



# **“What Really Happened”**

*Translated by Annemarie Gerhardt*



## **Part V: Death had a rich harvest in the West and Northwest Batschka**

*Part 5 of the translation series from the book “Völkermord der Tito-Partisanen”. The book is a collection of sworn statements and accounts from our fellow Donauschwaben who lived through these nightmares and survived.*

### **Hodschag**

By actual count, the district of Hodschag had the strongest German population; in fact, it was almost totally German. It included the large, pure German communities of Hodschag, Filipovo, Karavukovo, as well as the communities with the smallest Serbian population: Parabutsch, Milititsch, Brestowatz, and the communities of Batsch, Deronje, Wajska and Plavna, which had a strong German section. Due to the rapid approach of the Russian troops, a large percentage of the population heeded the evacuation call and left their homeland already in the fall of 1944. The percentage of evacuees varied greatly from village to village within the district. For instance, in most of the villages, an overwhelming number of Germans left, while in Filipovo almost the entire denizens remained and for the most part, those from Hodschag. And so it happened, that later these two communities became the showplace for the most gruesome mass murders. It seemed that the liquidating commandos of the Partisans were especially cruel and bestial in the villages where a strong German population remained on native soil.

Within the first days of their occupation, the Partisans, following their master annihilation plan, arrested the most prominent and distinguished Germans in the entire district and brought them to Hodschag. While many of those arrested disappeared without a trace, many were placed in concentration camps to serve as slave laborers. Beginning in the fall (1944) 182 German men between the ages of 16 – 60 were arrested by the Partisan Commando. The pris-

oners were divided into two groups, the first being taken from the village in the direction of Karavukovo to the cross on the Karavukovo Road; the second group was taken in the direction of Filipovo to a meadow next to the road. There they had to undress, line up next to a large hole in the ground and were then shot to death. The Partisans pushed and kicked the bodies into the prepared mass grave and shoveled dirt over them. Among the victims were the most esteemed citizens of Hodschag, including the Industrial Engineer Franz Ertl. A single man was able to save himself from this fate: already totally naked, he was next in line to step close to the grave to be shot when – at that precise moment, he started running. The Partisans – taken by surprise and completely unprepared – shot at him and even chased after him. However, in their haste, they shot and wounded one of their own. This incident greatly favored the man’s escape and he managed to get away. For a long time he was able to hide himself by kind people who did not even know him, but in the following spring and summer all Germans in the entire district were chased into the concentration camp and he could no longer hide. Under an assumed name he entered the camp and lived there undiscovered.

Also, in the spring and summer of 1945 a large number of young women and men from the different communities and camps were brought to Hodschag. In order to hold them captive, both sides of an entire street in the northeastern part of the village was fenced off with barbed wire. For years, thousands of German people were held prisoner there and were taken to different places within the district to work as slaves. The most dangerous places to work were in the marsh- and swamplands. The first prisoners to succumb in the marshes were the young women from Apatin. For the most part, these were mothers of small children or women in poor health that could not be deported to Russia. These young women had first been driven to Gakovo and Kruschevlje where they had been separated from their children and

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