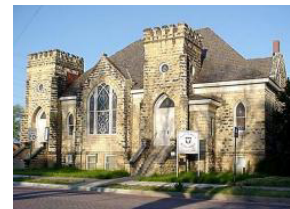




The Bukovina Society of the Americas

P.O. Box 1083, Hays, KS 67601, USA
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Bukovina Society convention in Regina in 2002

in conjunction with the Federation of East European Family History Societies and the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society

*Irmgard Hein Ellingson,
Bukovina Society international board member and 2002 program chair*

Plan now to participate in a unique, exciting **Bukovina conference in Regina, Saskatchewan, on July 17-20, 2002!**

The **Federation of East European Family History Societies (FEEFHS)** and the **Saskatchewan Genealogical Society (SGS)** will co-host a family history conference in **Regina** on those dates. Within this event and in the same setting, the **Bukovina Society of the Americas** and the **Society of German Genealogy in Eastern Europe (SGGEE)** will hold their annual conventions. These four organizations are working together to provide an exceptional learning experience for everyone involved.

First, let me introduce FEEFHS in the event that you have not heard about it. **FEEFHS was organized in 1992** as an umbrella organization that promotes family research in eastern and central Europe without any ethnic, religious, or social distinctions. More than 170 organizations, including the Bukovina Society of the Americas, are part of it. Within this bi-national (U.S. and Canadian) not-for-profit genealogy corporation, individuals and organizations can share information and research developments. Its resources include accredited genealogists, librarians, archivists, and linguists. FEEFHS publishes an annual *FEEFHS Journal*, maintains a large web site at <http://www.feeffhs.org>, assists in developing databases, and sponsors an annual convention in either the United States or Canada. Last year's event was held in Salt Lake City near the Family History Library (FHL) and its microfilmed collection of original sources from east and central Europe. Salt Lake City was also the site of annual conferences in 1994 and 1997. Other conferences have been held in Calgary,

Cleveland, Minneapolis and Los Angeles. This year's event will be held at the Ramada Inn South Airport in Milwaukee on October 5-7, 2001.

The topics at FEEFHS conferences always include genealogical resources, research techniques, databases, and projects in all European countries east of and including Germany and Austria. Within this general format, specific lectures and workshops address U.S. immigration records, European emigration records, Germanic and Slavic genealogy, internet resources for eastern European genealogy, eastern European databases, and Polish, Belarus, Ukrainian, Moldavian, Russian, Baltic, and Balkan research. For example, my lectures at four past FEEFHS conferences have included "Bukovina Networking," "The Multi-Ethnic Eastern Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1785 to 1918," and historical overviews of Galicia and Volhynia.

As the Bukovina program chair for the 2002 event, I am working with conference coordinator **Laura Hanowski**, who is the FEEFHS 1st vice president as well as former SGS director, and with the Bukovina Society board. We plan to offer two morning and two afternoon lecture blocks on each of the three main convention days, Friday through Sunday. Four lectures, workshops, or panel discussions will be presented during each block, in different meeting rooms but at the same time. One Bukovina or Bukovina-related presentation will take place in each block. Some additional features may possibly include a dinner with music and dancing, an outing in Regina, and excursions to Regina-area settlements of Bukovina Germans and Hungarians, Galician Germans, Germans from Russia, and Hutterites.

Invitations will be extended to our friends at the *Bukowina-Institut*, the *Landsmannschaft der Buchenlanddeutschen (Bukowina)* in Germany and the *Associação Alemã-Bucovina de Cultura* (Association for Bukovina Culture) in Brazil. At this time, it appears that representatives from each group will participate in the Regina event. We will invite resource persons within our own organization to make presentations as well.

All interested individuals and parties are invited to submit a lecture proposal by mid-January 2002. Watch for the 2002 Call for Papers and Submission Forms to be posted online at the FEEFHS web site and in upcoming newsletters. With the submission form, you can identify yourself, write a short description for your hour-long presentation, and request audio-visual aids.

Various registration models, including full conference rates with meals as well as daily rates, are being considered. Based on past FEEFHS events, we anticipate that a registrant might pay one \$75 registration fee with which he/she will receive a syllabus with all lecture outlines and notes, two lunches, and the opportunity to attend all sessions which interest them. Please remember, however, that this is only an estimate. More information about this and the conference hotel will be made available as soon as possible.

