

Schabo-Posad Memories

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Note: Information within [brackets] are comments by the translator.

[Translation Begins]

Memories of the Schabo-Posad Community

Hugo Mutschler

The village of Schabo-Posad was separated from Schabo-Colony (Swiss Colony) by only a path. The narrowest point was hardly wider than eight to ten meters [26 to 32 feet] and ran between the yard of the winemaker and farmer Sergius Gander and on the opposite side the Russian Orthodox church. The church was not very large, but was always well attended by the Russian population. The village of Schabo-Posad had about 3,000 to 3,500 inhabitants, of whom approximately 250 were of German origin. The rest were Russians, with a smaller number of Jews.

Behind the church, which was surrounded by a high wall, lay the large vineyard and farmyard of widow Amalie Büxel. The street on which the farm was located was called Patrulnaja. It stretched about 300 meters [984 feet] away from the Dniester Estuary (*Dnjestr-Liman*) along the shore for approximately 2–2½ kilometers [1.2-1.6 miles].

Next to the stately Büxel residence stood large stables, a cider press, a cellar, and several domestic buildings. Around 100,000 liters [26,420 gallons] of wine were pressed here annually. To the right of the residence were three more buildings. The district court was housed in the left wing of the building standing by the street. Behind it, in the courtyard, was a elegant, small house where the magistrate lived. The third residence also had a tenant. A large fruit and vegetable garden bordered the courtyard, coming within a few meters of the Dniester Estuary shore. In this garden, there were many fruits and berries that were well known to some of us boys: the cherries in the garden of the neighbor. Entry to the garden was always provided by the son of Mrs. Büxel—his name was Otto—and he was my age. To ensure we were not caught by his older siblings, he personally kept watch at the top of the garden entrance. Each of us was allowed to eat as much as we could, but without damaging the branches or bushes.



Schabo, Wine Tasting

In the same row was the farmyard of Edmund Kurz, a brother of Mrs. Amalie Büxel. This farm included: 25 hectares [61.8 acres] of vineyards, 170 hectares [420 acres] of arable land, and a building plot of 3,000 m² [32,340 sq ft] in Bugas. — Kurz pressed 130,000 to 135,000 liters [34,346 to 35,667 gallons] of wine annually. Four years before the Resettlement—1940—he had a very large, beautiful house built, one of a kind. The house had central heating, with all rooms heated from the cellar using straw, grapevines, or other materials. This kept the living spaces always clean and prepared. The farm buildings, stables, cellars, and winery, and so forth, were particularly large and spacious. In the winery stood four wine presses, including a large hydraulic one. No one in the communities of Schabo-Posad and Colony had more beautiful horses than Edmund Kurz. He was also the first in the community to buy a car, an American “Buick”.

However, he did not own it for long. Annoyed by a small accident which he had caused, the car was quickly sold. A large fruit and vegetable garden also sprang up on his property.

Across the street, Kurz had another beautiful, stately rental property, built entirely of red bricks. In this building were located the pharmacy and the residence of the pharmacist Swerdlik. About 600 meters [1,968 feet] to the south, Kurz owned another beautiful, large residential house—called “*Bratnowsky*”, after the former owner. To the house, in addition to a 1½ hectare [3.7 acres] vineyard, belonged a long building that stretched along the street. Part of the building had been converted into a cinema by the former owner, Bratnowsky. The furnishings and equipment were primitive, making it the cinema for the common people. The better-off members of the Schabo-Posad community usually traveled by the nice bus of Messrs. Schwallé and Theodor Stohler to the district town to go to the cinema.

Back to the residence of E. Kurz on Patruhnaja Street. His neighbor was widow Helene Forné, the daughter of the widow Amalie Büxel. She was very well off. Mrs. Forné, along with her only son Valeri—married—now live in Switzerland. Her son Valeri has a very well paid job. He speaks four languages fluently: German, French, Russian, and Romanian. To the right, opposite the yard of Mrs. Forné, stood the Evangelical Lutheran Prayer House. A long building, in which there was a large room for holding worship services; next to it was the Elementary School, followed by the Teacher and Sexton residence. On Christmas Eve, quite a few Russians and Jews came to the church and admired the beautiful Christmas tree. The parishioners who could no longer find a place in the church generously withdrew to the schoolroom and peeked through the connecting door into the church. — As mentioned, the 4-Class Elementary School was housed in this building. The Russians had their own Elementary School, which could also be attended by Jewish children. After Bessarabia was annexed to Romania, the German school was closed due to a lack of funds. The Elementary School in the Schabo Colony municipality continued to exist, so that the children from Posad could continue in the Colony. Three teachers employed at this Elementary School (Schabo Colony). My father-in-law, Friedrich Lauer, for the German children, Paul Jatón for French-speaking children, and Director Dersu for the Romanian language. The lessons proceeded

smoothly according to a conveniently organized curriculum. The children could choose whether they wanted to learn French, German, or both. Romanian was compulsory.

