

# The History of Brunnental, Russia 1918-1941

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Photograph of Jakob Mohrland

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**A Report on and Events in my Volga German Home Town Brunnental,  
Canton Seelmann, from the Founding in 1855 until the Deportation by  
Command of Stalin in August 1941**

Now I will report about the 86-year history of Brunnental and its citizens.

I was born in Brunnental on 30 March 1918 and lived in Brunnental until 22 August 1940. My father, Konrad Mohrland, was born in Brunnental on 28 August 1884, and my mother, Maria Elisabeth Rehm Mohrland, was born in Gnadenfeld (Moor) on 15 February 1892.

My parents were married in 1910 and had a farmstead in Brunnental with the necessary farm buildings, cattle, and agricultural inventory. I do not know exactly how much cattle and land my parents had at the time. I know only from my parents, stories that they had developed their farm business quite well by 1914.

When my father, who was a soldier, returned home in 1916 at the end of WW1, the farm had degenerated due to the events of war. During the next few years it improved again because of good harvests.

Now I want to say why I want to report about Brunnental. At first I will mention that I came to Germany in 1941 due to events of the war. A brother of mine and his family have also been in Germany since 1977.

Let me tell you about my beautiful hometown. I will tell you about my experiences in my childhood until the day of August 22, 1940.

I knew many Brunnental families very well. I knew the large village down to the small details. In addition, my parents and many old people often told me stories about the earlier days in Brunnental, so I have decided to write the 86 year-old history of the village.

Nieces and nephews, who now live in Germany, have asked me to tell them everything I know about Brunnental. They want to know how their parents and grandparents lived in Brunnental until 1941. The questions from the first generation that were not born in Brunnental, made me realize that in a few years, no one will be alive who can report to later generations about the village. On the basis of this consideration, I promised my nephews and nieces to tell you about my experiences and everything that I can remember.

Before I begin with that, I want to mention, that I knew about 80 percent of the Brunnental citizens because of the work I did in the MTS (Machine-Tractor-Station). I also knew well the layout of the village. Likewise, I knew almost all the farmsteads and who lived at each one. Because I had to leave my hometown in 1940, and knew the layout of the village quite well, I drew the accompanying village plat in all details. [Note 1] I also want to mention, however, that my experiences in Brunnental were very numerous, but not good. In my years, which I can remember, from 1922-1940, there was much bad for me, and those around

me, to bear. First to be mentioned are the famine years from 1921-1924. At that time many Brunnentalers starved to death, yes, even entire families died of starvation. I will report about that in detail later.

At the end of 1928 and into 1929, Stalin and his associates caused the forceful collectivization and the displacement of the farmers and carried it out heedlessly with all of the brutal methods imaginable. The forceful collectivization of the farmers had as a result, that after the last private harvest in 1929, another great period of famine awaited the Brunnental farmers from 1930 to 1934. I will return to that again.

### **How and When Was Brunnental Founded?**

I proceed thereof from, which is universally known, that the wishes of the Empress Katharina from 1763 to 1767 were fulfilled, that about 27,000 Germans left Germany and settled on the left and right banks of the Volga River. One had divided the land for the German colonists as villages and farms. For that reason, the Empress had promised the colonists many privileges and much assistance. But the first years were very difficult for the colonists. The promised help from the Empress became very meager.

The colonists suffered bitterly from the lack of necessities. This was due to the fact that the colonists did not know enough about the climate and the nature of the soil. Because of the scarcity of suitable lodging, bread and clothing for the long winter months, they froze and starved during the severe cold weather. One said at that time: "The first generation - death, the second-generation - misery, and for the third generation - the bread".

In spite of many difficulties at the beginning, the situation for the colonists gradually became much better within a few years, through sacrifice and diligence.

### **The Colonies**

The colonist, who founded the first colonies on both sides of the Volga River, are in the walks of life from 85 to 90 years, when even with many setback, became prosperous. The colonies became always more beautiful and well off. For that reason, the colonists' families always had many children. Because of that, there prevailed already in 1840, a large demand for land for the grownup sons who wanted to become independent farmers.

In order to assist the demand for necessary farm land for farmers, the government offered free land on both sides of the Volga River (the forest and the meadow), so

that from 1850-1860 many new colonist villages were founded----so that is how Brunntental was founded.

### **The Founding of Brunntental**

Brunntental was founded in 1855 (according to the statement of the "Homeland Almanac" 1955). Brunntental lies almost exactly in the middle between Seelmann and Krasny-Kut. From Seelmann to Brunntental it is 35 kilometers. I'm of the opinion that those colonists who founded their village sought a favorable site. By 1855, the colonists had years of experience with the climate and the nature of the soil. Selection depended on the availability of water for the new colony. The scouts, who sought suitable arable land for the new village location, found a place with a light flat valley where three rivers like canals came together into a larger canal. The larger canal had, at that time, a name already -- Besuch. Because this canal, in the springtime, on account of the snowmelt and heavy rain flow, the scouts saw in advance that this area would be favorable for the village plot. These canals are dry in the summertime. I want to mention again, that on the left bank of the Volga and also on the meadow side, the entire area consisted of many deep and wide canals throughout. For the new founded colonies, these canals were of great significance because they could be used for the collection and preservation of water. The scouts were well satisfied with the site of the flat valley. It was also shown that the site of the 3 canals was good for the founding of the village. I learned this from the older people who said that the new colonists of Brunntental constructed dams on the canals right away.

From the beginning, the village had sufficient water. In addition, it was noted that wells were dug right away because the ground water wasn't very deep. These wells, which were at about 3 to 5 meters, produced much water. With that, the water supply for the inhabitants and the animals used in farming was secured.

But in the first years, it also happened that the dam broke during high water, and then the water in the dam leaked away. But each time, the dams were repaired and strengthened. The colonists then watched the dams when the snow melted and strengthened them. But this solution wasn't a sure thing. By 1900 the village of Brunntental had developed very well and had over 4500 inhabitants. By 1912 it was a nice, large, and pretty like a checkerboard, important village with happy inhabitants, from rich farmers and mechanics (artisans) with 5000 residents (according to the "Homeland Almanac -1955"). Notice the village plan [Note 2]---- Brunntental had wide long and cross streets. In each field there were 6 farmsteads with beautiful houses and gates on the streets. The farmsteads were still relatively new because the village was first founded in 1855. Brunntental already had about 600 houses in 1912. In order to secure the water situation completely, one had improved the dam once more in 1923 and 1924 and built a lock with 4 slide doors

of concrete and steel. With this lock, one could regulate the water from the snowmelt so that one side in the village couldn't have any more floors and the other side could retain enough water. Now the fruit and vegetable gardens, which grew on both sides of the water canals, had enough water to irrigate the trees and plants for the entire year.

The dam with the lock lay on the southwestern exit of the village toward the village of Seelmann. At the northeastern exit of the village toward Krasny-Kut over Hussenbach (see village plan) lay the second large dam of Brunntal. I do not know exactly the year that this dam was built. I only know, that this dam was built much wider and higher and also with a cubic flow canal provided. The water at this dam was about 500 meters at the widest spot, and had a length of about 3 kilometers. As I remember, Brunntal always had enough water.

To add to that, I have to say many happy farmers had their own wells on their homesteads. More public wells came into existence. There were shared well, and all wells had good plentiful water. In the canals, fish were planted. The fishing was let out on lease. The fish were sold by the leaseholders to the villagers.

### **The Name of Brunntal**

Well, I also want to relate where the name of Brunntal came from. I don't know the story exactly anymore, but I think it was in 1925 or 1926 --- in the wintertime, when my father had the fur coat tailor in our house. To keep from freezing in the cold weather in winter, farmers wore fur coats made of sheepskin with high collars, when they made trips to Seelmann [Note 3] with horses and sleds. The fur coat tailors came every winter from the surrounding Russian villages in order to sew for the German farmers. These fur-coat tailors were big specialists in their profession. They have lived among the farmers a long time and were given good board and room. The sewing was paid for. They came mostly in groups of 2 to 3 men and went by orders, from house to house. So one day the farmer, Wilhelm Loeb sack (also know as Manuels Lebsack) came to us in order to hire the fur coat tailor. Wilhelm Loeb sack's father or grandfather's clan were from Frank on the forest side (of the Volga). Wilhelm Loeb sack told me at this opportunity, that his father was one of the first settlers of Brunntal, and told him where the Brunntal name had originated. At that time there was a water canal, close by and opposite, where later the MTS (Machine Tractor Station) was built, on land where 3 small wells had stood. Since the village lay in a basin shaped valley with 3 wells at the water canal, the village was named Brunntal, meaning "well valley". This is what Wilhelm Loeb sack told me.

### **The Site of Brunntal**

Brunntal lay 35 kilometers northeasterly from Seelmann [village] and belonged to the Canton Seelmann (province). Brunntal is quite square in length and breadth of about 14 kilometers. That complies with a pulley block of 196 qkm (Quadratkilometer)[Note 4]. To the west, Brunntal borders on the Warenberger frontier; and in the east on the Hussenbacher borders in Canton Krasny-Kut; and to the south to the Streckerau and Marienberg borders in the Canton Seelmann; and to the north on the border of Straub-Koeppental in the Canton Kukkus. Of the 19,600 ha (hectare), land could have been 70-75% arable----and the rest was pastureland.

Wheat, rye, oats and barley were mainly raised in Brunntal, while smaller portions of sunflowers, watermelons and melons were also raised. Very few potatoes were raised because the climate was too dry for potatoes. One could only raise potatoes in moist deep earth and for those the farmer raised only enough for himself.

Some fruit was raised in Brunntal, but without importance. The people of Brunntal received fruit from the hilly-side farmers, every summer. Every summer from the middle to the end of June, the hilly-side farmers would come first with wagonloads of cherries and later apples, to Brunntal. The hilly-side fruit was also very good. The Brunntal farmers didn't buy the fruit. It was exchanged for wheat or rye -- measure for measure. The hilly-side farmers drove the length of the street in Brunntal and called out, "Fruit exchange, tit for tat, small for large." It was meant like this: For one sack of apples, one sack of wheat; or 1 pail of apples, 1 pail of wheat. The business went well and for both there was satisfaction. The people of Brunntal had apples, and the people from the hilly-side had wheat and rye.

Vegetables were for the main part, raised in Brunntal for its own farmer. At the water canals, which flowed through the entire village, one found vegetables on both sides of the canal. There was white cabbage, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes, beets, beans, peas and other vegetables. The vegetables in the kitchen in the summertime were much desired. For the wintertime, much sauerkraut was prepared depending on the size of the family -- barrels full. Cucumbers were also pickled. They were much beloved, and they tasted good in the wintertime, as well as pickled watermelons and apples.

### **Brunntal of 1900-1914**

Now I'd like to report of the time from 1900 to 1914. I did not live during this time, since I was born in 1918. My parents related much about these years and many of the older people spoke about these earlier years. In 1915, the Tsar's

government had already resolved that the Volga German peasants would be sent to Siberia. Also, at this time, all German villages were given Russian names. Brunnental received the Russian name "Krivogar". Seelmann received the name, "Rewnoje", etc. But these names did not stick. Brunnental remained Brunnental until September 1941. The planned deportation of the Volga German peasants did not materialize, because of WW1 in 1914. But WW1 still had serious consequences for the people of Brunnental.

High officers of the Russian government were ill disposed towards the industrious and happy German peasants and threatened them with destruction. (Comment: But the bread of the Volga farmers had tasted very good to them and they took everything away from the farmers.)

After the outbreak of the 1914 war, the sons and the young farmers of Brunnental became Russia's Army soldiers, including my father. Already during the admittance into the army, the German farmers' sons weren't treated in a friendly manner. They weren't allowed to speak German, in spite of the fact that most of them couldn't speak Russian. They were only allowed to write letters in the Russian language. So they wrote their letters to their homes with the Russian alphabet in German words. In 1927 I read my father's letters of 1914, which were written in German using the Russian alphabet. My father was sent from the Western front to the Turkish front. There, some of the men of Brunnental died of hunger and illnesses. My father came home deathly ill at the end of 1916.

The people of Brunnental perceived that bad times were headed their way. Unrest prevailed and insecurity, also. In October of 1917, the communists took over the authority in Petrograd (Leningrad).

Great harm stood before the Volga Germans. They faced disaster! The lefts (or communists) had now, what they had wanted, for a long time. Now, one could rob, plunder and murder. The German farmers were overcome and robbed.

Let me give you some background: Let me return to the time of 1855 until 1910. In these 55 years Brunnental was a large and happy, lively village and had about 5000 residents. There was a large inventory of domestic animals and much grain to take care of the people, in the future. This was because the colonists knew, from many years of experience, that poor harvest years could happen. So because of those poor grain harvests, misery could come to the people and possibly there would be no feed for the animals. So preparations to guard against these shortages were made in Brunnental. I believe it was in 1910 --- two large grain elevators (magazine) were built to house the surplus grains. The granaries were about 15 meters in length and 8 meters wide and had a holding capacity of many

thousand of pounds of grain (1 pud = 16, 38 kilograms). The Brunntal village kept these large granaries for bad harvest years. A granary was emptied every year and filled again with new grain. The following year, the other granary was emptied and refilled with new grain. Because the Volga German grain had a good quality, one need not sorry about keeping it a long time. With this advance preparedness, no one needed to go hungry if they had a total crop failure. I have not heard from my parents or any of the older citizens that since the founding of the village of Brunntal from 1855 until 1920, that anyone was ever destitute. As I have said before, in 1919 in Brunntal there was a good harvest and all granaries were filled by the farmers as well as the prepared granaries, in case of a bad harvest. Also many horses and other domestic animals were kept for that purpose also.

But since the revolution of 1917, in the Russian towns, there was great need; and the authorities in Moscow knew that the Volga Germans, because of the Revolution and disturbances, had held back grains. So the Russians sent their hungry out of their Russian towns to attack, as a brigade, the German villages. They came to Brunntal. They took all the grains and good which had been prepared in advance... even to the last pound. They not only took all the grains, but also emptied all of the granaries. This continued as more brigades arrived from many Russian towns---banks like the "red guard", "Cossacks", etc. They all plundered and robbed the farmers until not a crumb was left.

In 1920 very little could be planted because of the scarcity of seed for corn. Therefore the 1920 harvest was very scarce. Yes, the citizens of Brunntal had nothing more to eat. In fact, what little was harvested was taken from the citizens. They were not alone. This happened to all Volga German farmers. So the Brunntal farmers were confronted with the greatest famine ever.

After the band of robbers had taken everything, and all reserved provisions were robbed, they began to dig up yards and search in the animal fodder for grain. When they didn't find anything, they knocked the farmers down and tortured them in order to have the farmers find more provisions. It finally got to the point where the farmers couldn't produce any more grain; and then they took clothing, household utensils, and furniture.

So the citizens of Brunntal were completely left with nothing. The robbers had a special liking for horses and took them, as well as any other animals.