If you have questions about FEEFHS, the Regina 2002 event, or this October's conference in Milwaukee, please e-mail me at irmgard@wctatel.net or write to me at Box 101, Grafton, IA 50440/USA.

WITH THE LANDSLEUTE IN BRAZIL

By Dr. Sophie A. Welisch

At the *Bukovinafest 2000* in Hays, **Al Lang** gave a presentation on his trip to southern Brazil and his encounters with descendants of Bukovinians who had immigrated to that country 114 years ago. At that time Al passed on to the audience an invitation from **Professor Ayrton Goncalves Celestino** to attend the 11th annual *Bucovina Fest* of the *Associação Alemã-Bucovina de Cultura* (ABC, Bukovina-German Cultural Association) scheduled for July 2001. Activities of this group have been reported in earlier editions of the *Newsletter* and have appeared in several English and German publications.

A final tally of visitors from Germany and the United States included **Dr. Ortfried and Maria Luise Kotzian** and **Michael Augustin** from Germany as well as **Steve Parke, Werner Zoglauer, Maria and Ed Becker** and **Sophie Welisch** from the United States. A minor catastrophe was averted when Werner brought to Sophie's attention the fact that one needed a visa to enter Brazil, a fact not mentioned to her or to the Beckers by their respective travel agents. Fortunately, there was still time to correct this oversight.

Since the seasons are the reverse of those in the northern hemisphere, we were about to experience winter in Brazil. Having been advised that temperatures never reach the freezing point, we packed accordingly. The flora and fauna in this semi-tropical region were in their full splendor, as they are the year-round. The firmament, too, is unfamiliar, with the constellation, the Southern Cross, a stellar landmark.

Our host, Professor Celestino, met us all at the airport in Curitiba, the city in which he also resides. Flying in from Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey and Germany, it stands to reason that we did not all arrive on the same plane. Some came in at various times on July 4, others on July 5. Nonetheless, Prof. Celestino was there to greet us, placing at our disposal a van plus chauffeur through the courtesy of **Senhor Ary Siqueira**, the mayor of Rio Negro in Parana. Our special thanks to Senhor Siqueira and the Prefecture of Rio Negro for van and chauffeur, who continued to serve our transportation needs for most of the duration of our trip.

Our accommodations were at the **Blumenpark Hotel** in Rio Negro at a daily rate of ten American dollars. This also included a continental breakfast of cheese, cold cuts, fruits, and beverages. Since Brazil has been experiencing inflationary trends, the rate of exchange was favorable for currency conversions from U. S. dollars and German marks. A word of caution to would-be travelers: not all places accept credit cards or travelers checks.

The *Bucovina Fest* opened on July 6 with presentations at the **University of Contestado in Mafra, Santa Catarina**. Attending the lectures, aside from members of the ABC, were **Professor Sandro Moreira**, chairman of the history faculty as well as some students. Most of the foreign guests had prepared a formal talk, but time did not permit all to be heard. According to Prof. Celestino the speeches will be included in his book, *The Bukovinians of Brazil* to be published in November of this year.

For July 7, the anniversary of the landing of the Bukovinian immigrants in Brazil, Mafra's Minister for Cultural Affairs, **Senhora Regina Paluch**, organized a motorized parade with people on family vehicles dressed in traditional Bukovinian attire. These vehicles were sponsored by individual families, whose names were visible on placards; coming to mind were **Fuchs, Maidl, Rankel, Reichhardt, and Schelbauer**. Trophies for the most outstanding vehicles went to (1) Maidl, (2) Reichhardt, and (3) Schelbauer. The parade lasted about 1-1/2 hours, traversing the various towns in the federal states of Santa Catarina and Parana where Bukovinians live. We had a warm reception along the way, as people waved to us from the street and their homes.

