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Marianowo

Report of a German village in the area of Narew, Poland

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Preface

If the German farmers, laborers, craftsmen and merchants who immigrated to Poland had known how short a time the fruits of their hard labor would last in that country, some of them surely would have thought twice about turning their backs on their homeland and leaving behind friends and neighbours in their search of a new home in a strange land. Whatever other reasons might have drawn a person to emigrate, he was certainly convinced that his fortunes and opportunities would be better in the unknown land. Many succeeded in achieving their expectations in a few years, but many others struggled for decades before they no longer needed to worry about their daily bread. That these people, who had once immigrated to Poland, themselves as well as their descendants, could not find a true home there, was sadly confirmed during the Second World War. Regardless, as long as these people lived in Poland and were allowed to work, they proved themselves to be worthy representatives of their native land. In this report, if I may call it that, I don't want to speak of all Germans. This discussion will not be about how for hundreds of years, German workers, farmers and drapers were called there, and with the passing of time, built cities and German villages along the Vistula. I will tell of the German people who at the beginning of the 19th century came to Poland and settled between the rivers Bug and Narew. It was German laborers and farmers from East Prussia and later others from Pommern who came there. It is of these people and of the villages they founded, of these people of whom otherwise little was written, it is these people whom I want to talk about.

Background

As a young lad, older people often told me the story of how, by the suggestion of agents who were sent out by Narew landowners, a large group of farmers and laborers from East Prussia got together to emigrate to Poland. These people embarked on a journey from their homeland in the certain hope of building a secure future in Poland. I probably don't need to say that this journey was no joyride, since there were no highways in those days or even hard roads. There were no trains or helicopters to fly over swampy areas. The journey was incredibly difficult, and when there weren't dangerous wild animals, then there were reptiles whose bites were often sufficient to keep the Promised Land from being reached. And even though some turned around in the first few days, and others were buried along the way, most achieved their ambitious goal.

The farmers who had a horse and wagon had it easier because they were able to stow their belongings. But those who did not have a horse, crafted themselves a hand pulled cart, filled it with their things and pulled it behind them. There were also those who had nothing and just carried a small bundle with them. But what everyone took with them, something the journey would not start without, was a Bible and a hymnbook – precious treasures.

The trek proceeded slowly. The largest obstacles were overcome, and if discussions of these were allowed they did not prevent them from getting ahead. It often took days to go around swampy areas through thick forests with sprawling scrub. But the strong faith these people had in God helped them overcome all troubles and obstacles. Every morning, before they started, a devotional service would be held where one of the literate farmers would read a psalm of David, and every night ended with singing and an evening prayer.

After weeks of travelling, they finally arrived at their destination. The landowners who had recruited them welcomed them with kindness, assistance and advice. But what help was this goodwill? They were not offered any cleared land - no house to move into after the arduous journey. They were not given any farm animals. There was nothing to see of the

golden mountains that the Polish nobility had tricked them into expecting. Ancient trees and shrubs covered the land they were given – that was all!

This group settled on the left shore of the Narew across from the county town of Pultusk. I must say in advance that I am stretching my memory, but that last part of this story I experienced myself and believe my remarks to be very close to the truth. Many of the accounts of the early days I heard from old people, so it is inevitable that some of them were imagined. Never the less, I promise that no information was purposely embellished or modified.

Wielgolas! That was the name of the place that the champions of Germaness in the Narew area first settled. At first, the area was designated Groβwald in the German vernacular, translated to Polish "Wielke", meaning so much large forest. More than likely, afterwards, the name thus transformed to Wielgolas. Wielgolas was located approximately ten kilometers from the county town of Pultusk on a road that led from Pultusk to Wyschkow. Although it was not far from my home, and as a young boy I desired to see this area, I never had the opportunity to visit it.

As already mentioned, the landowner – called dziedzic in Polish – was benevolent towards the German. He gave the land under very favourable conditions. But no one had enough money to pay these small sums immediately. Everyone owed the landowner large sums of money that they committed to paying off by working on the landowner's estate. However, this commitment severely limited their ability to clear and maintain their own land. In addition, the soil in Wielgolas was loamy and heavy – making it less fertile. Never the less, one piece of land after another was hacked and uprooted, the arable land thereby multiplied and the crop yield increased year after year.

Slowly the early huts were torn down and sturdy houses were built. Cattle were reared, horses and plows were acquired, and, with time, the farmers' existence became more bearable.

Meanwhile German settlers established themselves in many areas around Narew. The reason, however, that many of the early pioneers, including my great grandfather, left Wielgolas and moved on, I could never truly determine. It was only said that the soil there

was too heavy and that working it and making it fertile simply required too much work. In any case, Wielgolas was abruptly abandoned by the Germans and the Poles regained ownership.

Most of them, including my great grandfather, came to Sieczychy, a place that was approximately twenty kilometers north of Wielgolas. Unique villages began to emerge according to a certain plan. This plan was well thought out and later proved to be successful. According to the plan, when a larger village was founded, land was set aside for a church, a school, a village mayor, a blacksmith, and in some cases a village tavern. Of course the landowner included this land in his general price, but the records registered it as a gift from him. The reason why the landowner did not make the same amount of land available to all villages can only be explained by how many buyers there were. If there were few buyers who wanted to start a village then there would be little gratuitous land. If however there were more buyers he would give them land for many purposes.

So, for example, “Schultzenland” was available in every village. In the regulations it was two to three Polish acres. This land was payment to the village mayor who was elected for a specific time by the villagers. He received the land, tax-free, for the duration of the time he was assigned to his office. For this he had to collect taxes from the farmers and was given authority. He also was responsible for looking after things in the village and he was often the arbitrator in disputes amongst the villagers.

Some villages were provided “Krugland” for the purpose of a tavern. These guest houses, in those days called “Krugs”, were usually found at crossroads. The lot was on a street corner and the house was built close to the intersection. The land was leased to a suitable man who committed to soon open the village tavern. Naturally, the farmers helped to build the house because they wanted a place to go after a hard day’s work in the sun to chat with their neighbours over a glass of schnapps or beer. Otherwise, the tavern was meant for travellers who could tie up, feed and water their horses in the front while they refreshed themselves with a glass of beer or schnapps and had something to eat. In most cases this business was run by a Jew who besides schnapps and beer also sold groceries and other useful things.

Forge land was likewise not available in every village, but where it was considered it was for the purpose of establishing a village blacksmith. The land, by regulation three Polish acres, was given to an available blacksmith and the farmers helped him build the forge, and a house for himself. He did not need to pay rent or taxes on his building, as long as he granted certain forge privileges to the farmers: If a farmer from his village came to the blacksmith with some work, and the blacksmith was busy with work for an outsider, the blacksmith had to interrupt this work and give priority to his fellow villager's work.

Similarly, in larger villages, land was provided for churches and schools. The smaller villages typically participated with the larger and in this way formed a "Kantorat" (Cantor's parish). A larger building containing a chapel, a schoolroom and living quarters for a schoolmaster was built.

The village of Sieczychy was created according to such a plan. It was intended as a row of settlements drawn along a hill that offered views of the valley as if from a mountain, but on top was a plateau made of sandy soil on which fields of rye spread far and thrived. Back then, of course this entire area was covered by an undesirable spruce forest. The land was divided into long strips extending over the hill to a certain unmarked border in the swampy, willow shrub lowlands.

Cultivation of the ground proceeded much quicker here than it had in Wielgolas. But after a few years it was discovered that the soil was too light and required a year's work before it would yield a profitable harvest. Then it happened that in the meadows, which had been reclaimed from the marsh, a weed grew which was very harmful to the cattle but did not seem to bother the horses. The morale of the farmers was so badly affected that many of them, including my great grandfather, considered giving everything up and returning to Germany.

However, when rumors of discontent reached the ears of the landowner of Przetycz he asked my great grandfather and several other farmers to meet with him and offered that they should have a look around his area and select a place where they could finally settle down. He would give them any of his land under the most favorable conditions if they would stay. The Germans promised to think it over and in no time Polish buyers were found to purchase their existing, half-cleared land. The already-built schoolhouse collapsed over

time, and in my day, the German cemetery on the edge of town was covered by a small patch of willows and the crosses and mounds could no longer be seen.

Like Wielgolas ten years earlier, Sieczychy was hastily evacuated. Again, they moved five kilometers eastward and founded the village of Kalinowo. It is noteworthy that, in the entire region, there is no village founded by and settled by Germans that can boast having received a German name. All names were Polish and it was said that the landowner was particular about naming villages after his children. So, for example, the place Adamowo could thank Adam for its name. Kalinowo was derived from Kalinka, Marianowo was named after a daughter Maria, Stasin after the son Staszek or Stanislaw, and Zygmuntowo could thank Zygmunt for its name. That the Germans resigned themselves to keeping these names, was in my view due to the fact that, even in those days, they only saw themselves as guests in the land.

The village of Kalinowo was founded around 1850. Here again row settlements were planned. The farmsteads, however, were not located near the main street that lead to the already existing town of Wyschkow as had been the case in Sieczychy and other places. Instead, they were located five to eight hundred meters away. This was because there was a narrow water ditch that cut across the elongated strips of land, and the farmers preferred to build their homes near the ditch so they would not have to dig their wells as deep as they would a few hundred meters further away on higher ground. As already stated, the land in Kalinowo was divided into longitudinal strips and butted up against the aforementioned main street on the east side. Each farmer had access to the main road, but between farmsteads there were only walkways or narrow, drivable trails connecting them. The soil in Kalinowo was sandy, but much more fertile than in Sieczychy. One thing, however, was missing here, and that was grassland. This might have been the reason this well-loved village was again vacated after only two decades.

Apparently, the German farmers at first felt quite good about Kalinowo. The village expanded in a relatively short time. There was plenty of wood for construction and it wasn't long before every farmer had a solid roof over his head. It wasn't as it had been in the early days when Wielgolas was founded. Every farmer had a horse and wagon, cattle, small animals, and tools for plowing, all of which helped to cultivate the land. And since land had

been allotted here for a church and schoolhouse, work began immediately on erecting the schoolhouse. It escapes my memory who became the schoolmaster. Also I do not know how long services took place in the furnished chapel.

Around 1870, the rumors started circulating that the true mountains of gold were in Wolhynien and that there one could get truly rich in a short time. Naturally, a number of farmers were ready to give up everything here and wander on further. And since many of the early pioneers, including my great grandfather – he died in 1858 in Kalinowo – were no longer there, it did not take long until Kalinowo was in Polish hands. Most travelled east to Wolhynien, but the rest, who did not feel like going along, and who did not want to live next to the Poles, settled in the already established village of Marianowo or in the surrounding area. The altar cover and other furnishings from the Kalinowo chapel were brought to the church in Marianowo, but the chapel itself was torn down. When I once drove through Kalinowo an old German farmer showed me the place where the school was to have once stood and the farm that my great grandfather founded and built. But in the Kalinowo cemetery the only memory of this time was a small, four-cornered spruce grove where neither crosses nor burial mounds were to be seen.

Three areas that were possessed by German farmers and labourers and cultivated through much sacrifice and sweat, within half a century of German settlement, returned to Polish ownership.

The Village of Marianowo

Marianowo was established around 1840. As explained by an elderly farmer, who as a child moved with his parents from Sieczychy to Marianowo, this village was founded by only three farmers. Of course it was meant for more than three farmers, but the contract with the landlord was signed by these three respectable compatriots. It now escapes me what the names of these farmers were, although I once knew them. The founders of Marianowo might have come fresh from Germany. Others, however, separated themselves from the first pioneer group and settled here. This is because, when Wielgolas and Sieczychy were abandoned, the Germans did not all stick together; while some splintered from the group, others were added.

Marianowo! The large and beautiful German village. It lay on the western border of the district of Ostrow-Mazowiecki - the so-called Narew area – and included 1,564 acres (1,100 Polish morgen). It was surrounded by the villages of Nowa-Wies, Olszaki, Stasin, Zygmuntowo, Dozin, Adamowo, the small estate of Borkowizna, and the district of Pultusk's village of Grodziczno. All of the neighboring villages had mixed populations where Poles and Germans lived side by side. But in Marianowo, which formed the centre point of these villages, where a church and school were found, and which was designated as a cantor community, lived exclusively German families, aside from a few Jewish families who were found there as well. Not until 1924 did a Pole manage to acquire an eleven acres (eight morgen) land plot. However, this homestead lay at the outer edge of the village and in no way affected the German way of life.

Marianowo was a scattered settlement. The surveyor who had been commissioned to survey the village must have been a very able man in his profession, as the houses and the roads leading to them were very well planned. From the center of town branched three country roads: The road crossing the sandy fields leading west to the village of Grodzinczno, on which one passed through the cantor villages of Nury and Wincentowo on the way to the district town of Pultusk, the north-easterly road leading to the village of Olszaki, and the road commonly referred to as "Grobbel" that led east to the villages of Adamowo, Dozin,

Zygmuntowo, and Sieczychy, from where one could reach the Daliekie railway station and the city of Wyshkow.

Otherwise, there was the turn off from the road to Sieczychy on which one passed through Stasin, and from there Dlugosiodlo and finally arrived in the town of Ostrow-Masowiecki. Also, one should not forget about the road that branched off the main road to Olszaki, a road that many of the landowners in the middle of the village had to use to get to their remote properties. Likewise, the border path between Marianowo and Nowo-Wies, that came from Dlugosiodlo past the Zdruschk tavern, must be mentioned. Cutting another path from the river Narew, which in turn formed the boundary between Marianowo and the village of Grodziczno, but behind the cemetery of Marianowo, it went to individual farms. The farms of the village were laid out in such a way that each individual plot of land touched at least one of these roads. Between themselves, the farms were connected by foot paths. The village, that at its founding included around twenty farms, must have been a beautiful sight, much more beautiful than later when most of the farms were divided - some many times.

The land consisted mainly of good, but unfortunately sometimes of worse fields. In the middle of these fields there were sometimes higher places that could be built up and consisted mainly of black soil. The north and west sides of the village, however, had sandy soil on which rye grew well. For this reason there were a number of farms that had remotely located plots of land. On the one side were meadows, on the other side were rye fields.

In the middle of the village, near the point where the paths from Grodyicyno, Olsyaki and Siecz met, were the church and school land. The surrounding farms formed more or less of a broad circle around the center of the village. It is noteworthy that the forge and the mayor's properties were not likewise found in the center. Just like the church and school properties lay side by side in the middle of the village, so the forge and mayor's properties were found in the northwest corner. Beside the forge and mayor's lands were two Polish morgens of tavern land. To the best of my recollection – although I am not certain - I believe the building in which the tavern was housed, stood on the other side of the border of the village of Nowa-Wies. Beside the church and school properties, and on the corner of

the road to Grodziczno and Olszaki, there were also two Polish morgens of land that could also have been considered tavern land, however, were the property of the Jewish family Rosenberg. The old fashioned building, in which Old Simche and later his son Lejbke poured so many litres of liquor was demolished in my day and a house was built in its place.

At its founding, the village of Marianowo must have been planned as the center of the whole area. Here the landlord had set aside suitable land for many purposes. Besides the land for church and school, establishing the forge and the mayor's property, as well as two morgen for the tavern, he had also gifted two morgen of land for the purpose of a cemetery. The cemetery has located on the western edge of the village and was surrounded by a wooden fence. The year 1843, which is considered to be the year of the cemetery dedication, was carved into an oak cross that stood in the middle of the cemetery. It is assumed that in this year, the Marianowo cantor's parish was founded. A detailed description is found further in this report.

The forge land was a lengthwise-cut strip whose northern edge was between the Marianowo and Nowa-Wies border and extended towards the west side of town. Unfortunately, I could not determine if the forge was built at the same time the village came into existence. It is a fact, however, that my grandfather, who was born in Wielgolas in 1844, assumed the job of village blacksmith in 1870 and moved into the existing house. Older people told me that my grandfather was a hard-working blacksmith, although he, like most of the master tradesmen of his time, regularly visited the village tavern. He only began saving once he was older, and in a short time purchased a small country place by the ditch that ran across the forge land approximately one kilometer from the centre of the village and erected a forge. Since the house on the forge land was already very dilapidated, it was not inhabited by anyone afterwards and it burned down in the First World War. But the forge property was leased out and the proceeds flowed to the village fund.

The mayor's property was next to the forge. A house had never stood on this property because the law granted it to the mayor for use in his service of the village. I do not know for certain who the first mayor of Marianowo was, but I remember well that when World War One broke out it was the farmer Johann Neetz. During 1918, as the Germans were banished from Russia, something I will speak more about later, returned, and the Republic

of Poland arose, the farmer Gottlieb Ossowski was elected mayor. According to my calculations, he was re-elected twice and was replaced in 1927 by the farmer August Rymatzki. The farmer Rymatzki lent himself well to this office and was re-elected three times. In 1939, just a few months before the beginning of the Second World War, my brother Johann was elected as the last mayor of Marianowo.

