

teacher and taught in the 9-grade public school of Karlsdorf from 1942 to 1944. He was a dedicated teacher and became totally immersed in his profession. He founded and led the school choir, which among other things, sang for the German Forces Radio station in



Teacher Ludwig Schwan (1920-1945)

Belgrade, which also made the song "Lily Marleen" popular among the troops of both sides in North Africa.

On October 1, 1944 the railway station in Karlsdorf was crowded with Danube Swabians eager to escape from the dreaded Red Army. Among them was Ludwig Schwan and his 12 to 15 year old students. When the train finally arrived, it continued on without stopping at the station, to the utter dismay of those on the platform. It had apparently already been filled beyond capacity with wounded soldiers and civilians from east of Karlsdorf.

In the confusion of the moment, Schwan took the initiative and commandeered three trucks of an army bakery unit and transported his students to Belgrade, which was still in German hands. They reached the city in the afternoon and immediately boarded a train that was leaving for the west. After traveling through dangerous partisan infested territory, they arrived in Vienna on October 5th. The students were thoroughly exhausted, hungry, confused, and in despair at being separated from their parents, but their devoted teacher cheered them up and gave them confidence.

The genocide of the Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia began in 1944 with the arrival of the Red Army and Tito's mostly illiterate partisans. Without accusing them of any wrongdoing, the Communist regime stripped the Danube Swabians of all civil rights, property, and personal possessions and forced them into various death camps where the majority died of starvation, typhoid fever, denial of MEDICAL aid, and physical brutality. Schwan's father was summarily shot by the partisans and his mother starved to death in a Tito concentration camp. The full horror of the Danube Swabian genocide has been intentionally covered up by the compliant media in the "free" west to this day. Why?

Two days later, Schwan and his students arrived in Passau, Germany. There the little refugee group was split up. The boys went with teacher Schwan to Lower Bavaria and the girls under the guidance of lady teacher Sauer wound up in the Upper Franconia. After the separation, Schwan wrote the girls, "I have been your teacher for two years. Fate has now torn us apart. I believe that I was not only your teacher, but also your good comrade. I love you all and you will remain part of my being as long as I live."

Near the end of January in 1945, Ludwig Schwan and his boys were transferred to Bohemia under the auspices of the *Kinderlandverschickung*, a humanitarian organization in Germany during World War II, which took children from danger zones and transferred them into safer rural areas. In April of 1945, with the Red Army fast approaching Prague, Schwan again gathered his charges and moved farther west by train. He got as far as Fürth im Wald in Germany when the refugee train was strafed by American war planes and some of Schwan's students became casualties.

The battered train then took them to Cham in the Palatinate where they bedded down for the night in the waiting room of a local railway station. Early in the morning of April 18, 1944 American planes attacked this undefended civilian target. Teacher Schwan quickly roused his students and urged them to disperse outside. He was heard calling "Hansi, Seppi, quick get outside!" After the attack, there was total silence. Ludwig Schwan and seven of his boys were dead. He and his students had escaped death at the hands of the Communists in the east only to die months later in an American terror attack in the west.

Local Dr. Arnold, who cared for the boys, wrote, "If we ask the survivors to talk about the incident their voices choke with emotion and they get tears in their eyes. The pain of having lost their beloved teacher and seven of their friends has not gone away. The love for their teacher who remained loyal to them will remain with them as long as they live. The grave of Ludwig Schwan in the cemetery of Cham is hardly ever without fresh flowers."

One of the greatest tributes to him is that his name has been included in a book entitled "Deutsche National Helden", which delineates the lives of 100 German heroes over the past millennium. In this book he has been given a place of honor among kings, soldiers, scientists, inventors and explorers who have contributed so much to the honor and glory of the German people. Danube Swabians should take pride in the fact that one of their own has been accorded a place of honor in such illustrious company. ❀