Not far from the Prayer House lay the large farm of the grape-grower and farmer Adolt Kurz. — **A. Kurz** was the richest man in the communities of Schabo-Posad and Schabo-Colony. The farm included 287 hectares [709.2 acres] of land and 42 hectares [103.8 acres] of vineyards. — Over 200,000 liters [52,840 gallons] of wine were pressed annually. There were several farm buildings on the property, a very large winery with a large hydraulic wine press, and six other wine presses. In addition, A. Kurz owned a roof tile factory in the municipality of Schabo-Posad. Part of the agricultural land mentioned above was located in the districts of **Basyrjamka and Budaki**. The property included domestic servants and farm buildings. Adolf Kurz employed many regular workers and day laborers on his farm. To a Russian who had worked for him continuously for 30 years, he voluntarily paid an annual pension for life.

West of the farm of A. Kurz, on the edge of the vineyards, was the farm of Konstantin Beck. The farm included: 40 hectares [98.8 acres] of arable land, 4.5 hectares [11.1 acres] of pasture, and 11.70 hectares [28.9 acres] of top-quality vineyards. Each year, Beck pressed about 55,000-60,000 liters [14,531-15,852 gallons] of wine. His three sons—Gustav, Anton, and Wilhelm—managed the business admirably under the guidance of their father Konstantin. “Becks,” as they were called, were practically the economic barometer of the community. If the Becks sprayed their vineyards with a copper sulfate solution, the others did the same. Or if the Becks sold wine at a certain price, the others demanded the same price, and so on. But it was not only the German population of the community that followed the Becks, many Russians who owned property did as well. In the good old days, the old gentleman bought table grapes in the community and transported them, packed in baskets, to Odessa, where he successfully sold them.

Behind the yard of Beck came the beautiful, large Winkelmann yard. Winkelmann was from Switzerland and retained his Swiss citizenship until his death. His profession was primary school teacher (now retired). The house was built entirely in the Swiss style. The property included vineyards and land. His grandson, Rudolf Winkelmann, is now a primary school teacher in Switzerland. Further down was the property of the widow Emilie Becker, who lived with her 20 year old daughter in a beautiful, private house. Here too, the property included vineyards and land. Both—mother and daughter—met a tragic death.

The Russian population of the Posad-Schabo community was largely poor. Most were day laborers and worked for the winemakers and farmers of the Schabo-Colony and Schabo-Posad communities. They did not do badly in terms of earnings. At Christmas and on family occasions, they received from their employers: wine, wheat, or other things that were needed in the household. The most generous of all was Edmund Kurz, whom his day laborers and workers called “Papa Edmund.”

Among the Russians, of course, there were also fishermen who fished in the Dniester Estuary with their sailboats and large nets. They set out early every Sunday and brought the catch to the market fresh. The place was teeming with people, because everyone met here: the residents of the Schabo Colony, Schabo-Posad, Schabolat, Akembad, and Sergeevka. The men stood in groups and asked the Jews about the prices of wine and grain. The brokers were asked whether they had vineyards

or land for sale, and so forth. It was a colorful picture of people: Germans, French, Romanians, Jews, and Russians. A true League of Nations of people who got along real good with each other. The main language spoken was Russian.



Schabo, Bay and Beach

Among the Russian population, of course, there were not only poor families but also wealthy ones, such as Stephan Martschenko, Filimonov, Gavriliuk, Melnitchenko, and others. They all pressed wine from their own vineyards, producing tens of thousands of liters. Stephan Martschenko was a teacher by profession. He owned a very beautiful house and a winery. His two daughters were studying. One daughter, Nadja, was very close friends with Miss Doctor Herta Büxel, a dentist in Stuttgart, and she visited her from Romania in 1970. Michael Gavriliuk is a graduate engineer. Through his wife Lolo, née Margo, of Swiss descent, he was able to move from Germany to Switzerland with her in 1945. The residents of the Schabo Colony, who came from Switzerland, were resettled to Germany with the Germans in 1940. There were very few mixed marriages between Germans and Russians. It was probably the Orthodox faith that stood in between. There were somewhat more mixed marriages with Romanians.