The actual Marianowo tavern, as already mentioned, stood in the extreme northwest corner of the village, but since it was rarely visited by the more remote farmers, Old Simche Rosenberg probably figured business would be better in the middle of the village, so he purchased land, albeit a small plot, to build a house there. The house was not far from the school and was easy for all villagers to reach. I was always told that, right from the beginning, it was very well attended. And later, when there were good roads, probably many a farmer from another village, coming from the market in Długosiodło or Wzschkow, stopped in for a drink while his horses refreshed themselves with hay or oats at the front of the building.

When the village Marianowo was founded, it was like a wilderness. There were no trails or bridges and no drainage ditches. In higher places there were old gnarled pine trees, while on the lower meadows there were alder, birch, willow bushes and other shrubbery. The eastern staked part of the village could hardly be penetrated because of its marshes. Every square meter first had to be reclaimed before one could hope for a harvest. Every farmer took it to task, in addition to cultivating his own land, to communally participate in constructing trails and drainage ditches. It is easy to guess that such work was not child's play.

Since an east-west depression already ran through the north end of the village forming a natural drainage ditch, this was simply widened and in some places straightened. However, this by no means completely solved the drainage problem. In the eastern part of the village, where the lowest point was, an inflow ditch had to be created that flowed in a giant arc around the village. This ditch required a lot of work, but since it was the only way to irrigate the fields it had to be made. Another ditch started on Borkowizna's estate and similarly flowed through a large part of the western side of the village of Marianowo. Both ditches

ended after a short distance in the aforementioned main ditch of the village. Farmers connected smaller ditches from the main one to their individual plots of land.

Similarly the construction of trails took a lot of hard work and sweat. In the higher areas, this work proceeded relatively quickly, but in the lower areas it took considerably more work, and the most difficult part was the eastern side of the village. Here the farmers from four villages joined forces to lay a path from Marianowo through the villages of Adamowo, Dozin and Zymuntowo towards Sieczychy. They cut up alder and birch trees to the width of the trail, in rows, sometimes even several rows on top of each other, then thinner branches, and finally sand, which was brought in from the hills and spread on top. On both sides of the trail drainage ditches were dug. After months, perhaps even years of work, the farmers of Marianowo, Adamowo, Dozin and Zygmuntowo could reach Sieczychy with dry feet.

But the work on the trails and the drainage problems was far from complete. Every summer, the ditches had to be cleared of the mud, grass and shrubs that threatened to block the flow of water. The trails required thousands of loads of sand annually to remain drivable. Every fall, or in the work holiday prior to the harvest, farmers came together with horse and wagon and worked until all the damage had been repaired. It never occurred to farmers to excuse themselves or not to participate in this community work.

The houses in Marianowo, as in the whole surrounding area, were all built in the same style. In the early days, everyone had built themselves a makeshift hut just to have a roof over their heads. In fact, as my wife's grandmother told me, when as a ten year old girl her family arrived in the Narew area, they lived in a large hollow oak. She said that other families lived a long time under the protection of large deciduous trees. The roar of wild beasts frequently woke them from their sleep, and they became accustomed to waking up to see a snake coiled next to their pillow. Since there was plenty of wood available though, the farmers soon constructed sturdy houses.

The houses were built in three parts. They were kept very low in the walls, while the roof was high and pointed. The houses were comprised of a living area, the stable and the barn - long, stretched out buildings with all three parts under one roof. Each section had its own special entrance, but there was also a passage that stretched from one end to the other. This passage allowed the farmer to take care of his animals in cold weather without having

to set even one foot outside his door. The entrance to the living area, which in most cases faced south, and to the barn was in two parts. Hence, during the day, the bottom half could be closed to keep out unwanted intruders while the upper half remained open so that air and light could get into the house. The large barn doors on both sides of the building allowed wagons stacked high with hay or straw to be driven through. Only in later times did farmers start to separate the barns from the houses. However, stables continued to be attached to the houses.

The living area of the house usually had two neighbouring rooms – a smaller room that was used as a kitchen in the summer and as a storage room and hallway in winter. In one of the large rooms, right next to the entrance, was a stove, which was attached to a mud brick oven. The oven was situated in a manner that allowed it to provide comforting warmth to both rooms. A brick bench was also constructed next to the stove. When fire was crackling in the stove, the heat first had to wind its way under the bench before entering the oven. One could sit on this cozy bench with one's back against the warm oven, and thus take advantage of heat that would otherwise have been lost. In the small room, however, there was only a simple stove from which heat immediately passed into the chimney.

The two adjoining rooms were laid out so that one served as a living room and dining room, while the second was used as a bedroom. There was a wooden floor in all rooms, which was swept daily with a broom made of birch twigs, and was often sprinkled and scrubbed with fresh, white sand and water. The walls and ceiling were whitewashed at least once a year with lime. The windows, especially in newer homes, were quite large and usually consisted of six panes. All of the houses in Marianowo were built of wood, and, with very few exceptions, were covered with straw. A good wooden house, covered with straw provided sufficient shelter from the cold in the winter, while in the summer it was pleasantly cool.

Although the stable, which housed the cows and the horses, was only separated from the house by one wall, one could not notice the smell of the animals in the living quarters. After all, the hallway lay in between and this greatly reduced the smell of the stable. A stall for sheep and pigs was built across from the house and was usually attached to a shed for wood and other combustible materials. The buildings thus formed a horseshoe shape with the house as one leg, the main barn on the end and the small barn and wood shed on the

parallel leg. The gaps between the house and the other buildings were sealed by a picket fence. In a corner of the yard was the well, which was in most cases was built with wooden planks, but was also frequently made in later times from cement pipes. The basement is not to be forgotten; it consisted of low stone walls and with a thatched roof. It was used for storing potatoes for the winter and milk was stored there during the summer. There were also many other good and useful facilities and devices, discussion of which is beyond the scope of this report.

Land and the buildings erected in and around Marianowo, and as far as I know in all of Poland, were the inviolable property of the owner. The notary to the Polish regent in the town of Ostrow-Mazowiecki held a purchase contract between the landowner and the farmer for all land. The farmer could have him legally transfer this property, when and however he wanted. However, there was a law that a tract of country land could not be less than six Polish morgen. A farmer in Marianowo could, therefore, at any time separate a strip of land from his property and sell it to someone else, provided it was not less than six Polish morgen. However, this law did not apply to inheritances.

When the village Marianowo was founded the term “Polish morgen” was not used very much. Back then, most people used the term “hufe” instead. One hufe consisted of thirty Polish morgen. Also, the surveyor was not as accurate as in later times. In many cases it was later discovered that the tract of land, which was listed as one hufe, was actually up to thirty six Polish morgen. The properties in Marianowo were divided into one, one and a half, and up to two hufe. Most of the twenty or so farm properties in Marianowo were one hufe. Few were two hufe in size, and I can only remember one that was one and a half hufe. By my time, however, the properties had been divided by inheritance or sale, and there were hardly any properties left in Marianowo that were still their original size. In the last days, many a farmer gazed into the future with concern about what would happen to people if the properties continued to be divided generation after generation.

The livelihood of the population of Marianowo and neighbouring areas should not be represented as too luxurious. People survived here by the fruit of their land. Whoever had a larger property could also live better. But whoever had a small property and perhaps a large family on top of it, often had to, as they used to say, eat with small bites. If the

harvest was good and the farmer had luck with his pigs and livestock, he could afford more. But if there was a poor harvest, and disease among the livestock, then many had a long "przednowek", a word which in Polish originated from "before the new". This meant the time before the harvest, when the old bread and potatoes had been eaten before the new had arrived. In such cases, if the farmer had some stocks of grain and some money, he could survive this time well. But for those who had no stock, it was often not very good.

The people of Marianowo lived, as already stated, off the fruit of their land. Every landowner therefore strove to grow enough, so that the harvest would be sufficient for the survival of himself and his family. In addition, there had to be enough of a harvest that every year at least one piglet could be fed and sold. It is common knowledge that a person cannot live from just bread, potatoes, milk and meat. Sugar, salt, fuel for lamps and other purposes, were necessities that one could not do without. And although flax was grown, cut, spun and made into canvas, or often even shirts and pants, one needed something more to complete one's wardrobe. How good it was then when some bushels of rye, hay or straw, or butter and eggs could be sold in order to have money for urgent purchases. Taxes also needed to be paid; this was often the farmer's biggest worry. All in all though, the farmers in Marianowo did not suffer greatly.

The farmers in Marianowo and the surrounding area had a good relationship with their Polish neighbors. In Marianowo itself, the Germans rarely came in contact with Poles, since this was a purely German village. They only needed to use Polish when they went to the municipal office in Dlugosiodlo, or the rare times when they had official business in the county town of Ostrow-Mazowiecki. Even in the neighbouring villages where German and Polish farmers had to live side by side, the Germans understood how to train their children so that their Polish comrades would follow them. I knew very many Poles that mastered the German dialect and happily used it. And when a Pole met a German who spoke poor Polish, be it on the road or in town, he still treated him respectfully as a person. This situation only changed after the First World War because then the German children had to learn Polish in school instead of Russian. In the older generations though, there were many German men who spoke very poor Polish, and older women who hardly understood any of it.

The relationship between the farmers and the Jews was also exceptionally good. Although there were only a few Jewish families, the ones that had been born and raised in Marianowo spoke excellent Low German. The Germans, however, found it difficult to learn their Yiddish. When the German farmers travelled to the Dlugosiodla or Wyschkow markets, they met more Jews than Poles. The shops were mostly in Jewish hands. Artisans such as tailors, shoemakers, plumbers and most others were Jews. The Jews in the small towns only spoke their own language, so if one wanted to buy something from them one first had to address them in Yiddish or Polish. Thus the German farmer had no choice but to learn the Polish or Jewish language.

Although the relationship between the Germans, Poles and Jews could be considered quite good, there were certain boundaries between these three different peoples. They treated each other as fellow human beings, yet each knew that a gap existed between them that was not easily bridged. The German farmer conversed with his Polish neighbour just as he did with the Jew. All were eager to assist each other, in words and deeds, in the struggle to survive. Reciprocal contracts were signed, and if someone happened to make a profit the other party was not jealous. But this mutual aid never degenerated into real social intercourse. In the entire one hundred year history of the village of Marianowo, I cannot think of a single instance where a Pole married a German woman, or a German married a Polish woman. It was not inconceivable, however, that a Jew could have married a German woman, or vice versa, a German man could have taken a Jewish woman as his wife. These were matters that neither Germans, Poles or Jews considered.

The German farmer in the Narew area of Poland never concerned himself with politics. He abided by the principle: Give God what is God's, and the state what is the state's. His thoughts were centered on how to harvest enough to feed his family and to pay his taxes. If he achieved this he was happy. This was best proven in the 1860's when the Poles rose up against their Russian oppressors and tried to drive them from their land. The German farmers did not participate in these dalliances, as they called them, and avoided taking sides by helping one party or betraying the other. In most cases, this attitude was recognized by both sides, and the Polish "Labusen" (a Polish word meaning lobe - a naughty, bad boy - as the rebels were called by the Germans) did not attack and plunder German farms. Even "The Russians", as the Russian military was called, as well as the Cossacks, considered the

Germans neutral. Isolated atrocities could not be avoided. Now and then a German farmer made the acquaintance of the Russian "Nagajka", a kind of whip, and the Labusen also helped themselves to the occasional pork or beef from a German farm. As previously stated though, these were isolated incidents and the majority was not thereby tainted.

However, when the First World War broke out, the German farmers in and around Marianowo became conscious of the fact that they lived in a foreign land. I remember well how the mayor of Neetz came to my father saying that war had broken out between Russia and Germany, and delivering an order that my father should participate in guarding the telegraph lines that came from Ostrow-Mazowiecki and passed on the north side of Marianowo. My father did not take the war situation very seriously until he remembered a saying by his grandfather, who was said to have said (in low German), "Wänn, seck dej 'Jopt twoje match' me däm 'Donnerwetter' packe wahre, dänn waht ä seehe groot Kriegh utbrike!" ("When the [Russian expletive] and the [German expletive] get hold of each other, then a very big war will break out.")

In the first months of the war, everything followed its normal course. At the beginning of the month of January 1915, however, things became more serious. All men who had reached the age of sixteen years or older, were ordered to report to Ostrow-Mazowiecki, and from there they were shipped to Bialystok where they were initially housed in a prison. After three weeks they carried on and eventually ended up in the Ufa area of Siberia. The women, children, mayor and a few very sick men were left behind. But when, in February 1915, the thunder of the guns approached the Narew area, even the women and children had to get ready to leave. The order was given just a few days before their departure, so they quickly tried to sell their cattle and many of their smaller possessions. Credit must be given to the Polish neighbours who, although they knew that the German women could not take anything with them, still paid reasonably well for the goods that were sold. But house and farm, as well as the acquired land ownership stayed behind. It is not hard to imagine how difficult it must have been for some women to leave everything behind. I remember very well how my mother had all her children on the wagon, but she herself went back into the house. After a few minutes, I crawled down off the wagon and went after her. Through the door that was open just a crack, I saw a picture that I will never forget. In the middle of the large room I saw my mother on her knees praying. When she became aware of me, she

soon got up. I saw the tears in her eyes and asked, “Mother, why are you crying?” upon which she answered, “I’m not crying anymore.” In answer to my further questions as to why we had to leave she answered in a trembling voice, “Because we are German!” I did not understand the meaning of these words, but I thought about them many times afterwards.

After two days travel by horse cart the whole convoy was loaded on freight cars, and those inside were off to Russia. In Zarizin, later called Stalingrad, a number of wagons were unloaded and the passengers were housed in the city and in the surrounding villages. The rest were unloaded in Wolsk, a city on the right bank of the Volga and we spent a few days in the waiting room of the large railway station. One morning, a number of one-horse sleighs pulled up, and we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the men wrapped up in furs were German. They came from five villages on the left bank of the Volga to help accommodate their German sisters and their children. One farmer by the name of Klein, came to my mother and asked how large her family was. As she listed her children he said in his Schwabish accent, “That’s the right family for me.”

In a short time, the sparse luggage was loaded and the sleigh ride was under way. It can and must be said that the Germans from the Narew area were treated and taken care of by the Volga Germans with the greatest hospitality. In the summer of 1915, the men were allowed to come from Siberia to be with their families. And since the Russian government paid some support, and the local farmers provided opportunity for work, no one suffered any hardship during the full three years that we spent there. However, the pain of having lost one’s property was great and some of the many who found their final resting place on the Volga might have lived longer had they not been torn from their peaceful existence.

At the beginning of 1918, suddenly the rumor spread that the Germans from Poland could return to their homes. Immediately, large and small groups got together and began heading home. The group that my father joined was comprised of fourteen families, and the journey from the German Volga village of Baratajewka, commonly known in Schwabish as “Peddinger”, to Marianowo in the Narew area took sixteen days. But now the hardship began. The land that the German occupational government had leased to the Polish peasants was exhausted and barely cultivated. And since neither horse nor wagon, neither

cow nor other livestock was available, it was not easy for the residents of Marianowo to get through the first post-war years. But the tenacious will of the German countryman overcame all obstacles, and after a few years many a Polish peasant perhaps already looked with envy at his German neighbors, because now they were almost doing better than before the war.

Once again, the German people in and around Marianowo were permitted to live for two decades on their inherited or acquired soil and property. And although and independent Poland now existed, nothing had changed for the German farmer. They had the same rights and duties as any other citizen of the land. Although it did not happen often that a young Marianowo farmer's son was drafted into the Polish military, if one did receive a draft notice, he enlisted willingly, in fact, happily. The relationship with Polish neighbors was the same as before the war. What more could the German farmer ask for? He could cultivate his soil as he pleased, and if he paid his taxes on time he was the uncrowned king of his property. To give the esteemed reader a better overview of the village of Marianowo, I have tried to draw a sketch in which every farm, other buildings and facilities are shown. However, I must warn that the sketch is drawn from memory and the accuracy cannot be guaranteed. And since I left my hometown after my marriage in 1927 to live in the neighboring village Grodziczno, my memory of the village is frozen around the year 1925. If someone knew Marianowo shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and should be of the opinion that I forgot to record this or that yard, I must say that, although I am familiar with some of the changes that took place in the final years, I remember best how things were when I still lived at home with my parents. I will now explain the sketch, referencing its numbers.

1) German elementary school with spacious apartment for the teacher who was cantor of the congregation at the same time.

2) Started in 1925 and inaugurated in 1929, the Marianowo community church. In 1939, a tower with a bell was added.

3) The house belonging to the Jew Lejbke Rosenberg, that in the early days served as a tavern.

