

Regina Klotz Mock
About Her Ancestors
By Peter Mock

My great ancestors - the names are Klotz and Ehly on my father's side and Wilhelm and Wolf on my mother's side - came from Baden and Pfalz in Germany. The Klotz ancestors settled in Mariental, located about 25 km from Odessa, probably in 1809. About 1870 they moved to the daughter village of Krasna near Nikolajev in the Beresan District and this was the village where my grandparents Klotz and Wilhelm and my parents were born. My grandmother Regina Ehly and her ancestors Butsch and Ehly were from Sulz in the Beresan District.

My husband, Peter's, ancestors, Mock/Moser came from Alsace-Lorraine (district Weissenburg) and settled in the colony Kleinliebental in 1809 (Mock) resp. 1805 (Moser).

Most of the German people were farmers and owned their land. The first two generations of colonists in the south Russian steppe had a hard time. Many of them died because of the new and rough environment, diseases, crop failures and lack of equipment and horses they needed to farm properly. About 50 years later, the third generation of the first colonists, prospered. They produced excellent crops of wheat, corn, barley, vegetables and their own fruits. Most of the land was worked with horse and plow.

When I asked my grandmother (a year before she died) to tell me of her most beautiful memories in her life, she told me it was the time in her childhood in the German colony in South Russia. It was a time when they lived a peaceful village life, spoke the German language and followed German customs. They led a religious life with people supporting each other, feeling happy, and working in peace and freedom.

When I asked her about the bad things that happened in her life, she said the worst was the bloodbath in 1918 in her home village, Sulz, carried out by the Bolsheviks (the communists) after the 1917 revolution. She was born in 1911, so she was only 7 years old when that happened. We can see that the good times in the life of people like my grandmother did not last long. She also told me that another of the worst experiences in her life, and in the lives of thousands of German people, was the flight as refugees from the Ukraine to Poland in 1944. While fleeing, they were over-run by the Soviet army, mistreated in Poland and then forced to go back to Russia, to East-Siberia and the Asian republics.

In 1914 many of the young sons of the colonists had to serve in the Russian army. The colonist's privilege of "freedom from military duty" was annulled in 1874. They had to fight on the west front where the Russians fought against Germans and also in the south, on the Russian-Turkey front in the Caucasus. During this wartime the farms suffered because only the old men, women and children stayed behind.

They had not enough horses and carriages, because those had to be given to the army. After the war was over, the men came back home to their villages to find the new Soviet government in power. Following the October revolution in 1917, their land and all belongings were confiscated, nationalized and given in small parts to all people, including the Russian people. The Russian people never farmed like the German colonists and knew little about agriculture. The cruel civil

war in Russia that followed the October 1917 revolution brought poverty and destruction to all colonies. The German people were repressed for being German. There followed years of mismanagement by the communists, bad crop failures, and years of famine. Many people died of starvation.

In 1932 there was a bad crop failure in our area. In that year my father was born. From my grandmother I heard that my grandfather hardly survived the starvation in that year. Peter's parents, Elisabeth and Peter Mock, were about 12 and 14 years old at that time. Prior to the beginning of the war between Russia and Germany in 1941, namely in 1937 to 1939 under Stalin's regime, 19 million people were arrested, 7 million of these people were shot. First of all priests, teachers, doctors and then farmers were arrested and killed or sent to Siberia to labor camps. Sentenced to 10 or 25 years of hard labor, they never came back. Often their families knew nothing of their whereabouts, and never heard of them again. Most of the arrests occurred in the night; the family father could not even say good bye to his wife and children nor could he even get dressed.

Franziska Ochs, a sister of my grandfather, Wilhelm, lost her husband in this way. One night the military arrested him without any reason. He was taken away and his family never heard of him again. She and her children were able to survive only because the German families always tried to stay together and to help each other.