In the community, there was also a Russian Association that occasionally staged beautiful Ukrainian plays, which were also attended by the residents of the Schabo Colony. Joint celebrations between Russians and Germans were rare. The first of May was considered a holiday and was celebrated by the entire population. No political significance was attributed to the day. A large, tall Maypole was erected. At the very top, branches were attached to which various objects were fastened, such as an alarm clock, a bottle of schnapps, a small box of tobacco, or similar items — a brave fellow could take these things if he had the energy to climb all the way up to the branches. The villagers stood by, watched, and laughed at those who failed, amused by their misfortune. An accordion played the entire time, and those eager to dance got their fill.

There was also a Football Club. The players were of different nationalities: Germans, Russians, French, and Jews. As the captain of the team, I can confirm that it was a peaceful coexistence and togetherness.

In the village, there was also a grain mill for the residents of Schabo-Posad, Schabo-Colony, and some surrounding communities. It was steam-powered and belonged to my father, Salomo Mutschler.

A few weeks before Easter, the Russians had a time for fasting. During these weeks, they ate “lean”, mostly meatless. The food consisted of milk, cheese, lots of fish, and vegetables.

On the Saturday night before Easter, an Easter vigil service was held every year from 7 p.m. until about 2 a.m. It consisted of readings from the Bible, written in Old Slavic, alternately read by the church deacon or a teacher. On one occasion, it was teacher Stepan Nikolayevich Avtudov who was reading. We adolescents were just looking at the glass casket in which the crucifix lay. Stepan Nikolayevich had to step away for a moment! He sized us up and then said to the tallest one: "Come here, Oskar, and keep reading, I will be right back." Oskar went on reading aloud and audibly. The "Russians" paid no attention. At certain points, they made the sign of the cross or sighed reverently. Oskar was none other than the current Diploma Engineer Büxel in Stuttgart-Freiberg. At exactly midnight, the casket was brought out of the church and carried three times around it while the church choir sang continuously. The priest announced the resurrection of Christ with the words: "Christ is risen!" Afterwards, the parishioners greeted each other with the words: "Christ is risen!" The person addressed replied: "He is truly risen!" and then they exchanged a kiss—whether they knew each other or not, it did not matter. The purpose of this ceremony was as follows: People reconciled with one another as much as possible, forgetting the hatred and discord that had accumulated over the course of the year. Easter was celebrated for three days. For those more or less well-off, an Easter table was set up, covered with a variety of culinary delights, including food and drinks. The church bells—five in number—rang almost continuously by day for three days. This task was preferably carried out by the older children.

Christmas and New Year were celebrated as everywhere else. The Russian men, mostly workers and their children, liked to go to the Germans to wish them a Happy New Year.

Epiphany was celebrated in a very interesting way. The population went to the Dniester Estuary, when it was frozen, of course, where the priest held a service. One day before, boys and men went onto the ice and carved a cross, a crescent, and some stars into it, highlighting the openings with red watercolor. Then, a block of ice, about 1x1 meters [3x3 feet], was carved out and placed at the end of the cross. That was supposed to be the altar.

Early the next day, everyone went out to the worship service. First, a hole was cut into the ice. The water in this hole was blessed by the clergyman. The Russian population took this holy water and poured it into bottles, which they carried home and kept for a year. In case of illness, a sip was drunk or it was rubbed on externally. It was believed that this water had healing powers. One thing is peculiar. The water does not spoil over the course of a year. I have seen this for myself.

After the worship service, white doves were released, meant to represent the Holy Spirit. The police officers fired revolvers into the air. The many participants then dispersed. Only the ice skaters remained, who spread out across the estuary. If the estuary was not frozen, the water from a well was blessed.

Posad-Schabo also had a nice hospital. The chief physician, Nikolai Naumenko, was Russian, a very likable and competent doctor in his profession. Mr. Naumenko died in Bucharest after the war. His wife Irene lives in Lausanne today.