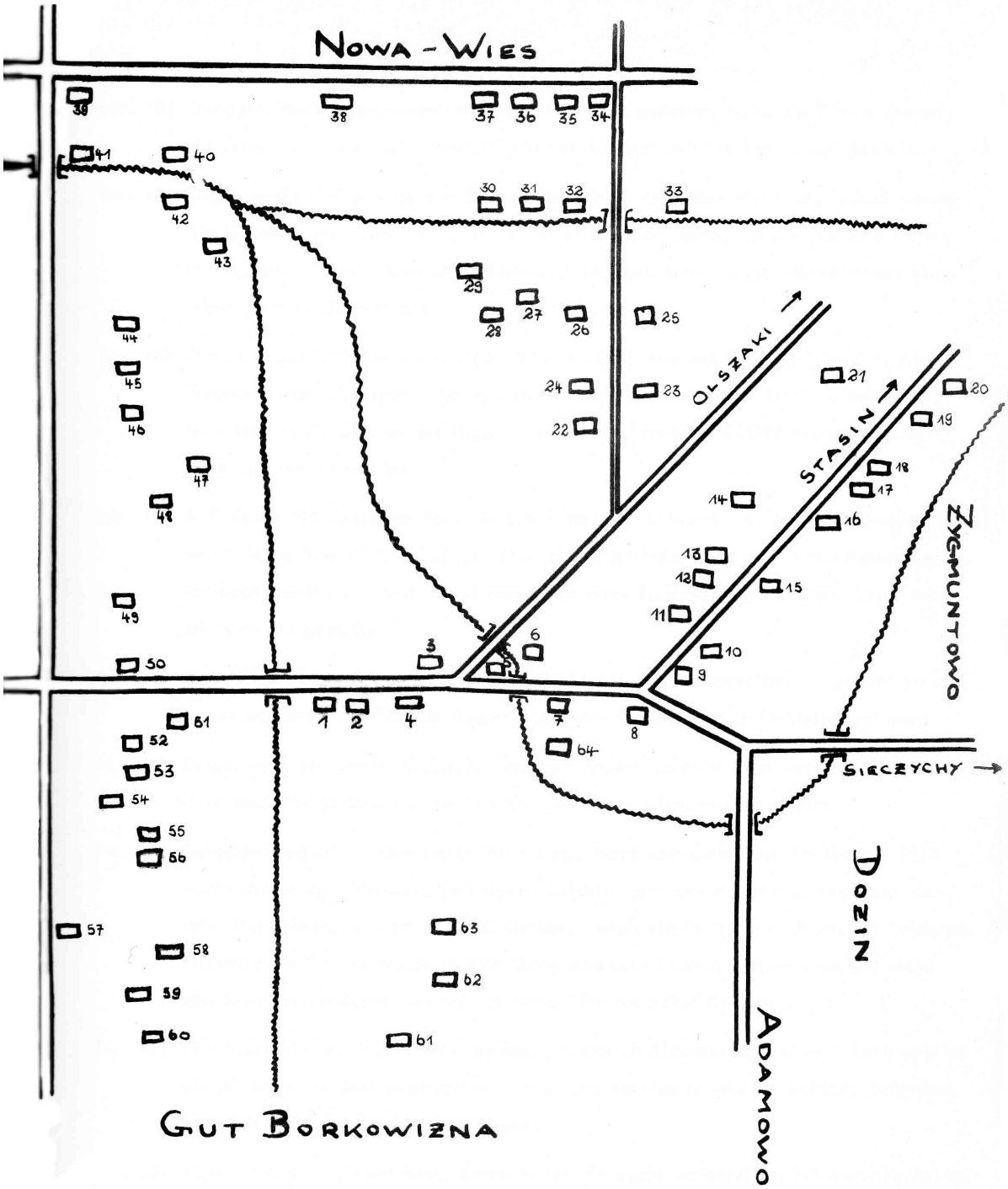
4) The farm belonging to the young farmer Sigismund Koppen and his wife Leokadia. This farm was started in 1928, but since I had a particularly good relationship with the family I have drawn him on the sketch. Koppen was classified as missing in action in Russia, but his wife lives in Waldorf/Hesse.

5) Here was the small estate of the farmer Gustav Ristau. He later sold his country place to two different farmers, and the buildings were demolished. He died during the war in the district of Schröttersburg, but his wife lives in Preetz-Holstein.

6) This was the farm belonging to my father Christian Guderian. I was born and spent my youth on that farm. Despite the fact that my father had learned to be a blacksmith, he decided to focus on agriculture. He died in 1927, but his descendants are scattered around the globe, not just in Germany, but also in Canada and South Africa.

7) This house and six morgen of land belonged to my father. After 1924, the house was occupied by my older brother Johann. He died in 1956 in Bad Oldesloe and his family emigrated to Canada.

8) This was just a small farm that belonged to the farmer Friedrich Ebelt. Old “Ohm Fried”, as the villagers called him was a real joker, who when he tried to return to his land in 1945, is said to have been murdered by the Poles.


NOWA - WIES
OLSZAKI
STASIN
ZYGMUNTOWO
SIECZYCHY
DOZIN
ADAMOWO
GUT BORKOWIZNA

9) The son of the aforementioned, also named Friedrich, married the widow of the late Paul Gert. This family now lives in Schleswig/Holstein.

10) This large farm belonged to the farmer Karl Gert. In the First World War, the buildings were burnt down and it took a number of years before the farm looked like it had before again. Karl Gert died in Marianow, but his descendants now live in Germany.

11) This property owned by Karl Neumann had once belonged to the estate of Karl Gert. When Neumann died the farm was taken over by his son in law Adolf Ernst. However, he sold the estate to his neighbors in the early thirties and emigrated to Canada.

12) The farmer August Rimatzki lived on this estate. He was called “Little August” by the villagers. As I heard it, he was taken by the Russians and died on the way to Russia. His wife died in Preetz.

13) This farmer was also named August Rimatzki. He was the brother in law of the aforementioned and was called “Big August”. He is said to live in Germany now.

14) This was an ancient building that belonged to the farmer Ephroim Gert. He himself died in Marianowo, but his descendants live in Germany.

15) World War One soldier’s cemetery. After the fighting in the summer of 1915, the fallen soldiers in the area were collected and buried here. The cemetery includes around 200 graves of which one third are German soldiers. While the graves of the fallen Germans were provided with names, the Russian crosses simply had the inscription, “A Russian warrior.”

16) The farmer Friedrich Rimatzki could only call a small farm his own. He too died a number of years before the Second World War, and where his descendants can be found I cannot say for certain.

17) The farmer on this property was named Martin Krüger. He was taken from his farm by horse and wagon in the year 1920 during the Bolshevik war and died somewhere in east Poland. His widow and daughter are said to live in the Gifhorn/Hannover area.

18) This was only a small property, owned the farmer Karl Krüger, but the buildings were in good condition. Since Krüger was small of stature, and there were several farmers that name, he was called “dej klehe Zwar”, meaning “little dwarf”. I know nothing of his fate.

19) The farmer Karl Ristau’s property was only ten morgen. He died a number of years before World War Two broke out. Some of his descendants live in Germany, and others in Canada.

20) The last property in this row of houses belonged to the farmer Rudolf Rimatzki. Because of his infirmity, he was referred to as “the mute Rimatzki”. He died during the war in the Schröttersburg area, and his wife died in East Germany.

21) Lonely and as if abandoned lay the property of Karl Rimatzki on a wide open field. It was only a small estate, and I only passed it a few times. Rimatzki died in Marianowo and I know nothing of the fate of his wife.

22) This large and well-appointed estate belonged to the farmer Adolf Markwardt. He had inherited the property from his father and later enlarged it. He himself died in Marianowo, but his wife lives with her only daughter, Emilie, in Groβ-Gerau/Hessen.

23) This very nice property belonged to the farmer Adolf Koppen. However, the farm was divided into several separated areas, but they were all easy to access from his house. He himself died in Marianowo, but his wife died in Preetz/Holstein.

24) This house belonged to the farmer Adolf Markwardt. It was occupied for a long time by a Jewish family and was later torn down. The house and barn that replaced it was given by Markwardt to his son Gustav. In 1945, Gustav was sentenced to ten years in prison that he was not able to survive, and was the cause of his death. His wife, however, lives in the Bremen area.

25) The farmer Michael Schattschneider owned only eight morgen of land. The house was also not large, but the property was kept in the best condition. He and his wife both died in Marianowo.

26) It was just a small house that stood here. It was owned by the farmer Adolf Markwardt and was occupied by the laborer Michael Ristau who died before the outbreak of the Second World War.

27) Gustav Krüger call this nice, if not large, property his own. Since there were many farmers with this name, this one was called “Big Gustav”. He died during the war in the Schröttersburg area, and his wife died in Preetz/Holstein after the war.

28) Johann Neetz was one of the largest landowners amongst the village farmers. Since he died childless, the largest part of his estate went to his step son, Adolf Ernst. The rest was divided amongst the relatives of the deceased.

29) This property also once belonged to Johann Neetz, but was later sold to the farmer Friedrich Schmidt. He tore down the ancient building that stood there and replaced it with a new one. His fate is unknown to me.

30) This house that was occupied by a Jewish family was owned by the farmer Johann Neetz.

31) The farmer August Teez lived here. He owned only eight morgen of land with a small residence and neighboring barn and stable. August Teez died approximately ten years before the outbreak of the Second World War, and I do not know what became of his wife.

32) This is the property that my grandfather, Wilhelm Gottlieb Guderian, had acquired. When he died in 1920, his heirs sold the property to Edmund Müller who now lives in Tötensen, Kries Hamburg-Harburg.

33) The farmer Gustav Reschke also owned a nice, large property. This property was located close to the irrigation ditch and was kept in good order. Gustav Reschke is said to have died during the flight in 1945.

34) The small property belonging the farmer Johann Machel lay on the edge of the forest. He and his wife died in Marianowo, while his son Sigismund lives in Schleswig-Holstein.

35) The only property in Marianowo that was occupied by a Pole belonged to Jan Dolecki.

36) The Zitlau family also owned just a small property. Both husband and wife died in Marianowo, while their only son, Hermann, lives near Kiel.

37) This house and the eight morgen of land on which it sat belonged to the farmer Adolf Markwardt. He purchased the land sometime in the last years and then rented the house to the shoemaker Wilhelm Heymann.

38) This beautiful, large property belonged to the farmer Paul Rinas. The building was from the old days and looked quite stately. Paul Rinas died in Marianowo, but his wife is still living in Germany.

39) The ancient, elongated building that stood here commemorated the former tavern. Now it was occupied by a Jewish family.

40) The farmer Karl Machel also owned a large property. His land was divided into a number of pieces, that were not far apart. He and his wife died in the Schröttersburg district.

41) Here the village forge once stood. Now only a few stones and a cherry tree were evidence that a house once stood there.

42) My godmother Otilie Krüger owned only a small house and a few morgen of land. Her husband had emigrated to America and had not returned. She died at her daughter's in Adamowo.

43) This house belonged to the previously mentioned Karl Machel and was occupied by a Jewish family.

44) This was a large property that belonged to the farmer Karl Rinas, but the buildings were in a state of disrepair. Otherwise things were well with him. This family is said to be living in East Germany.

45) The land, which belonged to this farm had once been owned by the Old Rinas. Now the sister of Karl Rinas who had married the farmer Eduard Look lived there. They sold the farm and moved to Blendowo.

46) David Zierat lived on this not large, but nice farm. He died in Marianowo, while his wife is said to live near Bremen.

47) The farmer Rudolf Barke owned just a little land and his buildings were not large either. When he died shortly after the First World War, his son in law Karl Ziemer bought out the other heirs and took over the farm.

48) This equally small farm belonged to the widow of my great uncle, August Guderian. I am not certain if she is still alive.

49) Johann Balkau also had just a small farm, however, he made a good living. I do not know what became of him and his family.

50) Next to the road that led to Grodziczno lay the newly-built estate of Gustav Krüger. He was called “Little Gustav”. He died at an early age in Marianowo, but his wife lives in Germany.

51) In this ancient building lived the two brothers of the aforementioned Gustav Krüger. Friedrich was the older of the two and worked the farm, while the younger brother, Rudolf, lived there. Rudolf was supposed to take over the house after Friedrich built a new estate, and this eventually happened.

52) The farmer Jakob Witzke just owned a small amount of land and a small house, but made a good living. I don’t know what happened to this family.

53) Samuel Teichel was the son in law of Jakob Witzke and built a small house on this property. This family is said to live in East Germany.

54) This was just a small house occupied by the Jewish family Ratschkowski, who supported themselves by selling butter and poultry. Later, this house was torn down.

55) This newly built estate belonged to the farmer Peter Balkau. He owned little land, but made a good living. He is said to live in Germany now.

56) Near the property of Peter Balkau, lay that of Gottlieb Ossowski. He was mayor of Marianowo for a long time. I do not know what became of him.

57) This is where the Marianowo cemetery was. I knew many people who found their final resting place here, and I think of them often. How I would love to return to that place one more time to see if this patch of earth was desecrated.

58) The farmer Friedrich Rinas owned a large property. His buildings were new and made the estate look good. Both husband and wife died in Marianowo.

59) The property of the farmer Adolf Müller also looked very nice. He later sold it to his brother in law Gustav Ebelt who erected a hall in which the Sisters of the "Christian Endeavor" community held ecclesiastic meetings.

60) The farmer Karl Ristau, who because of his large stature was called "Big Karl", owned a large, beautiful property. Later, he divided the land amongst his children and built a house on land in the village of Grodziczno. He died in the district of Graudenz.

61) The farmer Friedrich Reschke owned a mid-sized property. When his wife died, he divided the land amongst his children, while he himself moved to another area of Poland where he remarried.

62) Ludwig Schulz owned just a little land. And since it was not enough to sustain him, he worked as a builder. He built many of the buildings in the area – even the Marianowo church.

63) The farmer Friedrich Köppen also had a small estate. But because the buildings were new they looked very nice. He and his wife both died in Marianowo.

64) Number-wise, this was the last property of the village, although it was in the middle of town. It belonged to the farmer Sigismund Rinas. The building was built in the old style and housed all three parts under one roof. This family is said to live in East Germany.

This is more or less what it looked like in Marianowo in the mid-twenties. Although I did visit later from time to time, I cannot really picture what the village looked like shortly

before the war. However, when all the German farmers had already left Marianowo, I was granted one more chance to go there. I went past my father's house without entering, as it was already occupied by Poles. The church and school were locked and stood deserted. On the west side of the village a number of farms had been burnt down, and I visited the cemetery for the last time. I stood in front of the graves of my father, my grandfather and my two infant children and said a silent prayer. Then I sadly headed towards the district of Pultusk.

I will try to describe and record the details of how and when the German farmers of Marianowo left in the last section of this report.

Church and School

As the first German farmer and laborer pioneers arrived in the Narew district, the area looked quite sad. It was not just the wilderness that they found themselves in, or worrying about their daily bread, or the thought of not having a roof over their heads, but their spiritual needs also weighed on them heavily. In those days people still valued the word of God and believed they could not live without it. One Sunday without a church service was like a heavily-clouded harvest day to them. So their next priority, after their daily bread, was to build a school house in which a schoolmaster could conduct a church service and also teach their children to read and write.

However, land for a church and school had not been provided for in every village. Hence, the smaller villages joined the larger ones in forming a cantor's parish. In the village that was chosen to be regarded as "Kantorat", a large building was erected and furnished with a prayer hall, a school room and the residence of the schoolmaster.

The farmers all pitched in to build the school house. Everyone contributed as much as he could. Everything was done by the cantor parishioners themselves. The trees on the school property were felled, the branches processed and the lumber brought in. No one refused to help. The construction was completed very quickly. They worked from early to late, until the building was finished and stood ready for use.