Already in the fall of 1920, there was much misery and poverty among the farmers of Brunntal. Many starved in the fall of 1920 and the winter of 1921. Illnesses prevailed along with starvation, like typhus, cholera and malaria. It was an

indescribable distressful situation.... entire families starved to death. Many left in order to seek bread---traveling to Minsk and Poland, but many starved and froze on the way.

In 1921 a farmer could try to invest again in seed for corn and "beasts of burden", but there was little land for investing. And the small amount of land that was seeded did not sprout. With that harvest of 1921, which was nil, the suffering became greater and the people had no more hope.

In the beginning of 1921, news was received by the German villages, that an officer was fighting the Reds (communists). In the hope of betterment for the future, some farmers of Brunnental joined the conflict.

But the farmers were only armed with scythes, pitchforks, and clubs. They were no match for the Reds, who were armed with guns.

Many farmers lost their lives in this war. This revolt, by the farmers, was called a "club war". After this revolt, more than 20 Brunnental farmers were sentenced to death and shot. Because of this revolt, more farmers were sentenced to a federal penitentiary or prison. Those sentenced to death had to dig their own graves in the village and were shot falling into the graves.

But the misery of the citizens of Brunnental became greater. More people left in order to save their lives. More families sought their way via Poland to Germany, and then later to America. But those opportunities to travel to Germany didn't become available for 11 to 12 months. Finally in 1922 after immense suffering of hunger, freezing, and serious illnesses, people were able to travel to Germany.

It also became known then, that the Germans in were dying of mass starvation. Then began a drive for assistance for the Germans in Russia who were in great need, from people in Germany, America, Canada and other western countries. The Brunnental citizens received some of this aid also. Parsonages were vacated and a children's kitchen was prepared.

My life was also saved in one of these kitchens. I was 3 1/2 years old and know quite well that the children received warm food daily. There was bread, portions weighed and tacked together with small toothpicks. Sometimes there was sugar or sweets. With that, the urgency was not over---only lightened. But more was on the way---Germany and America sent large quantities of good, clothing and necessary items. The Brunnental citizens were very happy and thankful for the assistance from foreign countries.

The farmers, who were robbed of everything and who had gone hungry, decided to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, so to speak, and help themselves. But

the situation was very bad in the spring of 1922 when they went to prepare the fields. They needed seed for corn and beasts of burden (draught-animals). The people were too weak and had little strength. Some people used a spade to turn over the sod in the fields. But that small bit, the 1922 scarcity of seed corn and too few beasts of burden, yielded small returns.

The farmers continued with deficiencies in 1922 and 1923. But help from the foreign countries was now received in large quantities----seed corn, agriculture inventories, and also ready money (cash). With this money, the farmers could buy horses in the Kirghiz steppe (Mongolians in Central Europe). Then hope existed for betterment. Some of the people, who had left, returned. But many, who had left, had died. The village had become smaller. Of the 5000 residents in Brunnental before 1917, there were perhaps about 3500 left by 1923.

Many houses stood vacant, were shattered, ruined or town down and burned. Yes, by the time the Revolution years and the starvation years to 1924, were over, better said, "were more lenient", the beautiful village Brunnental had many casualties among the people and its economy. The population could increase in 1924, but never could be what it originally was.

By way of exception, I want to relate a story about my Aunt and Uncle:

On November 5, 1921, the family of my mother's sister with their 4 children, in order not to starve, also left Russia. This family was lucky to reach America via Germany. In America today, three of the four children are still living, 2 sons and a daughter. One daughter died in 1922 of hunger and weakness in a camp on Frankfort/Oder. In 1957, I received from my mother in Russia, who was still alive (she died in 1968), the address of my cousins who lived in America. In 1977 I visited my relatives in America. There my cousin showed me the old Bible belonging to her father (he wasn't living at that time). In the Bible was the following newspaper clipping of the death notice of her mother --- who was my Aunt. The clipping read:

Scottsbluff, 5 May 1927:

After an illness of 116 days, Amalia Wunder nee Rehm died on the evening of April 27th, 1927. In the afternoon of April 30th, the funeral service was held at the Evangelical Zion Church at Scottsbluff where she was laid for her final rest at the cemetery. Amalia Wunder was born in 1887 in Gnadenfeld on the meadow side (of the Volga) and was confirmed by Pastor Stuber in Brunnental in 1902. She married Henrich Wunder in 1905 with whom she shared joys and sorrows. She reached the age of 37 years, 11 months and 6 days. She is survived by her husband, 2 sons, and 1 daughter. The deceased experience many hard times.

She lived in Russia during WW1, the Revolution of 1917, the Citizen's War (the war in Brunnental) and then the poor harvest of 1921. Since she did not know how to survive the 'years of starvation', she conferred with her husband about looking for bread (food). On November 5, 1921, they decided to leave. Because of the unrest during that time, the train ride from Krasny-Kut to Minsk on the Polish border, took 49 days. It was a long and difficult trip. They traveled in an open wagon that was normally used for transporting animals. They had to travel during the wintertime through snow and cold weather. They froze, were hungry, and all of them became ill with typhoid fever. They thought they would all die on Russian soil. At the Polish border, they had to wait until they had regained their health. That took until July 13th, 1922. During fog at night, they crossed the border from Poland into Germany. This journey had lasted 11 months. They reached Frankfurt on the Oder where a daughter died. They finally made it to America. They were among the lucky.

Now let me tell you more about Brunnental.

### **The Economic Recovery From 1925 to 1929**

After the terrible hungry years of 1921--1924, the situation for the farmers of Brunnental began to improve. In 1924, Lenin had called for the formation of the Volga German Republic and gave them an interval of time for recuperation. During this time, Stalin and his helpers, realized that the "best communists" couldn't survive without food or bread. And the villagers of Brunnental recovered quickly with every strength they could muster, and with much industriousness. They tried to raise themselves on their feet again -- they used their knowledge and hard work to produce food for the people.

I also want to mention that in 1923/24, after inflation, new money came out. It was amazing that things went as well as they did, considering that there were few horses and cattle remaining in the fields. I remember living through those difficult times, and how my parents conquered and surmounted the difficulties during this period with hard work.

But at the end of 1925, everything was going well (great guns). The harvests until 1929 were better every year --- good and very good. I often ask myself, and today I still ponder over this, "how the Brunnental farmers could have overcome all these bad times?". I want to mention again that the new money supported many purchases. It was unbelievable that after the Revolution and the hunger years of 1920-1924, that the village of Brunnental could become such a rich and happy village in just the five years from 1925-1929. The farmers again had barns filled with animals, horses, oxen and camels; in addition, cows, pigs, and sheep. Truly, not all was perfect for all farmers. There were those who hadn't recovered as

quickly, but even those had success during the period of 1925-1929. Many buildings were constructed and damages from the previous years were repaired during this time. Many animals were added, along with machinery such as threshing machines, reapers (which were used to cut the grain), binder machines, and other machines of all kinds, which came from Germany and America. Six Brunntal farmers purchased an American "Fordson" tractor in 1926. The citizens of Brunntal had enough food again and all the granaries were filled; also, the two reserve granaries for future "bad harvest years" were also filled again. The harvests of 1928-1929 were especially bountiful with much wheat and rye grain being produced which sold for lots of money and finally gave the farmers the "purchasing power" they had so long gone without.

Every year after the threshing, the grain was cleaned once more with a milliner (cleaning) machine and then stored in the granary. Each farmer knew very well how much grain was needed for food every year, how much was needed for seed corn, and how much was needed for the animals.

The surplus grain was then sold. The grain was weighed to the exact weight and filled into sacks and hauled with a transport wagon to the town of Seelmann, where it was sold. The transport to Seelmann, went as follows:

From Brunntal to Seelmann was about 35 kilometers, and there were no paved roads. The only roads were through fields, which were very dusty in dry weather, and very muddy in wet weather. One could not overload the wagons because it would be too hard for the horses to pull in both dusty and muddy conditions. I was allowed, as a youth of 8-10 year in about 1926/27/28 & 1929 to ride along with my father quite often.

This is the way it was done:

The wagons were loaded in the late afternoon and shortly after sundown the wagons, horses and driver departed. We arrived in Seelmann by the next morning. In Seelmann, on the Volga River, stood more large granaries with a holding capacity of more than a million pounds of grain (1 pud = 16,38kg). When we arrived there, someone of authority took a sample to check it. Then it went on a scale used for weighing gold---they would check quality and weight. Sometimes they would check an entire sack for its weight. When everything checked OK, my father was allowed to take the sacks to the granary and empty them. It was this way! The granaries were at least 10 meters high. On the outside of the granary, there were zigzag high steps and in each staircase landing, there was an entrance to the granary. So if the granary was very full, you would have to carry the sacks higher and higher up the stairs. Each sack contained 4 pud (1 sack = about 65 kilograms). It was hard work and the farmers were sweating. Removing one's clothes was not done at that time, so you had to endure the heat.

After the unloading was accomplished, my father was given a receipt concerning the amount and quality of the grains. With that receipt, my father immediately went to the bank and received the ready money in his hand. We closed ranks and drove to a so-called farmstead. There were many of these in Seelmann. At these houses, or better said, at these farmsteads, there were large barns in which one could leave the horses in order to feed and water them. In the house, one could eat and drink tea, for payment. After the horses had been provided for, and additional supplies were purchased in Seelmann, we again began the trip home. The next morning we were at home again. The farmers made every attempt to sell their grain in the fall, because with the start of winter, these trips in snow and cold weather were very disagreeable.

I still would like to mention that the grain, which lay in the granaries in Seelmann, was loaded on ships and taken to the towns along the Volga River where the large mills were located, like in Saratov and Stalingrad. The large granary in Seelmann belonged to a large fire mill that was located there. It happened that the granaries were filled in Seelmann, so my father had to drive to a smaller mill. This mill was on the eastern exit of Seelmann. I still am able to remember that mill very well. It was more like a two-story building. Besides the mill's structure, stood the engine shed. In this engine shed was a large motor with a flywheel of about 2.5 meters through the knife, and a cylinder of about 2 meters long. On the flywheel was a belt-pulley of about 75 centimeters width and a diameter of about 60 centimeters. On that ran a driving-belt of about 50 centimeters wide. This driving-belt went under to the rolling stool at about 40 degrees high in the mills' structure. I had gone to the engine shed and looked thoroughly at everything. I observed how the engineer (mechanic) constantly shone the brass railings, which were around the motor, constantly wiping. The entire engine-shed was built from top to bottom with glazed tile. I am still excited today, whenever I think about this machine. I have never before, or ever after, seen such a large machine.

The houses of Brunntal and also the stables were predominately built of lumber, but because there was never a forest of any worth on the meadow side, lumber was in very high demand. About 5 kilometers south of Seelmann, on the Volga, was a large sawmill. The logs floated from the north on the Volga, to the south. At this sawmill, one could purchase any amount of lumber for every requirement or need.

The farmers, who had need for lumber, would sell their grain in Seelmann and then drive to the sawmill immediately and take wood back with them on their return home. In Brunntal, there were few houses built of brick. Those building that I can remember were the two-story schoolhouse, the former parsonage building, the dwelling houses of Alexander Hardt and of Henry Hardt and the house in which Pastor Grasmick resided.

Alexander Hardt's house, Henry Hardt's house and Pastor Grasmick's house were called "Siweter". They were houses with 7 rooms. I will return to that later. The other farmers, who were less fortunate, had houses of air-dried (unbaked) clay brick. Most stables, barns (granaries or sheds) and shelters as well as other buildings were built of wood. The greatest pride of the successful farmer in Brunnental was the beautiful entrance to the yard with the large beautiful ornamental doorposts with two wings of a gate besides the small entrance gate. On the one side of the entrance gate stood the dwelling house, on the other side was the summerhouse, so that from the street there was no view into the courtyard. I also must say, that not all farmers had such beautiful farmsteads---only the most successful farmers were able to afford such beautiful homes. But even the farmers who had less, put great emphasis on orderliness and cleanliness in their homes.

Now I want to, for the first time, speak about the church and the religion of the Brunnentalers. Right from the beginning, I have to say, that Brunnental was a genuine Evangelical village. I am convinced that Brunnental, from its colonization of 1855 to 1885 (some 30 years later) had already become an active industrious village, because it would not have been possible that already in 1885 such a beautiful church, with 1200 seats and a three-peal of bells with a 40-meter tower height, could have been built. The farm and church life in Brunnental focused strongly on the belief and the customs of the church. The Brunnental parish was made up of 4 villages: Brunnental, Hussenbach, Gnadenfeld and Beideck. The pastor for this parish was John Grasmick from 1913 to 1932. He lived in Brunnental was very, very energetic. Alexander Schauerman was the schoolmaster until 1928 or 1929.

Alexander Schauerman left Brunnental in 1928 or 1929 and went to Hussenbach on the hilly side. The schoolmasters had many assignments. He was the sexton, teacher, bookkeeper, deputy (second in command) of Pastor Grasmick, and prepared the confirmants for the confirmation. He was, as one says, a maid for everything in the life of the church. Schauerman was the right person for that. He was very talented and beloved in and around the vicinity of Brunnental. He led the church choir in Brunnental and was the director of the orchestra and was able to play so many instruments. He was very talented in technology.

During harvest time he was able to repair all kinds of machines whether threshing machines, steam engines, or Fordson tractors. The Brunnental citizens were very sorry that he went to Hussenbach. A short time ago I received a picture of Alexander Schauerman from a citizen of Hussenbach. I will attempt to learn where he is staying. Schauerman's successor was also from Brunnental, Samuel Mehlinger. He came from a family of mechanics. I will return to Samuel

Mehlinger and Alexander Schauerman at a later time. As I have already said, the schoolmaster had the responsibility to teach the children, mostly those of 14 to 15 years to prepare them for confirmation. The children at that time were thoroughly grounded or versed in religious subjects. They had to memorize a great deal.

They had to learn many songs from the Volga German hymn book (Gesangbuch), which was a collection of Christian songs of the colonies of the Volga---these were all done from memory. Also they had to learn much from the Bible, both the old and new testament. The children had to practically memorize the Catechism. It was such that the parents expected all of that from their children. If the learning seemed a little show, the parents assisted with a trouser belt and that produced the desired work. In those times, when the children were "only seen, but not heard", there was order and discipline in the family and on the street. There was great respect for the Pastor and also for the teachers, by both children and adults. I can still remember when I went to school and I met Pastor Grasmick, I greeted him with respect. Woe is me if I hadn't done that. He would have given me a proper lecture or a good scolding and box on the ears. Had he also told my parents, I would have received another reprimand and a box on the ears that I could not have forgotten very soon. This respect was applied to all older persons. We had to address our parents and all persons who were at least 10 years older than oneself with the formal "your". Otherwise, one addressed everyone who was not 10 years older than oneself using the personal pronoun "you" which was informal. That had become for us children and all growing youth, second nature. When I came to Germany 23 years ago, it was hard for me to address the older people with "you". It took a long time before I felt comfortable addressing anyone in this manner. As far as it is known, the regulation was the same in Germany for 100 years or more that one had to address the elder with "your".