Scheduled for the evening of July 7 was a dinner-dance, crowning of the queen, **Francieli Wolf**, and the performance of a "Brazilian-Bukovinian" dance group called *Boarischer Wind* under its coordinators, **Senhor Jose Adalberto Semmer and his wife, Waldette**. The large hall virtually held hundreds of people, all of whom seemed to be enjoying the occasion. This gathering also afforded us the opportunity of meeting some of the individuals whose families had been the subject of various genealogical searches by Werner, Michael, Maria and Sophie. Regrettably, no one in our group spoke Portuguese and very few of the Bukovinian descendants spoke English or German. The herculean task of serving as translator, interpreter of culture and customs, tour escort, and planner of varied and miscellaneous activities fell to **our host, Professor Celestino. Words cannot describe his tireless efforts on our behalf. We are all indebted to his patience, time, and planning in making our trip a huge success and wish at this point to express our appreciation to him.**

On Sunday, July 8 we attended mass at the *Igreja Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in Rio Negro. The priest, **Padre Nilso Jose**, made special reference to our group, gesturing in our direction and mentioning some of us by name. His homily focused on the gratitude owed our forebears. On a pedestal in front of the altar there stood a **carved wooden statuette of the Madonna, dating from 1777**, which, Padre Jose pointed out, **had sojourned in the backpack of its owners from Bohemia to Bukovina in the early 1800s and then to Brazil later in the century.** The choir, under the direction of **Senhora Marcia Schelbauer Valerio**, provided musical renditions during the religious services.

After church services we joined members of the congregation for an outdoor lunch, where again we were introduced to fellow Bukovinians. Here we met the family of Senhora Ivete Basso (nee Schaffhauser), whose grandfather, **Rudolf Schaffhauser**, built the first gristmill in Rio Negro. We later had occasion to visit the Basso home, where I shared with Senhora Basso some information about her Schaffhauser relatives in the New York area. Other Bukovinian families whom we met during our visit include **Ahrant, Fuchs, Hartinger, Hellinger, Herzer, Kolb, Koller, Rankel, Schafaschek, Schelbauer, Seidl, Sewchuk, Teodorowitsch, and Wolf.**

Thanks to the efforts and activities of the ABC, its **first president Professor Celestino**, its **current president Joao Jacob Fuchs**, and the many Bukovinian descendants interested in maintaining their cultural heritage, the Bukovina name is alive and well in southern Brazil. Our American and European *Landsleute* might wish seriously to consider journeying to Rio Negro to see for themselves the lifestyle of their erstwhile compatriots and experience their warmth and generosity. Indeed, through the medium of the *Newsletter* Professor Celestino, in the name of ABC, hereby expressly extends an invitation to Bukovinians abroad to **join in the celebration of the 115th anniversary of the Bukovinian immigration to Brazil scheduled for the first week of July 2002.**

Lacking space for a full description of our other activities, mention will be made of only some of them: a choir concert in the restored **Chapel of St. Aloysius de Tolosa**; a visit to the botanical garden in Curitiba and an archeological museum in Paranagua; some original Bukovinian colonial homes including the Bukovina colonists' first school; at the entrance to Rio Negro the "Bucovina cross" at the base of which a placard mentions the south Bukovinian villages of **Pojana Mikuli and Bori**; a choral concert in the *Seminario Serafico* (formerly a Franciscan seminary); dinner at the mayor's office; visits with local artists; a visit to the city of Rio Negrinho and to the City of Music in Sao Bento do Sul, where we also dined at a restaurant called *Alpenbier* and later visited the workshop of **Walter Malewshick**, a noted restorer and maker of violins and violas; and a weekend south of Paranagua at the ocean-side home of my relative, **Carlos Kolb**, professor of mathematics at the Federal University of the State of Parana in Curitiba.

High in the priority of memorable experiences is the hospitality and friendship shown to us by one and all whom we met on our trip to Brazil. **We will long remember the two weeks in July, which we spent south of the Tropic of Capricorn.**

BUKOVINA PEOPLE AND EVENTS

We welcome our newest family lifetime membership, that of **Renate and Johann Geschwendtner family of Dingolfing, Germany**. Renate has been a contributor to the *Newsletter* with stories of her grandmother in Bukovina.

Van Massirer, who chaired the committee which organized the **Texas German Society and German-Texan Heritage Society** joint convention in Waco this past April, sent us a copy of the program, affectionately called "his baby." The 352 registrants enjoyed two days of professional presentations interspersed by bus tours through "Bush Country." In 1995 Van had included the Bukovina Society in the joint meeting of the above groups. The Society's earlier commitment to participate in the annual meeting of the **Associacao Alema-Bucovina de Cultura in Rio Negro** precluded its regularly scheduled convention in Kansas as well as attendance at the Waco gathering. Although Van and Mary missed their annual trip to Kansas, they look forward to the Bukovinafest in Regina, Canada next year.

