

## My Family's Story

### (During World War II – Wolga/Krim Germans)

Welcome to the story of my family and how they experienced World War II as so called “Wolga Germans”, that were from my grandmothers side and as “Krim Germans”, that were from my grandfather's side.

First of all, I'd like to begin with the side of my grandmother, the Wolga Germans. Well, the story of my family starts with when they still used to live in Germany in the 17th century, until the tsarina Katarina invited people from foreign countries, especially Germany to settle in Russia and start a new life there, which sounded pretty good to my family because in Russia there was a lot of land, tax exemption, religious tolerance, and extension from military service, meaning that there they would succeed more. After they arrived at the river called Wolga, which is right next to the city “Saratow”, they were not the only ones who settled there and to be honest it was quite the opposite, because a lot of people especially from Germany started a new life there, which also made them support each other and create a community. Later on my family started to build their home in that area and just like how they planned they started a new life and got pretty successful, because my great great grandfather for example started selling wheat to stores, like to that German store called “Kaiser”, which also made him to still be in contact with Germany and earn pretty much money, so that my family can have a good life in Russia. However once the World War II started my family got deported to Uzbekistan, because the Russians took them as traitors, since they were German, which made them think that they could betray them and be against Russia. So since the Russians didn't want my family there anymore, they started to take everything away from them, like their house, their money and livestock. Additionally they didn't just take away things that they have built or succeeded, because they also arrested my great grandmothers father for no reason. This moment caused my great grandmother pretty much a trauma, because till she was an old woman she never forgot about it, since it happened right in front of her eyes and how she never saw him after that ever again. After the deportation my family had a very hard start at Uzbekistan, because of all the loss they have made and how everything has been taken away from them, but they still managed to build a new house and start a new life again, because of all that support they gave to each other. In addition there were also lot of German settlements in Uzbekistan as well and even though my family wasn't living in Germany anymore, they still spoke German at home or with some other Germans that settled there and they still kept the German traditions, like celebrating Christmas, singing German songs or reading German poems.

Well, that was everything about my grandmother's side (the Wolga Germans) and second of all I would like to continue with my grandfather's side, who were the “Krim Germans”.

The side of my grandfather emigrated in the 18th century from Germany to the peninsula called “Krim”. They got there the same way the side of my grandmother did when they came to the river Wolga, meaning that they also got invited by tsarina Katarina to come to Russia for the same reason (she offered a lot of land, tax exemption, religious tolerance, and extension from military service). As soon as they arrived at that peninsula, they also started building houses, breeding livestock and just took the opportunity to live better life very seriously. Just like at the Wolga river, there were a lot of German settlements already, but not as much as at the Wolga river, because the

amount of land was smaller and more mountainous, which is why it had a lot of disadvantages in the field of country life. After they have lived there till world war 2, the Russians took everything away from them just like they did with my grandma's side, for the same reason. However the difference between my grandma's and grandfather's side is that my grandma's family got deported to Uzbekistan, meanwhile my grandfather side got deported to Kazakhstan and to be specific they lived in the south of Kazakhstan. As soon as they arrive there, they again started to build a new home for them, which they also managed to do pretty good because of how hard-working they were. Additionally my great great grandfather used to do gatherings with the other German people that got deported there as well, in which he celebrated traditional events. However, after the World War II started to become even bigger the men also got arrested and taken away from their families, just like they were at my grandmother's side and a lot of teenagers around 16 years, were forced to do physical hard work, like chopping wood, which is what my great grandfather had to do. Furthermore was collecting wood in huge forests a task as well, which is what my great grandmother was doing and that's also where she met my great grandfather and how they fell in love.

About two generations later, when my mom was born, my grandmother and grandfather were now living in Kazakhstan together and once my mom was about 14 years old, they decided to go back to Germany, since they just wanted to come back to their hometown. The problem was that they weren't allowed to come back to Germany yet, because it was forbidden for many reasons. However, as soon as it was allowed again, they came back to Germany in 1992, even though they would've come back earlier. After they all arrived in Germany, they weren't accepted that much and everybody gave them a hard start again, but just like my ancestors did they still didn't give up till today and managed to start a new life again.

In conclusion, you could say that my family had to go through a lot of things, but still always managed to handle it because of all the support they gave each other and of how hard-working they were, even though the start in a new country after loosing everything was never easy for them.