Once more about the church in Brunnental---it was prevalent at the time to say that there was an unwritten statute that every resident attend church on Sundays and holidays. Moreover, it was also noticed that each one conduct himself morally, alas! if the Pastor Grasmuck heard any impropriety that did not come up to expectations. This he brought up in the church during his sermon with out naming names, a reprimand, clumsily done, with good success. These methods have stood the test.

Until 1920 there were no policemen, also no judges. All disputes of concern to the village were settled by the village magistrate or the village administrator (director). My parents told me that up until 1917 or about the time of the Revolution, that small offenses were dealt with quickly and simply, although sometimes hurtful. When, for example, someone had stolen something, the deed was settled without a judge and without a lawyer and closed. The concerned person was sentenced by the village magistrate. He then had to walk the length of

the streets in the entire village up and down, and yell loudly, "I have stolen, I won't do it again", etc.

If one had spread a lie about a citizen of the village, he received the following sentence: He also had to walk through all the streets and call out, "Mouth, you said too much--Mouth, you lied". That was a simple and a cheap and effective punishment. The guilty had to say whether he accepted the punishment or not. When not, there was another possibility, which was not unknown. Five or ten whiplashes would be prescribed. These lashes would be delivered this way: The condemned person had to lie on his stomach across a chair and receive the promised lashes from a whip which was about .5 meters long and as thick as a finger. It was said that the lashes were very effective, and everything taken care of without a policeman or the village director. The church members and the oldest members had at the end of 20 years, very little influence on the citizens. The orderliness and authority of the congregation was obliged to relax their rules. The church and school were separated. The children didn't have to study any religion.

The children were in 1926 already with little pleasure (zum teil); many already had joined the pioneers and later joined the Komsomols who were the communistic youth association. The religious influence over the children by the parents became less all the time. After the years of 1928/29, the old established orderliness, had no more period of validity, so the old people remarked, "Yes, Yes, a Pastor in earlier times was able to keep more orderliness in the village than 5 policemen today." For that reason, I will not report anything more about the church and religion. About that, I will return again.

Next, I will report about the Family relations, size of the families and orderliness:

In the early days, the Brunntal Farmers and the families who had a trade, had many children, 7 or 8 was the rule, and often 10 to 12 children or more. Thereby, it so happened that up to 3 generations lived in one house. Living together in such a large family group was possible, when one person was in charge and that was the grandfather or the great-grandfather---whoever was the oldest. The eldest made the decisions and that was adhered to in most families, even though it sometimes meant differences of opinion; but without the order of precedence, the large families would have fallen apart. During that time, the conditioning factor was such that the children were something wanted by God, at all times. On the other side, there was not yet social insurance from which the older people could live on.

So it was important for all of the family to be used for farm labor. So a large family, with many children, was mighty profitable.

So people questioned each other---why then did the sons remain with the parents or grandparents so long, especially when there were 3, 4 or 5 sons? When 1 or 2 of the sons received "separation" and acquired land from the father, there were always other sons at home, with children, who didn't get land. None of this was simple, because there wasn't always enough land or property to be divided amongst the sons. Each time the existing land was divided, a family would get less. In this case the land didn't increase in size, but the families who wanted more land did increase. Even though only the male children received land when it was divided, the acreage per head became less and less. Sometimes one could lease land from people who for some reason or another, couldn't work the land.

Also, there was "so called" free land on the borders of Brunntental.

This land belonged to the government, and one called it "crown land". This land was newly sold at auction always for a year, and it was good land. This crown land was auctioned by the large farmers of Brunntental in large areas of more than 100 hectare (a hectare is a French metric measure of area and equals 10,000 square meters). There the farmers built a large building for wheat or corn. For example, on this land were the large farmers--- brothers Konrad and Wilhelm Loeb sack. (The Manuel Loeb sacks, or sons of Emanuel Loeb sack)--- Friedrich and Heinrich Stroh---the Seibel family---the Becker family--- and other families. These families had private homesteads on this land, where they had animals and people living there during the winter months. Because they lived so far out, the long travels to the village were dispenses with and they kept enough feed at the homesteads, too.

Friedrich Stroh was the richest farmer in Brunntental, at the homesteads. He had as many as 15 - 20 camels, which he worked the land with and did the harvest. In the fall, he hauled a great deal of grains to Krasny-Kut or Seelmann with these camels. At these homesteads which were 20 - 25 kilometers from Brunntental, the families had more land and animals than did the people who lived in the village of Brunntental; and during the time of the Revolution and gang warfare, these homestead farmers were able to save animals and property, which were later used during the starvation period of 1921 -1924, making it easier for the people getting food supplies. They also helped other people, too. An example of this would be the farmer Frederick Stroh, known as Stroh's little Fred (he was a small man). He was the largest and richest farmer in the village. During the worst time of the hunger episode, he had saved some of his camels at his farmstead, and then he butchered the camels and distributed the meat to hungry people. Also other farmers from the farmsteads, who had saved their possessions, assisted people of the village during the hunger period. All of the Volga Germans had experienced earlier starvation and were prepared to help. Again, the proverb proved the fact, as it is noted, "When the rich have nothing, the poor haven't had anything for a long time already".

Now I want to report about the Brunntal School and my school days:

First, my schooldays--I entered the first class in the Brunntal School in 1925. The Brunntal village congregation had built a two-story brick school building in 1902. In the lower floor at this time, was a school of 4 classes with 4 classrooms, 1 teacher's room, with much illustrative material for instruction. There was only one large room for gymnastics or drill and playtime, which was used only when it was too cold in the yard in the wintertime. There were also all kinds of furniture and reserve school benches.

The first floor was built for use in the wintertime as a church with an altar and everything which belonged with it. The room was very large and completely supplied with church benches. In this church room, the prayer meetings were also held. Now, I also wish to say that our beautiful village church in Brunntal had no heating system and for that reason, church services were only held in the church during the summer months or during the warmest months in the year. But more about that later.

When the new schoolhouse was built in 1902, a large house for the schoolmaster had been built also. The Brunntal schoolmaster, Wilhelm Gruenwald lived in this house. I take it from that, that the schoolmaster Gruenwald was the first schoolmaster in the new school in 1902. During this period, after 1902, religion was still studied. At that time, Schoolmaster Gruenwald was also at one time very tuned-in to Christian work. He distinguished himself by being fully conversant in that branch of study. He was perhaps the only schoolmaster who was active from the first day in the new school in 1902 until the destruction of the Brunntal School in 1941.

When I entered school in 1925, there was no religion taught in the school. By that time, there were more men teachers and also women teachers. I shall name some: Instructor Gruenwald, Instructor Schuetz (the woman teacher), Instructor Borgens and others. The schoolteachers were almost all Brunntal citizens. Because of that, nothing changed at first.

In 1926, a middle school with seven classes was established, although it was deficient. It was decided that the 7 classrooms would be built in the space that had previously housed the "winter church". The space which had been set aside for the winter church was not important to the government because the church had nothing to say anymore and the government felt that the people should be contented that they could have services at all. The cost for remodeling the first floor space of the school was undertaken by the government, but they wouldn't help in upgrading the "heating system" for the summer church building, so that the Brunntalers would once again have a church they could use in the

wintertime. The Brunntal congregation and the citizens had to assume the cost of the heater installation themselves. And the citizens had to be responsible for the fuel costs. The state had no money for the church. The citizens had to be responsible for any expenses.

As I have said already, we learned much in school. The relationship between the instructor and the children was good. The children had respect for the instructor. While bodily punishment wasn't allowed anymore, the teachers' didn't quite accept that so precisely and off and on one could get his ears pulled quite hard, or as the occasion demanded---quite vigorously. The parents agreed when the teacher lengthened the children's ears. The children obeyed, nothing more or else. If I had every made a complaint about the teacher, to my parents, I would have received a hard following blow. I am convinced that today, every teacher can only dream of such a policy by the parents.

I was a good scholar until the 5th class, and was promoted each year. Only the teacher, alone, had the option to promote a student. There were not yet others who helped make that decision with the teacher. After my 3rd and 4th grade years, time changed. A new school ruling appeared and the teachers didn't trust themselves anymore with punishment. Unknown teachers entered the schools now, and above all, younger ones. Now the school became more political and each teacher had to watch the other ones. I will report more about the school at a later time.

Now I will report about the Doctor's Care in Brunntal:

There was good care for ill people in Brunntal, in my time. Brunntal had a beautiful large hospital building, built of brick. In addition to it, there were 3 houses for doctors and their staff. The hospital stood on a tract of arable land of about 3 hectare. On the south and east side it had a fence, and to the west and north, it was surrounded by a fruit garden or orchard. The land itself was planted with trees and shrubs (see the village plan or map). When the hospital was built is unknown to me. I rather believe it was built about 1910 or 1912. Since I was in Brunntal the last time (about 1940), the hospital and other buildings near it were still in good shape. For that reason, I've decided that those buildings couldn't have been more than 30 years old in 1940.

The hospital, as I've said before, was well planned. The main entrance was on the east side. To the right of the entrance was the doctor's room, and to the left was the waiting room. Behind the waiting room was the hospital's pharmacy. This pharmacy was just for the hospital, not for selling to the public. Brunntal itself had no pharmacy. The closest pharmacy was in Seelmann. In the back rooms were the sick rooms. A room for births was available. To be practical, they put

everything together. The children were wrapped in a bundle at home by the midwife, and only in an emergency did they go to the actual hospital. Mrs. Gruenwald was our active doctor. This woman doctor was well beloved in Brunnental and in the three neighboring villages of Streckerau, Marienberg and Hussenbach. Her husband, David Gruenwald, was a teacher, and he also was from Brunnental. I knew this woman doctor from the time I was a small child. I am not sure how long she was active in Brunnental. I do know that she and her husband were taken away in 1938 because at that time, two young doctors came to the hospital in Brunnental.

During the years of 1921-1924 and from 1930 -1934, the citizens of Brunnental were quite healthy people. Indeed, the malaria kept people busy up into the 1930's. I was sick with malaria until 1935. The best medicine against malaria was quinine (ammoniated quinine). This helped for quite a period of time. There were different remedies for malaria. The doctors were duly qualified to handle all illnesses at that time. In cases of serious illness, one had to go to Seelmann or to a special hospital. I had contracted a bad case of eye disease in 1935, and was taken to Warenburg. There I was taken to an eye clinic. Within a 12-day period I was okay.

Now I want to report on the fire defense in Brunnental:

For fire protection, I can say the following: In Brunnental, at that time, there were no actual jobs called "fireman", as we hear about today. It was really each citizen's job to be a fireman. When a fire broke out anywhere in the village, be it day or night, each citizen was obligated to rush to the place of the fire, equipped with every possible type of extinguisher, including chemical extinguishers.

There was no tap water, and not each farmer had a well on his homestead in Brunnental. All farmers, who didn't have a well, had to bring their water for their domestic animals. And for the household, with a water wagon, they brought water from a public well. In the animal stalls stood large stands (barrels) that were filled according to the demand. At the homestead, stood the water wagon with a water barrel filled with water, from which the housewife got the water for the kitchen and house. There was always much water set aside for possible fire because all the houses and farm buildings were built of wood, and the sheds and outer buildings were usually filled with hay. People were well aware of the fire danger, and were prepared. Because of this reason, each farmer was his own fireman.

I also have to say that in the wintertime, the water was brought by water sleds and the containers had to be emptied immediately in the cold weather. The farmers had to have additional containers ready for the drinking water. It was necessary

to prepare for all of this in the wintertime--to keep water available and ready for the possibility of a fire. I, myself, outlived some small fires, but they were always through quick work, that they were extinguished. It was this way: when a fire started, the bells rang. For that, certain people had been prepared to do that work. When these people weren't on the job, others did it. As soon as a fire alarm was given, all citizens were obliged to drop everything and leave everything lie where one dropped it and hitch the horses to the water wagon and rush to the fire. Within a short time, the farmers came with water extinguishers to the scene of the fire. Through these quick responses of togetherness of all citizens, it was always possible to control large losses.

I also want to mention that Brunnental had a fire-engine hall (large shop) with 2 fire engines, which with 6-8 men, also with muscular strength, set in motion. In this hall stood 2 water wagons ready, filled with water containers as well as a pot hook (poker) and water buckets.

Once a fire broke out during my time in Brunnental. The fire could not be quenched. It was like this---December of 1924, and it had been a bitterly cold night of about minus 30 degrees. The alarm sounded at midnight. There was burning in the lower village at the western exit where several two story wood fire mills stood, off by themselves. Because of the terrible cold weather, the water supply wasn't of the best. The backwater (static water), which was only 50-60 meters from the mills, was frozen with an ice coverage of 20 centimeters. Briefly said, before the unloading to get the water running and also because of the severe cold, the mill could not be saved. This mill was never rebuilt. Brunnental had a second fire mill, which was still in full operation in 1941. The fire danger was particularly great during the summer and during the harvest season.

Report about the Life of the Brunnental Farmers, After the Grouping of the Land:

It is generally known that after the 1917 Revolution, the farmland became the property of the Soviet State. The State placed the farmers' land at someone's disposal and management and divided it according to the size of the family. The first distribution of the land and the group division was good according to what my parents had told me in 1918. The total land available in Brunnental was divided into 8 groups. My parents were in the 8th group, which were about 10 kilometers in distance from the village. In the 8th group, also known as a piece of land, there were about 25 farmer families.

In order to avoid traveling long distances to and from the "piece of land" each day, the farmers built temporary accommodations for their families and domestic animals. The farmers traveled to these "temporary accommodations" in the springtime, shortly before "sowing time" with the necessary animals and

equipment needed. The tilling of the soil and the planting of the seed-corn had to be done early as it was very important, in that climate, to plant the seed as quickly as possible while there was still enough moisture in the ground so that the seed would germinate via the winter's moisture and grow well. During the sowing, only the men went to the land. The women and children remained in the farmyard in the village. The children were still attending school. The women and children came to the farmland only when the cutting of hay began, because all hands were needed in the hay harvest.

Most of the elderly remained in the village. The hay didn't grow in the field... it grew in the deep trenches which were very wide and deep on the pieces of land. The hay was cut with scythes. The hay land would be measured and each farm group received a portion. When the hay was dry, it was immediately taken home before the grain harvest and placed in the hayloft.

Now first I want to report of my years when I was a youth of 7, 8, and 9 in the years of 1924 - 1926 -- how I spent my summers:

Out on the land were many children who were my age. I can say, it was for us children, big freedom, those glorious summer days from June 1<sup>st</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup>. Everything was green. There were many different plants and all kinds of flowers. One could bathe in the dam as often as one wanted to, during the day, and soak up sun's heat.

