

The "stupid boy"

There were also the memories of me and my mother. Often, she took me everywhere on her bike in the child seat on the steering wheel, on the dusty road before it was paved, and we drove to the grocer for shopping.

There were many beautiful things: "sugar bonbons", "Arabic gum sweets, and other candies. This had always been a good incentive to come there with her. Apart from the beautiful feeling to be alone with my mother to go and see the scenery passing by, and to be faster than the pedestrians who were each time greeted with "s'Gott". (G'd Day).

Where the plain of the Traisen valley merges with Pré-Alpine foothills, the road from "Schloss Wald" along the Perschling to Pyhra, from us to the "grocer" was about two kilometres, only 10 minutes by bicycle. Later that would be my way to school, where we took a good half hour on our little legs, every time when the fat, friendly bus

driver did not stop and pick us up for free.

Once a military vehicle rushed beside us and my mother got off the bike and dragged me to the roadside: "*Quick Hansl, the Russians, hold on and keep quiet now.*"

At that time, the Russians were still occupying forces in Lower Austria, however, they did not notice us at all, but the cloud of dust behind the car was very impressive to me.

Yes, and there were the blockhouses of the Kyrnberg estate, some in Tyrolean farmhouse style which did not fit to the usual square yard farm houses here.

My great-great uncle, Paul Kupelwieser, had been manager at the Vítkovice ironworks of Baron Rothschild. His brother, my great-grandfather, the lawyer Carl Kupelwieser had, as mentioned, married Bertha Wittgenstein who brought this Kyrnberg estate into their marriage.

Even Carl became rich by acquiring iron shares almost overnight. He now invested them in large-scale real estate in Vienna, Pörtschach, Pyhra and Lunz

am See, where he built villas, cabins and a castle.

Among the inherited and acquired goods were also many small adjacent mountain farms to obtain contiguous forest areas for hunting. The "new rich" wanted to be considered equal to the old-established aristocrats. However, this was, at that time denounced as a widespread practice of acquiring mountain farms by the new rich, as "*peasants trumping*". But simultaneously Carl and Bertha also donated a lot to the community. The Radium Institute in Vienna, the hospital in Scheibbs, the Biological Station Lunz am See etc.



Bertha and Carl Kupelwieser (archive of my mother)

Such as also the old agricultural school in Pyhra to which our former Kyrnberg estate now belonged, where I went along with my mother on the bike.

Left from the road to Pyhra was still a small part, the so-called Residual or Fruit Garden estate, which still belonged to my mother's family. It was lying on a steep slope, with a huge ap-

ple wine cellar behind the "Stadler-house" where the Stadler, in his capacity as carriage driver of my grandmother had lived.

Further up there was the "Hunting Yard" of my great-grandfather, behind the now empty villa where my mother grew up. On the street there was the greater former centre of the estate, with many farm buildings and cow stables, surrounded by wooded hills and meadows of the Alpine foothills.

When it was then let my mother once started screaming and said to me. *"Yes, if the "Gauleiter" (Nazi Governor) had not taken away all that from us, anything here could be all yours now"*. I could not understand that, as still a child, but it remained in my brain as a kind of puzzle.

I was interested in cheap candies much more than an estate with many fields and meadows.

My father, who had found my mother after the war almost alone with a cow, a goat, a few pigs and the Czech caretaker and gardener Wenzel Kadletz on the "remaining estate", and had rushed to help her in haymaking and fruit harvesting, had himself a farm just behind Kyrnberg with meadows, fields and a small forest.

Enough for me to run around to scramble on gnarled fruit trees in the summer. Would I have needed such a big country estate anymore?

But this question didn't leave me too. Someone who had taken that away from my mother could only be a worse villain.

He probably looked like the "Rübezahl" (*giant forest ghost*) from my fairy tale book and from which someone had read to me so often before. I dreamed of him again and again - huge, with a black beard and swinging a mace.

"Mom, what is a "Gauleiter?" I asked her when we arrived back home?

"No Hansl, why are you asking so much that you cannot understand, that's a long story," was the answer.

