

TINA

KATARINA DYCK VOGT (1920-2011)

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from Endurance: One Family's Story of Surviving Communism, War, Famine, and the Soviet Gulag by A. Nakhla

TINA ◆ Born During the Russian Civil War

Katharina Dyck Vogt (1920-2011)



Tina was born during the Russian Civil War, when Lenin was establishing communism in the Soviet Union. Times were hard for Tina's family and many others, as normal life was disrupted by war and new communist policies ended private property and people lost their right to their possessions.

In the early days of Soviet collectivization, everybody's food was confiscated. Tina's mother grabbed a bag of flour and tied it around her stomach under her dress so she would have something to feed her seven children.



A requisitioning party in nearby Odessa, Ukraine, in 1932. Communists sent search parties to homes to seize any and all food (sacks of grain in the above picture), which became state property. The people were left with nothing to feed their families.

Born During the Russian Civil War

Katharina Dyck was born on December 21, 1920, in Nieder-Chortitza. She was the fifth child of Gerhard and Anganetha Dyck; they already had an 8-year-old daughter, Neta, and three sons, 7-year-old Heinrich, 5-year-old Peter, and 3-year-old Gerhard. Her family called her Tina. Another child, Anni, was born when Tina was 5, and Hans two years later, seven children in all.

The Russian Civil War (1917-1922) introduced communism into the Soviet Union. Under a program called "war communism," violent means were used to force socialism on society.

The government imposed requisitioning on the people by demanding quotas of goods from each household. Families had very little food themselves, having their fields and gardens trampled and raided by the various armies. Search parties entered houses, emptied cupboards, and procured the needed goods by impoverishing the peasants.

Collectivization was another goal of communism. The Marxists thought that people would voluntarily relinquish their lands, homes, and private property to the government for redistribution as the government saw fit. Not surprisingly, the most vocal opponents of collectivization were those who had the most to lose. Thus, the Communist Party targeted the wealthy and educated classes. They called them "kulaks," meaning tight-fisted ones, kicked them out of their homes, seized their estates, and sentenced them to death or exiled entire families to Siberia.

Tina's family was not rich and did not own land, so they were not in danger of being exiled. Tina's father worked at a windmill, grinding wheat. The Dyck family had shortages, but they did not starve the years they had the windmill.

After the Revolution, things improved for a time. Under the New Economic Policy, the government divided up the large kulak estates and distributed the land more evenly among community members, giving several hectares to each person. Tina's family received a plot of land that provided vegetables for their table and even a surplus to sell.

The Severe Stalin Years

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Tina's father died in 1929, when she was 8. Her mother was left with seven children to raise by herself. The youngest, Hans, died shortly after.

The Severe Stalin Years

Stalin wanted to collectivize, modernize, and industrialize the Soviet Union in as short a time as possible. Beginning in 1929, private property was again taken away, and requisitioning returned.

Tina's mother saw a search party arriving at her house. She quickly filled a bag of flour and tied it around her waist under her dress. The searchers took everything they could find, even a pot with a little lard in it, to be used for cooking, but they did not find the flour. Tina's mother had seven children, and that bag of flour was the only thing she had left with which to feed them.

Food was scarce. Kolkhoz workers received a very thin, watery soup for lunch at the field. The Dyck family had to forage for acacia flowers and other plants and weeds to eat, and Tina's brothers caught field mice to supplement the family's diet. There wasn't food for everybody, so those working in the fields had to eat first. Ten-year-old Tina's body became swollen from hunger in 1931, at the beginning of the Holodomor Famine.

Tina's Aunt Lena (her father's sister) lived in Neuendorf, about 30 kilometers from Nieder-Chortitza. She had a little more to eat. Maybe a kinder search party there had closed its eyes and left a few potatoes or beans behind. Tante Lena took in Tina for two years and looked after her. She gave Tina a fresh glass of milk everyday, a luxury Tina hadn't had at home. During her time in Neuendorf, Tina contracted typhus. She lost all her hair and was very ill for a time. Besides that illness, though, those two years in Neuendorf were wonderful, having enough to eat. Tina cried when she had to go home again to attend school in Nieder-Chortitza. Her sister Neta, also starving, took Tina's place.

When Tina arrived home, though, the situation had improved there, too. She attended school in Nieder-Chortitza.



Starving children in Ukraine during the Holodomor (1932-33).
Tina, 11-12 years old at the time, exhibited swelling of the abdomen, caused by insufficient protein or parasites from eating dirt and other non-edible things.