There were so many birds that sang the beautiful melodious songs high up in the sky. There was a special beautiful bird -- it was the hoopoe [any of several Old World non passerine birds having a slender decurved bill]. We said to this bird, "Wut, Wut". It had yellow on black plumage and such a beautiful head with a somewhat pulled-down bill and a magnificent red comb. He, most likely, sat out on roofs in the mornings and with a beautiful melody, called out his "Wut, Wut".

There was always something new for us children to discover. We changed by playing ball or we reciprocated testing our strength. Shortly before Pentecost, we picked pails filled with tulips on the Steppe, and brought them home and placed them in the deep cellar for the celebration of Pentecost (Pentecost fest). It was always a big celebration. House and courtyard were thoroughly cleaned and everything dressed up splendidly (decorated beautifully).

In July, one would begin to approach the harvests. At this time my parents cut everything with the scythe. At first all scythes were whetted on a stone (sharpened). One had to consider that everything had to be ship-shape----just right---before they began the harvest. The harvest was hard work for the farmers in those days. In these times, it was hot and dry, often for weeks. It seldom

rained. I had to help even when I was 7, 8 and 9. I had to prepare for everything - that there was always fresh drinking water at hand--there were different tasks for me. The horses needed a drink of water from time to time, etc.

Some farmers already had reaping machines and binders. I believe these machines were called "Cormick". Other farmers had the suction type, winch machine and horse rake. Each time, right after the reaping, the dry grain was taken immediately to the orchard and set in rows. These rows were about 5 meters wide and about 5 meters high and the length was about 10-15 meters. This orchard was a large area where all farmer groups had a certain place where they could set their grains. The rows had to be set with a certain clearance. This was done because of fire danger; and they also had to leave space to drive through with the wagon, and also for the setting up of the threshing machine. One had to strive to complete the threshing quickly.

The threshing on the land groups was done as follows: A farmer had a threshing machine with a Goebel horse mechanism. The horse mechanism was power-driven by means of 8 horses. The farmers prepared the framework for the horses. The work was done in two shifts or better said, Day and Night! Another farmer had a threshing machine with a neft motor. What this motor is called, I don't remember at the present time. At that time there were more of this kind of "neft motor". It was a one-cylinder motor with 2 swinging wheels of about 1 meter in diameter. I believe that this motor had about 8 horsepower. Of the two remaining farmers, one had a threshing machine and the other had a Fordson tractor. With the combination of these three, Group 8's threshing work was done energetically. The farmers agreed among themselves, when and whose turn was scheduled next. All the farmers mutually agreed to assist each other at threshing time. Everyone who could lick a spoon had to help, whether young or old. Naturally, the farmers who didn't own a threshing machine were required to pay rent for the use of one.

Now I want to return to say something more about fire protection:

At the time of many good harvests, a group on one place had a large fire, which could have been a terrible disaster for other groups. Therefore it was necessary to make preparations before each harvest, by making special rules and procedures.

It was agreed that no smoking was allowed in the orchards. Water barrels, equipped with water buckets, were an utmost necessity. The exhaust pipes of the neft-motors and the tractors were guarded with water barrels in a convoy. Everyone had the responsibility to be especially alert to any beginning of a fire. During the three years while I was in Group 8, we did not experience any fires in the orchards. But the farmers were also very careful. During threshing, the farmers immediately cleaned their grain with the cleaning machine (almost every

farmer owned such a cleaning machine), and they hauled the grain to their house and into the granary. Also the straw and chaff was also taken quickly as possible, to the house before the beginning of winter. When the domestic animals were put into the barn, then the feed had to be under roof and shelter, also. One could say the group work was finished, once the harvest was completed, the winter seed was in the ground, and the tilling was done, unless, of course, the winter rye still had to be planted in the fall. Once this group work was done, everything was cleared away, and the shelters were locked up and returned to the courtyard in the village.

I also want to say that there were 2 families in Group 8--- a Klippert family and a Koch family who still had holiday houses and barns. In these houses, people remained in the wintertime and animals were confined to the barns. With that I shall end my report on Group 8 from 1924-1926, when I was 7 to 9 years of age.

Now I shall report about the people in the trades in Brunntal:

In Brunntal there were not only farmers, but also there were many families who followed trades. Without these tradesman, the Brunntal farmers would not have reached such a large fortune. I also want to mention that about 80 percent of the trade's people also farmed. Before I count all the different vocations, I will name 1 or 2 by name. Accordingly, I will also refer to the fact why so many tradesmen were necessary in one village. Brunntal didn't have any industry; the agricultural council and the commodities council could have reestablished one. Everything had to be made by hand. At that time, Brunntal did not have a river to produce electricity not for lights or for machines run by electricity. Everything had to be done by muscular strength. In order to supply the demands of the agricultural council and the orders needed for house and courtyards, it called for many tradesmen. I will explain two examples why so many tradesmen were necessary. A wagon builder for horses, had to make 4 wheels for one farm wagon, all by hand, as it has already been said, without a river, without a single mechanical machine or circular saw. My Uncle John Rehm was a Cartwright (coach builder). At the time of 1926, he had 2 sons who were 14 and 18 years of age. I was 8 years old at the time and spent much time at my Uncle's workplace, and it can be said that overall, with my nose into everything, I learned much. One day he turned on a lathe, and the boys began to make the start of a hub for a wheel. The lathe was operated by both boys, who used their feet to drive it. I also assisted with my feet in its operation, as much as I could. This lathe had a large heavy swinging wheel over a crankshaft and jack, and ran with the feet on the board. My Uncle stilted the hubs, while the boys and I almost sweat blood with out feet on the board. I can say that by the time the 4 hubs were stilted, the day was over. That was but the beginning of the process. Now in each hub, one had to bore large crown holes exactly in the middle of the hub, by hand. Then in each

hub, 12 holes were spaced and under a small corner a support was placed, favorably inclined toward the front, all by hand. Then for 4 wheels, 48 spokes were made, all the same, each exactly like the other -- all by hand-- then also 24 fellows (felly-the-rims of a spoked wheel) -- also by hand. Then now the 4 wheels would be ready, except to assemble them, but then the other pieces of the wagon also had to be completed -- all by hand. After all of that, I am convinced that today there is no one in the position to estimate how much time the wagon builder needs until the wagon is finished. I believe from 10 - 12 hours per day, it would have taken at the most 4 weeks. According to today's time, with modern machinery, it would possible take 20 hours.

Another example: A sheet metal worker, or better said, a plumber, who puts together a water pail or cooking oven by hand, needs much time for that. With modern machinery it is possible to do it in a minute. I hope that with these two examples that I have made it clear to everyone why at that time it was necessary to have so many tradesman or people who made things with their hands.

Now I will list some trades and tradesmen whose names I can still remember:

- 1) Carpenter (cabinetmaker or Shreiner)
  - Friedrich Mehlinger family
  - Jakob Rehn family
  - Georg Gutmann family
  - Jakob Klippert family
- 2) Shoemaker (cobbler) (Schuster)
  - Andreas Hartung
  - Heinrich Klein family
  - Steinmetz family
- 3) Tailor (Schneider)
  - Seibert family
  - Heinrich Klein family
- 4) Plumber (Klempner)
  - Ferdinand Meier family
  - Lochmann family
- 5) Felt Boots and hats (Walker)
  - Becker family
  - Walter family
- 6) Tanner of Hides (Gerber)
  - The names of these tradesmen I do not remember
- 7) Blacksmith (Schmiede)
  - Hohnstein family
  - Johannes Meier family
  - Aschenbrenner family

## 8) Millers (Das Muehlen-Handwerk)

Here I count the mill-owners in Brunnental:

1. Fein family - 2 windmills
2. Johannes Hoelzer family- 1 windmill
3. Spiegel family - 1 windmill
4. Alexander Hardt family - 1 fire mill (a fire mill is a mill driven by an engine---ran by neft oil) Remember, a fire mill was burned in 1924. The fire mill of Alexander Hardt was still in full operation in 1941. All windmills were torn down after the expropriation in 1929 until 1932. The wood was used in the collective domestic economy.

Now I want to speak about the nourishment of the Brunnental farmers:

I will first report of the time of 1925 until 1929. In this period, the Brunnental citizens were enjoying good times again, even very good times. The big starvation period of 1921-1924, which they had overcome, was a great detriment for the people and property. But again, everything improved and looked good for the future. The farming had developed quite well again, thanks to the immense help from abroad. The farmers had again been able to purchase goods and spend money, and they had the opportunity to be able to borrow money from the government so they could purchase horses and machinery again. Each farmer endeavored to improve his situation again, as quickly as possible. The progress was also possible because the farmers were allowed freedom to work in the past 5 years (1925-1929). The proceeds from these crops increased from year to year and in the years 1927, 1928, and 1929 they were good to very good. The farmers had hope again. Much building was done and everyone worked. The farmers had much good grain again and were able to sell it for high prices. In a few words, the Brunnental citizens became wealthy again during those 5 years and had their barns filled with domestic animals. They had purchased expensive German machinery with which to work the soil, such as threshing machines, steam engines, plows and other implements and tools.

When I talk about nourishment now, I mean the time from 1925-1929. The Brunnental farmers were at that time up to 90% self-supporting. Without exception, they depended very little on others for support. They raised almost everything themselves. To begin with...let's look at the food.

Wheat and rye was brought to the mill to be ground, customarily about 8 sacks of flour were done at a time. A sack was 4 pood (1 pood = 16.38 Kilograms) (4 pood = 36.11 lbs). Of these 8 sacks, usually half were of white flour and the other half rye flour. The farmer had, back at him home, a two-section flour chest, where white flour was kept in one section and rye flour kept in the other. The farmer's

wife normally baked once per week -- one oven white bread and 1 oven rye bread, according to the size of the family.

Meat supplies were such that in the fall, when it was frosty already, 1 or 2 pigs were butchered. The pigs should be mostly large and very fat and weigh not less than 150 kilograms. A good slaughter pig should have hand and thumb-high fat. Then also a beef (cow or ox) was slaughtered. With that the meat and lard was supplied. Also, accordingly, a supply of sheep and poultry was butchered.

With the milk and butter supply it was so! The farmers usually kept only so many cows just for their own supply. The milk was separated by a separator. The farmer's wife put the cream into a stone crock during the week and on Sunday butter was churned. The farmer's wife clarified the butter, which the household couldn't use right away, and saved it in a stone crock for the winter months for seasoning the vegetables. Often times, fresh butter was sold at the market. When milk was surplus at times, one could sell it in the dairy.

Vegetables in Brunnental were raised for the family's own use. For cultivation of vegetables, land was given to the citizens as common shares on both sides of the dam's backwater ditches. On this vegetable land, the farmers raised white cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, peas and beans and other vegetables. The vegetables that couldn't be used in the summertime were preserved or canned for winter use. Much sauerkraut and cucumbers (pickles) were preserved for the winter. Also watermelons and apples were preserved in brine and eaten with pleasure. Fruit growing in Brunnental was of no importance. Fruit was traded for grain by orchardists from other areas.

I want to mention that the peasant women (farmer's wives) enjoyed making many dried apple slices from apples. These apple slices were prepared the following way: The apple was cut into 4 quarters (4 pieces) and the core was removed and the slices placed on a baking tin. These baking tins with the apple pieces were then placed in the sun to dry. If necessary, they might also be placed in a warm oven to dry. These dried apple slices kept very well and could be kept at the most for 2 years.

Cherries, gooseberries, and red currants were also canned to be used in the winter months, and one would call it stewed or preserved fruit. It tasted very good. All of the preserved vegetables and fruits were welcome vitamins during the long winter months.

I must also add that every fall, sugar-beet syrup was cooked and many times, not such a small amount. Also watermelon juice was cooked and called syrup. This watermelon syrup tasted especially good, and it was golden yellow like honey.

The cooking of the watermelon juice must be understood because one needed special containers.

I can only say that the nourishment of the farmers of Brunnental from 1925-1929 was simple, natural, and by all means healthy. During these years, the children, as well as the grown-ups, were healthy. The natural living was a good example. As I said before, the farmers were 90 percent self-supporting. Additional provisions which had to be purchased included sugar, salt, tea, spices, soap and lotions and other small items.

The Clothing of the Brunnental Farmers:

The clothing of the Brunnental farm families was simple, but modest. When one thinks of the clothes, one needs to remember the climate.

It is known, that the climate in the Volga republic is different than in the West. In the wintertime, it is very cold most of the times -- around minus 15 up to minus 35 degrees with lots of snow and snowstorms. By comparison, the summers are dry and warm, even hot -- from about + 20 degrees to +40 degrees.

According to the manufacture of the clothing for the Brunnental farm families, the women had the western style. First, I want to mention, that in the years 1925-1929, there were no manufactured (ready made) clothing available for purchase. As I have reported earlier, the farmers were able to purchase fabric for the entire family, after the harvest, as money trickled into the house. Overcoats, suits, and the large pieces of clothing were left for the tailors to make. All other clothing for the family, be it shirts, pants, dresses, blouses, underwear, children's clothing, bedding and quilts were made by the farmer's wives and daughters themselves.

The regulations at that time were so, that a farmer's daughter of marriageable age, could do the family sewing herself. With few exceptions, the girls were capable of doing it. When one or the other wasn't of that caliber, when she was married, she had to learn it very quickly. Normally, a sewing machine happened to be in the house of the better-equipped farm families. That was a big advantage for the young wife. Where there was no sewing machine, the women had to sew by hand. I know it appears unbelievable for today's times, but I assure everyone that things were like that at that time in Brunnental.

For example: my mother came from a rich farmhouse. She married in 1910, received a rich dowry, also a Singer sewing machine. This sewing machine was taken by the bandits in 1921, during the Revolution. My father was not in a position to purchase a new machine during the big hunger and starvation period from 1921 - 1924. As the economic situation improved and things became better

for the new farmers of Brunnental, my mother received a sewing machine again in 1926.

I truly remember that my mother sewed everything by hand, whether pants or shirts for my father and us children, in those years when she did not have a sewing machine. She had a paper pattern for all the clothing. With it she cut out the clothing and sewed it by hand. Not only my mother was capable of doing that; it was so common that all the women were able to sew for their families.

What I have discussed so far tells more about the clothing for the warmer time of year. But the clothing for the cold and the very cold season of the year, was very much more important. Also it took much more energy and skill for the wives and daughters to make this winter clothing. There was much preparation needed for the spinning and knitting of the wool clothing. The farmers had to raise sheep for the wool.

The sheep were also a great source of nourishment. The meat was enjoyed during the summer season and especially when field work and harvest work was being done. Since this fieldwork was done during the hot season, it was impractical to butcher a cow or any large animal since there would be no way to preserve such a large quantity of meat, such as we do today in tin or glass jars. One could only keep fresh meat in a deep cellar for 8 days during the summer. For that reason, one butchered large animal in the fall when frost was in evidence. One could then hang the meat in the granary on a hook until it was frozen hard as a bone. Then it was sawed into portions as needed and laid into the meatpacking case. The housewife brought it to the kitchen as it was needed during the winter months. But with sheep, since they were smaller, the meat could be used during the summer months, and eaten quickly.