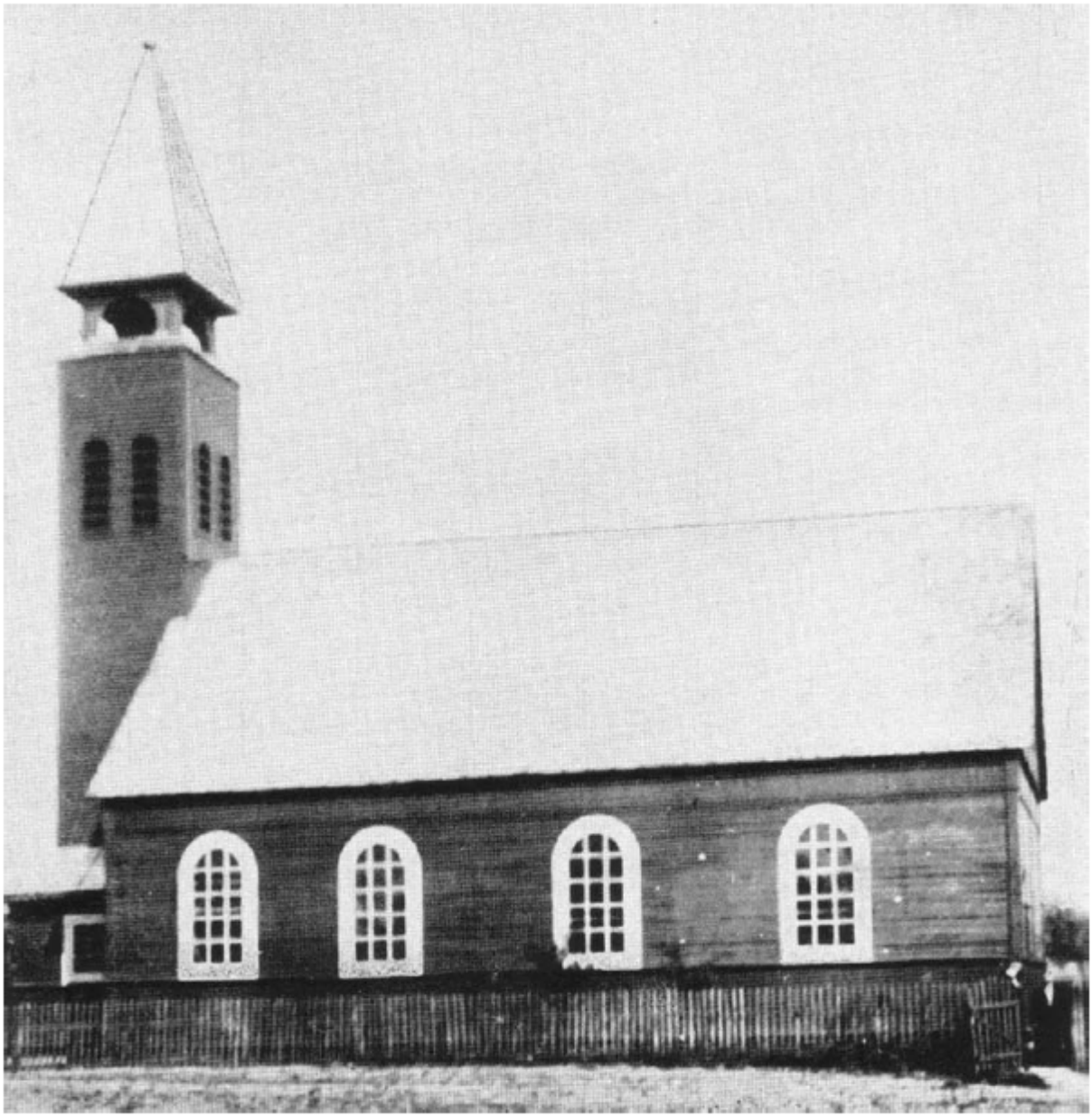
Once the building was standing and had been inaugurated, the schoolmaster moved in. His duty was now first of all to conduct a reading service on Fridays and Sundays, to baptize newborns, and to bury the dead. It was also his duty to teach the children how to read and write, and to prepare them for confirmation. He was considered to be the smartest man in the village and also helped the mayor calculate the taxes. He was also there to give advice to anyone who needed it and to help those who were unable to write, because in those days it was not unusual for one of the farmers or laborers to be illiterate.

Confirmation in Marianowo – 1935
With Pastor Sigmund Lang
(Behind him from right to left, church leader Paul Rienas,
evangelist Rudolf Reichwald from Nury, church leader August Rimatzki)

Brass Band from Marianowo 1939
With Pastor Matz and the band leader Edmund Müller (third from the right)

Johann Guderian
The last mayor of Marianowo

Friedrich Guderian
Author of the Chronicle of Marianowo



Protestant Church in Marianowo
Built 1925 to 1929

As payment for this service he received the usufruct of the tax-free school and church. Eventually the cantor's parishes decided to give the cantor, as he was later called, a dividend. This consisted of a number of pounds of grain calculated in proportion to the amount of land owned by the propertied farmers. The dividend was paid each fall or winter and was determined over the course of time to be the best method of payment for the cantor, who was perhaps better described as a schoolmaster.

The job of schoolmaster was not an easy one. He always needed to be available for the members of his parish. However, the church services were only held on Sundays and Fridays. The education of the children was also not ideal; it started in late fall and ended as soon as the land needed to be worked in the spring. But there were many other duties. If someone had business with the landowner or with some government office, the schoolmaster went along, since he had mastered the language of the land, which was not the case with all the others. If a police officer came to the village he first went to the schoolmaster because he was the only one in the village with whom he could converse. Often, he had to take a trip to the district's main city, which would demand sacrificing his entire day.

At that time, the civil status records were completed only by the Catholic clergy. The schoolmaster was not authorized to make entries. When he baptized a child or buried the dead he had to go to the clergyman who was responsible for his district, and get the registration from him.

He needed to work the land that the parish had entrusted him with himself. It was hardly worth having a horse. The law of the land required that he help the farmers, and they in turn made it their duty to take turns lending their horse to him, but he often had to walk from one to the other until he could convince someone to lend him a horse. Most of the time, the farmers were anxious to work their own land before thinking about the schoolmaster.

It was particularly bad during harvest time. If the weather was good then even the schoolmaster was able to get his grain in. But if there was rain, the farmers first looked after getting their own grain in and the schoolmaster had to fend for himself. And so it

often happened that the schoolmaster's grain was still being soaked by rain in the fields when all of the farmer's already had theirs in their barns.

The mental and spiritual welfare of the German population in Poland was still not satisfied, once they had built a school and had employed a schoolmaster. Although he held the reader worship and taught the children, and he also baptized the newborns and buried the dead, this was all just a stopgap. The people need to have a pastor in their community from time to time; everyone wanted to go to Holy Communion at least once per year. Their children of confirmation age, who had been prepared by the schoolmaster, had to be confirmed. There were also young people wanting to get married, waiting for the wedding ceremony. In the long run, they did not want their vital records to always be processed by the Catholic clergy. Therefore, the German Protestant farmers had to think of a way to get a pastor in their vicinity.

In the early days, as the German farmers, craftsmen and merchants settled in Poland, there were few pastors that had come with them. These few traveled from one place to another, and wherever they went they were warmly welcomed and lovingly received. The pastor stayed a number of days in such a place and conducted whatever religious activities might be required. He held a church service, complete with Holy Communion, conducted baptisms and marriages, confirmed the children whom the schoolmaster had prepared, and was otherwise available to the people for advice and assistance.

However, this condition was not satisfactory to the people in the long run. Soon, they expressed their wish to unite churches and appoint their own pastor. Thus, in time, small neighboring villages united and established parishes.

The duty of the pastors was now to alternately visit their cantor parishes, holding church services, performing official duties, and recording civil status, because as soon as a parish was founded and a pastor was employed, the government immediately appointed him as the registrar. If the pastor now conducted a wedding or other official act, he was also entitled to make the corresponding entries, which he was not allowed to do while he was a traveling pastor.

The cantors, or schoolmasters as they were commonly referred to, now had it easier. When they baptized a child or buried someone, they only had to make the appropriate notes and then collect these to send to the pastor once per month. The pastor then updated the civil status books. The schoolmaster was thus spared the many trips to the catholic clergy.

In the city itself, where the mother-church, as it was called by the cantor's parish, was, there were usually craftsmen and merchants who then, together with the neighboring farmers formed the mother church. The regulations required that five or six cantor's parishes attach themselves to a mother church. This church was not close, but was often thirty to forty or more kilometers away, but that did not deter the rural population from visiting the mother church frequently. For this reason too, arrangements were made for the pastor of the city church to hold the main service on the first Sunday of every month and to alternately visit the individual cantor's churches the rest of the time. On the Sundays when the pastor was outside of the mother church, that church's cantor would also just conduct a reading service.

The founding of the cantor's parish of Marianowo roughly coincided with the founding of the church congregation of Pultusk. The neighboring cantor's parishes of Nury and Wincentowo, as well as those of Nowa-Wies by Sierock and Seferinowo by Makow, belonged to the church congregation of Pultusk that was founded in 1844. In addition, another branch was established in the district Nasielsk, which also consisted of some cantor's churches, managed by the church in Pultusk.

The cantor's parish in Marianowo included all farmers and laborers who affiliated themselves with the Evangelical Lutheran Augsburg Confession. In addition to Marianowo, these included the villages of Adamowo, Doyin, Nowa-Wies, Stasin, Zygmuntowo, and also the dispersed German residences from Olszaki and the approximately six kilometer distant village of Grondy-Schlacheckie. Approximately half of the cantor's parish lived in Marianowo itself, while the other half lived in the neighboring villages. When now I think back and count the families, I arrive at around one hundred and twenty. Considering that there were an average of four people per family, then Marianowo's cantor parish amounted to around five hundred souls.

I do not know who the first pastor was that came to Pultusk and took over the cantor's parish. However, as I came across many documents signed by pastor Dzmonwski, I concluded that he must have held office a long time in Pultusk while also looking after the Marianowo cantor.

A number of years before the outbreak of the First World War, the parish of Pastor Falzmann was taken over. He shared the Russian exile experience with his parishioners, and I remember well that Pastor Falzmann continued to hold church services in Marianowo after the war.

When Pastor Falzmann left the parish in Pultusk to go to Zgierz, Pastor Erich Buse arrived. Although Pastor Buse only officiated one year in Pultusk and hence only took care of the cantorship of Marianowo for a short time, I remember him well because he confirmed me in 1922.

I don't believe I am mistaken when I say that Pastor Robert Nitschamann, who meanwhile took over the parish in Pultusk, held his first church service in Marianowo in January 1923. My wife and I were married by Pastor Nitschmann in the year 1927, and I believe that he left the Pultusk parish in 1930.

Pastor Siegmund Lang also officiated in Plultusk for a number of years and therefore also took care of the cantorship of Marianowo. Although, I remember well the circumstances under which Pastor Lang left the congregation, I cannot say for certain exactly when that was. I hope that someone else who knew the circumstances better than I might leave a more detailed report for posterity.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War One, I believe, Pastor Matz came to Pultusk and also took over the cantorship of Marianowo. I do not know when Pastor Matz left the parish in Pultusk, however, he was considered to be the last pastor to have taken care of the congregation in Marianowo. Incidentally, I know that after the Second World War, Pastor Matz supported and was involved in the Polish Evangelical Lutheran congregation in England.

I don't know when the first wooden chapel was built in Marianowo, but I remember well how it burnt down on Whit Tuesday in the year 1914. In the morning, a worship service was

held. As was the usual custom in the Narew area, main festivals were celebrated for three days. During or after the service a baptism was to have been performed. The participants, however, had been delayed, so the cantor had extinguished the candles on the altar after the christening ceremony. It is possible that a spark fell on the altar cloth. In any case, in less than two hours the building stood in bright flames. Although people rushed to the scene of the accident from all directions, it was too late to rescue anything. Only with great effort were they able to prevent the neighboring schoolhouse from burning as well.

So for the next fifteen years the worship services were held in the spacious school room. On normal Sundays the classroom was large enough to hold all who attended the worship service. However, on the high holidays, or when the pastor held the main service, the room was over-filled and people often had to stand in front of open windows to hear the word of God. For this reason, as soon as the congregation got over the shock of the First World War, they began to think about building a new church. Already in the year 1925, in a congregational meeting, they resolved to build a new prayer hall. The funds required for this purpose were to be raised by a family tax, calculated in proportion to the size of property. The church members acquired construction material and performed the necessary labor on a voluntary basis.

The church members volunteered to take care of the delivery of the construction material and the completion of all work. The church members of the cantor's parish of Marianowo still needed to meet a number of times to discuss additional taxation before the building stood ready to serve its purpose.

The inauguration of the newly built prayer hall was held on July 24, 1929. It was an impressive ceremony, which four pastors attended. The Marianowo congregation's brass band joined with that of the cantor's parish of Nury, and both choirs contributed to the beautification of the celebration.

Now the parish had a room again in which worship services could be held exclusively – not needing to be shared for another purpose. Shortly before the outbreak of World War Two, a steeple was added to the prayer hall, but I was not present as the congregation was called to worship by the new church bell on July 24, 1939. However, the congregation did not enjoy the sound of the new bell for long, because three months later the German farmers of

Marianowo and its surroundings were evacuated and settled in the district of Schröttersburg – formerly known as Plock, in Polish.

The cantor's parish of Marianowo already established a brass band in the year 1907, led by the farmer Adolf Müller. The brass band took on the task of enhancing the organ music, which accompanied the singing of worship songs. The members of the choir were also pleased to respond to requests to make a funeral service more impressive through their participation. That the band did not resume its activities in the early postwar years, was probably due to the fact that many instruments were lost, and the farmers had to recover from the horrors of the war before they could begin thinking of replacing them.

Since there was no organ in the schoolroom, and songs had to be struck up and sung without such musical accompaniment, the request for a brass band grew ever louder. In spring of 1928 it was finally happened that a group of young men declared they were ready to acquire instruments and to start a new band.

This time, it was Edmund Müller, a brother of the previously mentioned Adolf Müller, who gathered the young men around him and assumed the leadership of the chorus. The congregation rejoiced greatly when the brass band appeared for the first time in the school room. And since the organ was not initially part of the newly built prayer hall, the congregation of Marianowo greatly welcomed the brass band, which continued its activity until the end.

The first school house in Marianowo was built shortly after the founding of the cantor's parish. Unfortunately, I cannot remember what this building looked like. I have a weak recollection of how this long-dilapidated building was demolished and a new house put in its place. The outside of the school house was made of round logs, and offered a beautiful picture in its surroundings. Next to the spacious class room, it held multi-room, living quarters for the teacher. The stable and barn stood close by, and the large school yard was surrounded by a wooden fence – providing a good playground for the romping children at recess.

From time immemorial it had been the custom in the cantor's parish of Marianowo that the serving school teacher at the same time held the office of cantor. From the beginning, the

community had been given the right to ensure that only schoolteachers of German nationality and Protestant faith were employed. Not even the Polish government – even in the end – interfered with this right; they never tried to send a Polish teacher to Marianowo. Marianowo was at that time one of the few places in Poland, until the outbreak of the Second World War, which had a school with German as the language of instruction.

It should be noted that I have not succeeded in determining who the first schoolmasters of the community were. In a short discussion with the last leader of Marianowo's brass band, Mr. Edmund Müller, who was considerably older than me, he explained that a certain Mr. Hirsch held the office of schoolmaster for many years and gave it up around 1885. But where this schoolmaster ended up after he had given up his office in Marianowo, Mr. Müller could not remember.

According to statements made by Mr. Miller, in 1885 a certain Emil Tonn came to Marianowo to assume the office of schoolmaster. He conducted his duties to the great satisfaction of the community until 1892, at which point he briefly left Marianowo. He had probably hoped to find a better position somewhere else. However, since the Marianowo community were not pleased with his successor, a certain Mr. Koch, and Emil Tonn had not found what he was looking for in his new position, it happened that Mr. Koch was removed from his office and Mr. Emil Tonn was called back to Marianowo. Mr. Emil Tonn then held filled this position until his death in 1902 and was buried in the Marianowo cemetery.

Shortly after Emil Tonn's death, Mr. Ernst Herbsteit came to Marianowo. As Mr. Müller recalled, this teacher only worked in Marianowo a short time, and after a little less than three years, in the year 1905, left the school.

After a short break, a certain Mr. Weiβ came to Marianowo. He served in the position of teacher and cantor around seven years and died here in 1912. The remodelling of the schoolhouse happened during his tenure. Incidentally, I was said to have been baptized by him.

Then Mr. Trinks came as teacher and cantor to Marianowo. This is the first schoolmaster of this area that I have any memories of. He participated in the evacuation to Russia in the year 1915 and returned here in November 1918. But he was not permitted to work in

Marianowo for long. Shortly after Christmas he became sick, and if I remember correctly, he died in March of 1919. He too was buried in the Marianowo cemetery.

In the fall of 1919 Mr. Ludwig Kurth came to Marianowo. He was an older gentleman who may have been a good schoolmaster in his earlier years. However, in Marianowo, where for a long time the school had already been monitored by the school authorities and the teachers were state certified, he could not manage and had to leave school after two years.

Mr. Edmund Kohls followed him. He was a very young man. At just eighteen years of age, after a three year term in the Soldau teacher's training college – Dzialdowo in Polish – he took over the teacher's position in Marianowo. The community was very happy with him, and if I am permitted to add a personal note, I can say that I can thank schoolmaster Kohls that I became an office worker.

When Mr. Edmund Kohls left Marianowo in 1924, Mr. Rudolf Zimmerman came here. Mr. Zimmerman was only a cantor and could therefore not survive long in Marianowo. And although the community was very happy with him as a cantor, he was relieved of his teaching duties by the Ostrow-Mazowiecki school board in March 1928.

Now a certain Mr. Kuschlik came to Marianowo as teacher. Although he claimed to be of German descent and protestant faith, his German was so poor that he was unable to hold a church service in any useful way. And after members of the congregation approached the district school inspector a few times, Mr. Kuschlik was relieved of his position as teacher in Marianowo by the school board in autumn of 1928.

Mr. Edward Pelzer followed him. He was a pupil of the German teacher's college in Lodz, and the community and the church members were very satisfied with his work as a teacher and as a cantor. The inauguration of the new prayer hall and the founding of the second brass band happened during his tenure. After a number of years, however, there were disagreements between the cantor and the congregation, and Mr. Pelzer therefore indicated his preference to leave the Marianowo congregation in the fall of 1935.