As a life-saving measure, Tina went to live with her aunt in another village. There, she got a glass of milk each day, a luxury her family couldn't afford. She cried when she had to return home where there was less food.



A sculpture in Kiev, Ukraine, honoring the famine's victims.
Public commemoration has been possible only since the fall of communism in the Soviet Union in 1989. People place grain in the statue's arms or apples at her feet.

TINA ♦ A Short and Tragic Marriage

Katharina Dyck Vogt (1920-2011)

A Short and Tragic Marriage

In 1937, a new, good-looking teacher named David Vogt began teaching at the Nieder-Chortitza school. All the girls fell in love with him, but 16-year old Tina caught his eye. Tina and David were married in 1938, and the following year, on August 20, 1939, their son Viktor was born.

As newlyweds, Tina and David moved in with Tina's grandmother, Anganetha Penner. They shared very tight accommodations, just one room in her house. Tina became ill with tuberculosis when Viktor was born. She was very weak, so her aunt, Anna Penner, called "Tante Nüt," had to step in to care for Viktor for several months while Tina's grandmother nursed Tina back to health. Viktor also developed tuberculosis, and was ill for some time. After they left Russia, he was put into a sanitarium in Austria where he recovered and remained healthy for the rest of his life.

Tina's husband, David, was drafted into the Russian Army. When war broke out with Germany in 1941, the Soviets began exiling vast numbers of ethnic people whose loyalty might be suspect, starting with Russian-born Germans. In the wave of forced relocations that also claimed Tina's brother, Peter, and his family, David was sent to Siberia in 1941 and put into a forced labor camp. Tina never saw him again. She presumed that he died there.



As newlyweds, Tina and her husband, schoolteacher David Vogt, moved into Tina's grandmother's house in Nieder-Chortitza. They shared a small room in the crowded household. Tina and her son Viktor developed TB, but Tina's grandmother and aunt, Tante Nüt, helped care for them.

German Occupation During World War II

By July, 1941, the invading German Army occupied Nieder-Chortitza. The Soviets had relocated many people from their village east across the Dnieper River and north to Siberia, but Tina, her mother, and Viktor, hid in Tina's grandmother's basement until the Germans came. Once the German front passed through central Ukraine and went further east into Russia, the Mennonites who remained were able to live in their own homes.

Life resumed some semblance of normalcy during the two years of German occupation. The occupational government seemed reasonable and fair to the Mennonites. They mapped the local villages and compiled village reports that quantified how the people had suffered under communist rule: how many from Nieder-Chortitza had been exiled as kulaks in 1929 (7 families), how many had been arrested during the Purges of 1938 (74 men), and how many had been forcibly relocated in 1941 (280 people). Much of the communal fear caused by communist practices of arbitrary arrests, government surveillance, and soliciting informants vanished.



Deportations of Germans, 1941. Forced relocations were part of Russia's method of dealing with undesirable people groups. Tina's husband, David, was sent to a prison camp in Siberia in 1941, along with 279 other Germans from Nieder-Chortitza. Many exiles were worked to death or died of exposure. David never returned.

German Occupation During World War II

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Times were lean throughout the war. The crops did poorly, as many fields had been trampled by opposing armies, and wartime requisitioning was still in effect. Citizens had to provide the German government with a portion of their milk, eggs, meat, and bread. Families gleaned what they could from their trampled fields and harvested vegetables grown in their gardens, canning or drying what they could to store away for the winter months.

In the fall of 1941, the Germans reopened the local school. They invited the Mennonites to find teachers from the village. This was a gain for the Mennonites, since the Soviets had replaced many Mennonite teachers with Soviet ones steeped in atheism. Tina and her younger sister, Anni, began teaching at the Nieder-Chortitza elementary school. Tina taught Grade One, and Anni, who had recently graduated, taught kindergarten.

The Germans also permitted freedom of religion. The church, which had been closed since the middle 1930s, reopened and people began attending services again. German soldiers sometimes attended church with the villagers. The communist regime had destroyed all the songbooks and most of the Bibles, but it was a joy to be able to express faith once again without fear of reprisal.

Tina joined a baptism class and was baptized with a group of other believers in 1942. In Mennonite communities, baptism was an important rite. It was a public declaration of one's faith, and meant full membership in the local church.

German rule didn't last long. Once the German army suffered defeat at Stalingrad in February, 1943, the Germans started a slow retreat out of the Soviet Union. As Russian forces drove them westward, the German army evacuated ahead of their retreating forces the Germans who had lived in Russia for generations. Most didn't want to stay; they had suffered enough under communism and were ready to permanently leave the Soviet Union.