Now, back to the sheep or better said, back to the wool of the sheep. First, the wool had to be prepared for spinning. The work was mainly done by the wives and daughters. First, the sheep were shorn in the spring by hand with a so-called sheep shear. Then the wool had to be washed. The dry wool was first placed in a sack and stored until fall, after the end of the fieldwork. In the fall, the wool was brought forth and prepared for the spinners.

This is what took place: The wool was pulled apart by hand by the wives. Then loosely placed in layers in a basket about the size of a page and the thickness of 3 fingers. The wool was then scratched (scored) with two curry-like carding combs, the size about 25 centimeters by 30 meters with a handle on it. The one carding comb with the handle is laid down on the bench, and then one puts a layer of wool down. Then one takes the second carding comb and goes over it, back and forth

many times, until the wool gets looser. This wool is then laid into a basket and is ready for spinning. I also want to say that many times a great amount of wool must be worked to be ready for spinning. It sometimes takes weeks for this work to be completed.

Much wool must be prepared for felt boots. Felt boots were a great necessity for the families in winter during very cold weather. There is no better footwear than felt boots in cold weather. Yes, one could say, that without sheep there is no warm clothing for the winter season. Many felt-cloth boot makers were in Brunntental. Those boots were mainly made in late fall and winter. Making the felt boots was hard work in warm damp rooms. As far as I know, felt boot making was only done by men. And this work was done by oil lamps. There were no electric lights in Brunntental.

Spinning of the wool took weeks of work. In some houses, one could count 3 spinning wheels. After the spinning, the yard with 2 threads was turned together on a spinning rod. Then the twisted yarn was removed from the spools and wound onto a reel and then the hank was taken from the reel and dyed according to one's wishes. Then it was dried and rolled into a ball. Then the yarn was ready for knitting. Now, everything that needed to be knit was knitted, often taking the entire winter to finish the work.

I want to say again that the farmer's wives and daughters did a great amount of work to cloth the family. The women had the housework for the entire year, and the care of the many children besides. It was a difficult hard lot for the wives. The housewives and daughters were able to work the many sided tasks because they didn't have to work the entire day, but also were busy during the long winter evenings, energetically knitting or patching clothes. In order for a change, the woman and girls sang many songs, religious and folk songs. Often, neighbor women and girls joined the group, brought handwork and sang vigorously together. Yes, at that time, there was no radio yet and no television -- but also no poverty!

The girls didn't have things easy then, they had to remain in the house in the evenings and help with the work. The rules were strict. The girls could only go out with their parent's permission. It was so different from today when 15 year-olds can rent a room and undress or live together. It would have been unthinkable then, also the thought would have been bad for the girl. But the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, during the expropriation of the independent farmers and forced collectivism and first, right after the abolition of the church, rules were changed and the customs began to deteriorate. I will report about that later.

Now I will report about Burning-Material Supplies of the Brunntental farmers:

The supplies of burning materials for the Brunntal farmers was already always difficult, that's the reason I want to report about it. First, I will add, that there was no forest far and wide near Brunntal, and coal for heating wasn't available either. On the other side, one needed much material for heating during the long and often very cold winter. In Seelmann, there was enough wood to buy, but for burning it was just too expensive. As I have mentioned many times, most of the farm buildings in

Brunntal were built of wood. Whenever a building needed to be changed, enlarged or completely torn down, the used lumber was used for heating material. But this quantity did not cover the usage of the farmers. Other methods had to be found for establishing a permanent supply of heating material.

As long as the farmers were independent and the barns were filled with animals, there was enough manure deposited; and out of this manure, the farmers could make the so-called "manure wood" used for firewood. The Brunntal citizens had a much more difficult time procuring burning material after the expropriation at the end of 1929 and the beginning of 1930, since the farmers didn't have any more animals; and with no animals, there was no manure; and with no manure, there was no manure wood. I will talk about this later.

So I will describe the manure wood production briefly and show you that this manure wood, even though it may be hard to grasp, was nevertheless an excellent material to burn. It was so common in Brunntal to separate the farmsteads into a front yard and a backyard. The barns for the animals were always in the backyard. The manure, which was collected during the long winters, was always set in front of or behind the barn. The manure piles were either round or rectangular, and were about 5-10 millimeters in diameter. During the winter season, the manure pile increases sits perpendicular on all sides. Accordingly, much snow is thrown on the manure pile. During the warming of the manure, the snow fuses the manure, and the manure rots very fast. By spring, when the animals leave the barn to go to the willows, the manure pile is up to 3 meters high. The manure stands there until after the spring seeding. By the middle or end of May, the manure is rotted through and through and is like a layer of bacon from the bottom to the top.

Then the manure is made into manure wood. It goes like this: The manure is hauled by transport business with horses to a vacant place, separated and divided into equal parts of about 50 centimeters in height. Then water is sprinkled on it, evenly and repeatedly, several times. Now 2 or 3 horses on a long line are driven on this manure surface in a circle until the manure was pliable. Then the surface of these manure piles were trampled flat with the feet of many people to the height of about 15 centimeters, then finished with a manure shovel, by cutting into

squares of about 25 x 30 centimeters and set into rows. After 8 - 10 days, when the cut squares were somewhat dry, they were set into large long piles or round piles. These set-up piles were usually hauled into sheds before the harvest, and piled high to the top. In addition, I wish to say that the heating power of the manure wood is about like peat.

Now I wish to return once more to the year 1927. As I have already said, in 1926 the land groups had been reassigned. My father went from Group 8 to Group 1. This group lay directly on the east side of the village. The first harvest in 1927 for Group 1 turned out very well. It was good all the way around. My parents were able to purchase new things. My father purchased a new reaping-machine (winder-machine). He bought wood in Seelmann and throughout the entire house he put new flooring. The horse barn received a new roof and many other buildings were improved. In any case, the farmers were again filled with hope, and had lots of ambition to improve their households much better.

Also the year 1928 gave the Brunntal farmers a very good harvest. They were able to sell many grains. The granaries were filled for future use and everyone believed they would have a better future. But the farmers and all the people of the Volga made this calculation without giving thought to the "landlord". The landlord was Stalin. Stalin had other plans for the farmers. He wanted to create an industrial state out the existing Russian agricultural state. For that purpose, he needed much grain so that he could purchase machines from foreign countries. He needed these machines to build up modern factories and plants. He needed to do this without incurring any costs. In order to carry out these plans, Stalin and his henchmen in the Kremlin thought to destroy the farming. In a few words, these plans were declared: the total annihilation of the private property of the farmers through forced collectivization.

These plans were carried out by Stalin with the most severe consequences that any of the farmers at that time, has experiences. Thus it began: in 1928, as I have said before, the farmers had a rich harvest and could still carry on with their business as before. Now the politicians in the local soviets (at that time known as municipal soviets) quietly divided the Brunntal farmers into three groups, according to the prepared plans of Collectivization by order of Stalin. The first group was the wealthy, the second group was the middle farmers, and the third group was the poor farmers.

In the first group were the farmers that had a lot of property, for example, the owners of a mill, those that had 6 Fordson tractors, many cattle and the most beautiful and valuable homes, and so forth.

To the second groups were those farmers who possessed up to five horses and very little property. Most of them in this group used tools and equipment to farm their land.

The third group, were the poor farmers who had one or two horses, and virtually nothing else. This group also included those farmers who worked rented land.

The division of the farmers into 3 groups was accomplished by the municipal courts along with the politicians and communists. In one bold stroke, all this came to pass by November of 1928.

All the farmers, the wealthiest that belonged to Group 1, the so-called Kulaks, had to leave all their possessions, without any warning, in the middle of the night. They were allowed to take only hand baggage. These families were allowed to be taken in by friends and relatives. All property, home, farm buildings and machines and the other agricultural tools, the barns along with the cattle, the silos full of grain, were now in the hands of the Collective Management.

Now the communists, and those who had little inclination to work, screamed that now we will annihilate you blood suckers. Now everything belongs to us. Now we will never have to work for these Kulaks. I will report on this later.

On the 30th of March 1929, on my birthday, my father had to provide a team of horses to take these so-called Kulaks to the railroad station at Krasny-Kut. Yes, there would be many other teams of horses provided for these farmers. On the 30th of March 1929, the thawing of the snow had begun, and there was water standing in the ravines. The people carrying their luggage and meager belongings became wet. The Brunntaler Kulaks were all sent to northern Russia in the region of Kotlas, and there they perished in the forest.

I will report to you now of the Kulak families that I know that had to leave at that time. I do not remember the names of all of the families.

1. Friedrich Stroh -- His house and entire farm became the office of the Brunntaler Collective No. 1.
2. Konrad Loeb sack, farmer (also called Manuel's Konrad) - His farm became the office of the grain warehouse of the Brunntaler Collective Farm No. 1.
3. Wilhelm Loeb sack, farmer (Konrad and Wilhelm were brothers) -- His farm was taken over by the MTS Mashinen-Tractor-Station.
4. Heinrich Stroh, farmer -- His premises became the MTS office.

5. Alexander Hardt, farmer and engineer -- His premises became the Municipal Court Building.

Heinrich Hardt, farmer and merchant -- His premises became a market. Alexander and Heinrich Hardt were brothers and had a mechanized mill.

Johannes Hoelzer, farmer and windmill owner -- His premises became a clubhouse and horse stalls for the Collective No. 1. The mill was dismantled in 1932 and the wood taken to the Collective.

The Fein family, who possessed 2 windmills -- They were dismantled in 1930 and the wood taken to the Collective.

The Spiegel family -- owners of windmills eventually dismantled and the wood taken to the Collective.

The brothers Hardt, powered windmill owners -- these mills were in service until 1941.

11. The Hohnstein family, farmers and smiths

12. The Linker family, farmers and owners of a tavern.

13. The Uhrich family, farmers.

14. The Gruenwald family, farmers.

15. The Seibel family, farmers.

16. The Melcher family, farmers.

17. The Goettmann family, farmers.

18. The Schaefer family, farmers.

19. The Becker family, farmers.

20. The Koch family, farmers.

And many others...

As far as I can recall, in one swoop, the 30 families were taken away on March 30, 1929.

And how did matters continue?

The Collective farms were financed and established by the properties and wealth of the exiled families. The Proletariat now said that all belongs to us. In time, everything in the house, furniture and house wares, were dispersed. Everything belonged to us!

The houses and administration buildings were passed on to the Collective Administration. The present large grain supply was immediately shipped to the State. Now the mean rascals (the Kulaks) were gone and now they were using pressure on the other farmers in order to compel them to join the Collectives. The farmers were not at all prepared, for the grain was high in the fields and it appeared that it would be a bountiful harvest. They had also hoped that they would not need to join the Collective.

They allowed the farmers to reap the crops and when the harvest had been brought in and placed under cover, then the Collective Management put pressure on the farmers, by compelling them to work day and night so that they would join the Collective.

Since everything didn't happen as they expected it to, one said, "Well, Comrade Farmer, if you don't join now, you will have to deliver to the State, such and such Pud of grain (1 pud = 63.5 KG or 130 lbs.) in 24 hours or pay so and so many rubles to the State". They worked the farmers day and night until the last bit of grain and the last ruble was delivered.

Finally, the impost tax was applied at a high rate, until the farmer finally was compelled to join the Collective Farm. Now Brunntal was established into two Collective Farms. The Oberdorf was No. 1, and Unterdorf was No. 2, Collective Farms.

Each Collective Farm had five field brigades. (Later, also tractor brigades) Each Collective Farm had a chairman, a field manager, and a business manager with an office accountant. All brigades had a leader and a floor manager.

At the end of 1930, 90 percent of the Collectives were shut down. In the spring the Collectives planted the first crop. The field brigades had been given horses and equipment, that which had been taken from the Kulak farmers. But things didn't go according to plan. The farmers who knew about agricultural business, no

longer had any say. Those that had something to say knew little or nothing about agriculture. In spite of this, the politicians planted the seed.

According to the PLAN: It was generally known how many hectares of land that each Collective was composed of. A portion of the grain was confiscated by the government, according to the number of hectares of the Collective. The portion of each hectare was very high.

The seeding of the crop was done in a very faulty manner, so the 1930 crop was quite lean. But the State's plan was as stated before. When the crop was harvested, the State's share of the grain was fulfilled first. But the entire harvest wasn't enough to fulfill the State's requirement.

Now I will tell you how the Collective Farmers were cheated! One was not paid in money, but in so-called "labor coupons". He who did a day's work, received one labor coupon. Soon contract labor was introduced. With contract labor one could earn more than a day's equivalent work, or less.

This unit of contract-labor was paid off at the end of the year in kind.

That's the way it went!

Whenever the Collective Farm had a very good harvest and could fulfill the State's plan, and also had the seed for the next year's crop, and had an excess of grain, each Collective Farmer received a share of the grain according to this contract-labor units.

A Report about the Establishment of the MTS - Machine-Tractor-Station:

Because of the faulty work and mismanagement of the fields in 1930, the crop was meager. The State still received their share of the harvest and nothing was left over for the Collective Farmers. Yes, those people who at first praised the Collectivization by the Communists now complained that they were in need. Even the Communists and Politicians remarked that as soon as the Kulaks were driven away, the "bread" disappeared. They also remarked that one must earn his "bread" by work and sweat. Now I will turn to another topic.

Part of the overall plan for Collectivization, was the establishment of the Machine-Tractor Stations (MTS), which was done at the very outset. This MTS was built in Brunntal to service three villages: Brunntal, Streckerau, and Marienberg.

The MTS building was constructed of the wood that was obtained from the farm buildings and mills of the farmers that were sent away.

The mission of this station was to service and repair all of the agricultural machines, tractors, thresh machines, and automobiles for all the Collectives of the three villages. The building was built in short order and equipped with machines and tools. The attendant necessary tradesmen were engaged: locksmiths, blacksmiths, joiners, and mechanics. If the necessary tradesmen were not available, they were either sent to school or apprenticed.

The MTS was located at the southern exit of the village. A mechanical workshop was located there, a gallery for the blacksmiths and the joiners, a warehouse for spare parts, garages and five machine galleries, as well as a building for inflammable substances. This MTS did not belong to the Collective Farms. It was a business established by the State, and also equipped with the necessary machines and tools for the maintenance of all the agricultural machines, as well as tractors, threshers, autos and farm vehicles.

The Director and the Party were politically responsible; the technical responsibility was that of the master-mechanic, the Director, and the Party.

The duties became more involved and expanded the more machines assigned to it by the State. The MTS tradesmen were workers that the office had assigned. All were paid in cash, and all of the expenses were paid by the State as well as the machines and spare parts.

