cattle from the mountain pasture). There in the town hall they had to clean the toilets of the 'uprava' (administration)."

Jacob Schwindt in the Heimatbuch Katsch enlightens us about the further fate of the Lutheran Pastor Klein from Katsch: "our good Pastor Klein in this hell had to literally suffer the afflictions of Christ. Because he indeed did not refrain from providing pastoral care to his fellow countrymen, he was abased, derided, cursed, beaten and finally battered to death. He has become a martyr in the truest sense of the word, a faithful, upright man who had no enemies."

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***Now follow further partly abridged accounts of experiences of former inmates of Camp Jarek.***

***These reports are identified by name, all of them confirm or substantiate the horrible occurrences in the camp from December 1944 to April 1946.***

***The hateful disposition of the partisans, their inhuman doings and dealings culminated always in the sarcastic statements: "You'll be put in the 'Recreation Camp Jarek,' there you can feast and rest!" Eternal rest was meant by that.***

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## ***The Camp Physician, Dr. Johann Müller,***

***Community physician from Waldneudorf/Budisava, has survived the camp and relates:***

"The Germans from the Titel District were the very first in Jarek. The village was empty when we arrived. We were housed with the mill proprietor Franz Pichler in the Wurtz Haus in the Ochsen-gasse. Several days after us came the people from Schowe, Neusatz (Novi Sad), then people from Palanka and others. Jarek was completely surrounded by partisans. No one was permitted to leave the place; we weren't even allowed in the street. We got nothing to eat for four to five days, then the kitchen was established and warm food was given out, which, however, was inedible. It was mostly dry peas or roux soup. After two to three months we got only saltless fare for half-a-year.

The fellow countrymen from Bulkes were brought to Jarek only after April 18, 1945. They arrived just at the saltless period.

These people dropped like flies. Each day ten to twelve people from Bulkes died. Within three weeks most of them were dead. Jarek had 2,000 inhabitants before the war. Now there were 12,000 to 14,000 people housed here. I know that because every deceased person was registered by me. I had it organized this way that every morning certain people reported the names of the dead in every street quarter. The people died from typhus, which had originated from the lice, from dystrophy (nutritional disorder), diarrhea and exhaustion. The small children had bloated bellies and couldn't stand up because their legs were swollen.

I was ill with encephalitis and typhus. When I was laid up sick, there was no other physician in Jarek. There were no medicines. The camp prisoner Öhl, originally from Temerin — he, too, died in the camp — was druggist and wanted to help the fellow countrymen. We roasted white Kukurutz (maize) on a stove top, ground it and filled small bags with the flour. It was dispensed against diarrhea. We mixed liquid from various herbs into 'heart drops,' which I gave the people. It was really nothing, but the people were delighted when they received anything, because even psychological remedies were in the great want. There were three physicians in Jarek. Their doctor's office and the instruments had been plundered by the 'liberators' — the drugstore likewise."

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## ***A Fellow-Countryman from Schowe Reports:***

"Until Palm Sunday 1945 the situation generally remained unchanged. Diversion was brought about only by the newly admitted, some of whom arrived daily. Shortly before Easter — it might have been Maundy Thursday — a new camp commandant arrived. She was the third one since the existence of the camp. We never learned her actual name. She was called only Jana. With the appearance of this sadist, the Jarek camp became a living hell all at once! Not only the camp inmates hid from her when she rode through the camp with her whip; the guards trembled also when she appeared somewhere.

She commenced Good Friday by ordering the people to clean the street. They had to pluck out the grass with their fingers. The use of any gardening tools was strictly forbidden. The work had to be completed within two hours. Jana then rode through the streets brandishing the whip as always in order to make sure that her order had been carried out. The number of the dead increased constantly and on some days 100 or more were carted away. Initially the graves were opened and the corpses thrown in. Then mass graves had to be dug.

When on the day before the previous corpses had been buried very shallow, the digging continued the next day. The dead were undressed completely, thrown on a wagon and unloaded at the cemetery. It would be too much to report about all that this notorious camp commandant thought of with her morbid imagination to torment and torture the people; to wear them down, not only mentally but also physically with the final goal of destroying them."

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### ***A Fellow-countryman from Futok Reports (Futok Heimatbuch):***

"When we got to the Roman entrenchments toward five o'clock, we realized that the road could only lead to Jarek. Exhausted, wet through and through, with God's help, we reached the community of Jarek around seven o'clock in the evening at pitch-dark night. The women prayed the Rosary the entire way. When we arrived there, the community was occupied by the Russians. Thus we were lodged in emergency accommodations. God be praised that we had dry shelter. At that time already there were German inhabitants in Jarek from the communities Palanka, Katsch, Temerin, Budisava, Schajkasch-Sentiwan, Tschurug, Wekerle, Obrowatz. We remained together for three days, after that the individual families were separated. The women were separated from the men, because the partisans regarded morals highly (!). We were already five days in the camp, but no one had yet inquired whether we had had anything to eat. We knew that they were working on establishing a kitchen; and a total of 19 kitchens were erected. The camp occupants were assigned to the individual kitchens by streets. Approximately 500 to 600 people were assigned to a kitchen. We received no food until the eighth day. It was a watery potato soup without any taste, along with 20 dekagrams (200 g) bread. The rations, as well as the entire treatment in Jarek, were such that thousands perished. When the potatoes had been consumed, only peas or barley were boiled down, but just such a small amount that in most cases only water and a little piece of bread remained. Consequently, and due to malnourishment, death reaped an abundant harvest, especially among the children.

In the spring of 1945 there was a shortage of fuel. Thus only raw food was served often for two to three days: bread, some flour, a few drops of sunflower oil. That was the ration for 24 hours. In spring of 1945 there were approximately 16,000 to 17,000 persons in the camp.

In the spring of 1945 there was no salt, neither for bread nor food. That time was the bitterest in our camp life, since there was only an empty water-soup to be had daily. In summer 1945 the death toll reached an average of 35 to 38 persons daily. The dead were loaded on wagons and carted to the cemetery, where daily deep graves were dug 'in advance.' The dead were stacked into them, then covered with earth.

In spring 1946, during Holy Week, the entire Jarek camp was relocated to Kruschewlje (Kruschiwl)."

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***"My Second Life by " by Susanna Harfmann:***

„I, with my daughter Lieschen and my son Philipp, was in Camp Jarek from the start. I escaped abduction to Russia only because I was pregnant. On May 6, 1945 I have given birth to a son also in Jarek. When he was three months old, I came down with malaria. From then on the health of the child also declined. One cannot raise a child with mere cornmeal. On November 27, 1945 the child died of malnutrition.