Dr. Sophie Welisch, contributor to numerous publications on Bukovina related stories, was featured in the Spring 2001 issue of the Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia. Her article, "**What's in a Name? Names and Naming Practices Among the Bukovina Germans,**" contains maps and tables supporting her data.

Elections held at the annual meeting of the Board on July 17th resulted in a unanimous decision to have **Martha Louise McClelland complete the term of Mary Agnes Lang-Wagner and Michael Augustin to serve as a new member of the International Board.** Board

vacancies were filled by election. On behalf of the Bukovina Society, **Steve Parke**, who attended the Bukovina convention in Brazil presented **Professor Ayrton Celestino** with a Western Bolo Tie and the Association with a miniature Kansas windmill.

Fay Jordaens writes again of her family, "My father loved to talk about and remember his **life in Czernowitz, Bukovina and its extraordinary diversity**. For instance, he said, "when we kids went outside to play, it was nothing for us to romp with a group of Russians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Germans, etc. and whatever language our friends spoke, we spoke." Two of my friends were Jews, [the Narvan family], and they spoke Yiddish so we spoke Yiddish." Later on in his life, when my father came to America and settled in the Bronx, New York, that knowledge of Yiddish came in very handy. He attended a fiftieth anniversary celebration for two friends in Florida, and toasted them in Yiddish, singing a song he had learned in his Bukovina childhood! My father had to have surgery in 1906, when he was 5. "Since the hospital was on the other side of town, we traveled there by trolley in 1911, when we left Czernowitz, it was a cosmopolitan city that had at least one university, a beautiful town hall, many magnificent churches as well market places, beer halls, etc."

When the family came to Elbourne, Canada they were stunned at the starkness of the environment, the flatness of the unbroken land and the fierce cold. There were no trolleys, market places, town halls, no paved roads, and no hills [just mud!] etc. When my dad lost his father, it was too cold to bury him! Fortunately, there were family members already homesteading, ready to help out this family of nine. Every child went to work [my dad was worth \$50 for the year]. His sister made \$12 a month..... the youngest boy was farmed out at the age of 7 for a pittance.

They had no way of knowing that their courage to move to another continent would spare them the experience of 2 world wars, worsening political and economic conditions in Bukovina and an overall steady decline in every way imaginable. In time all of the family prospered. Certainly the early years of life in Canada were daunting, but those who survived were our family Heroes!"

May 19, 2001 witnessed the ordination in St. Patrick's Cathedral of **James Pilsner** by New York **Cardinal Edward Egan**. Grandson of the Bukovina immigrant, **Joseph Pilsner** (born 1905 in Gurahumora) and **Anna Schmidt**, son of **Arnold Pilsner** and **Marcia Rowan**, James was preceded in his calling to the priesthood by two elder brothers, Peter and John.

Father Peter Pilsner is a high school religion teacher in the New York area and Basilian **Father Joseph Pilsner** serves as formation director with the Basilians in Toronto. Another brother, John, teaches comparative literature in Queens College, NY. Their only sister, Mary succumbed to bone cancer at age twenty-five. Aside from the nurturing environment the parents provided for their family; Marcia feels that Mary's suffering through the years worked as an example of selfless love and a source of Grace for her brothers' vocations.

NEW BOOK REPRINT

Helmut Kusdat (Austria) has informed us of a reprint of **Hermann Mittelmann's 1907 book entitled *Illustrierter Führer durch die Bukowina (Illustrated Guide through Bukovina)***. It appears the original was extremely rare and only by coincidence did he discover it. Consisting of 156 pages, about 100 illustrations including two maps, and a foreword by Kusdat, the book is available at Verlag Mandelbaum, Ferdinandstrasse 25/2/605, A-1020 Vienna, Austria, Tel. & Fax 01-213- 68 2605, e-mail: mandelwien@aol.com for a price of 205 schillings.

In his foreword to *Illustrierter Führer durch die Bukowina* Kusdat tells us that the book offers a multifaceted view of the crown land's ethnic population, including their cultural distinctions and architectural preferences; in addition, through word and illustration the reader is introduced to Bukovina's geographical landscape; the tourist attractions of its larger cities, including Czernowitz and Suczawa; and the spas of southern Bukovina. An insight into everyday life in 1907 can be gleaned through numerous announcements by artisans, merchants and service personnel. Still used as welcomed guides by Western tourists are the detailed road map of the Bukowina and the city map of Czernowitz by Leon Kreiner .