Always the same, I was just an *"silly boy"* who knew nothing ...



The hunting lodge "Gamseck" (my mother's archive)

In this hut book were also writings of military staff from the war, who had lived there. "Yes, yes," said mother, "here they tested motor engines for Russia and Norway".

Behind the "Pauschenalm" mountain pasture was what was named the Central European meteorological cold pole of "G'stettneralm" with the "Grünloch" "green hole", a giant sink-hole in which, in winter, the cold air accumulates and cannot drain out. In summer the water flows out via the underneath discharge, through the karst.

At that time, there were still old, dilapidated barracks. Minus 53 degrees had been measured there already. Be-

cause Hitler would have said that here they should test the engines for the North



Coldness pole Grünloch with measurement Station

(lecture Leichtfried, Biolog. Station Lunz)

Pole, then they would also not freeze in Russia.

In 1943 the military had seized this terrain of the families Kupelwieser, Mathes and Lenz at the "Pole of Cold" closer to this sinkhole, the "green hole" at 1500 meters above sea level with all its huts. They built barracks and a military kitchen, stationed a whole company of soldiers there and set up a secret troop-training depot for testing tank engines and engine oils for the invasion of Russia.

In 1943, the military had, in a hurry, confiscated all the alpine huts on the mountains of the Kupelwieser, Mathes, and Lenz families on the "coldness pole" in the vicinity of that dolina, the "Grünloch" at 1500 meters above sea level, and barracks and a military kitchen were built. Whole companies of soldiers were stationed there and a secret troop exercise place and a motor vehicle test station were set up for the testing of tank engines and engine oils for the Russia campaign were set up..



*Temperature measurement in the winter of
1932*

(Lecture. Leichtfried, Biolog. Station Lunz)

There was also a "cable car station" right behind the Gamseck house. It had been only a goods cable-track, but sometimes some brave woodsmen also ventured up on the wooden platform to the dizzy height.

As a child, I had seen it before and was always very impressed, but finally it was decommissioned in the 1950s.



With such "Kettenrad" (chained motorcycles) vehicles the pasture for the military was reached.

([Http://www.wikiwand.com/it/Sd.Kfz._2_kleines_Kettenrad](http://www.wikiwand.com/it/Sd.Kfz._2_kleines_Kettenrad), creative commons license)

It was of interest to the Nazis to keep this place secret, that's why they didn't confiscate the family estate in Lunz as a whole, but operated in the mountains in secret and under the protection of a normal seeming forest enterprise, which was, after the death of

my grandfather in 1939 and the withdrawal of my grandmother to her private quarters, *de facto* led by the head of the biological station Professor Ruttner, together with the domain-forester Hohenwarter. Both had expressed good contacts with the NS-authorities.

This war-important role of the professor apparently gave him the possibility to protect, with much courage, a Jewess and her children. This was probably also due to the following geographical situation: the estate Seehof-Hirschtal lies behind the Seehof Castle and is only accessible via a forest road, it is completely shielded by the Dürrenstein massif to the south. In this secret troop-training terrain lived thousands of soldiers and the Hitler Youth in huts, barracks and seized mountain pastures.

Perhaps the Gestapo had no access, or they could not, or did not, intervene in this domain of the military?

Then there was also the "Army Foal Yard" in Lehen on the road to Göstling where the young military horses were grown up. Also, at that time this terrain belonged to the Seehof domain. Since the heavily militarized mountain area was accessible only through a

"Reitsteig" (horse trail) the horses, and the chained motor cycle (Kettenkrad) vehicles, were particularly important there. The animals were supplied by the forest estate, **where** still lived - under constant threat - my grandmother.



*My then 22-year-old uncle (left) in the civil labour service with the forester and Wehrmacht officers on the "Army Foad Yardf" in Lunz.
(My mother's archive)*

The cable car was taken away again after the end of the 1950's, because it was unsuitable for forest work. There was only a small platform, just large enough to accommodate a tank engine.

"Yeah," my mother said, "that was a bad time. At war's end. there was even

terrible fighting on the mountain pasture, and behind the Gamseck house, someone was shot down ... ".