Shortly before we were relocated to Kruschiwl (April 1946), we four women who were together in one room, decided to go begging. Bright and early, at four o'clock, when it was still dark, we started on our way to Temerin. We were two women from Palanka as well as Elisabeth Jung, née Jakob (Danis) and I. On the way back it started to rain. The earth began to stick and cling onto my footwear. I had to stop often, take off my shoes and wipe off the clay. Thus I had soon lost the three others. During the way home I often heard gunshots. That was common; one didn't think anything of it anymore.

On the next day two partisans came and searched the houses in order to establish whether someone was missing. I had to go with the partisans. Just 50 meters from Jarek three women were lying, shot by machine guns. They were my three roommates. Two from Palanka and Elisabeth Jung, née Jakob (Danis). They were riddled by volleys of gunfire. Next to each lay yet a bundle with begged food, which they had obtained for themselves, but especially for their malnourished children."

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***The Farmer Jakob Pleesz***

***from Sajkaski Sveti Ivan, District Titel, gave the following statement for the record:***

"The provisions in the camp were entirely inadequate and poor. There was merely a tasteless water-soup without fat and frequently without salt. There was also no meat. The sick were initially separated from the rest of the camp inmates, but received no special food, nor were they treated any better. They lay on some straw on the floor, just like we.

We had two physicians who were likewise interned. One of them couldn't even help himself and died within a short time. The other one, Dr. Müller from Budisava, indeed made an effort, but couldn't accomplish much since there were no medicines available. We had many bugs, mainly lice. In May 1945 typhus broke out in the camp. Everyone was terribly malnourished and utterly emaciated. During that time 40 to 50, even 53 persons died daily. They were buried in mass graves in the cemetery without the presence of relatives and without a priest. At that time I was gravedigger for four months. In one mass grave, 2 meters wide and 2 meters deep, we had laid 500 to 700 dead on top of each other in four to five layers. Only the gravediggers were permitted

to enter the cemetery. Altogether there were 16 gravediggers. Twelve men, I among them, had dug the graves in the morning and covered them up in the evening. Four gravediggers took the dead from the camp to the cemetery, undressed them and stacked them up in the graves that had been dug. The deceased, by order of the partisans, were buried naked; the clothes had to be handed in to a warehouse by the gravediggers. Altogether around 9,300 persons (\*) died from Dec. 3, 1944 until the closing of the camp on April 17, 1946. This figure was told to me by my fellow villager, Jakob Heumel, master mason, who during the whole time was active as gravedigger. The camp in Bački Jarak, which due to its high number of deceased was also called 'death camp' or 'extermination camp'. The camp inmates were divided among the large concentration camps Krusevlje and Gakovo, District Sombor, when it closed on April 17, 1946."

*(\*) The correct number is about 6,300. Possibly it is a question of a copying error of the number given in the report at the transcription of the first handwritten version.*

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***Katharina Haller from Neu-Schowe (Nove Sove), District Neusatz (Novi Sad), reports about the camp life in Jarek (excerpts):***

"Everywhere one looked, one saw people emaciated down to the skeleton, who deloused each other. They lay conscious or even without consciousness and awaited their death. Most of them had wounds all over their bodies. The children had terribly swollen heads and large bellies, and one could count each individual limb.

Wherever one looked, one saw innocent people dying. Some fell asleep forever; others fought adamantly in their death throes. And no one could help another, since everyone was helpless and had to struggle daily and hourly for the maintenance of his life. Everyone had only one goal: to get out of this horrible death camp yet alive. I couldn't go to work in Camp Jarek because I was sick. Those who were still healthy didn't want to go to work, because they received the same food as those who didn't go to work. Consequently the partisans came and randomly got the people for work, even old people and children. They took my 76-year-old grandmother to work also. Since the food was very meager and since the people had to work in the greatest heat or cold, in the snow and rain, and had nothing to wear except their old rags, they had to perish.

They passed out in the heat due to weakness or they got sunstroke; what is more, no one was allowed to help them. They had to lay there until the others went home and took them along.

Those working in the rain got sick afterwards. Most of them came down with pneumonia, flu, influenza, rheumatism, arthritis, etc., and with frostbitten hands and feet.

Typhus and dysentery were the worst."

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## *The Camp as Seen through the Eyes of a Child,*

### *Report by Mrs. Agathe Dorth-Prochaska:*

"We heard that we were going to Jarek; what that meant we certainly didn't know. All those unable to work, the aged and children went to Jarek; but that we learned only later. It was still dark when we arrived in Jarek. There we were divided among the houses. Jarek was an empty village without furniture, without cattle, no cat, no dog, only the interned. Even the well in the yard had dried up; someone had thrown large stones into it all the way to the top.

We were put in a house in the Spitalgasse. It was the first house of two identical houses next to each other (they were the houses of Franz Greuling and Philipp Stroh.) We were put into one of the rooms facing the street. We shared the room with ten other children.

Our home for the coming months was the room. The room was divided in the center with a path. On both sides of the way there was a wall two to three bricks high, which kept the straw off the path. Our few meager items of bedding were put on the straw; our bundles of clothing were used as pillows.

The kitchen was in a house a few houses farther in the same street, so that we didn't have to go too far to fetch our food. Thus the food often was still warm, when got to eat it.

We went to the kitchen with a dish and picked up the food for the entire family. We received food three times a day. The breakfast consisted of cornbread boiled in water; at noon we mostly got soup, it was often pea soup with black bugs in it, and cornbread, which was so coarse that it made your mouth raw. No one was allowed in the street, only three times a day when the church bells were rung and the food was distributed.

At noon when the meals were distributed, the wagon for the dead arrived also pulled by a horse in the middle of the street. The people came up to the right and left sides of the street with their dead, who had died in the last 24 hours. The deceased were thrown on the wagon on top of each other, many a mouth was wide open, eyes open, arms and legs dangling up and down as the wagon drove along the street to the cemetery, where they were put in a mass grave. Many a deceased was yet sewed into the last sheet; the final honor for a dear deceased.

Also death didn't stay away from our small room. The first one whom death took from our midst, Dieter, Aunt Christel Dorth's child, who was still a baby; he must have died during the day. Two small stones were placed on his eyes so that they wouldn't stay open; he was then sewn into a cloth. Overnight he was put into the pantry so that he wouldn't be in the same room with us.