The last teacher and cantor of Marianowo was Mr. Eduard Sonnenberg. He too was a pupil of the Soldau teacher's college and arrived here in the fall of 1935. The community was very pleased with how he conducted his duties. Even as cantor, he tried to steer the community

that had been entrusted to him on the right path – and to keep them on that path. He was a member of the Christian Endeavour movement and a zealous contributor to meetings that were held for ecclesiastical reasons.

As I learned, Mr. Edward Sonnenberg was one of the last Germans from Marianowo and the surrounding areas to leave this place. But when I was in Marianowo on December 24, 1939, the church and school stood there - deserted. I stood between the two buildings and looked sadly from one to the other. And after I had also viewed the cemetery, I travelled on to Pultusk and attended a Christmas service conducted by an army Chaplin.

Religious Customs and Traditions

The German farmers of Marianowo and the surrounding area all belonged to the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland. The saying, "Co ewangelik to niemiec, ale co katolik to i polak!" (or in German, "Whoever is protestant is German, but whoever is catholic is Polish.") was truly realized here. The German Protestant farmers were faithful followers and supporters of their Protestant beliefs, which of course is not to say that they were all, without exception, Christians in the truest sense of the word. But all applied themselves to leading a righteous life, even if some only outwardly, so that nothing bad could be said of them. And if someone, as they used to say, crossed the line and committed a severe sin or injustice, he was made aware of it by others, and if it was repeated, it could happen that the person would be excluded from the community. Divorce happened rarely, even though in the vast majority of cases, marriages only happened because the girl's dowry was suited the young man's estate, or the land of one was across from the other. People rarely married for love, as one talks of it today. And yet it was possible for these marriages to be lived in happiness and satisfaction until the end. However, this could only happen because husband and wife strictly held to the traditional customs and practices that were in turn, bequeathed by each couple to their children.

From beginning to end in Marianowo, there was only one Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession that everyone belonged to. The Sunday and Friday worship services were well attended, and the observance of the Christian way of life was everyone's most holy duty. Even though there was a difference in church attendance on an ordinary Sunday and on the high holidays, or when the pastor held the main service with communion, it must be said that, as far as church was concerned, people did not live without the word of God. Almost every household had a book of sermons, and if the farmer could not attend church, he would gather his family and read a sermon himself, or let one of the grown-up children read aloud the prescribed, relevant sermon for that Sunday. Then one or another song was sung from the hymnal. Morning and evening blessings were needed by the people, just like their daily bread. I remember well how my father set up the altar every morning and evening for us children, and together we had to pray the morning or evening blessings, the

confession of faith, the Lord's Prayer and other prayers, in his presence. Only then could we sit for breakfast or, in the evening, go to bed. Saying grace before meals was considered as important as the meal itself. If neighbors noticed that these customs subsided in a certain households and prayers were not being said, the entire community knew of it in short order and this family was referred to as godless. There were also some other nice and good customs, that were adopted by the old and maintained by the young.

But before I turn to describing other religious traditions and customs in Marianowo, I would like to mention that in the early postwar years, in the neighboring cantor communities of Nury and Wincentowo, a congregation formed whose members rejected the label Baptist, but introduced adult baptism and separated themselves from the church. This community erected their own prayer hall in Nury and employed a preacher who looked after the religious needs of the newly formed congregation. The cantor councils of Nury and Wincentowo thereby lost half their members, but both survived. And later, a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War, in Nûrz again, a group formed that one could say, fell out of the country church and turned toward the Evangelical Free Church. However, Marianowo was again not affected by these events. That the sect of the adult baptism, as later too the free church movement had little or no influence on the evangelical church members of cantor's council of Marianowo, was perhaps due to the fact that in the summer of 1924, a sister had been sent by the mother house in Vandsburg, which, as I understand it, was governed by the Christian Endeavour movement, to evangelize. This crusade was a great success, because the sister had managed to convince a group of farmers to appoint a sister to Marianowo and to provide for her. The mother house in Vandsburg then decided to assign the same sister who had conducted the crusade to build the congregation. And after even more crusades, that were now largely carried out by missionaries of the Christian Endeavour movement, it happened that the farmer Gustav Ebelt, when he bought the nearest Marianowo country place of his brother in law, Adolf Müller, built a two-storey complex onto an already existing house, and gave this to the congregation free of charge. Now the work of the sisters could finally really move forward. The meetings that had up until now been held in personal homes could now be held in a dedicated hall. The already-established choir and the string orchestra now had a quiet place where their members could meet. But the pastors of the Pultusk parish looked with

reservation at the work of the sisters. Although they tolerated their work, because the sisters were not trying to steal church members, but were only anxious to strengthen people's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they hardly got directly involved in the work itself.

Pastor Nitschmann had from the beginning gotten into the habit of staying in a cantor's council no longer than was absolutely necessary. He usually only came out on Sunday morning, held the worship service, performed his official duties, if such were waiting for him, and returned, if possible, the same day back to Pultusk. Pastor Lang, on the other hand, showed more interest for the rural communities than his predecessor had. He stayed longer, visited homes and almost always participated in the community hall meetings. And when he came, he was always asked to give a speech, and he never refused. Whether Pastor Matz supported the work of the sisters, eludes my knowledge, since I no longer lived in Marianowo at that time.

The teachers, who were cantors at the same time, also took a cautious approach towards the sisters. Cantor Zimmermann tolerated the work of the sisters within his community. From time to time he attended the meetings and occasionally even gave a speech there. Cantor Zimmermann also allowed the sisters to hold meetings on feast days in the classroom, which was commonly used as a prayer room, instead of afternoon worship services. However, one cannot say that there was true and lasting cooperation.

The teacher and cantor Edward Pelzer on the other hand, completely refused to work with the sisters. Even if he did attend a meeting now and then, it was only out of curiosity. Mr. Pelzer knew his duty to the community to which he was committed, while the sister was endeavoring to enhance or at least maintain the faith of the community.

Only when the teacher and cantor Eduard Sonnenberg came to Marianowo, did real cooperation and understanding between the parish cantor and the sister become possible. Cantor Sonnenberg was, as far as I know, a member of the Christian Endeavour movement, the Blue Cross Association and other Christian organizations. He rarely missed a meeting, gave speeches, occasionally led the choir, and was always anxious to lead members of the congregation to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I believe I can say that the cooperation between Cantor Sonnenberg and the sisters of the congregation contributed significantly to the building of the cantor's parish of Marianowo and glorified God.

Christmas time is probably the best place to begin describing the religious customs and traditions in Marianowo. When the farmers had finished their autumn farm work it certainly did not mean that they could now rest and be lazy. There were still many things to do before winter fully set in, although this work was not as urgent as the work in the summer. But when Christmas time began to approach, one could sense a restlessness amongst the people. Granted, it was a happy restlessness, but still stressful. The women were anxious to make some new wool socks, or perhaps to acquire a new piece of clothing for each of member of their family before Christmas. The men, on the other hand, were busy looking after the livestock and filling the cracks between the logs of the house's and barn's walls with moss. The potato cellar also needed to be covered to the roof with raked leaves or straw, so that the frost could not creep through the walls. It was also common to thresh a significant portion of the rye before Christmas, and so one could frequently hear the sound of the flail being swung in the barns by strong men. The butchering started in the last days before the celebration. Almost every day one could hear the squeal of pigs being led to slaughter on the various farms. Much of the meat was later made into sausage. Grützwurst was particularly loved in this area, but it had to be made of real buckwheat grits and with quite a lot of meat in it. It is possible that slaughtering was actually delayed until shortly before Christmas, so that the Grützwurst could be had fresh at the celebration table. The day before the celebration, the cake, which was only to be had three times per year, namely, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, was baked. Beginning noon of the twenty fourth of December, Christmas music filled every household. Now only the living quarters had to be cleaned, the Christmas tree decorated and by evening, young and old wished only to leave in time for the Christmas Eve celebration.

If, however, the farmers and their family members, had lived a relatively relaxed life in the weeks before Christmas, the school teachers, or better said the cantors of the Narew area, found this to be the toughest part of the year to get through. Preparations for the Christmas Eve service had to be started five to six weeks in advance. It was customary here that every child that attended school should recite a verse under the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. For this purpose, the cantors selected Christmas story verses or other relevant Bible passages, or a Christmas song such as "Ihr Kinderlein kommet", "Am Weinachtsbaum Die Lichter Brennen", or Silent Night, for others to sing between the

children's verse recitals. And if a cantor had eighty students, as was the average case in Marianowo, then he had to work hard to ensure that the Christmas Eve Celebration satisfied the congregation. Added to this were the mothers who would bring their little offspring, who often could not even speak properly, but had learned a few words of a song verse, and then also wanted to recite the little speech they had learned. But the cantors spared no effort for that evening and were patient, letting the farmers have their fill, knowing that their salary depended on the success of this celebration. If a farmer had enjoyed the Christmas Eve celebration, when it came to giving provisions for the cantor, he did not even put the bag of rye on the scale, but made it so full that it was beyond the capacity of the scale. And if the farmer's wife happened to pass by and add a special word of praise about the cantor, it could happen that the farmer might grab his shovel and add a few more pounds of grain. So the cantor had every reason to exert himself a little more during the Christmas season because he could increase his income considerably by doing so.

The Christmas Eve celebration usually started around six o'clock in the evening. However, if one wanted to get a good seat, one needed to show up around five o'clock. For this reason, people could already be seen rushing to church around dusk. For this reason, by five o'clock, there were only a very few lights to be seen in the streets and on properties, coming from kerosene lanterns, lighting the bumpy paths for their carriers. Since the church services in Marianowo were still being conducted in the school room, on Christmas Eve it was overfilled long before the start of the celebration. The people stood in the aisles and along the walls, since only a third of the attendees could be seated. The churchwardens often had trouble keeping a place free for the children lined up in the next room. But even later, when the newly built prayer hall provided more space for the congregation, this place was filled during such celebrations.

Shortly before the start of the Christmas Eve celebration, the churchwardens lit the candles on the altar and the Christmas tree, at which time the children, with the cantor leading, would march into the hall. At this time, the Christmas song "Ihr Kinderlein kommet" was usually sung. The children, surrounding the Christmas tree, held burning candles in their hands, that were tied with blue, green or red ribbons. As soon as the song ended, one of the older boys walked, as far as space permitted, to the front and recited a welcome poem, whereupon the congregation responded with a Christmas song. The cantor gave a small

speech to those present and then the children recited their verses, one after the other, interspersed with the Christmas songs the children had practiced. The celebration closed with prayer and a song sung by the entire congregation.

In Marianowo, as in all of the surrounding area, Santa Claus was unknown. Never the less, the cantor distributed small gifts to the children, but these were not comprised of sweets; instead, every child received a small picture on which a Christmas verse was printed in fancy letters. The older children would sometimes also receive a small tract which contained a small Christmas story for them to read. Usually, however, it was just pictures that were handed out.

Once at home, the entire family would first sit at the Christmas table on which, most importantly, the previously mentioned Grützwurst could not be forgotten. And once the delicious meal had been enjoyed, and the course of the Christmas Eve celebration had been discussed in detail, the children, if there were any in the family, recited their verses, and the head of the house began singing a Christmas song that was enthusiastically taken up and sung by the others.

On Christmas Day, there were two church services. And although the prayer hall was not as crowded as the night before, almost everyone considered it their duty to participate in one of these services. The second day of Christmas, on which a church service was also held, served mostly to allow people to visit with each other. Even the third day of Christmas, that was celebrated here, was really nothing more than a transition from the holidays to everyday life.

The turn of the year was celebrated in a similar manner. On the last night of the year the Marianowo congregation gathered for a New Year's Eve church service. And when the people came home it was rare that anyone thought to fill the time until the end of the year with pouring of drinks or other antics. They spent the rest of the evening in meaningful conversation, and on the first day of the New Year, the community gathered again in the prayer hall, to, as they would say, start the year in God's name.

Lent began on Ash Wednesday. Even though no special customs or traditions were tied to this time, it must be said that, during this time of fasting, people did not engage in events

that might have led to dancing or entertainment. There were certainly no weddings. People believed that wedding celebrations were merry occasions, even if there was no dancing. And if it was already quite in this area during Lent, one could still hear that this or that should not be done. Even the humming of a cheerful little song was, especially at this time, considered a sin.

The high point of Lent was on Good Friday. In the local vernacular, it was referred to as the "Silent Friday". And though there were older people who did not eat food on any Friday during Lent, it was custom and tradition that on Good Friday everyone fasted. On this day, there were two church services in the prayer hall, and if someone did not show up for church service on Good Friday, they forfeited their reputation as a Christian in the community. For this reason, the prayer hall was often more densely occupied on Good Friday than on Christmas Eve. Those members of the congregation who lived a further distance from the church made it a practice not to go home for lunch, but if the weather was suitable, made themselves comfortable on the benches in the school yard, or they went to the homes of the farmers who lived close by, or they visited the graves of their deceased family members in the nearby cemetery. After the second church service, everyone went home, and, when the sun had set, the time of fasting was considered to be over.

Not as much fuss was made for Easter preparations as for Christmas. Never the less, on Saturday, cake was baked, and some of the bigger farmers could afford to treat themselves and their families to fresh meat, but overall there was not the same cheerful atmosphere as Christmastime. There is not much to say about special Easter customs and traditions because the earlier common practices of flogging with juniper bushes and mutual dousing with water had long been deemed as immoral and were no longer practiced. On the morning of the first day of Easter though, one could see the families gathered on every farm before sunrise, looking for, as they used to say, the Easter lamb. They would look at the rising sun and believed they could see a bouncing lamb in the sun's corona. As far as the hiding of Easter eggs was concerned, where the kids had to search for them in the gardens, this custom was known here but found very little appeal.

But the trombone players of Marianowo had developed their own tradition. They gathered on a high hill and, when the sun had risen, played some Easter chorales, arias appropriate

for Easter, as well as spiritual folk songs that echoed far into the landscape. The first choral to ring out was usually "Jesus lebt mit ihm auch ich!" (Jesus lives and I with Him!) through the mild spring air. Also well loved at this occasion was Bach's aria, "Er lebt, Er lebt!" (He lives, He lives!). Easter songs such as "Gelobt sei Gott im höchsten Thron!" (Praised be God in His highest throne) followed, along with spiritual folk songs such as "Ostern, Ostern, Frühlingswehen!" (Easter, Easter, spring travail!) and "Erstanden ist der heilge Christ!" (The Holy Christ is risen!). But the members of the congregation especially enjoyed when, at the end, the trombones played the beautiful Easter melody from Nikolaus Herman: "Erschienen ist der herrlich Tag, dran sich niemand gnug freuden mag: Christ unser Herr heut triumphiert, all sein Feind er gefangen führt. Halleluja." (The glorious day has come, with overflowing joy: Christ our Lord triumphed today, all his enemies, he leads captive. Hallelujah).

The Easter days were like any other Sunday or public holiday. Although on the first day of Easter two church services were held, the first of which was very well attended, but the second had few visitors. But on the second day of Easter there were usually actually far less church service attendees than on a normal Sunday. The third day of Easter, that was also celebrated here, was, on the other hand, similar to Christmas in that it was regarded as a transition from the holidays to everyday life.

Most years, right after the Easter celebrations, the farm spring planting began, and the farmers and their families needed to endure some very difficult labor. But they were happy to work since they had rested well through the long winter months. And when the spring planting was near its end, the Pentecost celebration was already at the door.

It was custom and tradition that, before Pentecost, the dwellings and stalls had to be thoroughly cleaned. Even when time was short, "Big Washes" were held, where living quarters were freshly painted or at least whitewashed, and the stall and other work buildings were thoroughly cleaned. It was said that the purpose of this cleansing was not just to provide clean living quarters for man and beast, but also to remind every Christian person that their heart needed to be cleansed from the filth of sin, so that the spirit of Pentecost could make its home there.

It was custom and tradition that, on the day before Pentecost, the living quarters were decorated with greenery from specially designated trees. Twigs from oak and chestnut trees were preferred for this purpose. The twigs were simply stuck in the cracks between the beams and the ceiling or attached with small nails to the beams or walls. Lilacs and various other flowers were placed in vases on the tables, while the calamus plant found its place on the windows. A few young birch trees were stuck at the front of the house, tips bound with other branches, giving the impression of a kind of gazebo. It was said of the decorating of the living spaces with flowers and fresh greenery, that this should serve to remind the people, even in their homes, of the work of God in nature.

But otherwise no great preparations were made for the celebrating of Pentecost. While, like the two previous high holidays, cakes were baked and maybe some other tasty morsels prepared, but the festive mood that was present at Christmas time was missing. However, this is not to say that people were less happy about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost than of the birth of Christ at Christmas, but one could certainly notice a difference in people's attitudes towards the two celebrations.

The prayer hall, like people's homes, was decorated with flowers and fresh greenery. Like Christmas and Easter, there were two church services on the first day of Pentecost in which, again, the morning service was very well attended. But the second and third days of Pentecost, since the weather at this time of year was usually good, were used to visit distant friends and relatives. Otherwise, however, those days were regarded as ordinary holidays.