### **1930 -- The First Year of the Collectives**

The director of the MTS had divided all the tractors and agricultural machines among the three villages according to size and arable land. The tractor drivers had been trained at the MTS and were ready when needed. They were paid by the Collectives with work units and in part by cash.

The harvest in 1930 was very bad, and the Collective farmers received no pay for the entire year. The State's share could not even be fulfilled due to the poor harvest. Therefore, there was no pay. In spite of that, the Party people said that the farmers had hidden grain from the harvest of 1929. Because of that, the last pound was squeezed out of the farmers from the last of 1929 and beginning of 1930. The farmers were worked day and night to utter exhaustion. In any case, the end of 1930 brought hunger and need to the Brunntalers home. They had barely survived the famine of 1921-1924, and had not as yet forgotten that time. The farmers were afraid that these times would return. How right they were -- very hard times were ahead of them.

In the fall of 1930 and the first part of the year 1931, an infectious disease broke out among the horses, resulting in an excess of mucus in the sinuses and nasal cavities. Because of that, most of the horses had to be shot. Now the Collectives in Brunntal had fewer draft animals. How was one to plant the seed in the coming spring of 1931 with so few horses? The MTS station had, up to 1931, been delivering a few tractors. The tractor factories could not keep up with the demand. To this day, I have no memory as to how many tractors had been delivered to the MTS station at Brunntal in 1930 - 1931 for the 3 villages, but there were very few. Fortunately, the first ones delivered were 6 Fordson tractors that the wealthy farmers bought from America in 1926. In 1931, they were still in good working order and were used for the 1931 spring planting. These 6 Fordson tractors were but like a drop in the bucket. But what could one do?

The few horses that survived the sickness were not enough to take up the slack. We went to the newly established dairy farms and harnessed the dairy cows to pull the plows and seeding machines. But it wasn't all that simple! The cows had to be trained to be harnessed so that they could be taught to pull the plows and seeding machines. In addition to that, they were not well nourished since they had not been receiving nutritional feed.

Even the families of the farm workers were starving. For their labor in 1930, they had not received any labor coupons. The brigade leaders were compelled to secretly feed the people from the seed allotment until the harvest. Even at that, seed was stolen and buried in the field, or somehow hidden in the homes. Of course, this was all strictly forbidden. If a person was caught, Stalin's judges fined him the equivalent of 5 to 10 trouser pockets of grain.

Now I will change themes.

Since the government and the Communist party believed that the farmers had either buried or hidden a lot of the grain, search teams were formed, at the most three or four men in each brigade. The leader was always a member of the party. The others were either sympathizers or party members.

The search teams always came during the night, and they were like bloodhounds. They went to the farmers who they imagined had some grain. They were armed with cudgels. They were iron bars about 3/4 " thick and about five to six feet in length. At the very end was a hollow cone-shaped structure with four holes bored into it. When the search team would plunge it into a haystack, under which would be hidden a sack of grain, the grain would fall into the hollow area, therefore, finding the contraband grain.

These methods were also used to probe snowdrifts or into the earth. With these weapons, the search teams were put to work, always during the night. They would knock on the farmer's door, and when the door was opened and a lantern lit, the search team went to work. They searched everything thoroughly. Whether anything was found or not, a report was written up, and the farmer had to sign the results of the report.

Most of the time nothing was discovered. Sometimes they would find a crock of sauerkraut, but not even a crumb of bread. Then they would ask the question--- Why is it that a family with several people, apparently in good health, live here? What do you live on? Frequently, in a day or two would be another search. Sometimes something would be found.

From 1930 until the end of 1932, our family was searched often. One time in the autumn of 1932 we were searched 6 times during the night. But nothing was found. In a fury, the search team tore up the entire new floor in the entire house that my father had laid. Because they didn't find anything, they would have like to take the clothes right off our backs. My father had to go to the municipal court every day for an entire week. He was supposed to tell them where the grain was hidden. Since he could not reveal where the grain was hidden, there was nothing to reveal since nothing had been hidden. He was fined to deliver 100 Pud (1 Pud = 140 lbs) of grain and pay 500 Rubles within a week's time. This fine was an impossibility for my father. He could not deliver the grain, because there wasn't any. Not only that, there hadn't been any money for a long time. In fact, we have been starving for months. The search team continued to search our home. For quite some time, we had been living on sauerkraut, and occasionally our friends would give us something to eat from their meager rations. Otherwise, we would all have starved to death.

After a period of time, they told my father that because he had not voluntarily discharged his duty to the State, they would confiscate everything that he still owned. We had nothing left with the exception of our home, summer kitchen, and a few pieces of furniture. All of the other buildings had already been torn down and taken by the Collective.

So, on the following day, a Commissar came and took everything that was in the house; the furniture, bedding, and even our clothing, except that which we were wearing. They also took the wall clock, water pails, and cooking pots. That was a low period for us!

This happened to many families. All goods were taken and auctioned in order to pay our debts to the State. Better said, our goods were all sold for less than their value.

A neighbor lady bought two pails and two cooking pots at the auction and gave them to us. We were not allowed to participate in the auction. We didn't have any money anyhow. My parents had helped the neighbor lady several times in the past when she was in need -- and now she helped us.

Yes, my dear readers, these times are very hard to describe. So much happened that words cannot describe them. The Stalin sympathizers have done their work thoroughly and will do so, long into the future.

In the fall of 1932, my father was arrested and taken to prison in Seelmann. In the middle of December, my father, for not fulfilling his debt to the State of 100 Pud of grain and 500 Rubles fine, was sentenced to 10 years. In February 1933, he came home for two days. He was allowed to bid his family good-bye and then had to go away. Where, no one would tell us.

My mother was now alone with seven children. My oldest brother was 21, my oldest sister 19, I was 14, my youngest brother 5, a sister 3, and twins 15 months old.

My mother said to us: "now only starvation is before us." We have not had a letter from the State as to where our father had been sent. A year later, 1934, my mother heard in a round about way, that my father had been in the Ural Mountains for the time since we last saw him. In May 1933 he had an accident while felling a tree, and since that time died of starvation.

My mother was never notified by the State.

How matters ensued.... I will give you some news about that.

Now I will report to you about the end of the Church in Brunnental, as well as the end of religious freedom. As I had reported earlier, the Brunnental congregation in 1926 added stoves to the summer kitchen, paid for by the people, so that worship services could be help during the winter.

Since the church, at that time, was separated from the State, the people had to support the church financially. That arrangement was fine until 1929.

But this did not please the State at all! In order to eliminate the church entirely, the State had placed a lot of pressure on the church officials.

The Collectivization during the years 1930-1931 resulted in the condemnation of private property, and now the final stroke of death had to be rendered to the

church. Now the Stalin sympathizers launched a vicious campaign against the clergy and the church members, in order to let the people know that the church and all the pious people were cause of so much privation and suffering during the two years of collectivization.

By the end of 1931, and the first part of 1932, the church was effectively stifled. The churches were now closed and remodeled for the use of a clubhouse and dance hall for the youth. Pastor Grasmick and Schoolmaster, Samuel Mehlinger, disappeared and were never seen again.

That was the end of the Brunnentalers church that to this day remains empty.

As I had previously stated, the people of Brunnental, for the most part, were church going people. And there was also the Brotherhood, who held prayer meetings twice a week in private homes. Those pray brothers, as we called them, during that time when the churches were locked up, held worship services in the homes on Sundays. But even these people were a thorn in the side to the State. For that reason, many of the Brothers were arrested and sent away. But there was still a small flicker of light in the corners that kept the spark of religion alive. Some of the faithful would secretly baptize a child or conduct a burial service. And these people, too, went the way of the other faithful. Now it came to the point, were the people hardly ever mentioned the church or their belief in God, let alone even thinking about it. The church and Christianity in Brunnental was now dead! The people had turned to Communism, and most of all, the younger people.

In June 1934, on a beautiful summer day, six men were taken from the joiner workshop, from the 1st and 2nd Collective farm, and sent to the church, in order to remove the three church bells and tear down the steeple.

I was sitting on the steps of the school entrance directly across the street from the church, and witnessed the razing of the church tower and bells.

The men first dismantled the cupola and then part of the steeple.

Then they dismantled the steeple so that the cross, which was about 60 feet long, was now free and it hurled to the ground. There they loosened the supports of the remaining parts of the steeple so that it toppled down on the west side. When it fell, the earth trembled. At that time my body trembled as I witnesses that terrible event. Within the next few days the church had been dismantled to the level of the height of the walls, and a roof was then provided to cover and protect the interior.

The church had been built in 1885, and was barely fifty years old in

1934. The building still appeared to be like new and was painted white. The people of Brunntal were very proud of their church. No matter who had gone on a long journey and was returning home, one was overjoyed to catch a glimpse of the church steeple -- it was 130 feet tall -- and one felt a strong attraction to his church and village.

After the dismantling of the church steeple, I don't know how I can express it, the village and church tower had a special charm, and a strong attraction to the citizens and travelers... but now, that was gone.

From a distance, Brunntal appeared to be a city that seemed to be ill.

Because I experienced the final hours of the church tower and steeple, I still see the church as it once existed.

My Education -- 1931 to 1932:

Now I'd like to tell you about my last years in school. Because of the compulsory Collectivization and mismanagement of the Collective, there was very little harvest in 1930. Therefore, the farmers received meager rations of grain. There was starvation in the fall of 1930 and winter of 1931.

On the 1st day of September 1931, I was promoted to the sixth grade. Due to the fact that my father, or better said, since our family had not paid the fine of 100 Pud of grain and 500 rubles, I no longer had any winter clothing. I was able to go to school until the cold weather set in. In March, I could again go back to school. In spite of that, I managed to be promoted to the seventh grade.

In the fall of 1931 and during the winter of 1932, I could not go to school for the same reason as the year before. I studied diligently at home and managed to pass my seventh grade examinations. Thus ended my education in Brunntal on May 31, 1932.

In the meantime, conditions in general deteriorated. The Collective Management, so highly praised by the Stalinists, had utterly failed and there was widespread famine in 1932. There was nothing left for me to do but work for the Collective. I was employed in a field brigade in Collective No. 1. It was the beginning of June, and the spring seeding had just ended. The seed was in the ground.

The provisions for the Collective's field brigades were rather meager. Sometimes there was nothing to eat. In order to alleviate our hunger pangs, we ate straw. Yes, hear readers, you read correctly! We threshed the straw from the

harvest that had been threshed the year before. We would obtain about 20 to 30 Kg. (65 lbs) of battered and bruised grain and various grass seeds.

We would then wash these kernels and mill them by hand. From this so-called flour, we cooked a mush. Now we could provide something to eat for the people employed by the brigades.

One day, my brigade leader, Heinrich Groth, came from the village and told me that I should report to Heinrich Maier at the Brunntentaler MTS. Heinrich Maier was the labor foreman of the MTS. So, one day I went to see him and asked him why he wanted to see me. He told me that the MTS had the intention of establishing an apprenticeship. He escorted me through the workshops and told me that I could decide whether I would like to learn to be a locksmith or a turner. I accepted the offer to become a turner and worked at the Brunntentaler MTS as a turner until 1940.

### **The Second Year of the Collective - 1931**

In Brunntental, in 1931, the hypothesis was very favorable to establish four very large vegetable gardens, and each would be about 40 hectares in size. There was an ample water supply at hand to provide irrigation. Many varieties of vegetables were planted, white cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, and other vegetables.

These gardens produced large yields due to the ample water supply. Because of the large yields, the Collectives could fulfill its quota to the State in grain. The people received lots of vegetables, especially white cabbage. A lot of sauerkraut could be stored up for the winter. The sauerkraut was often the only thing the people had to eat during the winter of 1931. Otherwise, there was nothing!

Now I will report to you about the 1931 harvest. This harvest was just as meager as that of 1930. How could it be any different? If nothing was planted on time, then one could expect poor results.

Then, too, the few draft animals were too malnourished and weak to do the heavy work, for without adequate feed, the best horse could not work. The few tractors were also not too dependable, often breaking down mechanically.

In 1931, we received the first thrash machines that had been allotted to us. They had a cutting width of 12 feet and had been built in Saratov. These machines had only one motor to do the thrashing, but had to be pulled by tractor.

Now we come to the 1931 harvest time. There was little to be expected. Everything was put into motion to finish the harvest as soon as possible. It was easier said than done. There was a shortage of draft animals, thrashers and unreliable tractors. Three or four thrashers were pulled by one tractor. The intention was good, but the results were poor. Whenever four or five thrashers, that were to work together, there was always one or the other that broke down. There were few spare parts. One can imagine how things turned out.

The thrashers in 1931 were of poor quality and prone to mechanical breakdown -- sometimes the drive-chain, sometimes the augur, or the motor would overheat, etc. Each time that happened, the operator had to remove the broken part and take it to the MTS, more often than not in a horse drawn wagon.

According to the layout plan of the fields, he often had to drive 10-12 kilometers. Repairs lasted 20 to 24 hours, depending on whether the MTS has spare parts or not. When it so happened that the thrasher was idle, so was the tractor that pulled it. Everything was at a standstill until the operator returned with the spare parts. Now one can picture that the harvest could not be accomplished under these circumstances.

Thus a part of the harvest remained in the fields and covered with snow. The crop was just so-so in spite of the fact that a good part of the crop was left in the fields and was lost due to the shortage of thrashers.

During harvest time, the people that worked in the fields were separated from the new harvest and provided for. But this was strictly forbidden. It was quietly allowed by the employers, because the official shares of provisions for the heavy work of harvest, was not sufficient. It was evident that the meager harvest again would result in an insufficient share of grain for the workers. And this is what happened!

The winter of 1931-1932 was especially difficult for the farmers. The little bit that was harvested was immediately hauled off to the state. Everything was carefully watched. It was hardly possible to get away with just a few kilograms of grain.

The mills were allowed to process the grain into flour with mill-coupons. The mill-coupons were issued only by the Party. In Moscow, Stalin didn't believe that the people in Brunntal had been starving for two years.

There were times that people would get wind of others that secretly hid some of the grain, and even that was taken from them, and they were severely punished.

But as I indicated, the mills could not produce flour unless the mill coupons were presented.

The people were forced to build all kinds of contraptions to process the grain by hand. These mills had one disadvantage. They made too much noise. The noise was the one fatal flaw. In order to muffle the sound, the mills were placed upon quilts and other types of cushioning material. But the Communist Party members knew that the people had the problem of too much noise whenever they used the mill, so at night they would send spies about the village and eavesdrop at the houses. Woe unto him, whenever the spy caught them milling the grain. The incident was immediately reported. The authorities would attach the house, all provisions confiscated, and in addition, the family was punished.

The situation worsened to the point that the people themselves set up a system of sentries in order to warn the people if a stranger would come near their home. But I will tell you that only a few were able to secretly provide for themselves. Difficult times were ahead for the people of Brunental. The first of the villagers starved to death in February/March 1932.