Great-grandmother Becker, the grandmother of my father, was put into the room with us; she was ill; her sister had also died already. She had diarrhea and could not stand anymore; she slept the entire day. She grew weaker constantly, and was put into the horse stable where the seriously ill were put; so that she didn't die in the room with us. One day when I visited her she said very softly so that I could hardly understand her:



'My child, the dogs are chewing on my legs.' When I lifted up the blanket to see, I saw that the rats had bitten her toes; the poor woman wasn't even dead yet."

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*These statements, which the survivors had put on record and which agree with each other in the horrible details, speak a clear language for themselves. They could probably be supplemented yet with further reports, for there are yet survivors, who had gone through this hell and who escaped with their life.*

All reports and witness statements accuse. A criminal regime, represented by vengeful, immature young partisans, who never in their life had fought against the Germans, Tschetnicks or Ustascha, but who in uniform now goaded each other to "heroics" against defenseless old people and children, stands accused in the dock.

However, the victims and their immediate family members are aware that justice will indeed catch up with the perpetrators; respectively, has already convicted those who on the German side have participated in the abominable war crimes.

The arm of the law does not yet reach into Yugoslavia — according to today's standpoint — into Serbia and into the Vojvodina. Many — regrettably they are yet much too few — know the tragedy concerning Camp Jarek. It is compared with the place, which as symbol for the Nazi atrocities and which is written in the history of this century, with Dachau.

A Jewish physician from Neusatz (Novi Sad), who himself had spent a full four years in the German concentration camp Dachau, and who had inspected camp Jarek in the winter of 1945/46, said about it, "that is the most terrible thing that was ever done with people." (\*)

*As closing remarks of this reporting — also intended for reflection and as admonition — the authors present the words of a fellow countrywoman from Sekitsch:*

*„We Danube Swabians, like the Jews,  
Are filled with sorrow profuse.  
Though their dying by the whole world is known;  
Interest in our dead no one has shown!”*

*(Source: 25. Juni 1992 ORTSAUSSCHUSS JAREK  
Michael Schmidt Gustav Morgenthaler)*

*(\*) (from: "Ein Volk ausgelöscht" ("A People Wiped Out,"), by Leopold Rohrbacher,  
Portrayal of Their Deeds)*

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## ***Here Follow Several Reports in Full-Length***

***„My dear fellow countrymen from Jarek,***

I very gladly complied with the request of writing a report about the days and months that I have spent in our beautiful Jarek after the general Escape on October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944. For I am one of the few survivors who have witnessed the tragic doom of our village. Now I'll try to describe my unpleasant memories and the few enjoyable memories the way I still remember them after 14 years."

***Georg Haug,***

***former mill owner in Jarek***

"I had my first unpleasant experience yet on the first day of the escape, October 7, 1944. For the escape I received a tractor with a wagon which was composed of an elevator from Michael Wack. On it the fuel and lubricating oil for the tractors was to be transported. Already after the first 50 meters the axle broke, and we were stuck. It got to be night until the damage was repaired, and since I didn't want to drive into the night, I decided to delay my departure until the next morning. Under great difficulties, which I don't want to describe here in more detail, this departure came about. I got as far as Futog. There I was able to find lodging in the home of my friend Franz Schaab. This short distance, hardly 30 kilometers, had a very sobering effect on me. I could see how it would continue. After due deliberation I came to the conclusion that I didn't want to take part in these pointless exertions. I wanted to return to our home, back to our Jarek.

After the horses had been shod in Futog, I, with two persons, drove back to Jarek to reconnoiter the situation on October 13, 1944. On our return trip the international street was congested with military vehicles. We had to stop five times, since they wanted to take the horses from us. However, I emerged unscathed, for I had credentials from a Hungarian detachment of border patrolmen that I was in its service.

When we approached Jarek from the small entrenchment it looked almost as things do at a fair in Temerin: Livestock and poultry were chased away, across the *Grundlöcher*, fields of the manor, the Arrass Road and through the vineyards. These goings-on didn't bother the billeted German soldiers, on the contrary, they took part in them themselves, by giving new dresses, bed linens and furnishings to Hungarian young women, in order to make them submissive for the indescribable sexual orgies.

In my home almost everything was in good order. Only the groceries had been plundered, and 28 head hogs had been transported by the German military on trucks. In the house and mill the bureaus had been ransacked; the tills and drawers had been broken open. The safe of the J.V.A.G. had been dragged off, and approximately 70 kilograms of bearing metal was missing, which later turned into a catastrophe for me.

Here I want to mention the reception which was accorded me by a part of the Serbians at our return. As we with 23 persons, whose fate was closely linked to mine, two days later switched from the International Street to the Jarek-Temerin Street, Cveto Rakic,

Cenej, came and received me with an embrace and the words: "You came to your senses after all! Who would do anything to you here?" I said to him: 'At a coup something can happen very quickly,' at which he answered: 'What could happen? We, the entire Cenej, will protect you.' 'As long as you're able to,' I remarked, and I noticed for the first time that our Serbian neighbors, too, were afraid of something unknown. 'Sta ce biti snama?' ('What's going to happen to us?'), was their question in those days.

The lootings took on an indescribable scope. From the railroad tracks to the corner of Bohland a seemingly unceasing stream of plunderers moved along from Temerin. They came in on the summer road and the paved highway in a row each, and on the other side they drove back in double rows. Sowing machines, corn seeders, furniture and grains — everything went in the direction of Temerin, whereby sowing machines and corn seeders served as vehicle for those who didn't have a wagon.

I saw three men, who rolled a 400-liter barrel filled with wine to Temerin. (My daughter took very imposing pictures of these goings-on, which would have depicted the tragedy which took place in our village in all its vividness. Whoever hasn't seen that, cannot envision it. Regrettably, the camera got lost during a nocturnal assault by the Russians and Dobrovoljcs.) Also several very good farmers came — if not for anything else — to get at least a wagon full of wheat or sunflowers, which were mainly available in sacks as seeds or for delivery. These lootings were named Biro Janos, "Hitler-Vasar" (Hitler Market). This name survived and perhaps continues to live in the Hungarian colloquial language. Taking the Katsch, Neusatz (Novi Sad), and Cenej side not a tenth of it had been plundered.