Given just a day's notice, Tina and her family permanently left Nieder-Chortitza on October 3, 1943. It would be the last time she ever would ever call her little village on the Dnieper River in Ukraine "home."



Tina on her baptism day in 1942 in Nieder-Chortitza, with son Viktor and sister, Anni in the former Communist Club Garden.

Under German occupation, the people regained the right of religious expression, and resumed religious worship and public expressions of faith, like baptisms.



Pastor Heinrich Winter performing a baptism in Nieder-Chortitza during German occupation, 1941-43.

GERMAN VILLAGE REPORT 1942

Assessing Communist Rule in Nieder-Chortitz



Leaving Russia & Becoming a War Refugee

◆ **TINA**

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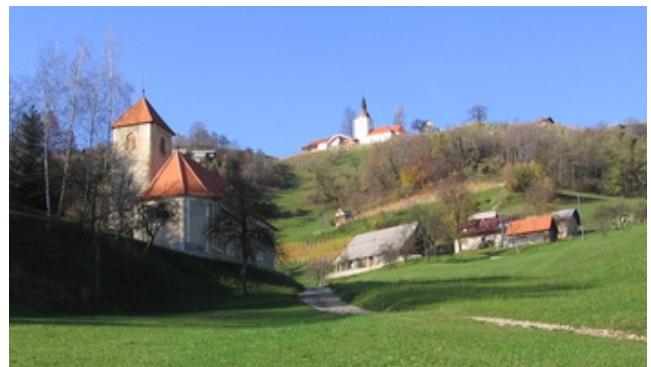
Leaving Russia & Becoming a War Refugee

German troops provided trains for the Mennonites and other Germans who were evacuated from Ukraine. The Mennonites were loaded onto cattle cars with no roofs. Each car was so crowded that the passengers had to sit up day and night; there was no room to lay down. During one of the many stops, somebody found some lumber and built roofs over the top. It was seven weeks before the refugees finally arrived in Germany. They came to Dresden for a short time, then went on to Lampertswalde, then back to Dresden. Each time, they stayed in different refugee camps, one a converted linen factory. Conditions were crowded and dirty. From Dresden they were sent to Yugoslavia (today it is Slovenia), where they stayed until the end of the war.

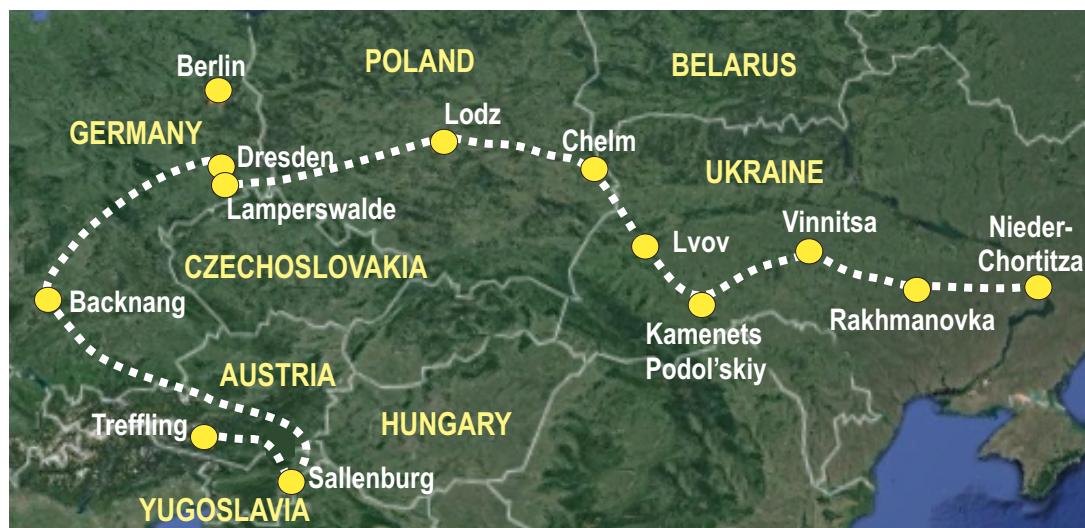
Tina found a job working in Sallenburg's City Hall. Her mother and son Viktor were still with her. Her sister Anni was nearby, a kindergarten teacher in Windisch Landsberg. Tina's mother was very lonely in Sallenburg. There were no other Mennonites there, nobody with whom she could speak German, and she was angry with Tina for going to work in such a small forsaken village. Tina was not physically strong, though, and she was happy to have an easy job, despite her mother's complaints.