The following essay describes the circumstances leading to the 1940 transfer of the German population from their ancestral homeland of Bukovina to an uncertain resettlement in Germany. In June of 1940 the Soviet Union annexed northern Bukovina, a move unanticipated by the Third Reich. Negotiations first between Germany and the USSR and then between Germany and Romania secured the peaceful evacuation of Bukovina's ethnic Germans. While 75,533 inhabitants of Bukovina had declared themselves as German in the Romanian census of 1930, 95,044 opted for transfer to Germany when given the opportunity to do so a decade later.

THE 1940 RESETTLEMENT OF THE BUKOVINA GERMANS

Erwin Massier, Josef Talsky, and B. C. Grigorowicz, eds., "*Die Umsiedlung der Buchenlanddeutschen im Jahre 1940*," in *Bukowina: Heimat von Gestern*, translated by Dr. Sophie A. Welisch (Karlsruhe: Selbstverlag "Arbeitskreis Bukowina Heimatbuch," 1956), pp. 276-282. Due to its length, the entire essay could not be printed in this edition. [The conclusion, "Farewell from Home,"](#) will be published in the next issue.

NORTHERN BUKOVINA. As legal basis for the official resettlement of the German population, an accord had to be reached between Germany and the Soviet Union. For this purpose a German delegation proceeded to Moscow in July 1940, which, after many weeks of intense negotiations with a possibly unreliable partner, finally succeeded in reaching an agreement to resettle the ethnic German population of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina to the Reich. Acting as plenipotentiaries for their respective countries were Dr. W. Nöldeke, the Consul General of the German Foreign Office, and Anastasi Vasiukov, Secretary General of the People's Commissariat of the Foreign Office of the Soviet Union.

The treaty concerning the resettlement of the Germans of Galicia and Volhynia in the winter of 1939-40 served as a guideline for the negotiations. Here it should be noted that a similar plan for the evacuation of the ethnic Germans to the Reich's sphere of influence in Poland had already taken place in the fall of 1939 with the Soviets simultaneously removing the White Russians and Ukrainians from these territories.

The German Resettlement Commission arrived in [Soviet] occupied Czernowitz on September 9 and by September 27 the first thousand transferees had left by rail to the West via Galicia. By November 17 about 45,000 people from northern Bukovina had departed for Germany in about 1000 railroad cars, thus concluding the transfer.

Tarutino in Bessarabia served as the headquarters of the Soviet-German Resettlement Commission. One German and one Soviet territorial adviser were designated for northern Bukovina and stationed in Czernowitz in the "City" (Fiala), a boarding house on University Street. Since at this time Germany enjoyed friendly relations with the Soviet Union, the Soviets respected the improvised bi-lingual signs marked "German Community" [placed on German homes and businesses] and desisted from molesting the life, property and possessions of the German population.

In view of the newly-established occupation policies and the overall political situation, hardly a German declined the opportunity for resettlement, since none had the slightest desire to live under Soviet rule. Indeed, thousands of members of other ethnic groups: Romanians, Ruthenians (i.e., Ukrainians), Poles and many relatives of German families attempted to register [for resettlement]. Wishing to offer them the way to freedom, many were accepted but not always without negative repercussions since the Soviets showed great mistrust. Because of these exceptions a much higher number of individuals applied for evacuation than had previously registered as German in the 1930 census.

The departure of the Germans from northern Bukovina represented for them not only the painful forfeiture of their beloved homeland but for very many also a great material loss in that they had to abandon house and farmstead, farm animals and businesses. It is true that the Resettlement Commission had promised them compensation in Germany for all their relinquished material goods. Although with heavy heart, all were nonetheless imbued with the hope that the call of "home to the Reich" would lead to a better future.

While a much more favorable agreement for the transferees from southern Bukovina could be negotiated with the Romanian government, the northern Bukovinians could only take personal goods in relatively limited quantity: 50 kilograms of movable property and another 35 kilograms of hand luggage per person!

In Czernowitz the district leader Professor Franz Lohmer worked with Father Goebel, Dr. Erich Prokopowitsch, and Dr. Franz Jelinek until the conclusion of the registration, rendering valuable services. Under the territorial plenipotentiaries, there was one district representative each for Czernowitz-West and East and for the suburbs Rosch, Klokuczka and Manasteriska as well as for the villages of Tereblestie, Althütte, Czudin, Storozynetz, Augustendorf and Katharinendorf. The Soviets remained distrustful of the German resettlement staff. No representative of the German staff could leave the office buildings without a Soviet "protective escort." One must assume they feared espionage. On the other hand the Germans estimated the number of agents smuggled into Germany with the resettlement at about 300.