I learned that the German division commander planned to ignite the hemp remains at the hemp plant, so that there would be a clear view in case of eventual military action. I wanted to intervene against it by this commander, who was at the house of Johann Lenhardt (house 141), but was unable to personally talk to him. I could not even get as far as the adjutant, since he took a walk with a wanton woman of easy virtue from room to room, and had no time for my concerns. A lieutenant kept me company instead, to whom I repeatedly wanted to entrust my wishes, but always without success.

During the night of the 22nd to the 23rd October 1944 the last German troops disappeared quietly from Jarek. Now arrived the weirdest time. The familiar calm in the village was lacking, and those who had stayed began to gather. Several farm hands came into the village and moved in the houses of their masters. Since there was already enough wine, they could be seen drunk every day.

On Monday, October 23, 1944, I observed from the house of Mathias Morgenthaler, my brother-in-law, the removal of furniture from the house of Jakob Morgenthaler, Nr. 97. Under the command of the field hand Matyi, who belonged there, who also robbed the entire Wassergasse, eleven or thirteen — I got confused while counting — wagons from Temerin packed full with furniture drove off. Matyi belonged to the national guard and had a rifle. Besides, two armed policemen from Temerin took part. Suddenly from a distance of about 20 meters sounded a shout: 'Ruke gore!' ('Hands up!') And both policemen put up their hands and surrendered their good weapons to two Serbian fellows, who had only an old, rusty rifle. The uniform was torn off the body of the proud Hungarian policeman Uracs. The young fellows took the three rifles, put on the uniform and gave their rags to the policeman. It was a situation which didn't lack a certain sad humor. The appearance of the two fellows — they were Djoko Pervac and a shepherd's son Miodragovic, I know them both — resulted in finally stopping the organized and unorganized looting from Temerin. 'Jönnek partizanok!' ('The partisans are coming!')

was a shout of terror for the valiant Hungarians who otherwise were so brave at plundering. On the second day about ten such partisans came; Dugan Rakic's grandson was also with them. He was the commander of the gang; however, behaved himself impeccably as commander.

Soon several Katsch farmers arrived, as for example, Stenj and Laza Dobanovacki, thus already older and affluent farmers, in order to maintain peace and order in the village. It is almost incredible that they, too, participated significantly in the mistreatment of the Lutheran pastors Elicker from Bulkes, Klein from Katsch, and Neumann from Schowe. The pastors, for example, had to clean the privies in the community on Easter. Such orders by men of their age must be attributed to deliberate harassment and the later mistreatment as consequences of sadistic predispositions; with the young fellows it could have been rash cruelty.

A 'business director' arrived later who was to boost the economic life. He was a Katsch Serbian who had learned to be a bricklayer, but who had never become a journeyman, and who had worked as a farm laborer for Radenko Pec. A kind of 'economic collective' developed, which extended only to Jarek and the Jarek territory (Hotter). There existed a similar institution for the Neusatz (Novi Sad) Hotter with its office in the Lenhardt house (Altheim). After several days I put the mill back into business. There were skilled workers, but it didn't take long till I had to deal with a commissar, and I was constantly pushed aside.

Every now and then Russian troops arrived in the village. Here I must state that they have always behaved themselves correctly. When they moved through the village they always asked: 'Which way to Berlin?' and 'How far is Berlin?' Questions, which in time sounded funny, especially because the Russians with their limping oxen deemed Berlin to be off only about 20 to 30 kilometers.

One day it was reported that I had gone away and returned again, that I had hidden the drive belts, etc.: in one word, I was a saboteur. The partisans passed on the report to the Russian secret service, which had its office in the Spitalgasse (the house of Juri Renner). I was subjected to a very agonizing interrogation, which, however, turned out well for me in the end. The partisans were very astonished when I was set at liberty again.

I was interrogated a second time by the partisans and accused of having carried on sabotage. A main bearing on the flywheel had fused for which I was to be blamed according to their perception. When they were unable to harm me thus, they sought another excuse: I had supposedly refused to surrender my radio. I received blows with a rifle butt and had to accompany them to the town hall. At my house they then took whatever they wanted, clothing materials and clothes, also a light harness; since it was in the attic it was considered to have been hidden. That was one more reason to interrogate me. The partisan commandant took me into the adjoining room and said he was sorry that I was getting such a raw deal, but there was a report and he had to send me to Temerin to be interrogated. I was taken to Temerin with my machinist, who was the saboteur and who had denounced me, where I was received by a young Slovak and was beaten.

My machinist was also confined but not beaten. I was together with eleven Hungarians in detention. The beatings were repeated until, out of desperation and to make an end to it all, I dealt the fellow such a blow that he staggered away. Fortunately the commandant, who had just come from the town commandant, yelled at his people out in the corridor, so that my tormentor remained completely quiet. When the

commandant had disappeared into his room, he, too, left and only murmured menacingly, 'tekaj, nadjemo se joa!' At a formal trial — though I didn't get a defense lawyer — I was acquitted, probably because I could say that in case of a bearing should fuse I had always had bearing metal in the house, but it had disappeared when I got back home again. So I was dismissed with a slap in the face and the words: 'Gledaj, da se gubig!' ('See to it that you make yourself scarce!'). I had barely escaped death, and I arrived home heavily marked by blows and strokes.

November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1944 arrived, at which time a copy of the '*Politika*' was given me by the mill commissar with the words, 'would you read please.' The newspaper contained a report about the notorious session of the National Committee in Jajce and the '14-Point Program,' which had such a horrible impact on us Swabians. The confiscation of and expulsion from hearth and home began. Jarek, as a deserted place, was made into a camp, and, already on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the first Germans from Budisawa were admitted and billeted in the lower Ochsengasse.

An order was received that all Jarekers were to be put into a camp. I bridled against it as well as I could, but it didn't do any good, although I had allies at the Dobrovoljcs. On December 4, 1944 we were picked up, allegedly only for three days for questioning. Fifty persons were driven to Altker; five of them — I was also among them — were driven to Neusatz (Novi Sad), where we were put into a labor camp. In January 1945 I was released to Jarek due to inability to work. The other Jareker had also returned again since end of December. We were billeted at Michael Klemens (Schustermichl, the corner house in the Ochsengasse) and were now prisoners in an extermination camp, which was surrounded by about 14 day and night guards. There were no camp inmates lodged in the Hauptgasse; it served the camp's economy. (Jarek had had roughly 2,000 inhabitants.)