Other days, other than high holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost were also celebrated. So, for example, Mariä-Verkündigung (Annunciation) on the 25th of March, Ash Wednesday at the beginning of Lent, Christ's Ascension, St. John's Day on the 24th of July, Peter and Paul's Day on the 29th of July, Jacob's Day on the 25th of July, and like Michael's Day on the 29th of September. The Reformation Celebration on the 31st of October was, if it fell on a weekday, postponed to the following Sunday. On all of these days of celebration, there were church services in the prayer hall that were well attended. In the afternoon, however, especially in the summertime, one could see how people were still going about their work. One exception was Ascension Day. This day counted as a full-fledged holiday and was usually equivalent to a normal Sunday.

Good and nice customs were also tied to the baptisms of children. It was custom and tradition that a child would be taken to be baptized a few days after birth. Most of the time, the baptism was performed by the cantor, but it sometimes happened that some parents waited until the pastor of the congregation came. The godparents, as is probably the custom everywhere, were selected by the parents of the child, and there was something like an unwritten law that no one could decline to carry a child to baptism if he was asked to do so by the parents of the child. On the other hand, it was tradition that if someone had already carried a child of a family to baptism, then that person would not do so a second time, even if the child of which he was the godfather died. Obviously, this rule applied not only for the godfather, but for the godmother as well.

The name of the child was also determined by the parents. Preference was given to the names of deceased ancestors. But it was customary that a name within the family was not allowed to repeat, even if the child who had been given this name, had died.

The baptism of the child was usually performed at the end of the church service. But it often also happened that some parents had their children baptized by the cantor on a weekday.

When all the arrangements for the baptism of the child had been made, the godparents came and picked the child up. The godmother took the child from the mother while godfather said to the father, “We take a heathen from you and promise to return a Christian!” To which the father replied, “May the Dear Lord so grant.”

The godparents proceeded on, usually led by the father, to the church where the child was baptized. After returning to the house, the godmother gave the child to the mother, while the godfather addressed the father with the words, “We took a heathen from you and returned a Christian!” The father answered contently, “With God’s help!”

Then, usually sometime in the afternoon, the so called baptismal celebration took place. “Kindelbehe!” was the common name for this celebration. While such celebrations never had dancing, the copious consumption of alcoholic beverages, often resulted in the participants having a very enjoyable time.

It was neither custom nor tradition that the godparents give a gift to the child. It did sometimes happen that the godparents sought to please the growing child, but this was rarely by material gifts, rather, as I have frequently noted, by a nice and meaningful godparent letter.

This letter lay in a box made of paper and had on its front page a colorful picture and, underneath, a pre-printed dedication that could be added and removed at will. The letter also contained a few poetic verses, which were printed in red or green. And, as I too once received such a letter as a present, I want to reproduce it here, so that the valued reader can get a picture of how gifts were given to children in those days.

The letter, which I received fifty years ago from my godfather, Peter Lorris, and that I last saw in 1944, looked something like this (in rhyming verse):

“To my dear godchild Friedrich, from the devoted Peter Lottis.

This I wish for my child:

A pair of eyes gleaming like sunlight, with pure little heart and hands,

A little head, that can think and ponder much, a friendly attitude towards every man.”

(“Ein Augenpaar glänzend wie Sonnenschein, Herzchen und Händchen stets hübsch und rein,

Ein Köpfchen, das sinnen und denken viel kann, ein freundliches Wesen mit jedermann.”)

Then, in fancy letters, framed with abundant ornamentation, there were three verses that I memorized the same day I received the letter, and have kept in my memory up to this hour.

The wording of these three (rhyming) verses is as follows:

“The flowers spread by angels, bring luck and joy. Because Angels’ hands gladly give children guidance.

They lead you through the universe, singing holy songs of praise. Child, may no evil ever displace your faith in God.

The heavens want to give you peace. And may this verse also remain a dear memory for you."

There is actually not much to say about the customs and traditions of funerals, but I would like to mention something about them anyways. As far as the religious part of a funeral was concerned, there was little difference whether it was a child or an adult. In both cases, a short memorial service was held at the house of the deceased, and then the coffin was accompanied by the mourners to the cemetery. It was the custom that the coffin was opened during the funeral service at the cemetery, so as to give everyone present the opportunity to personally bid farewell to the dead. After the cantor finished his speech, the coffin was lowered into the grave and then blessed. While the grave was filled with dirt, the attending mourners sang an eternity-themed song.

But there were certain outwardly differences in the appearance of funerals. The participants in the funeral were already different. It was often difficult to determine the reason because it could happen that more participants gathered for the funeral of a hireling than when the richest farmer was carried to his grave. It often seemed as if more people came to the Graveyard out of curiosity than to express their sympathy. Very often it was mentioned that such and such only came to the cemetery to see how the deceased was dressed, or to watch how the relatives behaved. But I doubt that people actually behaved that way.

It was tradition in Marianowo and the surrounding area, that if the head of the family or another elderly person died, the relatives held a so-called post-burial (Nachbegräbnis). The friends and acquaintances, who took part in this special ceremony were specifically invited to do so. They therefore considered it their duty to participate in the funeral at the home and at the graveyard. Afterwards the invited guests gathered for a follow-up reception at the home of the bereaved.

The purpose of this reception was to ensure that the bereaved were not immediately left alone during their mourning. And whereas at a wedding things were merry, at a child's baptism the mood was cheerful, this celebration was held in virtual silence. Only limited alcoholic beverages were served, and at the tables one could hear conversations, mostly related to the deceased, and only good things were spoken of him.

After several hours of this get-together, the guests dispersed. Each individually said goodbye to the hosts, and some thought it their duty, in cases where an inheritance awaited, to urge those left behind to try to settle everything peacefully, so that the deceased would rest peacefully in his grave.

In conclusion I should like to mention that every now and then, especially with older people, a superstition came to light, even though people in Maranowo believed in God and considered themselves righteous Christians. The superstition was that there were some men and women who could try to cure the pains and diseases of humans and animals. However, it must be added that these actions were not considered magic, but those concerned believed they were doing this in the name of God. However, as the sisters of the Christian Endeavour movement took up their activity in Marianowo, this superstition was pushed back more and more. During the last years I can barely remember anyone in Marianowo who sought help in meetings or who engaged in this superstition.

General Customs and Traditions

As the days became longer, and the snow melted, and the sun began to shine warmly, it turned to spring in Marianowo and the surrounding area. When the first storks returned, the swallows sought out their nests in the stable, the lark trilled high in the air, and the cuckoo began to call, the farmer knew that winter was over. When the first leaves emerged from the buds, and the fruit trees in the garden were covered with flowers that looked like snow, the farmer knew that it was time to start his spring plowing. When the meadows and pastures began to green, and the cattle came out of the barn for the first time, they jumped for joy as if to express that, finally, the dark time was over and the long-awaited summer was near. Everything awoke to new life, and the farmer looked forward to the change. Although he knew that this was the end of doing nothing and hard work awaited him, he was happy and appreciated the beauty of nature. He dug out his plow, cleaned off the rust, harnessed his horse in front and headed out into the field. And when the first furrow was turned over, and the crows flew by searching for worms, the farmer became well aware his profession. He plowed, spread the seeds over the soil and harrowed them in. A few days later he observed his field with joy as blades of grass began to creep out of the earth.

The housewife also began a new activity. She had sat long enough behind the spinning wheel, having to work flax into thread. She had been bound to the tasks in the room for far too long. Now she sighed with relief, and her first thought was to get the garden in order. She got out the spade and began to turn the earth. Beds were formed and vegetable seeds spread in the ground. Also, she did not forget to plant flowers that bloomed wonderfully throughout the summer in the little gardens underneath the windows.

However, when spring came to an end, and the days grew longer, the sun sent its hot rays to the earth, the corn fields began to ripen, and the tips of the blades of grass in the meadows turned yellow, the farmer realized that summer had come and that harvest was approaching. And as in spring he had taken out the plow, he now sought out the scythe and began to mow. Early in the morning, you could hear the peening of the scythe because the farmers said that the mowing was the best when the meadow was covered in dew.

During the harvest, the farmer's day in Marianowo and the surrounding area began at sunrise. It was much easier to work in the cool of morning than later when the sun was higher. But the farmer did not shy away from the heat of the day either when it was necessary to put hay in the barn or to bring in the grain. So he worked through the whole day and allowed himself a few hours of rest late at night, only to return to work refreshed the next day. This rush and bustle carried on uninterrupted from early Monday morning until late Saturday night. Although the work was not easy, and the farmer survived by the sweat of his brow, he was not happy when something unexpectantly disrupted his work. On Sunday, however, the farmer wanted to rest completely. On this day, he did not do more or less than was absolutely essential. On this day, the farmer donned his Sunday jacket and went to church to thank his Maker.

In between, however, even if there was much work to be done, the farmers of Marianowo and surrounding area found time to engage in their traditional customs and traditions, giving themselves and their families a few hours of leisure and repose. During the harvest there was the "Rageolle".

Rageolle means something like "Rye-old" or "Old Rye". After the last piece of rye had been milled, a few stalks were left standing, in whose middle a stick was stuck. With the help of a string, the stalks that had been left standing were easily tied to the stick and the whole thing was decorated with corn or garden flowers. This was the sign that the rye harvest had ended here and now the retraction of the grain could begin. Also, when the last piece of rye had been milled, the farmer gathered his family or even the laborers to a small celebration that often continued late into the night. Although there was no dancing, it was a light-hearted celebration, which one often remembered fondly.

This type of celebration repeated itself a number of times throughout the year. In addition to the "Rageolle" there was the "Schackeolle", which was celebrated when the last potato was harvested. The "Grasolle" was held when the last piece of wheat was milled, and other "Olle's" could have been named.

An "Olle" was always considered when some lengthy farm work came to an end. To have made a Olle, therefore meant that the work was finished and the farmer could now consider it as something that had happened in the past that he no longer needed to think about. It

was not necessary that every time such work was completed that there had to be bottle of liquor on the table, or that it had to be followed by a few hours of rest; it was sufficient when work was finished that the farmer told his family with satisfied expression, “Wi häbe dä Olle mukt!” (“We have made the Olle”).

But before the harvest something was held, that cannot be described as a custom but rather as beautiful tradition. On the Peter and Paul Day, the 29th of July, all the lads and lasses of Marianowo and surrounding area went to the state forest that lay behind Sieczychzy to pick berries that were found there in great abundance. The purpose was not so much to bring home jars filled with berries, but was more about the opportunity to be in the forest. It was, as we would call today, an excursion, where everyone had lots of fun and joy. The young men and ladies were joined by older people, and it was a considered a really successful Peter and Paul Day when it started with the sun beating down hot, followed by a storm and downpour in the afternoon, so that all forest visitors were soaked to the bone, and for weeks afterwards everyone was laughing and talking about how this young boy or that girl had looked like a wet cat.

Beautiful customs, but perhaps not the best traditions, accompanied wedding receptions. They started with the engagement. This was always kept strictly secret, and it was often admirable with what ingenuity the guys carried it out, when one had to take place.

The engagement party always took place in the late evening, in order to prevent the young men from, as they say, playing pranks. But no matter how hard the engaged couple and their parents tried to keep the engagement secret, the Marianowo lads always knew when such would occur. Because as soon as something began to develop between a young man and a girl, they were constantly watched and observed. And if then the engagement took place, the young men took it as their mission to play a prank on the amorous couple. Such a prank usually consisted of blocking the door of the house where the invited guests had gathered so that no one could exit through it. And, if they could, the young men would jamb the windows shut from the outside with some sort of pole, so that the people inside the building would have to cross the floor of the stall to reach the outside. Once the young men managed to obstruct doors and windows, the chimney was covered, so the people inside could neither cook nor fry. Also, it was common to nail up the well or to stuff some

bundles of straw into it, so that the farmer had a few hours of hard work in the morning before he could draw water.

However, whoever would think that the engagement party participants would be upset about such a troubles, would be mistaken. Of course, the party participants were anxious to prevent such pranks. But once the youths had managed to obstruct the doors and windows, the engagement party calmly continued indoors. Preparations had been made. Some full buckets of water were provided, and even if the chimney was covered, they would still find a way to warm the food. People would be really happy about a successful prank and tell everyone how funny everything was for weeks afterwards.

In most cases, the wedding took place only a few weeks after the engagement. The banns of marriage were published immediately after the engagement party and preparations for the wedding reception began. The reception was usually held in the bride's house, but consideration was given to which of the couple's parents had a larger room. There was butchering and baking, and thorough cleaning and decorating of rooms. Most importantly, a man had to be recruited who would go by foot or horse and invite wedding guests in the name of the wedding couple.

This man was called "Dej Kästebedde". In the early days, he would ride by horse and invite the guests. I remember well how such a Kästebedde rode high on horseback to our house and invited the family to a wedding. He literally rode into the room, and although he had to stoop while sitting on the horse, he did not dismount until he had recited his verse, the words of which unfortunately I do not remember. Only then did he dismount from his horse and was warmly welcomed by my father and mother.

In later times, however, it was sufficient for the Kästebedde to go by foot and to invite the guests with the following (rhyming) verse, "I do not come in riding, so I come on in walking! Four horses stand in my barn, but one is blind, the other lame, the third has no teeth in its mouth, and the fourth is terribly lazy! In the name of the couple ..... and ..... I cordially invite all who live in this house, to the wedding to be held on ..... at ..... o'clock in the afternoon, held in the home of the bride!" ("Komm ich nicht reingeritten, so komm ich doch reingeschritten! Vier Pferde stehn in meinem stall, doch eines ist blind und das andere lahm, das dritte hat keine zähne im Maul, das vierte nun, das ist sehr schrecklich faul! Im

name des Brautpaares ..... und ..... lade ich alle, die in dieses Hause wohnen, zu der am ..... um ..... Uhr nachmittags im Hause der Braut stattfindenden Hochzeit aufs herlichste ein!")

Then the Kästebedde was most warmly welcomed by the farmer and the farmer's wife and invited to a glass of schnapps. He then put his walking stick, which he had decorated with a silk ribbon, in a corner of the room and sat down with the head of the house at the table. He was not allowed to drink much because if he had only two or three small shots at every one of the twenty or thirty houses he had to trudge to, he would not have gotten very far. Instead, prudently, he sat in every home and sipped a bit from the glass offered to him. Usually, he did not stay long in any one house, but soon moved on.

But the duties of the man who was to invite the guests to the wedding were far from being exhausted. It was also his job to greet the guests at the wedding and to make sure that the whole celebration ran smoothly and in good order. He was responsible to ensure that everyone was seated well, that the meals were served in a timely manner, and, most of all, that the musicians were in good spirits. By rights, you could say that the Kästerbedde was the uncrowned king of the wedding and, next to the bride and groom, was seen as the most important person of the celebration.

Weddings usually took place in the fall. This is not to say that people did not get married at other times of the year in Marianowo and the surrounding area. But most weddings were in September or October. Perhaps this was because the work was not as much in the forefront, or maybe it was just a long-standing custom. In any case, most of the weddings I remember took place in late summer or fall.

When the banns had been published and expired, the wedding party was prepared. As already said, there was baking and butchering. A man, usually a good friend of one of the couple's parents, was appointed, to invite the guests and ensure that everything would run fine. Musicians, for dance music, were not always invited. In cases, however, where there was to be dancing, three or up to four musicians, of which under no circumstances a drummer could be missing, were ordered and a fixed fee was determined for this. Here the Kästerbedde was asked for his advice, because he had to work with them.

The weddings often took place in the mother church in Pultusk. When this was the case, the wedding couple and a small entourage had to leave early in the morning in order to make it back that evening. It was more than thirty kilometers from Marianowo to Pultusk. And if the road was in poor shape – there were neither paved roads nor highways – the couple had to hurry to make it back to the home harbour before it was dark. Even at a wedding, the boys of Marianowo were eager to play a prank on the couple.

This time, it was not about blocking doors and windows to trap the house guests, but attempts were made to erect barricades across the road that the couple had to travel. It was not uncommon that, if the boys were successful in blocking the road, they would set up a few hundred meters before the obstacle and announce to the bridal train that they should drive carefully, so that nothing unfortunate should happen to them.

When the couple then stood in front of the obstacle, the young men offered their services to clear it for the cost of a few good drinks. Most of the time, they were lucky because it was not appropriate for someone from the bridal procession, much less the groom himself, to clear away obstacles of this kind. In such cases, the groom had no choice but to reach deep into his pocket and to give the boys their drinking money, whereupon they immediately and happily got to work restoring the road to order.

With their honestly earned money, the young men immediately went to Old Lejbke, who always had a bottle of schnapps in stock, even though he had no authorization to resell, and sat, legs wide around the table. Now they too could celebrate the wedding. And when the Jew uncorked the bottle with the words, “Long live the groom!” the young man took it from his hand and answered, “You must only be thinking about your sons!” Then the glasses were filled and they drank to the good health of the wedding couple who, at that very moment were being well received with full honors in the courtyard of the wedding house.