The Czernowitzers, and with them the remainder of the northern Bukovinians, were for the most part accommodated in the German East (Silesia, Warthegau). The farmers had to take over farmsteads confiscated from the Poles, many of them in a dilapidated condition. Refusal to accept ownership under these terms, although detrimental to both parties, was deemed sabotage against the German wartime economy. Artisans and craftsmen found work in factories, while able-bodied men were inducted into the army and the youth for the most part into the *Waffen-SS* (Armed SS). Few intellectuals found suitable employment in the beginning; retirees and pensioners had to live in the camps for many years along with the families of compatriots drafted into military or labor service, where they eventually shared the lot of the hundreds of thousands of refugees paralleling the great retreat of the German armies in the east. At the same time the Germans expelled by the Poles and Czechs [after the war] also had to reestablish themselves in the south and west. Thousands of stalwart Bukovinians succumbed in the great chaos of the flight while others could not be accounted for. Many who remained in the Soviet zone or reached Czechoslovakia were [forcibly] repatriated to southern Bukovina or deported to the Soviet Union.

SOUTHERN BUKOVINA. None of the many Bukovinian nationalities was so affected by the partition of the province, as were the Germans. For them, the rending asunder of their homeland threatened their ethnic identity in both areas--those under Soviet administration as well as those remaining free in the south--with their viability as an ethnic group at stake.

From the very first day of the [Soviet] occupation a resettlement of the northern Bukovinians seemed a strong possibility; however, the fate of the southern Bukovinians was not yet clear. Czernowitz, the nerve center of the Germans, was lost, and with their leading spokesmen located in the Soviet-occupied north, their national organizations were disrupted.

As soon as the dust had settled, attempts to organize the rump population in the south began. Certified engineer (*Dipl.-Ing. = Diplomingenieur*) Johann Krotky of Gurahumora was elected as the new national group leader aided by his two sons-in-law, Hans Bender and Albert Heilinger, two effective assistants. At this time the comprehensive concerns of the Germans of southern Bukovina were articulated, and Gurahumora, the charming mountain town, became the new center of ethnic activity.

Although it at first appeared that a closer orientation of the southern Bukovinians to the Germans of Transylvania, their nearest neighbors, might take place, the dissolution of Greater Romania by the Vienna Accord of August 30, 1940 dashed these hopes: Hungary annexed Transylvania. As a result the totally isolated German splinter groups on the eastern slopes of the Carpathians had only the option of resettlement to Germany, if indeed they did not wish to remain weak, exposed, and in headlong decline. In full recognition of this situation Berlin decided to evacuate these German enclaves and began negotiations with Romania for their resettlement.

News spread like wildfire throughout the province. The people in the towns and villages had time to consider their options and reach a preliminary decision. Nearly 100 percent of the Germans chose resettlement, although they did not face the hopeless situation of the northern Bukovinians and the Romanians did not look favorably upon a transfer. One can only speculate on the compelling reasons supporting and justifying their decision.

In order to understand their circumstances, one should lay to rest the idea that the southern Bukovinians at that time supported the philosophy of National Socialism and its propaganda, blindly accepting the slogan, "the Führer commands, we obey." Anyone familiar with the situation in Bukovina knows that precisely its Germans in their trinity of Swabians, Zipsers and German-Bohemians with their clerical differences and varied historic traditions were little inclined to succumb to the "Führer-leadership principle." Their individualism was too strong to permit this.

The cardinal issue facing the rank and file of the population was far more the psychological impact of the partition of Bukovina. The chaos of the last days of June, the horrific reports by the countless refugees about conditions in the north, the persistent rumors that the Soviet Union also intended to annex southern Bukovina, the blow below the belt from Vienna, the impotence of the Romanian government, all kept the people (and not only the Germans!) in constant panic. In taking up resettlement negotiations with Romania they wanted confirmation of Soviet intentions and demands. Had it been possible to escape from the Soviet shadow at that time, there would have been many thousands among the other nationalities embarking with the Germans on the way to an apparently safe West.