Tina and other German refugees left Ukraine in cattle cars with no roof, evacuated by the German army. They traveled for seven weeks to Germany, in cars so crowded that there was no room to lie down.



Tina lived in Sallenburg and worked at its city hall towards the end of the war. The town had been Loka pri Žusmu, Yugoslavia, but the Germans had renamed it during their occupation.



Tina left Ukraine in October, 1943, and after traveling several months through various refugee camps, she ended up in Yugoslavia. She was with her son, Viktor, her mother, and her sister, Anni.

TINA ♦ Trapped in Communist Yugoslavia

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Tina in Sallenburg, Yugoslavia, 1944.



Tina and her family experienced a terrifying Partisan attack in Sallenburg.

A few days later, they left Sallenburg for a larger city.

One night, a Partisan attack occurred in Sallenburg, right outside Tina's home. The Partisans were Yugoslavian resistance fighters, communists who fought the Germans. As the gun battle raged outside, Tina grabbed Viktor from his bed and laid him on a blanket in the hallway. She knelt over him on the cement floor for hours, shielding him with her body. When the shooting finally subsided, her knees were so sore that she could hardly stand. An investigation of the yard showed three dead Partisans and three dead Germans lying there. It was unsettling. A few days later, Tina, Viktor, Anni, and their mother sought safety in Erlachstein, a larger city close to Celje.

Trapped in Communist Yugoslavia



At the end of the war, Tina and many other Germans and Axis soldiers were in communist-controlled Yugoslavia. Desperate to escape communist rule, hundreds of thousands of soldiers and refugees like Tina and her family traveled for the border. They were refused exit, and became enmeshed in an event called the Bleiburg Repatriations, where columns of refugees and POWs were driven toward Czechoslovakia and killed by the thousands in a death march.

On May 8, 1945, the war ended. Tina and her family didn't want to stay in Yugoslavia because it was communist, and they were in danger of being sent back to Russia. That would have meant exile and labor camps for them. They fled with the Germans toward Austria, begging the German soldiers for rides on their trucks towards the border. The trip to the border took 16 days, and was bumper-to-bumper traffic all the way. When they finally reached the border, however, the Yugoslavs refused to permit them to exit the country. They



Tina and her family, along with thousands of others, were stuck in communist Yugoslavia after the war, and refused exit.

even confiscated the trucks, so Tina and her family had to walk back. They became separated from Anni at this time.

Tina, Viktor, and her mother went to a farmhouse. The farmer's wife was kind. She gave them a little pull-wagon and said, "Put your belongings and the child in the wagon and go on." From the time they started for the border in Yugoslavia until their journey ended in Austria, they were in peril the whole way. Many people got shot, and some starved to death. There were too many horrible incidents to mention. They marched many days, and never really knew where they were.

They moved slowly with the wagon. Everybody passed them and they were eventually left all by themselves. They came to a village and saw some soldiers who were not communist. The soldiers motioned for Tina and her family to sit under a tree. There were other refugees there as well. After awhile, all the refugees were loaded onto trucks and taken to Klagenfurt, a D.P. (Displaced Persons) camp.



German POWs in Klagenfurt, May 1945.



Fleeing the Russians, she and her mother set out for the Austrian border on foot, pulling her son Viktor in a wagon that a farmer's wife had given her. Photo: German refugees.

Klagenfurt Refugee Camp

The first morning in Klagenfurt, all the refugees were summoned to the yard. Farmers had come to select workers from among the refugees, whom they would feed in exchange for work. Tina stood with all the others, but no one selected her. She thought that she probably looked too frail and skinny. In the afternoon, a woman offered Tina a job working in her shop. Unwilling to leave behind her mother and son, who depended on her, Tina asked the woman if she could bring them along, but the woman refused. That night, as she went to bed jobless and hungry, Tina thought disparagingly, "Nobody wants us. We will starve to death."

In the D.P. camp, Tina and her small family shared sleeping quarters with 50 to 60 people. Looking around, Tina noticed one woman eating bread. She asked her where she had gotten it. The woman replied that she washed laundry for English soldiers. They picked her up each morning, took her to their camp where she worked, and returned her each night. They paid her with three meals a day and food stamps. Tina asked if she could work there too, and the woman agreed. So Tina was hired to wash for the English soldiers.