It was tradition that the invited guests leave the wedding in Pultusk for home a few hours before the members of the wedding party, and meet in the wedding house. The Kästerbedde and the musicians had to be there before everyone else, so they could greet the guests. This happened as follows:

As soon as an invited family got close to the wedding house, the musicians started playing a wedding march in front of the door. The Kästerbedde approached the guests with a glass and an accompanying bottle of schnapps in one hand, but a thick braided whip, attached to a short stalk in the other. He swung the whip through the air so that it gave a loud crack. Then he wound the whip up, clamped it under his arm and offered a glass of schnapps to each of the arriving guests. In doing so, he was acting as if he was drunk, which always amused the guests.

When the wedding couple, coming from the church, came near, the guests were almost always already there. The musicians rushed to the door and played an especially nice, long wedding march. The Kästerbedde snapped his whip around, and once the wedding couple's wagon had circled once around the courtyard, it stopped in front of the entrance to the house. The bride and groom, like everyone who had been at the wedding, were poured many glasses of special schnapps, so that, as the saying went, those arriving should first warm up. Then the bride and groom stepped off the wagon and were wildly greeted by their parents, their siblings, and their close relatives.

Afterwards, the wedding meal was held. Even though, on arriving, every guest had been offered a snack, some hours had already passed, and all the guests were hungry. The tables were, as they say here, stretched. The wedding couple sat prominently with the guests to the right and left of them. It was also not unacceptable, if space was not sufficient for the guests, to make use of an adjoining room.

As soon as the meal ended, the tables were cleared away and the dancing started. This is when things sometimes got quite entertaining. The bride and groom performed the opening dance. Then it was the bride's duty to dance with all the men, short and tall. The fun lasted throughout the night and only when morning was approaching could one notice how fatigue began to slowly seize dancers. The guests that lived in the neighbourhood went home and the others tried to find a small place to rest in the barn or elsewhere. But some guests held out. They told each other jokes until everyone came together again.

Even the couple were granted the right, at dawn, to disappear unnoticed and get some rest. At this point I think it is also appropriate to mention that in Marianowo and the whole area it was strictly ensured that the bride and groom could not have intimate relations with each

other before wedding. At the wedding celebration, however, the bride's mother had nothing against the newlywed couple retiring alone and unobserved.

Around nine in the morning, however, life returned to the party. “Good Morning” was played. The guests were all back together at full strength and the musicians were in place. The Kästerbedde now looked for a second man from among the guests who could help him out. Two chairs were set up in the middle of the room and all men, young and old, were fetched in sequence. Each man was invited to sit on one of the chairs, whereupon he was asked which woman he wanted. The chosen woman, or girl, was brought over, and when both were sitting next to each other, they were given a small glass of schnapps. Then the man was shaved by the Kästerbedde, not with a razor, but with a cooking spoon. His hair was then “combed” so that it was left very messy. Finally, he was asked to give his partner a kiss, after which they were dismissed.

This game took a lot of time, but since plenty of schnapps was distributed to all of the guests, everyone had lots of fun and it was never boring. It also needs to be said that only the older men invited their wives to participate in this game. In general, the women were, as they used to say, exchanged here.

At the end of this game the morning meal was held. But since the “Good Morning Game” usually took a long time, it was beset to finish breakfast as soon as possible. After the meal, the tables were immediately cleared, and then followed a transaction that I should probably explain a little better.

The bride’s wreath and veil were removed. “Hievke. Dej Brut hieve!” was the common saying for this action. This meant that the bride was removing her wreath and veil, but donning instead the state of marriage. There was an accompanying song for this action, that was only sung by women and the title was “Dej Hievkestrik”. When I try to translate this title into High German, I come up with the words, “Act Of Uplifting”.

During this action, the bride and groom sat at a table and the bridesmaids and their companions took their places behind the couple. A number of women began to sing. “Should I now completely leave behind my beloved maidenhood? And despise the friends

who make me so happy? Should the prime of my life and the beautiful wreath of flowers . . .", was the first verse of this song, the rest of which, unfortunately I don't recall.

As the third and last verse of this song were being sung, the oldest of the bridesmaids approached the bride and removed her wreath and veil. Neither were worn by the bride again, but she kept them as remembrances. The bridesmaid laid the wreath and veil on the table, whereupon all of the guests, one by one, presented the couple the gifts they had brought.

As soon as this action was completed, the dancing started again. The actual wedding reception was over now, but generally, around lunch time, there was another meal. And when this was over, there was still more dancing, but, one by one the guests began to leave the happy get-together.

Except for wedding celebrations the youth of Marianowo were rarely given the opportunity to spend time dancing. For this reason, they took full advantage of such celebrations. But since only a limited number of youth were able to participate, and the others had to wait until they were invited to a wedding by their close friends, from time to time dance events took place. For this purpose, a number of young men got together and tried to convince a farmer to make his residence available for the evening. The resulting costs were covered by an entrance fee. Each youth who participated in this event, felt obliged to pay the required entrance fee.

In the last years though, it became increasingly difficult to persuade a farmer to provide his living quarters for such a purpose. In those years, few dances took place and even wedding receptions were increasingly held without dancing. Only on St. Martin's Day, which was always held on the Sunday following November 10th, did an event with games and dancing take place in the last years before the war.

Martini! or "Matin" in Low German, was a celebration of the working youth. In Marianowo and the greater surrounding area it was custom and tradition that all contracts between a farmer and the so-called servants ended with the St. Martin Days. On this day, or no later than the following Saturday, all of the servants left their workplaces and went home. That is, so far as they still had parents and a home. But even those who wanted to remain with

the same farmers were given a few days off, so that they were able to celebrate St. Martin's Day leisurely.

This tradition was not just observed by the Marianowo farmers, and nearby, and further afield, but was also accepted by the Polish neighbors because it happened, if not very often, that Polish servants worked on German farms, and occasionally vice versa.

Since all of the contracts between farmers and servants ended during St. Martin's Week, and on the following Sunday an event with games and dancing took place, the St. Martin's Sunday was considered the working youth's celebration. On this day it did not matter if a person had been in the service of a farmer or if he had been employed by his parents; today everyone was equal. And even if the farmer's son sometimes considered himself better than the servant, or some farmer's daughter looked down contemptuously on a maid, on St. Martin Day all came to the same abode and there was no difference between them. Today it was the working youth's celebration.

And as already said, in other places some farmers' sons were even now getting together and persuading a farmer to leave them his residence for the St. Martin's Sunday. Then a firm contract was signed with some musicians that were to play that night. They could be certain that sufficient patrons would come because on St. Martin's Day, every young man strove to appear on the dance floor with a bottle of schnapps in his pocket and a nice girl at his side. Not only boys and girls got together, but also married couples who often gave the place the right character.

These places were always lots of fun because everyone who attended had the attitude that St. Martin's Day only came once a year and so it needed to be properly celebrated. There was drinking and dancing late into the night, but it did not get out of hand. Everyone was cheerful and it rarely happened that there were any disagreements. And, if occasionally, as they used to say, someone had peered too deep into the glass and tried to start a fight, two, or if necessary three strong guys jumped in and gently led the trouble maker out to the barn or to a bed of straw on the stall floor where he could sleep it off in peace.

On the other hand, those who knew how to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner did not miss the opportunity to fully enjoy the nice and pleasant evening; for those who had

come to this place all knew that, even though there would be a follow-up celebration the next Sunday, it would not be as pleasant as on the first St. Martin's Sunday.

The following day, or at least in that week, the larger farmers went out looking for suitable servants. Since there were only a few farmers in the Marianowo area who could afford servants, big farmers often came from the area of Warsaw, or even from the Vistula and took workers from here. So by the next Sunday, almost all who needed to work on other farms had rented themselves out, and when a second house party was also organized it was more poorly attended.

At the end of St. Martin's week most of the farm work was completely finished. Even if this or that farmer had not gotten around to beating the flax that would later be spun by the women and made into canvas, this work would be quickly caught up. In the barns, the last of the rye was threshed, and the potatos were covered with raked leaves, potato herbage or even straw. Now winter could come. And when the first snow fell, and then the heavy frost set in, it was time once again to begin the Christmas preparations.

Joy and Sorrow

This large, beautiful German village offered, with its meadows and fields, its paths and walkways, and its uniformly built houses, a lovely sight. And if I now, after nearly twenty-five years of definitive separation from this place I go back in thought, I can still see everything in detail before me, as it was then. I can still see myself with my schoolbag, which was made of thin wooden boards, on my back, walking to school, romping around at recess, playing handball, bothering the girls, playing pranks, but all the while not forgetting school's actual purpose and diligently learning. It was also nice later when the boys and girls gathered outdoors, played games, floated back and forth on a home-made swing, songs in the air as evening crept in, some young men snuggling close to their girlfriends, dreaming of a happy married life. It was a really nice time.

There was no cinema for showing movies in Marianowo. There was also no theater or auditorium for us to go to. But to my mind, there was more opportunity then to experience the joys of life than the youth of today, whether they live in the countryside or in the city, can have. In those days, when a group of young lads and ladies got together, they immediately formed a circle and began playing some sort of game. When outdoors, the favourite game was the round dance. When playing this game, a young man would stand in the middle of the circle while the others held hands and circled him singing the following song:

"Ich lieb und darf es nicht sagen. Ist das nicht schwere Pein? Mein Herz tut mir verzagen, weil ich hier steh allein.

Komm her, mein Schatz, zu mir. Ein Küßchen reich ich dir. Und diesen Kuß zum Zeichen, daß ich dir treu will sein.

Ich habe beschlossen, dein Eigen zu sein. Und eh ich dich fasse, bist längst du schon mein."

("I love, but am not allowed to say so. Isn't that horribly painful? My heart is dismayed because I'm standing here all alone.

Come here to me darling. I'll hand you a kiss. And this kiss will be a sign that I will be faithful to you.

I have decided to be yours. And before I embrace you, you will long have been mine.")

At the end of the second verse, the young man standing in the middle approached one of the circling girls, took her hand and danced with her to the singing of the other participants. Then when the song ended, the game started over again with the girl staying in the circle and choosing a boy.

Another game also had the participants forming a closed circle while one of them walked around behind them with a leather belt in his hand saying, "Battemählk es denn o deck, wäkihe seck emkikt, dej kreght en't Ghneck!" These (Low German) words meant, "Buttermilk is thin and thick, whoever turns around gets it in the neck!"

As he said these words, he had to try to hand someone the belt, without that person's neighbor noticing. Then, when the speaker had gone a bit further, the person who had been given the belt hit his neighbor with it. This one then had to run around the circle as good or bad, but as fast as he could until he returned to his spot. Then the one who had the belt in his hand circled around the outside and the game began again.

There were also other games that could be played outdoors. For example: "Knock Off The Third", "I'm A Poor Bird", and so on. But also in the winter, when it was too cold outside and the youth had to spend the evening indoors, there were enough games for them to spend their time happily.

In a closed room, the following was the favourite game. It was called "My Spot Is Empty". For this game, it was necessary that the young men outnumbered the ladies by one. The young men sat down somewhere, perhaps on a stool or a bench, or even on the edge of a bed, and each of them winked for a girl to come sit on his lap. The game started with the one who had no girl calling out, "Mein Platz ist leer, ich wünsche mir die Christel her!" ("My spot is empty, I wish Christel was here!" – rhyming in German). Naturally, he called the name of the girl that he wanted to have with him. The named girl left her place where she had been sitting and rushed over to the young man who had called her. Now the next young man needed to call a different girl, and so it continued for hours on end.

Many other games could be described, that were played indoors or outdoors, but it would take too long to name them all. But I consider it my duty to point out that these simple youth games provided a lot of fun, and were always conducted harmoniously. It was very rare for there to be any quarrel between the participants. And, if there ever was a troublemaker trying to bring discord to the group, he was immediately made aware of the rules of the game and he yielded to the will of the others.

And when then in the late evening hours the young men would escort the girls home, a real prank was usually played. It often happened that in the morning a farmer, wanting to hitch his horse to his wagon, would first have to search long and hard before he found his wagon sitting behind his neighbor's barn, or he might even have seen it on his roof next to his chimney. The youth had a great sense of humor, and none of the old farmers ever got very angry after having been pranked. In these cases, they all remembered the times when they too had been young and adventurous.

The reason why the youth of Marianowo were so fun-loving and took every opportunity to really let off steam while they could, may have been due to the fact that it was customary here to marry at a very young age. The girls were usually married at the age of sixteen. And, if one of them was still at home at the age of twenty, she was referred to as a spinster. When a girl was confirmed here, which usually happened at the age of fifteen, the neighbors immediately began to speculate when and who she might marry. The men would say of such a girl, "Sej bid't all!", which was Low German for, "She begins to pray." I do not know for certain if it is one hundred percent true, what was claimed by the girls, but it was said that the young girl every night prayed a prayer in Low German, the text of which I hereby want to try to reproduce.

"An jihdem Marge, fall eck op mien Knee, o bihd dän waht eck kann, Gatt gev mi enne ghoode Mann.

Dej mi nuscht dejt. Dej mi nech schleht. Dej mi toodääkt, wään hej opsteht."

This prayer, translated to High German, would read something like this:

"Every morning I fall to my knees and then pray, what I can, God give me a good man.

One who doesn't do anything bad to me. One who doesn't beat me up. One who covers me when he gets up."

But as I said, I do not know if this claim is true. In any case, the parents, and even in certain circumstances the neighbors or relatives, ensured that every girl found the right man, and, if possible, at the right time. And although the dowry of the girl as well as the wealth of the young man played a greater role in the marriage than love, of which so much is spoken of today, it can be said that marriages carried out in this manner resulted in harmony and satisfaction.

Not only the girls married very young though, but there were also very many young men who chose to marry before they were twenty. In any case, it was rare to meet a bachelor over twenty five years of age. And probably, for this reason, the youth would always bear in mind the short span of time that was available for them to savor before they got married, and which they would be able to reminisce on in their older years.

But even those people in Marianowo who were later in life understood how to enjoy life. Throughout the entire summer the farmer had little time to pay homage to idleness. But in the winter, when the days were short and the nights were long, many neighbors would get together, sit in front of a warm stove, smoke their homegrown tobacco or even Polish Machorka, and tell the funniest jokes. When, however, they were in a really good mood, they would tease each other.

Once I overheard the following conversation: Our neighbor, Koppen, told of how, on one of the previous days, he was trudging through the freshly fallen snow. Since the countryside looked very flat he decided to shorten his trip and cut across a field towards his neighbor Markwardt's building. But Markwardt had emptied his potato storage and not filled in the ditch. The snow covered the ditch and neighbor Koppen fell into it. He was stuck in the snow up to his arm pits, and since no one was around, and he could not climb out of the ditch on his own, he had already abandoned all hope of seeing his loved ones again. That he still was rescued, seemed to make the storytelling worthwhile to him.

My older brother, who apparently was listening attentively to this story, said to Old Koppen, "Ja, Ohm Käpp! Ji haade sult na Hus ghune o Juch enne Spudem tom ruttegruven hule."

("Well, Uncle Koppen. You should have gone home and got yourself a shovel to dig yourself out.")

Neighbor Koppen looked at my brother with wide eyes and an open mouth. He apparently could not understand how a person who was stuck in the snow up to his armpits could go home to get a shovel to dig himself out. And once he was finally out why he then should climb in again. But slowly he understood that my brother was just teasing, and he then laughingly answered, "Woo kun eck dän na Hus ghune o mi enne Spudem hule, wänn eck dach bett unned Ahms em Schnee stack. O as eck eeste ut däm Lach rutte weehe, daghd eck dach nech meehe duhedraan, nachemul en dej Kuhl renne t'krupp."

("How could I go home and get a shovel when I was stuck in snow up to my armpits? And once I was out of the hole I didn't think to get a shovel to dig myself out.")

These types of jokes were told, and the evenings were often far too short. However, not only jokes were told but often very serious matters were discussed. The farmers of Marianowo generally cared very little about politics. But it was often discussed how the Poles were closing one German school after another, and how in the remaining ones the educational authorities were increasingly pushing the German language to the background. The German school in Marianowo was never-the-less happy to be designated until the end as a "School with German Instruction", but what was left of this? Only a few hours per week were provided in the curriculum to teach the children spoken or written German. But still it was a comfort, because the teacher was able, even in the Polish teaching times, to explain something to the children in German if they had not understood him.

Until shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War, there were no political associations or clubs. The German People's Union (deutsche Volksverband) or the Young German Party (Jungdeutsche Partei) were completely unknown here. Slowly, however, some farmers started reading the weekly paper "Freind of the People" ("Der Volksfreund"), and also the people's calendar, published under the same name, found its way to German families. Also, the weekly paper, "The Messenger of Peace", published by the Protestant church leaders in Lodz, like the associated family-friendly calendar was read.

Eventually a local chapter of the German People's Union was established in Marianowo as well. And although some farmers predicted that this uniting in associations and organisations would lead to trouble if things got serious, the membership of the association grew every time a speaker came to a meeting in Marianowo.