Things looked dismal in the village. The straw balls had fallen over because they were hollowed out. Fences and boundary posts had been torn down and were used as firewood. Generally everything combustible, even the doors of the privies, were torn down and burned. I realized at that time that one could only survive if one had work; and I offered myself as a worker by director Branko, whose words were weighty. I now got a pass and was allowed once a day to go from the Ochsengasse to the hemp factory and to return again. Later I worked in the vineyards, and I trimmed the privets in the Hauptgasse.

In the Hauptgasse a so-called tractor station was erected. All tractors, which still existed, sowing machines; sewing machines, corn seeders, etc. were housed in the Isele Restaurant, in the house of Schübler-Wagner and Giess-Schlosser. The metal-workshop was there also. The new warehouse by the railroad was torn down and constructed again at the houses named above.

On many days there were 400 to 500 persons occupied in the vineyards with all kinds of work. Five camp people named by me supervised the workers. Since you could only acquire some nourishment for your immediate family, the people went to work gladly. It was indeed prohibited under severe punishment to take anything home with you, but many a mother accepted this danger and punishment in order not to let her children starve.

After the bearing metal had been gotten again, my mill was in operation again once more. Since the firewood started to run short, the acacias were cut down first in the *Füllenstand*, after that the trees on the farms (*Salasch*), on the Katsch Street and finally those on the pasture and on the cattle drive. My machinist and the head miller

functioned as managers of the mill at that time. Both had this post until 1957. During that time they succeeded in misappropriating more than one million dinars, for which they were sentenced to several years of penal servitude. I found about it after I had already begun to write these lines.

I want to briefly report about one of the common methods of the law enforcers there. On Palm Sunday 1945 we had reported as always in rows of fives from the community hall to the cemetery. There we were divided for work. Suddenly it was put about that only the Hungarians are to go to work. (In the camp there were also about 3,000 Hungarians from Zabalj, Csurug and Mosorin. They had been brought there, because the Serbians had reported that they had collaborated during raids by the Hungarian authorities.) The Germans received the order to get all their baggage; they would be released to go home. Within me there rose strong doubts immediately, but most of them believed that finally the time had come, for the rumor had arisen often already. When the people had reported with their baggage — they were indeed yet only several bundles — all their valuables, which they had smuggled through until now, were taken. Four partisans were ready with a sheet; everything had to be pitched into it. Three other partisans conducted the search; in doing so they even undertook body searches of the women. The greed for gold of the partisans went as far as literally tearing the earrings out of the ears which couldn't be opened anymore; this I have seen myself.

Since Jarek was an 'extermination camp,' here are yet a few words about our cemetery. When I returned to Jarek in January 1945, most of the graves had already been opened by the grave diggers, and had been stuffed full with other corpses. For the gravediggers, who were also Germans from the camp assigned to this work, this was the simplest possibility for burial. The deceased were simply pushed into the graves. This may sound unbelievable to someone who hasn't seen it, but when one knows that every noon after twelve o'clock, eight, ten and even twelve and more dead persons were driven out on a wagon like sheaves or bundles of corn stalks, one can understand that then. After all the graves were full, the people were buried simply between the graves.

But when daily 20, 40, 50 and more people died, they were buried in mass graves. Three to four dead were laid next to each other and the others were piled up over them in a pit two meters deep and two meters wide. When this pit was full, next to it earth three meters deep was dug out, and this earth covered the dead. According to my knowledge, six or seven mass graves with a length of 60 to 70 meters, which ran from the death house under the last row of graves beginning in the direction toward the houses, resulted in this way. I have seen this myself for a second time when my mother-in-law died of typhus there in the camp on November 22, 1945. The next day she was buried in the manner described. I secretly sneaked out and from the Hotter and the vineyards I tried to establish at least approximately the place where the gravediggers buried her.

End of August 1949, when the camp had already been terminated, a total of eight gravestones were standing in the cemetery. Otherwise our once so beautiful and neat cemetery at that time was used as pasture ground for the cattle and pigs.

That our church was also destroyed should be known to every Jareker. The material from the demolition was used again in a different way. Dr. Dreier, a Jewish physician from Temerin, was community doctor at that time. He had the half demolished church cleaned and closed up. It stood like that until 1947/48 when it was completely dismantled.

On April 25, 1947 I was in Jarek the last time. I noticed that four houses in the Neudorf and several at other places were completely demolished. 80% of the rest of the houses for the predominant part were destroyed or damaged. It was terrible for me to go through the village, through our formerly so very beautiful Jarek, which had ceased to exist. It was as though one has lost a loved one through an accident and one remembers only the dreadful mutilations. All of you, who have not seen this, keep Jarek in mind as a peacefully smiling deceased person."

***Georg Haug,***  
*früher: Jarek*

*(Source: Reprint of the Heimatbuch Bački Jarak-Jarek (1937) with appendix, published 1958, under the editorship of Teacher Wilhelm Heinz and his former students)*

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***Statements of Farmer Jakob Pleesz from Schajkasch Sveti Ivan, District Titel:***

"The conditions in the concentration camp Jarek from its formation in December 1944 until its termination in April 1946.

During the first days after the seizure of power by the Tito partisans all men of German origin were jailed and mistreated. The partisan Beric Mile originating from Schajkasch Sv. Ivan immediately took my wallet with money and my golden watch from me. My fellow villagers Daniel Kiehner, master carpenter; and Michael Sutter, farmhand, were shot dead by the local partisans. However, we were released soon from custody, after all our money and valuables had been taken from us. On December 3, 1944 I had to vacate my residence within five minutes. I had only that with me, which I carried on my body. All the remaining people of German origin from my village fared similarly and to some extent even worse. We were all herded together and from there led to Bački-Jarak.

Bački-Jarak was formerly a purely Lutheran community of German origin with roughly 2,000 souls. It was turned into a large extermination camp for those of German descent from the Batschka. I, along with my fellow villagers from Schaikasch Sv. Ivan, was among the first who were admitted into this camp and remained interned there continuously, with a short interruption, until the termination of this camp.

Mainly older persons and mothers with small children, consistently those of German descent from the surrounding villages, were interned in this camp. Those fit for work of the younger age groups (men, 18 to 45, women and girls, 18 to 30 years old) were deported to Russia yet until Christmas. The number of camp inmates amounted to 14,000 to 15,000 persons on an average.