She caught the eye of an English major. Once, this major sent his messenger to tell Tina that he wanted to take her for a ride at 5 o'clock. Tina knew

TINA ♦ The Start of a New Life in Germany

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In Klagenfurt, the British military officers tried to bribe the women for sexual favors in exchange for groceries. Tina responded, "If I go with somebody, it will be for love, not for a bag of groceries!" The soldiers respected her for it, and she became a washerwoman, earning honest wages for honest work.



Tina (right) and her sister Anni in Treffling refugee camp, Austria.

what he had in mind, and didn't go. The next day when she reported for work, the major stood there with his arms full of groceries. His messenger announced, "All those groceries would have been yours, if you would have gone with the major." Tina retorted, "If I go with somebody, it will be for love, not for a bag of groceries!" The soldiers heard about the incident and respected her for it. They paid her good wages so she could supply her mother and Viktor with food.

Winter came, and the big sleeping quarters in the camp were unheated. The English soldiers had built another D.P. camp, this one in Treffling, and sent the Dycks there. The Mennonites had dispatched MCC workers to Europe to look for displaced Mennonites and help families reunite. Through their help, Anni found them in May. Together they found their older sister, Neta, and her children, who were in Eggerding, Austria.

The Start of a New Life in Germany

Tina's mother and sister Anni immigrated to Canada in 1949, and her sister Neta and four children went a few months later. Since Tina had had tuberculosis, scars still showed up on her lung x-rays. Canada only took healthy people, so Tina was not allowed to immigrate. Tina and Viktor had to remain behind in Germany.

Tina met Richard in Germany. Remarriage was complicated since her first husband had disappeared to Siberia, so Tina and Richard lived common law and she never took his name. She was able to get a widow's pension which helped support her family. Together, Tina and Richard had Heinz. The family then moved to Vettelschoss, where they had two more sons, Wolfgang and Horst. Tina and her family lived in Vettelschoss for many years.

God must have had a plan why Tina was not allowed to go to Canada. As more and more Mennonites arrived in Germany, most without documents, Tina was positioned to testify to the identity of many people from her village and help them immigrate. Forty years later, after Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* gave greater freedom to the

Family Life in Germany

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Tina and Richard, 1949.



Tina and Richard, Heinz & Viktor at Christmas.



Viktor Vogt, Tina's son
who had traveled through
war-torn Europe with her.
He worked with Richard,
building bridges.



Heinz (another of Tina's sons) and Rosi Vogt,
and their son Dirk.



Tina, Richard, and their sons, Viktor (standing) and Heinz.



Tina settled in Vettelschoss, Germany, a small town near the Rhine River, and made a life for herself there.

Years later, when Soviet immigration policies lightened under *Glasnost*, she was able to help her three brothers and their families immigrate to Germany.

TINA ♦ Later Years and Reunions with Family

Katharina Dyck Vogt (1920-2011)



A reunion with brother Hein. Tina surprised her brother Hein at the Vancouver airport, BC in 1983. He was coming to Canada to visit, and she was visiting as well. It was the first time they had seen each other in 47 years.

Soviet people, Tina was able to help her brothers Gerhard, Peter, and Hein and their families, and several cousins immigrate to Germany from the former USSR. After her lonely first years in Germany, at the end of her life she was surrounded by family.

In 1998, the six Dyck siblings had a reunion in Germany. They had been dispersed and lived exceedingly difficult lives, yet God had preserved each through very dark times. They felt fortunate to be together, and to have the last years of their lives so peaceful and full of family.

Tina died on June 24, 2011. She was 90.



A Reunion in Germany, 1998. Gerhard, Lydia (Gerhard's wife), Tina, Anni, Karl (Anni's husband), and Neta.



Tina at Kitsilano Beach in Vancouver, BC.
She is 63.



Tina in her later years. She lived in an upstairs apartment of her house, with son Wolfgang and daughter-in-law Rosi living below.

Family Life in Germany

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Tina, sitting on floor, surrounded by family.



Tina's son, Horst Vogt, and his daughter, Nina, on her wedding day in 2016.



Family in Germany, 1989.

TINA ♦ Family Life in Germany

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Family celebrations. Viktor Vogt's 50th birthday.(L to R): Dorothy, son Horst, sister Anni, a friend, son Viktor (standing), grandson Dirk, son Wolfgang, Inge (son Viktor's wife), Rosi (son Wolfgang's wife), and Anja (grandson Dirk's wife).



Tina's family in 2016 at granddaughter Nina's wedding.