In view of these circumstances, it stands to reason that individual concerns also took on weight, reinforcing the decision to emigrate: the many requisitions by the army and the quartering of troops, the steady deterioration of the economy and of economic opportunity, the severance of familial and social relations with the Germans in northern Bukovina. In short, the homeland had become increasingly alien to its children.

However, this did not mean that the negative side of resettlement had not been considered. Germany was at war. Would it be able fully to fulfill its promises to the newcomers? Was not the East, the envisioned area of settlement, not long ago overfilled? Would it be possible to settle the stem groups [i.e., Swabians, Zipsers, and German-Bohemians] or at least the village communities together? Such and similar questions constantly arose; but the die had already been cast.

With the conclusion of the agreement between the German government and the Kingdom of Romania about the resettlement to the German Reich of the ethnic Germans of southern Bukovina and the Dobruja¹ reached on October 22, 1940, matters began to unfold rapidly. For the German side, the Consul General Wilhelm Rodde, for the Romanian, the Ambassador Ioan Brosu signed the document. The particulars of the treaty were largely based on the German-Soviet model on the transfer of the Bessarabian and northern Bukovina-Germans, except that Romania made far-reaching concessions regarding the removal of assets by the émigrés. A central point: the parties agreed that legal aspects of the German properties would be handled by the signatory treaty parties. Accordingly, the émigrés relinquished to the German government any claims for properties abandoned in Romania, with Germany agreeing at the same time to compensate them for their losses.²

After the conclusion of the negotiations the Resettlement Commission arrived in southern Bukovina. SS Major General Siekmeier set up headquarters in Gurahumora with individual commissions established in the villages. With appropriate secretarial help and staff from among the ranks of local Germans, the work of registering those desiring to emigrate could begin.

Adults (with the exception of the ill and infirm) who wished to avail themselves of the right to resettle, had personally to appear before the Commission. After confirming the German ethnicity of the applicant and his family, a list of his immovable property was prepared.³ As proof of registration, every single-family member received a resettlement pass on which, besides name and place of origin, a number identified his listing in the records. Upon registration and receipt of the pass, the emigre placed himself under the protection of Germany and simultaneously under the terms of the treaty. Thus he lost the right to control his own fate and became a pawn of state politics.

The accompanying on-the-spot seizure of his property brought the first foretaste of his new status. A German assessor and his Romanian counterpart appraised the individual properties, assigning a value to them. This was an extraordinary opportunity for the assessors, and they attempted in the main to reach a common accord. The property owner retained the right to specify the properties and items he wished or was required to relinquish. He infrequently got a glimpse into the results of the assessment, obtaining only a receipt. Only in the camps in Germany did the perplexed individual, upon request, see excerpts of the assessment. It then became apparent that the agricultural population had been very ill advised; in order to buy transportable goods of all sorts, they had sold a good portion of their livestock, yet livestock, in comparison to acreage, was highly assessed.⁴

Then followed the packing of the hand baggage. In practical terms no limitations were set on the amount of furniture and crated movable goods that could be included for shipment. All freighted and hand luggage was toll-free. Crates and boxes were identified with the name and number of the transferee and every owner received a receipt for the number and type of luggage he had surrendered.

When that had been settled, there began the final preparations to leave the homeland. The elderly and the ill were dispatched earlier via special trains while the remainder had to wait patiently until their names appeared on the transport lists. In the meantime much remained to be done. The last dispensable household items and miscellaneous other articles were sold for cash and exchanged for items which seemed worthwhile taking along. Naturally these transactions were not without considerable loss. While goods offered for sale went for a pittance, the price of fabrics, clothing, leather, etc. rose from week to week.


From mid-November until shortly before Christmas the transports rolled across Hungary to Germany. Almost 48,000 Germans had opted for resettlement with a few hundred remaining in southern Bukovina. A 155-year saga had come to an end.

- 1The circumstances leading to the resettlement of the Dobruja Germans were similar to those in southern Bukovina.
- 2Romania made many deliveries of goods [to Germany] in compensation for properties relinquished by the émigrés.
- 3Who was a German was quite liberally determined. [Proof of one German grandparent usually sufficed.]
- 4Two head of cattle were assessed for more than the yield of one hectare. Yet according to local standards, the yield of one hectare could buy seven to ten head of cattle.

In literary style the author personalizes a Bukovinian family's last hours before they abandoned hearth and home for an uncertain destiny in Germany.

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