The treatment of the camp inmates on part of the partisans especially in 1945 was extremely barbarous. At that time we had a Serbian woman, a partisan as camp commandant. She drove old people into the street and ordered them to pull weeds with their fingernails. She struck men as well as women because of trifles. If, for example, someone picked up mulberries from the street, in order to assuage his hunger, he was



tied to a tree and was pummeled. The camp commandant also beat children for so long till the blood ran from their mouths and noses. Often the camp inmates were locked into the cellar.

On Easter Sunday 1945 the entire camp had to report at the street with all baggage. Everyone had to hand over the available and hidden money under threat of death penalty. Suits and shoes in good condition were taken off us. Earrings were simply ripped out from the ears, if women didn't remove them quickly enough; wedding rings were taken away as well.

Camp inmates unfit for work had to line up in a file (Sroj) on the street mornings always for 1-2 hours and wait until they were picked up for work or until they were sold. Civilians of other nationalities not incarcerated in camp have often requested manpower from camp and paid a fixed sum by postal check. I was bought from the camp by a Serbian farmer from Kamenica, Rado Mihajlovic, for the rate of work of 1,160 dinars. I and also the other camp inmates didn't receive anything of this money. The people who were bought for work outside generally fared better than those who stayed in camp, especially food-wise.

Camp inmates were not allowed to participate in divine services. Entering the church was strictly forbidden. Only a partisan went into the church daily, in order to give a signal with the church bells for working time or for fetching food. With us on the camp there were also two Lutheran pastors and one Roman-Catholic priest. They were especially brutally maltreated, beaten and derided. They always had to be in the front of the labor detail going through the village, with a spray of flowers on their hats, and were mocked. In the camp they had to perform the lowest work, as, for example, cleaning lavatories.

We weren't allowed to receive mail (letters or parcels) in this camp. We received no help at all from the Red Cross, from the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) or other organizations. Only well-disposed Serbians, mainly from Futok and Paschicevo had slipped food to us surreptitiously.

The rations in camp were completely inadequate and poor. There was merely a tasteless water-soup without fat and frequently without salt. There was no meat.

The sick were at the beginning separated from the rest of the camp inmates, but received no special provisions and also weren't treated any better. They lay just as we on some straw on the floor. We had two physicians, who likewise were interned. One of them couldn't help himself, and died within a short time. The other one, Dr. Müller from Budisava, made an effort, however, couldn't accomplish much, since no medicines were available.

We had lots of bugs, mainly lice. In May 1945 typhus broke out. All of us were terribly malnourished and very weak. 40 to 50 persons died daily, once even 53 persons. They were buried in mass graves in the cemetery without the presence of relatives and without a priest. At that time I was a gravedigger for 4 months. We had laid 500 to 700 deceased on top of each other in four to five layers in a mass grave 2 meters wide and 2 meters deep.

Only the gravediggers were permitted to enter the cemetery. There were a total of 16 gravediggers. Twelve men, I among them, had excavated the graves in the morning and covered them up in the evening. Four gravediggers drove the dead from the camp to the cemetery, undressed them and layered them in the excavated graves. The dead

were buried naked by order of the partisans; the clothes had to be delivered to a warehouse by the gravediggers. Altogether roughly 9,300 persons had died from December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944 until the termination of the camp on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1946. (The correct number is approximately 6,300. It is possibly a matter of a mistake in copying at the transferring of his first handwritten version. The author could not recollect exactly when queried.) This figure had been communicated to me by my fellow villager Jakob Heumel, master mason, who had been active as grave digger during the entire time. Of the 72 fellow villagers from my native village who had stayed in the fall of 1944, 53 died in the camp until my escape in April 1947. Wooden crosses made of slats were erected in the cemetery at the beginning. They were ripped out later by order of the partisans and used as fuel in the camp kitchen. The cemetery was rampantly overgrown with weeds.

***Camp Jarek, which due to its high number of dead was called ‘death camp’ or ‘termination camp,’ was terminated on April 17, 1946.***

The camp inmates were distributed to the large concentration camps at Kruschewlje and Gakowa, District Sombor. At that time I was working for a farmer in Kamenica. (He had bought me for work outside the camp.) My wife came to Kruschewlje, to where I followed likewise on July 7, 1946.

A farmer had bought me soon to work, so that I was outside camp more than in camp. However I was able to determine that since the beginning of 1947 the treatment of the camp inmates has improved considerably. The partisans, who had guarded and mistreated us until then, were replaced by the militia. Arbitrary executions by firing squad did not occur any more, also the mistreatments were rarer. The camp provisions still remained bad and insufficient. Those who were occupied in field work outside of the camp, were able to beg for food or barter it. Since the beginning of 1947 food parcels were permitted to be sent into the camp by mail.

Escaping across the close-by border wasn't as dangerous anymore as previously. It happened often that up to a hundred person fled to Hungary in one night. I, with my wife, set off at night and made my way across Hungary and Austria to Germany after one and a half months, where I arrived at my son's in Neureuth, District Karlsruhe on May 29, 1947."

*(See: Documentation of the Expulsion, Vol. V.)*

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### **Das Lager mit den Augen eines Kindes:**

#### **Agathe Dorth-Prochaska:**

"In February, 1945 the partisans came to our house to take mother and Grandmother Dorth into the concentration camp. Günther, Helmuth and I were not allowed to go along and we had to move in with Aunt Florence and Uncle Jula. What significance that had I did not know and my two small brothers also had no idea of what was going on. I was only eight, Günther five, and Helmuth two years old. We only knew that we would rather have been together with our mother, but we did not feel very separated because the camp was in the Silk Factory, just a few blocks from us. I knew where she was.

With Pentecost came the complete internment. I was not afraid and was very happy because now we were again united with mother. Whatever we could carry we were allowed to take along. One can imagine that this was not very much. We were directed to the second story of the factory. It was in a very big open area, with straw on the floor, and crowded from wall to wall with people, much like cattle in a stable. Mother came to visit us on that first evening, how happy and joyful we all were to be together again after such a long time.

Mother and grandmother had to leave the camp during the day to work. It was really not so bad. On the third day we had to pack our few things and were loaded with them on a wagon. It was rumored that we were going to Jarek. What lay ahead none of us could imagine. Very high on the wagon, on top of many small bundles, I can remember, as we drove past Grandmother Gabel's House, I joined in with the others when we sang "Now Good-by My Home". Few had tears in their eyes and I too had to cry. It must have been late in the afternoon as we arrived at the train station.