Even the Young German Party tried to recruit members in Marianowo, but this did not result in the founding of a local chapter. The organizers of the People's Association had greater opportunities because their views were more popular among the ethnic Germans. I heard from a reliable source that, at the outbreak of the Second World War, about half of the German farmers residing in Marianowo were listed as full-fledged members of the German People's Union.

In Marianowo it was rare to see a Polish police officer wandering around. This may be because Marianowo was around eight kilometers from Dlugosiodlo, where the municipal office and the police station were. The police had to walk their beats by foot and therefore tried to limit their routes to closer places. But when, once in a while, as we used to say, one or two policemen got lost and ended up in Marianowo, they would go up to Old Lejbke, who would gladly offer them a cold drink. After that, the policemen would to a nearby farm and asked the owner for a ride back to Dlugosiodlo. I myself took a number of such trips with the police, and on one occasion had to opportunity to ask one of them why they visited the German homes much less than the Polish ones and he answered, "By you everything is always in order. On a German farm it is rare that we find anything we can write a ticket for."

Early in 1939, however, the trust between the police and the German population was destroyed. Slander by the Polish farmers, with whom the relationship until now had always been very good, was practiced more and more frequently. I was told that, in the beginning, the Dlugosiodlo police did not want to hear these accusations. But as the allegations increased, they gave in to the pressure from their superiors, and that is when the first home searches began. During the searches one or perhaps another old, rusted shotgun might be found, stashed and forgotten from the time when it was allowed to hunt on private land. Of course, such weapons possessions were misconstrued and the first arrests were made. Granted, these farmers were released after a few days, but soon other men followed them

to jail. Particularly suspect were those who were members of the German People's Union or those who had rendered services in other ways to the ethnic Germans. A number of these farmers from Marianowo and the surrounding area were sent to the infamous Bereza Kartuska concentration camp.

But in the first days of the war things got more violent. Quite a number of farmers, with their wives and children, were taken from their beds by Polish troops at night and brought to the Malkini area. Shortly before the place, they were allowed to camp in the forest, but they were told not to wander away because they were surrounded by mine fields, and as soon as one of them was triggered their whole group would be blown up.

Five days and five nights these people lived in constant fear for their lives, nourished only by the scant supply of food they had brought with them. Only on September 10th did deliverance finally come. The Polish guards were surprised by German soldiers. Most were taken prisoner, though some escaped. But the band of unfortunate people could now return home.

Another group of German people from Marianowo were brought to the banks of the river. Hidden in the forest, as the front approached, the Polish soldiers decided to shoot the German men and leave the women and children to their fate. One of my younger brothers and also the last teacher and cantor of Marianowo were among them. The fear for their lives had reached a peak when suddenly a Polish soldier yelled, "Niemcy! (Germans!)". The already-raised weapons were lowered and the oppressors fled, but most of them were soon imprisoned. Awakened to a new life, the German men and women hastened to meet their liberators.

Marianowo was probably one of the few German communities in Poland in September 1939 that did not need to mourn any casualties. All deportees were returned unharmed to their home village. The groups from Malkini and the shore of the Bug river also returned. Even those who were in jail and in Bereza Kartuska presented themselves. However, when they had recovered from their initial shock and sought to return to some semblance of normal life, like wildfire the news spread that Marianowo and all the surrounding villages were to be sacrificed and to become part of the Russian sphere of influence. The German troops began to withdraw and the German farmers went with them. All movable belongings could

be taken. The cattle were herded, and furniture and other belongings were loaded onto carts. They left, without a firm goal in mind, over the Narew River. But then came the order that the whole convoy was to go to the district of Plock.

Here all the German farmers from Marianowo and the surrounding areas, from as far as the district of Ostrow-Mazowiecki, were re-located on Polish farms. As Plock was barely one hundred kilometers away from Marianowo, they were given the opportunity to drive back to Marianowo to pick up some of the things they had not been able to take along the first time. However, many did not take advantage of this offer because they actually found everything they needed on the Polish farms.

Marianow, however, the beautiful and large German village situated in the district of Ostrow-Mayowiecki, had ceased to exist. And although a few weeks later, the German-Russian border of influence was set about 5 kilometers east of Marianowo, no one returned to their home village. Then, in January 1945, the German people left the district of Plock, now called Schröttersburg, under much worse conditions than they had left Marianowo in September 1939, to disperse to almost all parts of the world.

Homeland

Homeland! A beautiful word in our German mother language. But when we speak this word, or the German farmers of Marianowo speak it, it impels us to ask the question: What is a homeland? What really is the meaning of this word? What does a person actually mean when they say home?

A few years before the outbreak of the Second World War, I went to a meeting where a speaker from the German People's Union had come to recruit members. This speaker was well aware of the fact that the people of Marianowo were Christian-minded, and so he tried to give his popular presentation a religious slant. The topic he chose was, "The Home of the Soul of the German People", and among other things, he said the following:

"We, who are called German Protestant people of this country and are born in Poland, call this country our home. And it is in fact our home! Because here, where we were born and uttered our first sounds, here, where we spent our childhood and our parents, and in some cases our grandparents, lived and died, here, where we went to school and in youthful exuberance played the occasional prank, here, where as citizens of the state we paid our taxes and faithfully fulfilled our other obligations, here, where we continue to manage the inherited properties of our ancestors, or where we have developed and acquired properties for ourselves, and here, where we try to raise our children as good citizens of the state, is our home!"

"And who could argue this? Do we not have some right to call this land our homeland? Can someone claim that we do not belong here? Were our forefathers not called to this country to bring their culture? And did they not suffer hunger and thirst as they worked the wilderness into fruitful land, not resting until forest and swamp had been transformed into blooming meadows and fields? Were not many factories built in this land by German people? Who could then deny us the right to call this country our home?

"And yet, despite all that, lying dormant in each of our hearts is a spark of desire for the country from which our ancestors came. Even if we believe that our home is here and that

no one has the right to deny it, each of us, in some quiet hour, longs for the land in which our ancestors lived and died for thousands of years, for which they were drawn into the bloodiest wars and for which they gladly gave their lives.

“Very often we find that something binds us to the land in which our mother tongue is spoken and in which our large ethnic family feels at home. Do our hearts not beat faster when some discussion turns to the country of our language and heritage? Do we not have sympathy for the people over there who are ethnically related? Do we not inwardly share in all of the joys and sufferings of the country of our ancestors? And has not the desire welled up in each of us at some time to see the land of our fathers? Would we not like to walk on the same meadows on which our forefathers walked for thousands of years? Yes, if we are to be honest, then each of us must confess that he carries a longing in his heart for this country.

“But it is similar with our souls. Man, created by God, carries a soul of divine origin, which longs to return to its Creator. So, in every human heart lies a dormant spark of desire for the Creator, and the soul does not find rest until it has found peace in God. And, as it helps a man nothing if he plunges into the hustle and bustle of this world and all the pleasures that it can offer him, enjoying them to the last drop, his conscience settled that he can live happily without God and church, so it does not help us either to convince ourselves that this is our true home. We are indeed born and raised here, but as the soul has its origin in God, so we also have our beginning over there in the land of our ancestors. And just as the soul always awakes anew and longs for its Creator from which it was separated by man’s sin, so also arises in us the sentiment to see and know the country of our ancestors, not to be separated from the inborn customs and traditions of the German people, but to continue them despite any contrary-minded environment.

“If it is possible for a man to numb his conscience, as he devotes himself to the pleasures of this world, so it is only for a short time. The dormant spark in his heart awakens anew and blazes, admonishing him that he should make peace between himself and his God. The soul of man requires rest. But this rest can only be found with its Creator. And when man has made peace with God, then his soul finds rest, its homeland, and is saved for time and eternity.

“Home! A beautiful word in our German mother tongue. In a recent German newspaper article about the most beautiful words in our language, next to the words mother, love, luck, honor, freedom and health, the word homeland was listed. Some even maintained that homeland was the most beautiful word in the German language. Not only because it sounds so nice when it is spoken, but because it is such a meaningful word. Because happy is he who can say that he has a home.

“Yes,” said the speaker. “Do we have a home here? If we say our home is here, where we were born and raised, where our children grew up and we know every tree and shrub, where we have our families and our property, but on the other hand we are drawn to the land where our native language is spoken and where once our ancestors came from, then we must first ask the question, what is home?

“Interestingly, people answer this question in different ways because they have very different views on the subject. When some say that home is an area, family or love, so others say just the opposite. But all agree that a person can only have a home when three prerequisites exist: satisfaction, security, tranquility or peace.

“Satisfaction means that a person has everything that makes them content. A faithful spouse who they get along with, healthy children who grow up to their delight, and living with agreeable neighbors.

“Security means that a person has a good income and can earn or procure enough so that his family is never in need.

“Peace is what a person and his soul need. When a person has peace, then he also has a home. Then it does not matter where he lives, but rather what kind of environment he finds himself in. And as the soul finds its home when a person makes peace with God, so the person also finds his home when he has peace. Peace means home, for people themselves as well as for their eternal souls, because home is peace.”

As the speaker finished his presentation, I stood up and left the meeting. I just could not participate in the ensuing discussion. My inside was churned up too deeply, and I first had to collect my thoughts. I only fully became conscious of my surroundings again as I found myself standing in front of the Marianowo school. Between the church and the school I

leaned against a roadside willow tree and looked from one building to another. How long this hill had served as the center of the German life of Marianowo and its surroundings was certain. Involuntarily, however, the question came my mind how much longer it might last.

But I was terrified at this thought and tried to suppress it. The German people who lived here were born here, loved their soil, felt happy and saw this country as their home. For this reason, I was ashamed of having had this thought and never discussed it with anyone until the outbreak of the Second World War. But I kept recalling the words of the speaker, who had mentioned as a side note, that it would possibly require a drastic change through which the people would begin to see themselves as strangers, as he put it, in this land, and would give up their property and the lands of their forefathers, to return to their ancestral homeland.

This drastic change actually occurred. There were only a few years between this Sunday afternoon and the big event when the village of Marianowo, the German village, ceased to exist. Head over heels, Marianowo was cleared of German people, and there was many a farmer who only became fully consciousness of what had happened once he found himself on a Polish farm that did not belong to him. Granted, there were some who were happy to now possess such a large and beautiful farm, but in the visits that I made in the Schröttersburg district, I continuously heard people say that they were not as happy working on and owning unfamiliar property.

“Dat es doch nech mihnt!” (“This isn’t really mine!”) an old farmer once said to me when I praised his beautiful property. By this he meant to say that a beautiful property is of no value to a person if it does not belong to him and there is a risk that, at any time, it might be taken away from him or have to be abandoned.

This was not just the sentiment of the farmers, but of many others as well. They simply did not agree with settling on strange properties because they felt the pain of the displaced Poles and could not understand how people could be driven from their homes and properties overnight. For most of them, it was small consolation when it was said that there would be an equalization between the Polish and German farmers after the final victory.

But it never came to such an equalization, even if it had actually been planned. The Poles returned to their farms, and some of the German farmers of Marianowo had to pay for their relocation to Polish farms with their lives.

In January 1945, came the most drastic change. If the farmers of Marianowo had already left their home village hastily, this departure was even more surprising. In fear of the Russians, who were only a short march away, they quickly loaded their horse-drawn wagons with only the most necessary household items and fled. In long convoys they now left the district of Schröttersburg and were soon joined by other German people who were also born in Poland and had considered this country their home. Many did not live to realize the ambitious goal of reaching Germany, and others perished later as the result of hardships endured. However, those who arrived in Germany, the land from where the great grandfathers of this returning throng had emigrated, how are they doing today?

A refugee, whose name I do not know, has attempted to summarize the whole span of time from the emigration to the return, in a poem. He first speaks of how for hundreds of years the forefathers moved to the Vistula River basin, how they followed the call of the Czars, how they placed their hopes in the hands of the Polish earls, how they cleared the bushes with axes and hoes, how they dried the swamps, and how many of them thereby died prematurely. As the years passed, as many thousands of hands got busy, as they built and worked, seemingly without end, their urge to build was never satisfied. As the villages on the banks of the Vistula emerged, these creations brought envy. And although the hatred could not rob their possessions, it often brought them worry and suffering.

The poet discusses how loyalty to the country leads to their demise. For when the furies of war began to race through the world, when they began to stir up hatred and revenge, the fate of the Germans in Poland was sealed. For when the demons of hell were unchained, no one needed to justify their actions. The Germans from Poland were to leave their homes because they were suddenly too bad for their surroundings.

In the end, however, the poet discovers that Germany, although itself bleeding from many wounds, grants them a protective roof. The innocents have been deprived of their homeland, and thereby testify to the disgrace of the century.

Yes, the German people of Marianowo, even they returned to their "fatherhouse", which had once been left by their grandparents or even their great-grandparents. But the hardships that these people suffered in their return were greater than those their forefathers had endured when they emigrated to Poland. In those days one did not expect to find rose gardens in Poland, and one just took everything the way it came. But now it was different. Nobody believed it was their fault that they had to abandon house and home to live in misery. The hunger and thirst, however, thank God, did not last too long, and when now and then I visit someone, I am usually happy to discover that the people from Marianowo have it better today than they did in Poland.

In spite of all this though, no one is really happy. When I talk to these people I often hear that very few of them have found what they hoped for in Germany, namely, their home. Yes, the people make a good living. And even though most of them have a completely different occupation than they had in Marianowo, they find themselves very happy with it. But what is missing is the connection, the interaction with other people. "Ma kann doch met diche Liede nech waam waare!" ("I just can't get warm with you!") I often hear said. What they mean by this is that the people here are from a completely different clan. It is not as easy to engage them in a conversation. And often I even hear the complaint, "Wir werden doch nicht für voll angesehen." ("But we are not considered complete.") And then the people begin to reminisce about their youth, their wonderful experiences and eventually come to the conclusion that "back home", as they express it, it was much nicer and better than now.

Had the Germans from Poland settled in groups, or at least if several families from one location could have been accommodated in one location in a city, they would certainly have felt more comfortable. But it is rare to find a place where several acquainted families, that knew each other from earlier, are together. Although fraternities tried to combine the various compatriots into groups, this was a poor substitute for grouping people who knew each other from their childhood days. And so these people feel lonely and believe now more than ever that they are living in a foreign land, when it is actually their home in which they find themselves.

Many of these people also cannot get over the fact that they had to leave their houses and homes, for which most of them have not received any compensation. Perhaps they promised themselves a bit too much when the talk turned to the Compensation Act. Back then, everyone believed they only needed to complete the application and the money for the abandoned property would be paid to him in a few weeks. But the years passed and more new difficulties surfaced in the compensation question. It took a long time before the request was sent to the homeland information center, there again some time passed until a meeting with local experts was called, each application was examined for its credibility and even then it could take years for a small sum to be paid. In many cases, the applicants are no longer there, and their children continue to wait for compensation for the possessions which were left behind by the parents.

In spite of all this, I hope and wish, although the generation that left Marianowo did not find the home that they had hoped for in Germany, that their children feel comfortable and at home here. And to turn our thoughts once more to Marianowo, I have tried to piece together a poem about this village in the language that was spoken in this place in daily life.

En Marjenaaw du stund e Hus,	*In Marianowo stood a house*
Woe eck gebore ben drenne.	*Where I was born*
Dat sach seehe schmock va butte ut,	*It looked as good as butter,*
Dach schmecke nach va benne.	*But it tasted much better.*
Oppem Haf due stund e Lindeboom,	*In the yard stood a linden tree,*
Met groot vabreed de Ääste.	*With large, sprawling branches.*
O unne däm Boom, due stund en Bank,	*And under the tree was a bench,*
Woe wi oos kunne hänsäte.	*Where we could sit.*
Schmock weehe dat ock ringsheremm	*It was beautiful all around*
Wänn Gras o Halm seck jughde.	*When grass and stalk rubbed each other*
Dee Wihsebloomkes neckde stomm,	*The meadow flowers bowed silently*
As wulle see oos säghe	*As if to say:*
Dit Hus es as e Märchenschloß,	*This house is a fairy tale castle,*
Met sihne groote Stuwe.	*With its large rooms*
O selig as en Moodes Schooß	*As blessed as a mother's lap,*
Lät seck dat hihe good schlupe	*You can sleep well there*

But this is all far in the past. Never again will there be a returning for the generation that was born and raised there. But what happened to the well-kept German properties and farms? It is certain that there are no German people in Marianowo today. Who took their place? Was it maybe Poles from the neighborhood, or did the replacements come from far away? I wonder if the newly built prayer hall is still standing, and the school is still there next to it? What purpose, if such buildings are still standing, do they now serve? In any case, the German people of Marianowo have now been dispersed by the wind. Most of them probably landed in Germany. But I know of many who emigrated to England, Canada, the United States of America, Australia and even to South Africa. After the war, I have only met with a few comrades and friends whom I knew and I grew up with. In spirit though, I greet them all and call to them, "Think back to our youth and do not forget the large and beautiful village of Marianowo!"