Now I will tell you about the MTS that had now been in existence for two years. I mentioned previously that the MTS workers and the tradesmen were paid in cash. The shop workers were paid by the hour, and the tradesmen paid by the month. The money was provided by the State.

Normally the wages were to be paid monthly, but that had not happened since the founding of the MTS in 1929 & 1930. Wages were often three months in arrears. There was always a little cash advance. The Director continually promised the workers that conditions would improve, but that never came about. In any event, the wages were low, and the workers received pay a little at a time. But the only way they could survive was with money.

The worst part for the MTS workers was that even if they had money, there were no provisions to buy. In other words, one can say that the MTS workers had a more difficult time of it than those who were employed by the Collectives.

There was a grocery store that was established only for the MTS workers. Now and then, they could buy bread or flour, but only when it was available. But at that time, there wasn't anything in stock. The MTS workers endured a very hard time during 1931 & 1932. It came to pass that the workers could not work their eight hours due to hunger and fatigue. But even more difficult times were ahead for them in the latter part of 1932 and 1933.

The report of 1931 has now ended and I will tell you about the year of 1932! The year began with a greater privation than that which existed at the end of 1931. As I said before, the first of our people died of starvation in February and March of 1932.

Now, in the time of our greatest need at the beginning of 1932, it so happened that those who had betrayed us, also suffered. The proletariat, the spies, and the search teams were also starving. During the previous two-year period, when they spied on us and betrayed us, the families had to suffer need and hunger. Nobody gave the spies and traitors even a crumb of bread. Now the spies and traitors remarked too late, "if the wealthy have nothing, then the poor hadn't had anything for a long time".

The hungry villagers longed for spring. I must also say that not only did the villagers die of starvation, many froze to death. Everything that they had possessed, had been condemned and taken from them for the Collectives. Due to the fact that the people did not have any livestock, there wasn't any manure to burn for fuel. The stalls and barns had been dismantled and taken by the Collectives and also given to the villagers for fuel. Very little straw was available to use as a fuel. The collectives needed the straw for the cattle.

Now, after a great longing, the expected spring of 1932 arrived with the hope of improved conditions. But how could conditions improve? The government never gave a thought about helping the starving population. The only improvement was that the people would not have to freeze to death.

It was said that the only help will come from God. He allowed an abundance of grasses to grow. The people cut everything that was green and ate it either raw or cooked. Hunger is painful!!

But this time again, on or another would hike some of the seed in order to save those families that were near to death due to starvation. There was little opportunity to do so. The privation of the villagers was worse at the end of the 1932 planting than at the same time in 1931. Now the Stalinists were placing the claim on the Collective's inefficiency and the cause of the privation.

Of course, the Communists could not admit that they were to blame for the starvation of the Collective farmers. Now they searched out among the Collective farmers, those that knew all about agriculture and labeled them as saboteurs and enemies of the State. They were removed from their jobs, and condemned. Those jobs were now given to the Communist party members who understood very little about agricultural matters. Now, agriculture went into reverse gear!

During the winter months of 1932, the tractors were repaired at the MTS with whatever spare parts were available. There were some tractors and thrashers that were delivered during the winter.

The spring planting was accomplished mostly with tractors. The tractors were assigned to the field brigades. The planting was strictly observed. From the time of the spring planting until the harvest, the Brunntalers were in greater need and suffering than in 1931. Nothing could be done to provide nourishment to the starving people. In spite of the adverse conditions existing at planting time of 1932, the crop didn't turn out too bad. Due to the designated amount of grain demanded by the State to fulfill its quota in the overall agricultural plan, there was nothing left over for us. For all their labor, the Collective farmers received very small amounts of grain in 1932.

Shortly after the fall harvest, the few kilograms of grain that were allotted to the farmers were taken from them. Now the people had nothing!

There was quite an amount of vegetables and white cabbage that they had gathered from the gardens and they preserved them in crocks. Some people didn't manage to do that. Now the Brunntalers were facing a catastrophe of starvation never before occurring since the founding of Brunntal in 1855.

The managers of the Collective farms were now the members of the Communist Party. They knew nothing of agricultural matters and thus the misery and want of the people was perfect! In November 1932, many people had swelling in their legs because of lack of nourishment. In December of 1932, people began to die. During January of 1933, entire families would starve to death. There were mass graves and no coffins. The relatives and friends of victims were so weak that they were unable to dig graves in the frozen earth. The dead would have to be buried later.

In 1933, the piles of straw would again be threshed as in 1932, but that produced pitifully little grain. One could hardly save those poor souls from starvation that had thrashed the straw.

The winter of 1933 was very cold. I took a spade and went to the garden and shoveled the snow away from the area where the cabbage had grown in the fall. Under the snow, I found frozen cabbage leaves and the cabbage roots from which the cabbage heads had been cut. My mother washed everything clean and then cooked it with salt ...there wasn't anything else! In this manner, we clung to life -- in other words, we saved ourselves from dying of hunger. My twin sisters, who were 1 1/2 years old, died of starvation by the end of February. The children could not be saved by the cabbage roots and leaves.

My oldest sister, who was assigned to feed the cattle and milk them, occasionally could bring a few kernels to the house. These kernels were the leftovers of the sunflower oil press that we used as cattle fuel. The seeds were so hard that a hammer had to be used to crush them. Small loaves were made of this crushed kernels of grain. The skins of the kernels were included. The skins did have some fat and whoever was hungry would eat it and keep chewing so that the last bit of fat was extracted from the skins. The skins of the kernels were then spit out. I will tell you that this small amount of nourishment that was initially intended for the cattle, in some small degree saved some people from death.

There were times that the cattle were fed straw. It was expected that the cows would produce milk. But they were just as hungry as the people. The Party always knew better! By the end of March, we had survived starvation because of the cabbage leaves and cabbage roots, and an occasional loaf made of the leftovers of the sunflower oil press, but each day we heard of more deaths. As it happened in 1921, many people left the villages and went to the larger cities in 1932, so that they would not die in Brunntal.

At the end of March, the snow suddenly began to melt and in a short time the fields were cleared of snow. As I mentioned so many times, God had sent a lot of ground squirrels -- more than usual. He certainly was aware that we were starving.

I would like to say something about the ground squirrels. These animals live out on the steppes. They feed on grass and grain. They were destructive to agriculture, and before the grain ripened, one either had to control them or capture them. These squirrels lived to eat the grain and caused a lot of destruction to the fields. The best time to catch them is to pour water into their tunnels and nab them as they jump out of their burrows. Normally, the farmers would catch and kill the squirrels to prevent damage to the crops and fields. If the farmers controlled the squirrels each year, then the problems they created for the farmers would be in acceptable limits.

The ground squirrels dig deep holes in the earth where they can hibernate and be protected from the cold. These animals weigh about 300 to 400 grams; have a smooth fur that can be used by the furriers. Normally these animals are not eaten, but in the spring of 1933, they were all that stood between life and death for many Brunntalers. I, too, went out to the fields one day in March 1933 with two buckets and drowned out three squirrels, took them home, dressed them out, and then ate them. It was terrible for the people that due to weakness from hunger, some could not carry the buckets of water to flush out the ground squirrels. In all

events, one had to admit that these little animals rescued the lives of many Brunntalers, including my family and me.

During the starvation years of 1921-1924, aid came from Germany, America, and Canada. From 1930 to 1934, Stalin would not allow any aid from foreigners. He just allowed the people of Brunntal and the entire Volga-German Republic to starve without giving them any consideration.

Considering all of the conditions, the crop in 1933 wasn't too bad in the fields. The crops seemed to be rather good; the Communist Party gave less thought to the starving people than that of fulfilling the quota of grain to the State.

Up until harvest time, the villagers fought death from starvation until the crops were harvested. As the crops matured, the fields were guarded. The hungry people would sneak into the fields and separated the kernels from the stem by rubbing it between the hands, and then eating it immediately. Finally, when it came to the job of harvesting the crop, the people were much too weak to work. It was some time before they were able to work up the energy to go to work.

The Communists were now compelled to allow some of the grain of the new harvest to be milled so that the people had something to eat. And again, as in the years 1931 & 1932, the Collective farmers were given a small portion of the harvest, in payment for their labor.

Several months later, the people began to starve again. Only the workers that operated the thrashers and tractors received more grain and some cash. The Party leaders realized that the reapers and tractors could not operate without "living" people. The party did not want to let them starve. The thrasher operators were paid high wages for each hectare of grain, and the tractor operators asked for more pay and grain, and they received it. The rest of the workers hardly received anything. Those who were able to stand up had the chance to survive, but few had the inclination to do so.

The majority of the Brunntalers had to contend with hunger through the winter of 1933-1934. During that long cold winter, many more starved to death.

I will relate to you as to what happened in 1934. Up until the harvest of 1934, conditions were the same as in 1933, with the exception that the harvest was better than 1933. The people received more provisions than in the previous years. Now none in Brunntal were starving. But one should not believe that the need and privation was over. Conditions had only slightly improved. For some families, conditions improved. A few of them had acquired a few chickens or a goat or two; at the most, a steer or a cow. Above all, the tractor and thrasher operators

were paid extra. And it was soon realized that there was not a crop that could be expected to be harvested, without the services of the people that operated those machines.

For example, the thrasher operators received high wages and special privileges. The more hectares that he thrashed, the higher his privileges and awards -- such as the Order of Lenin that also included a cash reward.

Now we go to the year 1935. During the winter months, the tractor and all of the farm implements were thoroughly reconditioned and repaired. The spring planting proceeded without a hitch in the plans. The Collective farmers had recovered somewhat and had enough to eat during the planting season. On the average, the harvest of 1935 was rather poor. The thrasher machine operators received high wages and premiums, and in addition to that they received coupons that entitled them to buy clothing and other goods that were in short supply at that time. Even the tractor operators received more money and grain, and even the field laborers received more labor coupons than they had received the year before.

In 1935, a new thrashing machine was introduced with the name of "Stalinetz". This machine had a cutting edge of nearly twenty feet and had a much better motor with more horsepower than the smaller thrashers, which had a cutting edge of only eight feet. The new thrasher was not self-propelled, and had to be pulled by a tractor.

This system of thrashing, using two expensive thrashing machines with a four-man crew, was a wasteful arrangement for the Collective. It so happened that in order to harvest the meager crop, the Collective had to use four tractors to pull the 8 ft. thrashers, and six tractors to pull the 20 ft. thrashers. In addition, four wagons were dispatched with the smaller thrashers, and six wagons with the larger thrashers.

The grain fields were very large and the wagons had to follow the thrashing machines both coming and going. The thrashers did not stop at all when they unloaded the grain into the wagons. The field brigade leaders were responsible to see to it that the wagons were always ready and in place in order to harvest the grain without stoppage.

Since the beginning of Collectivization, the meager harvest now had to be placed out in the open in huge piles. The storing of the precious grain, wheat and rye was a difficult problem and a tempting one at that. Before Collectivization in 1929, the storage of grain was no problem at all. All of the farmers had plenty of room to store the grain in the silos. Because Stalin's people

were so short sighted, and because the silos were 90 percent filled, the Collectives immediately dismantled the silos that were in the farmyards. After Collectivization, the grain had to be stored in the open fields, where a 30 percent loss could be expected. Even at that, they always placed the blame on someone else.

Now I will tell you about Stalin's greatest mistake. At the beginning of the 1930's, Stalin put a lot of pressure on the foreign manufacturers to complete and deliver the tractors and agricultural equipment that he had paid for, so that he would be able to mechanize the agricultural industry as rapidly as possible. With the intention to do so, many farmers starved to death in the years 1930-1934, and endured the worst period of starvation of all time. In the meantime, in 1935, agriculture was mechanized and the horses only played a minor role. New tractors and agricultural equipment arrived, and the mechanization continued. Along with the complete mechanization of agriculture, the Communist Party officials and the planners, planned for reality to take place in the future. Stalin and his cohorts had already told the Collective farmers that they would have a given number of hectares of land to farm, and were expected to harvest a given amount of grain per hectare, and deliver the prescribed quota of grain to the State.

For example: The Brunnentaler Collective farmers had about 12,000 hectares of land to tend, and would have to deliver a given amount of grain to be delivered to the State. But for the masses of people that worked for the two Collective farms, there were just a few silos that were expected to ensile the grain. What should we do with the harvest? Of course, we know that if the grain were gathered in an open field, as in previous years, that we could expect a 30 percent loss. Yet if a hungry Collective farmer could take a couple of trouser pockets full of grain during those starvation years of 1930-1934, he would be severely punished. But who was to be punished now for the terrible loss of grain when it was gathered and stored in an open field? Certainly not Stalin and his Party people. They were innocent!

The same mistakes were made by the Party concerning roads and transportation. Stalin's factories continued to build much larger tractors and caterpillar tractors, as well as thrashers and other agricultural equipment, but nobody gave a thought as to trucks and other means of transportation. Their highly touted 5-year plans were carried out. After all, the Party knew what was best. They didn't think to build enough of the two types of trucks we needed, one for 1 1/2 ton capacity and the other for three-ton capacity. Remember, by 1935 there were no horses, and the agricultural industry had already been mechanized. Up until 1941, the two Brunnentaler Collective farms were only assigned eight light trucks with a capacity of 1 1/2 to 3 tons. That was not sufficient for the Collectives. We needed more!

The worst part was that there were no spare tires. When a truck wore out a set of tires, the truck was just abandoned. The officials of the Collective had to find a way to provide tires. It was possible to buy truck trailers with new tires. The trailers were purchased just for the tires to place on the trucks, and the trailers remained unused.

I will not repeat about the consequences of the high percentage of spoilage of the grain in the fields, but this poor planning concerning the roads and trucks added to the damage done by the Collective farmers.

At that time in the Collective farm system, a strict amount of grain was to be delivered to the State according to the number of workers assigned per hectare. When the debt of grain was delivered to the State, according to the Plan, the remainder of the grain would be apportioned to the farmers. That's the way it was. If a lot of grain was left over, then a lot could be distributed to the farmers. In other words, the State was responsible for the crop damage because of their faulty management, but would not admit to their failure. The Collective farmers had to bear the blame for the loss.

That is what happened in the years 1931-1934, when the Collective farmers received very little or nothing at all. The State's plan had to be satisfied first and nothing was left over for the people. Nothing remained for them whenever the damage and waste was excessive. To Stalin and his cohorts, it didn't make any difference that so many of the diligent and hard-working farmers starved to death, or that his agricultural plan brought about the worst famine in history.

Now I would like to tell you about the problem with the roads and the modes of transportation in Brunntal and the surrounding areas. I am of the opinion, that if a government wants to fully mechanize its agriculture, it has to build roads. As I have reported earlier, Brunntal was a large village of about 5,000 inhabitants and located about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Seelmann.

A lot of goods were transported from Brunntal to Seelmann and back. This had been done since the founding of Brunntal, and was accomplished by use of wagons drawn by horse, oxen or camel.