My father's grandfather, Christian Klotz, an old man, was shot dead in 1919 by the communists while sitting on a bench in front of his house in Krasna, near Nikolajev. In 1937, Jakob Klotz, an uncle of my grandfather, Martin Klotz, was arrested in the same village of Krasna. Nobody ever heard of him again. People were frightened and scared of the communists terror.

In 1941, during WWII, the German army attacked Russia and captured our villages in south Russia, Stalin sent all other German people in western parts of Russia; the Volga, Crimea, North and South-Caucasus, and parts of the south Ukraine to Kazakhstan, Altai and Siberia. The whole German community of the Volga district was forced to leave their villages and all belongings within 24 hours in order to go to East-Siberia and Kazakhstan. German people in Russia were hated because of the war Germany had against Russia.

Our grandparents and parents always told us about living in the villages in the Odessa district. My parents were born 1932 and 1934 and much of what they told us was about the time when the German army occupied our villages. For the 3 years from 1941 to 1944 the children of the colonists could attend school in the German language. Religion was allowed again, people could go to church without fear and they could also work in the fields in freedom like they did many years before. For my parents it was the only time when they were able to go to a German school.

It was only for a short time that they felt secure and were protected from Stalin's terror. In 1944 the Germany army was forced to retreat. The Soviet army was coming closer to the villages in South Russia. Everybody understood that all German colonists had to leave their villages forever. Treks, with the last horses they had, were prepared for the long journey back to Germany. Actually they were destined for to the district "Warthegau" in Poland were they first had to be registered by the German government.

In the spring of 1944 these long treks started from all the colonist's villages occupied by the German army. They went to Poland on much the same route as their ancestors, 150 years earlier, came to Russia but in the opposite direction. Unfortunately, most of the colonists never made it to Germany. The Soviet army captured them and forced them to go back to the Soviet territory. They were never allowed to resettle their former villages again. Instead, they had to work in Siberia, in Kazakhstan, and in the cold north of Russia. Many people died on the way. Under Stalin's regime, 7 million people died before WWII began, and even more millions died during and after the war.

Peter's parents, as well as my grandmother, with my father (my grandfather was in the German army) reached Poland after months on the trek in the summer of 1944. The family of my mother almost reached Hannover when the Soviet army found them and forced them to go back and then deported them in Kazakhstan.

In February, 1945 in Poland, the people, mostly women and children, were taken away. They lost their clothes and the last of their belongings. My grandmother lost our family bible and the last few family photographs she had. That's why it is hard to find many photographs about the life in the German villages. When the treks of deported people, in cattle wagons, started their way back to Russia from Poland in April, 1945 our grandmothers and our parents, had nothing but clothes on their bodies and an uncertain future before them. They suffered from hunger and diseases during many months on their way. Peter's oldest sister, as well as my mother's youngest sister, were born 1944 on the trek from Russia to the Wartheland.

Peter was born in 1951 in Perm, in the Ural district, where his parents were sent in 1949. There the German people had to work in coal mines. Later the family moved to Aktjubinsk in Kazakhstan, They had found some relatives there, but they had to ask for permission to leave Perm. All German people were registered and not allowed to move.

My grandmother, Regina Klotz, with her two children, was sent, together with her sister, Albertina Leibhan and her 4 children, her sister-in-law Katharina Thomas with her 7-year-old son and my great-grandfather, Martin Klotz to central Kazakhstan.. They arrived there in May, 1945 and stayed in a cow-shed until November, 1945. Then the three families were deported to Karaganda, a small town in central Kazakhstan, which previous served as a labor camp and a prison camp.

The Soviets needed people to work in the coal mines. My father, who was only 13 years old, and my grandmother now had to work in the coal mine. The women were alone because their husbands were in the prisoner-of-war camps somewhere else . They did not know where their husbands were nor did the men know where their families had been deported.

My grandfather finally found his wife and his children in Kazakhstan after years of searching. He escaped from a camp in the very north of Russia, and took the risk of moving through the country without permission.. He was lucky not to be found, for the punishment of such an offense was 10 years of hard labor in a gulag in East-Siberia.