We were loaded into open cattle cars, one person next to the other. Only stars broke the darkness as the train traveled through the night into the unknown. It was good that we were packed so tightly together because it was very cold. I can remember that I was shivering. We left mother and grandmother in Vrbas. Aunt Florence was with us. Mother of course did not know that they had taken us because she was not in camp when we departed.

It was still dark when we arrived in Jarek. There we were assigned into houses. Jarek was an empty town. Without people, the houses were completely empty; there was no cattle, no dogs, nor cats were to be seen. Even the well in the yard was dry; someone had filled it up to the top with big bricks. I think we were housed in a house along the Hospital Street. It was the first of two identical houses right next to each other, with wooden roll-down awnings on the windows facing the street. We were in one of the rooms that faced the street and shared the room with about 10 other people.

Our home for the next months was this room. The room was divided down the middle by a path. On each side of this path was a small wall about three bricks high which kept the straw on which we slept back away from the path. On top of the straw we put our few poor bed thing. Our clothes had to serve as pillows.

The central kitchen was a few houses away in the same block, so we didn't have to go too far to get our food. In fact, it was close enough that our food was often still warm. We got the food for our family with one pot and were fed three times a day.

Breakfast usually consisted of cornmeal which had been cooked with water and coffee. At lunch we were usually fed soup. The soup was made with dry peas that released small black bugs that floated to the top during cooking. We were also given cornbread that was so rough that eventually everyone had open sores in their mouths. No one was allowed onto the street except for three times during the day when the church bells rang to signal that the food was ready for distribution.

At noon when the bells rang to call the people to get the food a wagon also came carrying the dead. The wagon was pulled down the middle of the street by a horse. From the right and the left people emerged from the houses carrying their dead. These had died in the last 24 hours. The dead were piled one on top of each other onto the wagon, some with open mouths and open eyes. Arms and legs were dangling and even moved as the wagon made its way over the rough road. The wagon eventually reached to the cemetery where the dead were buried in a common grave for the day. Some of

the dead had been sewn into the last white sheets by their relatives to show last respect and honor for their loved one.

Death also did not remain away from our small room. The first one that was taken from our small circle was Christel Dorth's son, Dieter, who was just a baby. Aunt Christel and another women, a few houses from us, whose own son died earlier, tried to nurse Dieter but without help since they had little or no milk. Dieter died during the day. Two small flat stones were placed on top of his eyelids since his eyes had remained wide open. He was then sewn into a sheet and kept in the kitchen pantry during the night so that his corpse wasn't in the same room as us.

Aunt Florence was still with us and during the day she had to work in the vineyards. Often when she came back to the house in the evenings she had hidden grapes in her brassiere for us. How happy we were with these extra delicacies. Even the Mulberry Trees on the street gave us nourishment. Sadly though, many of us got dysentery from them and died of dehydration. Even the sparrows had to give their lives. We built traps from roof tiles and bricks and caught them in order to roast them on wooden sticks.

During one night we were robbed by the camp guards who used flash lights to guide them to our last possessions. We could not imagine what they wanted with our last junk. Aunt Florence now became disenchanted and escaped from Jarek. Where she went we did not know. She had been with us approximately for six weeks. Aunt Christel now took us in. She and I cared for the four small ones, Gunther, Helmuth, Hannelore, and Manfred, but we could not do much for them.

Once in a while we took a bath without soap in a wooden trough filled with cold water outside in the backyard. The clothes were never washed. There was no soap to wash clothes and there was nowhere to hang the clothes to dry without someone stealing them. Essentially what you had, you had on your body during day and night. Oh how there must have been an aroma - we must have all stunk! One cannot imagine how infested with lice we were and how they thrived. I still remember how Mrs. Klein, Aunt Florence's Mother-in-law, sat on a white sheet and combed the lice out of her short cut hair with a very fine comb. The lice fell down on the sheet and were destroyed. Often we went through our clothes, especially the seams, in order to catch the lice that we crushed between our thumb nails. But none of it really was effective, because the lice were also in the straw on which we slept. Our bodies were covered with scabs and infections where the lice had bitten and we had scratched open because of itching.

The outhouses were soon filled to the top and then we went in the back near the manure pile. There the fleas jumped onto ones legs so that we had to deal with these also. Soon a ditch was dug between the summer kitchen and the house and a horizontally supported iron bar serves as a toilet seat. The metal was very cold during the winter nights and one had to be very careful that the skin did not remain behind.

Not too long after Aunt Florence had left us, young Daniel Dorth came one morning and informed us that his Grandfather, Philip Dorth, my Dad's Uncle, had hung himself. His wife had died a few weeks earlier. His body was full of water due to malnutrition and he knew that his end was close at hand. He could not bear the suffering and so he took his life. Mrs. Klein and her sister were also dead by this time.

Aunt Christel and her two remaining children now moved to the other Dorth's - young Daniel, his mother and sister because they were closer related than we were and there was more room. Now we were all alone, my two small brothers and I. Helmuth came down with dysentery and I knew that this was very dangerous because I had seen so

many people die from it. I had to do something so I took a brick and heated it and made Helmuth sit on it. Unfortunately I heated the brick too much and burned the poor kids rear end. I took wood and burned it to get coals that I then pulverized. I mixed the coal powder with water and Helmuth had to drink this mixture. From where I got this idea I still don't know, and if it helped I also don't know, but Helmuth is still here today. Often we ran bare footed and Helmuth stumbled one day and as a result lost his large toenail and then contracted an infection. Till this day he does not have a complete toenail on that toe.

Great Grandmother Becker, my Fathers Grandmother, now moved in with us. She was sick and her sister had died. Before this, she lived across the street from us with her sisters that had both died. She could no longer stand on her feet, had dysentery and slept most of the day. She got worse and worse, so that eventually she was moved into the horse stable where by now the very sick were kept. This was done so that they would not die in the same room as the rest of us.

One day as I visited her she said to me, barely audible because she was weak and near death, "my child, the dogs are eating away at my feet." As I lifted the blanket away from her feet I saw where rats had begun to gnaw at her toes. The women was so weak and could not move to ward off the rats, that would not wait till she was dead.

Sometimes we behaved like children. In the yard we played, out of branches and rags we fashioned dolls and ran between the yards. In this way we did have some fun.

In the winter it was very cold, there was a space heater, Kachelofen, built into a the wall of our room, but unfortunately there was nothing to burn in it. The fences were already all ripped down and had been burned, even though that was forbidden. One day we heard that there was wheat in a room in one of the houses a block away from us. We took our pots, that were used to get the food, and snuck across the street down the block through the yards to get some of the wheat to burn in the stove to keep warm. Even the laths from the stable ceilings were ripped down in order to form kindling mixed with straw. This was always done so that the guards would not see it because it was forbidden and if caught you would be punished.