In the Romanian period, public offices employed not only Romanians but also Russians and Germans, and indeed, in the Schabo tax office, even a Jew. The relationship among them was harmonious.

When the Romanians occupied Bessarabia in 1918, a Russian named Javorovsky was the head cashier at the Akkerman tax office. A large, broad-shouldered man with a long, white full beard. One day, a Romanian commission appeared to determine whether he was suitable for the Romanian administration. He was aware of it. On the day in question, he had put on his Russian official uniform, green pants and a blue jacket, on which his decoration, a medal awarded to him by the Russian state, gleamed. The books were neatly arranged on the table, and he placed the cash keys beside him. He immediately stated that he wanted to resign from the administration. The man was liked by the gentlemen. He was persuaded to stay.

Earlier it was mentioned that the village cinema was set up in a building owned by Mr. Edmund Kurz. In memory, images rise to the surface that were characteristic of those times fifty years ago. For instance, it sometimes happened that a Russian dog sneaked into the cinema during an unguarded moment, perhaps looking for its owner. But since that was not so easy in the dark, the dog ran between the benches. The boys whistled and laughed, others stomped their feet and shouted. Immediately the lights went on. Bratkowsky ran in with a bottle of Eau de Cologne and sprayed the fragrant liquid between the rows. An “Aah” could be heard, and the screening continued.

Only silent films were shown. For the various scenes in the film, Mr. Stafidov played different pieces on the piano, adapted to the scenes. There were times when Stafidov was overtired or had drunk a bit too much beforehand, and then the scenes in the film did not always match the music of Stafidov. Once again, it was the boys who laughed, stomped, and shouted at the top of their lungs until Stafidov changed.

In summary, it can be stated for both communities—Schabo Colony and Schabo Posad—that they were very conveniently located in terms of transportation. Thanks to the particularly favorable soil conditions, the residents had the opportunity to engage in both growing grapes and agriculture. I have already described how the wine was sold (see *Heimatkalender* 1970, page 67).

The grain was sold to the German cooperative “*Budschak*” or to Jewish grain traders.

Here I would like to tell a little funny incident that happened during a grain sale. The grain dealer Tultschinski had bought grain, including rapeseed, from widow Adele Besson. Pinja, son of Tultschinski, had been given the task of watching over the grain until it was transported so it would not spoil. With the rapeseed, however, Pinja—a big, strong Jewish youth—neglected to check on it in time, and when he finally did, he suddenly started crying loudly! His father came over and kept asking, “Why are you crying, my golden boy?” Pinja was too overwhelmed by tears to answer. Father Srul was close to despair and suddenly cried out: “Give me a knife, I will cut my throat!” Dodo, the adolescent son of Mrs. Besson, had stood by and grinned the whole time. After Srul asked for a knife, Dodo went into the barn, came up to Srul with a broken scythe tip and said, “Here, it is very sharp!” Srul was taken aback for a moment, then he said, “You must be crazy, it

is all rusty, you can get blood poisoning from it!” The rapeseed was spoiled, but the situation was saved!

In Posad-Schabo, the Germans lived more closely intertwined with the Russians than in most other scattered settlements, and yet it can be said that there was an excellent relationship among them and they always got along well, with a few exceptions during World War I. The friendships that developed between Germans and Russians endured all political events; this could easily be proven by the number of non-Germans who were resettled around 1940. How much impression Germans could make even in the turbulent time of inflamed German hatred can be seen from the following small incident.

During World War I, soldiers from Bessarabia were also sent to the Front. Before being transported, they were assembled on the parade ground in Akkerman, where a worship service was held and speeches were addressed to the soldiers by high-ranking personalities. Representing the Evangelical Germans, Pastor Wilhelm Meyer, pastor in Neu-Posttal, spoke up. He delivered a speech in the best Russian that touched hearts so deeply that not only the ordinary soldiers but also many of the officers and high-ranking personalities had to cry.

Schabo-Posad still exists today; it has not fallen apart like some of the German villages. It is said to have been expanded immensely.

The Germans no longer live there; who among the Russians from that time is still alive is unknown. However, it can hardly be assumed that the people of Schabo-Posad today live better and happier lives!

[Translation Ends]



[Stump Map of Bessarabia reworked by Rolf Jethon—not in original document]