In Kazakhstan lived many German people but many of them died because they had not enough to eat and they had to work very hard. They were not allowed to speak the German language in public. There were no schools. Only after many years were there some Russian schools. Their

religious life could exist only underground as with the German customs like celebrating Christmas or Easter.

After my grandfather, Martin Klotz found his family in 1947, he worked in the coal mine too. The same thing happened to my mother's family.

I was born in 1956 in Karaganda in central Kazakhstan. Since we spoke German at home, I did not speak Russian until I went to school. However, about 1971, we were given the option to study German as a foreign language in our Russian school.

My father, Anton Klotz, was a shoemaker, but he also played many instruments such as accordion, clarinet, horn and drum. He and his brother, Josef Klotz, as well as my mother's brother, Valentine Wilhelm and my grandfather's brothers, Pius and Christian Klotz played for many weddings in our community. They were well known for their wedding music. Funerals and weddings were the only occasions for the scattered German people to come together to share news and experiences. My father was able to attend a night school to study music sciences and finally he worked as a music teacher and choirmaster. We lived in Karaganda until 1972. I have three sisters.

It was after 1955, when German Chancellor Adenauer visited Moscow for the first time since the war. Following his meeting with Khrushchev, the German people in Russia had hoped that one day they would be able to leave Russia and emigrate to Germany. However, the borders were closed and for many years people had no chance to move. From the time when I was a little child, my parents spoke of immigration to Germany. It was their wish and the only wish and hope of many people.

We had only one relative in Germany, Simon Klotz, one of my father's uncles. He managed to stay in Germany after 1945 even though the Soviet army tried to get him back to Siberia. After 1956, with the help of the German and International Red Cross, Simon found us in Karaganda. After that we received letters and a few times even parcels from Germany. Uncle Simon Klotz sent us so-called "wysows", official application forms, to apply to the Soviet government to be allowed to leave the Soviet Union in order to immigrate to Germany.

There was no chance of getting permission from the government in Kazakhstan, so in 1972 my father took us to Taschkent, a town in the Central Asian Republic, near the Chinese border. There he taught music and I was able to finish school. In September, 1973, after a difficult time and many obstacles, we finally gained permission to immigrate to Germany. From Taschkent we had an almost three day journey by train to Moscow. Then after three days in Moscow, we went by train through Poland to Braunschweig in Germany, then to Hannover and Friedland camps where all German people from the east had to register.

In previous years German families moved to Estonia, and Latvia where they were able to get a visa to emigrate but those routes were later closed. Some people moved to Kaliningrad (Koenigsberg) or, like Peter's family, to Moldavia, with their only goal to get permission to leave the Soviet Union.

Peter's father, Peter Mock, worked in the coal mine in Aktjubinsk in North Kazakhstan where Peter and his sister and brothers lived until 1974. Peter's family went to Moldavia in 1974,

hoping that from there it would be easier to get the permission but it took almost three years before they received a visa. One of Peter's brothers had to stay behind in Russia for another two years to serve his term in the Russian army. Peter's family arrived in Germany 1976 and settled at Ulm. Since then, his parents helped many relatives and other German people in Russia come to Germany.

My family settled at Wuerzburg in Bavaria. After courses in German and the sciences I graduated and gained admission to the University of Wuerzburg where I studied Pharmacy for four years. I graduated in 1979 and took a position in a community pharmacy in Ulm for my year of practical-training. That is where I met Peter and where we were married. Both of our children, Peter and Julia, were born in Ulm.

My grandparents moved to Germany in 1976, three years after we escaped from the Soviet Union. That was when my grandfather, Martin Klotz, met his brother, Simon Klotz, for the first time in 35 years.

I was 17 years old when we went to Germany and since then almost all of our relatives have come to Germany as well. I have no contact now with anyone living in Russia but life there is as bad as it was before.

Note:

Some general dates and facts were taken out from the book "Erinnerungen an die Deutschen Kolonien des Großliebentaler Rayons bei Odessa" written by Eduard Mack in 1998.