Where mother was what was going on with her we did not know. One day a Serbian Farmer, Laso, came with a wagon from Altvrbas to get us and take us to mother. We were overjoyed. It was now spring again, almost a whole year was gone, but it was still very cold and we sat on the wagon covered with a large fur on the trip home to Vrbas. The farmer brought us to a family in Vrbas where mother worked in their house. As we stepped down from the wagon I can still hear the words that my mother spoke "how you look?" To us this seemed very strange, we thought that there was nothing wrong with us. Sadly, we did not know that all of us had retained water because of malnutrition. Our heads were very large, our eyes sat deep in our skulls and we had very enlarged stomachs. That first evening I heard mother as she spoke to the women of the house that they would have to be very careful in order not to give us too much food and that was too rich so that we would not get sick.

We were not allowed to remain with mother. So we moved to the Diakoenissenhaus – a Swiss Orphanage that had escaped the partisan's wrath because of the Swiss' neutrality. There normal life began. Again we slept in a bed, ate and sat at tables, laughed and played with children and also began to go back to school. That was a real life. It was marvelous. Mother came every Sunday to visit us. We were very happy again.

Unfortunately, luck did not stay with us very long, the camp commandant heard about our good fortune and the farmer Laso, the one who had gotten us from Jarek was ordered to get us. We had to work for him on his farm.

Helmuth was too small to work on the farm so he was allowed to be with mother who was now working in the Hemp Factory. Gunther had to herd the pigs and I had to take care of the cows. We were out in the pastures with the animals all day. The German Farms were all empty and abandoned. Often, as I herded my cows on the "Hutweide" I saw huge rats run from building to building or sun themselves in the sun.

One evening when I brought the cows back to the farm as it started to get dark, Gunther was not yet there with the pigs. The farmer had a very belligerent boar with huge saber teeth that returned with the pigs on their own without my brother. I was convinced that the boar had killed Gunther and I was very scared. We went into the field, along the creek and across the many pastures to look for Gunther. We found him asleep. I was very happy that we found him still alive, but yet at the same time I could have killed him for making me so scared.

Winter came and there was no need to herd the livestock any more, therefore, in January 1946 Laso returned us to the concentration camp located in the silk factory where mother also was. Now mother not only had us three children but had also taken charge of Aunt Florence's two daughters. They had been in Subotica in the care of a Jewish Family. They were not able to endure it there any longer and ran away and came back to Vrbas. With five children mother and Grandmother Dorth were removed from the Vrbas Camp.

Again during the cold of night, close together, in a cattle car, we were transported to a camp in Kruschiwl. There we were assigned to houses just as we had been assigned to houses in Jarek with straw on the floor and many people bunched in a room. We thought that things were much better here than they had been in Jarek, but mother thought things were very bad. The food was much better and there was a lot of it so that most of the time we were not hungry. We were also left alone by the camp guards and were allowed to go and visit from house to house without any fear of being shot to death.

Here in Kruschiwl we again were united with Aunt Cristel and her family and young Daniel Dorth with his sister and mother – they had been transferred here. Sadly now by this time Daniel's mother and his small sister had died and he was alone with his aunt and two cousins.

It was rumored that one could bribe the guards with money to have them take one across the border into Hungry. Renate, the oldest daughter of Aunt Florence, and mother snuck out of the camp during one night, back to Vrbas in order to raise money. Mother had given all her jewelry to a Serbian, a friend of my fathers, and she hoped that this family would give them money. If we would see Mom and Renate again we did not know.

After many long days they returned with the money. Mom bought our freedom. So, like a small herd of cattle, we walked one night on foot, with our few things on our backs, to freedom. After many hours of walking we walked along a narrow board that lay across a small creek and were told that we were now in Hungry. Many times on this long journey, little Helmuth asked, "how long will it be till we get to Oma Gabel", because he knew that was our destination. Mother always pointed her finger into the distance and said, "do you see that small light my child, there is Oma Gabel." This

encouraged him each time and he managed to forget how tired he was and walked further.

We spent the first night of our freedom in a warm cow barn with the cows. We went on, on foot, and in a few days we spent a day at a brick factory in a very cold open shed. This is when Uncle Jula came and got his two daughters. Now there were only nine of us, all of them Dorths. Aunt Christel with her two children, Daniel Dorth, Grandmother Dorth and the four of us.

At night we crossed the border into Austria many times and each time were apprehended and returned to Hungary because no one wanted us – Austria was overrun with refugees. On one of these occasions we were actually also thrown in jail. The adults came to realize that our group was too large with too many children that were too noisy as they tried to escape into Austria. So the group divided into two: Aunt Christel with her two children and Daniel as one group and the remainder of us into the second group. (*Both groups successfully crossed into Austria on their very first attempt. \**)

Now we made our way to the Castle Freiberg, near Gleissdorf, where Aunt Florence and her family made their temporary home. We only stayed there a few days. Then we went to a British refugee camp. Grandmother Dorth stayed with her daughter, Aunt Florence. From this British Camp we hoped to be transferred to the British Zone in Germany where Grandmother Gabel was. We were there only a few weeks when polio broke out. Mother decided that we had to leave and again during the dark of the night we crawled under the fence and escaped.

We traveled on foot again, across Austria, across the Alps, along a beautiful small brook in the thick forest to Germany. Then we traveled by train from Berchtesgaden to Grandmother Gabel. There in Degersen near Hannover little Helmut found his "little light" on a warm sunny August afternoon in 1947. Grandmother and Aunt Kathie sat on the porch doing needlepoint as we arrived, they could not believe their eyes. That was some reunion!"

(\* *Comment added by translator*)

*(This story was published in German in two periodicals, "Werbasser Zeitung" and "Der Donauschwabe" during September 1984.)*

*(The Werbasser Zeitung added the following commentary: "Forty years after leaving her home we received this report. It is not our intent to open old wounds. This recollection should however bring to light how a small brave girl saw her world and how she learned to deal with it so long ago. Without hate or grudge she recalled the many hard and even sad events that occurred and how she coped with them. Mrs. Agathe Prochaska ne Dorth has shown how the human being even when only a child grew by having lived through these terrible and tragic time and has surely become a much richer human being as a result.")*