Seelmann is on the banks of the Volga River and has a harbor so that goods can be traded and sold. There were large silos filled with grain in Seelmann. The farmers from the surrounding villages, some as far away as 25 miles, would come to Seelmann to sell their grains. There were many markets in Seelmann and there were many businesses to handle the daily trade.

The ships on the Volga River carried grain both up and down the river to the larger cities. In short, Seelmann was a business center for the surrounding villages, but the roads, or better described as "country lanes", that led to Seelmann, were always in bad condition. In the heat of the summer, the lanes were very dusty with many potholes; and in the rainy season, the lanes were muddy and often impassable. These bad roads were always time-consuming and costly to the farmer. In the best of weather during the winter, one could transport goods by sleigh. Even at that, there was the terribly cold weather and often times snow storms that made the journey very unpleasant.

During all this time, the highly praised mechanization of the agricultural industry (1929-1941) did absolutely nothing to improve these roads. It was torture for the trucks to make the trip in the summer through the dusty potholes. One could see the clouds of dust from a distance of a kilometer or more. During the rainy weather, automobiles remained stuck in the mud or else had to wait until the roads dried up. I, myself, often made the trip from Brunntal to Krasny-Kut. In the 35-kilometer stretch of road, there were many deep depressions that filled with water and mud in the spring. Since there were no bridges, the truck drivers had to muscle the trucks through the depressions. With a lot of luck and skill, they usually managed to drive through.

Sometimes the mud would be to the top of the wheels. Then one couldn't move forward or backward. Broken springs and damage to the trucks was often the result. The driver had to seek assistance somewhere.

Sometimes there were tractors in the nearby fields that could help them. I must, to this day, take off my hat to those drivers for their ability and nerve.

Due to the bad roads, the trucks had to be repaired very often, and there were never enough spare parts. A lot of time and money was spent repairing the trucks. Because of that, the life of the truck was unimportant.

Thus, the productivity of the trucks and drivers caused a high overhead. I would venture to say that if a truck loaded with goods were to make the same trip today, it would be in 2 hours or less for the round trip. At that time, it took 6 hours on those bad roads, and sometimes even longer.

This is why I have reported to you about the conditions of the roads and the connection with the mechanization of the agricultural industry in Brunntal from 1929 to 1941.

**Now I will report on the year of 1936:**

The spring planting was accomplished on time in an efficient manner. Agriculture, at that time, for all practical purposes was completely mechanized. Horses seldom were used as draft animals. Everything was done using tractors and all other kinds of mechanized equipment. Even in Brunnental, the MTS to which the villages of Streckerau and Marienberg were assigned, had improved working conditions over the year of 1935. The wages weren't always regular, but the workers were able to buy groceries. The MTS workers had now withstood the great privation of the starvation years. Some of the people, who had moved away during the years of 1931-1933, returned. But many of those that had moved away had not survived. In any case, the starvation period of 1931-1933 had severely reduced the population.

In 1934, Brunnental initiated the name of the street and assigning house numbers. During that time I was employed by the MTS and therefore I was well aware of the conditions of the MTS Station. The foreman, Heinrich Meier, gave me the job of making the house numbers. I made the plate numbers of tin by hand. They were about 4 1/2 inches by 6 inches in size, and then painted and the numbers added. At that time, there were 403 houses that were occupied in the village of Brunnental.

All of the outbuildings had mostly been dismantled. They were either taken over by the Collective officials to be used as lumber for the Collective farm; or in time of need, they were used for fuel.

The general condition of the villagers had improved in 1936. Even the harvest was very good and was finished on time, although, again with a lot of waste. The waste was because there were not enough silos available to hold the grain. I have often reminded you that nearly all of the silos had been torn down in 1930. Now the Collective was compelled to place the grain in huge piles in the open fields. This was done by means of a shovel-like piece of equipment pulled by horses.

There were two kinds of trucks -- the 1 1/2 and 3-ton gasoline powered Fords. These trucks were driven day and night. But there weren't enough trucks, and they could only carry small loads. With such a small load, the farmers could just not accomplish much. The State's share of the grain had to be transported to Seelmann some 35 kilometers away. That is where the huge silos on the Volga were located. For that reason, the piles of grain that were lying in the fields became larger and larger. They just couldn't get it all transported to Seelmann.

After harvest time, there were usually some rainy days, which sometimes lasted for extended periods. That's what happened in 1936. After these rains, then came the frost! The huge piles of grain remained in the fields. With the frost, the west

layers of grain were frozen in a layer of about 1 1/2 feet. One could say that the grain had a frozen "roof". During the course of the late harvest, the grain under the "roof" was hauled away, but the waste was terrible because the frozen "roof" of grain was spoiled.

Now the Party officials were searching to place the blame for this disaster. But the Party, as usual, didn't blame themselves, although, they alone, were to blame. They placed the blame elsewhere.

In 1936, it was the Trotskyites that were entirely to blame. The Trotskyites were identified as people that formerly had foreign connections or who were still receiving letters from abroad up to 1930, or men who had returned home after being German prisoners of war during 1914-1918. All of these people disappeared overnight. These were the people that had common sense, and who understood something about business. They were but a thorn in the side to the Party functionaries. They had to be done away with.

Since the 1936 harvest was good, the members of the Collective received quite a bit of grain and also some money. There was so much that people had enough bread and also some money. Nobody had to steal anymore! The people could also obtain more clothing and buy small livestock such as calves, goats and sheep. In all cases, everything improved for the Brunntalers. The terrible times of famine and death were now at an end.

1937 also began very well, and the people were hoping for a continuation of the improvement of their living conditions. It was hoped that if 1937 had a good crop, then the people would have a better income and be able to acquire even more goods and animals. In 1937, there was more Kg. of grain per person and also more money. Many families had received more grain than they could even use, and so the State purchased the excess back from the families. With this money received from the grain, the people were able to buy necessities, which were still in short supply.

The problem of the storage of grain from the 1937 harvest remained a problem. And again, there were thousands of tons of grain of premium quality lying in huge piles in the open fields. As it was in the previous year, the loss in 1937 was just as great. But again the Party searched for and found the "guilty parties". As always, the innocent ones had to take the blame because the Party was never wrong.

Now a "cleansing" action took place. One now mostly blamed the old people as enemies of the State and as saboteurs, as well as anti-Stalinists. These people were then taken away and imprisoned. At the end of 1937, there was hardly a soul

more than 45-50 years of age in the village. All the old people were taken away whether they were teachers, tradesman, farmers or doctors. The Party didn't want anybody around that could report or know anything that had happened in the previous years.

During the famine years of 1930 - 1934, I would say that they were worse than the earlier years of 1921-1924. Since Stalin did not permit any help from foreign countries during the 1930-1934 famine, many more people starved to death than in the earlier famine. Stalin never gave a thought to helping the hungry people.

Many people in Germany have asked me why there was such privation in Brunnental in 1930-1934. Everything was going well for the farmers. I've already mentioned the dispossession and dispersal of the richest farmers in 1929 as well as the terrible conditions in 1930-1934. Many can't understand why the farmers allowed Collectivization to take place? The people that ask these questions did not know about Stalin's power. Yes, the people that ask these questions are the lucky ones. The German POWs that had been in Russian POW camps don't ask that question!

Now I will try to explain why the farmers had to yield to the pressure of Stalin's forces, or to give into them. I can say with certainty that the farmers had struggled a long time against dispossession and collectivization. But the farmers were worked day and night by all kinds of methods. They had weekly meetings in the farmhouses at which all the farmers and their wives had to attend. These meetings were organized by the Party and at first led by the schoolteacher with the goal of convincing the farmer with promises to step into the glorious future of the Collective system.

The teachers had little success in convincing the farmers, for the farmers were distrustful and did not believe the propaganda of Stalin. The farmers resisted the pressure from 1917 to 1924. How right the farmers were!

Since the teachers didn't get the expected response at these meetings, young Party members were given the task to try again. But the young party members didn't have any more success in spite of their zealous proposals and rosy promises of the future. They promised that the farmwives would be free of the kneading trough, the feeding of the chickens, of the milking of the cows, from the need to use the sewing machine, and various other heavy chores. There was no response!

Stalin's aides were so correct in saying that the farm families would be free of all of this! Yes, so free that some people starved to death in 1932!

I often listened to those meetings in my parent's home. At first, when the teachers conducted the meetings, there would be lively discussions between the teachers and the people, above all about the "wonderful promises".

When the young propagandists conducted the meetings, not one farmer was brave enough to protest. That would be dangerous! The Party had announced the program, and nobody opposed it. The program that was presented had bad consequences, which I will explain more fully, later on.

Since things were not going too well in the mid 1930's, they used other methods to bring the farmers into the Collective system on a volunteer basis. The independent farmers were punished with a high tax on grain and other property. Of course, the Stalinists had long before confiscated the last pound of grain and goods, so there was no way a farmer could pay these fines or taxes. The Stalinists knew exactly that the farmers hadn't had any grain or good for a long time.

There was a lot of pressure placed on my father to join the Collective. He and many of the other farmers did not immediately join the Collective. The Stalinists knew that my father didn't have any grain on hand, and that he didn't have any money. But they presented my father with the following facts: they demanded that he deliver to the State a prescribed amount of grain and money within 24 hours!

Since my father had no grain at all and no money, they sentenced him to 10 years in prison. He was sent to the Ural Mountains to fell trees, and within 3 months he had died of starvation. That happened often during these times, to many people. I hope that maybe this answers the question of why the farmers did not resist.

In 1937, the older generations had for the most part been removed by Stalin's friends. Now the youth and the younger generation were in the grip of the Party. Nobody could or dared step out of line or even utter an unkind word. At that time, such an act would be a great danger to one's well being. On that note, 1937 came to an end.

As to 1938, things went along just like the year before. The harvest was bountiful. The members of the Collective received a sufficient amount of grain to sustain themselves and their families, although there was less money. There weren't too many people sent away in 1938. Nothing of an unusual nature occurred in Brunental that year.

The year 1939 -- The Collective farmers again had a bountiful crop, and the conditions in general, again improved from the previous year.

The year 1940 -- Again, there was another bountiful harvest!

Nothing much had changed with the farm's administration. They did, however, acquire some additional trucks. There was still a lot of waste of grain with the huge piles of grain lying in the open fields. The general condition of the Brunntalers was improving and the agricultural industry had recovered. The State's Plan could now be readily fulfilled. The Collective farmers now had enough to eat and had recovered from those terrible years of privation and starvation.

How often had these farmers, throughout their entire 178 year history in Russia, never had given up the battle in spite of their being blamed time and time again for the crop failures, the imposition of high taxes, and even lastly, of being disposed of their belongings due to compulsion to join the Collective farm system. How did they survive all of that?

Yes, the Brunntaler farmers had resurrected the agricultural industry by means of hard work and diligence, and were able to produce an abundance of grain for the State after having endured those two periods of privation and hunger, 1921-1924 and 1930-1934. Stalin and his functionaries were satisfied with the amount of grain produced. Now the farmers believed that the time of privation and oppression had now passed. As often happened, the farmers reckoned without considering Stalin!

Stalin had other plans for the industrious Volga Germans. The outbreak of the war in 1941 gave Stalin the upper hand to send all Volga Germans to Siberia according to his plans that had been formed years before.

In August and September 1941, all Germans living in Russia were shipped overnight to Siberia under the most pitiful conditions.

The dispersal of these industrious people, that had produced so much for the Soviet State, was indeed a disappointing and humbling experience upon these people.

I cannot report anything to you about the dispersal since I was not present. I do hope that perhaps a Brunntaler may do that someday. One can't say anything more about Brunntal.

I have not received any news, since 1966, that only about 50 houses are remaining of the 408 that had been inhabited in 1934. Even the few remaining houses are in sad state of disrepair. The church is gone. Part of the school had been dismantled. In short, for the former villagers of Brunntal, it no longer exists.

I have the map of the village that shows its condition in 1940. Jacob Mohrland, born 30 March 1918 in Brunntal, lived there until 1940.

Comments on the village map:

When I had to leave my home village in 1940, I knew 80 percent of the owners of the homes and farms. But when I looked at the village map in 1957, after 17 long years, I had forgotten several of the owners' names. That's why I could not identify all of the owners. In addition to that, there were several homes that were unoccupied.

I'd also like to remind you that the list of names of the house owners are on the left of the page and continuing with the name from top to bottom are correct. And in closing, the Public Buildings, and farms:

205. Church
206. School
207. Hospital
208. Physician's residence
209. Residence of hospital personnel
210. Boarding school
211. Teacher's residence
212. Village magistrate (formerly Alexander Hart's house)
213. Administration building and farm of the Collective #1. (formerly owned by Konrad Lobsack).
214. Administration building and farm of the Collective #2. (formerly owned by Friederich Stroh).
215. Cattle barns of Collective #1.
216. Cattle barns of Collective #2.
217. The mechanized rolling mill (former owner, Alexander Hart)
218. Mercantile business (former owner, Heinrich Hart)
219. Station (former owner, August Wacker)
220. Dairy
221. MTS Station

The MTS tract of land consisted of 10 hectares in size and had the following buildings:

- 1 Mechanical repair shop
- 1 Spare parts building
- 1 blacksmith and joiner's shop
- 2 large garages
- 4 large barns for tractors and thrashers

1 A building for combustible materials.

There were the additional MTS buildings:

- 222. MTS office - formerly owned by Heinrich Stroh.
- 223. MTS residence formerly owned by Konrad Voelker
- 224. MTS residence formerly owned by Loeb sack
- 225. MTS residence - formerly owned by Schauermann
- 226. MTS residence - formerly owned by Wilhelm Loeb sack
- 227. MTS residence - formerly owned by Schauermann
- 228. MTS residence - formerly owned by Loeb sack

In closing I will again mention that the public buildings, with the exception of the church, school, boarding school, the two teacher's homes and all the buildings that were owned by the rich farmers, they were branded as Kulaks in 1928 and dispossessed of their property. In March of 1929 they were banished to other forests of northern Russia where they perished.

My story of the 86 years existence of Brunnental, from its establishment in 1885 to its demise in 1941 is hereby ended. I will never forget by beautiful home village.

I send greetings to all Brunnentalers in Russia, Germany, America and Canada, and everywhere that any might yet be surviving.

[Note 1] The map of Brunnental, circa 1940, drawn by Jakob Mohrland, can be purchased through AHSGR, 631 D Street, Lincoln, NE 68502-1199. Please request Map #57. (Cost is \$5 plus postage for AHSGR members, and \$6 plus postage for non-members. Please include \$.75 for postage. The map will be mailed to you within 4-6 weeks)

[Note 2] See Note #1 for ordering map of Brunnental

[Note 3] Seelmann was a village located 35 kilometers from Brunnental.

[Note 4] QKM---Stands for Quadratkilometer measurement