Introduction

The journalist Rupert Lockwood (1908–1997) lived in Victoria, Australia, and wrote a number of (unpublished) articles on the history of the Wends in Europe and Australia, particularly those who settled in Victoria.

Lockwood hoped to publish the manuscripts, however in the early 1990's his health deteriorated and he passed the manuscripts on to a friend not long before his death.

His friend knew nothing about the Wends and filed his work away. She came across the manuscripts 20 years later and considered taking them to the rubbish tip, but fortunately her husband typed the word 'Wends' into his internet search engine and found the website of the Wendish Heritage Society in Victoria. Lockwood's friend contacted the Society in 2016 and offered to donate the manuscripts.

The members of the Wendish Heritage Society in Victoria were thrilled to receive the manuscripts and have published them on line (www.wendishheritage.org.au) with the assistance of graphic designer, Robyn Zwar.

The Wends in Europe and Australia

by Australian journalist,
Rupert Lockwood
1908–1997

Chapter One
Background

Charlemagne, King-Emperor of the Franks for the bloody years 771–814, refused to let his acquired Latin culture and demands of mistresses interfere with his brutal Christianising of Saxons and Slavs. Between Christians and heathen Wends, he established the Elbe-Saale line and buffer states, the Marches. Magdeburg, founded in 805, became a mission city, a second Rome, boasting 12 cardinal-priests, 12 cardinal-deacons and 24 cardinal-sub-deacons. Magdeburg was appointed a frontier post between Teuton and Slav worlds. (By the irony of history, it is now near the West German border, with a Russian garrison in the area). No German merchant trading with the Wends was to set foot beyond Magdeburg. The Carolignian empire leaned too unsteadily on one mortal man, and soon Magdeburg was a base for Teuton conversion or extermination of Slavs, for the burning of their sensual images along with their thatched huts. The Wends did not take kindly to these missionary incursions and razed Magdeburg.

There was no stopping the Drang nach Osten. Henry I (919–936), proclaimed founder of the German empire, and Otto the Great (936–973) drove the Wends back a distance, but not inexpensively. Widikun of Corvey, tenth century Saxon historian, chronicled the desperate stand of Wends who "preferred war to peace, ignoring the greatest of misery when it was a question of defending their precious freedom." German dukes and margraves visited such frightfulness on the Wends that they had no option but to resist. Marches and bishoprics along the Elbe, the mission centres of Brandenburg, Havelburg, Oldenburg, Merzeburg, Zeitz and Meissen developed as staging posts for the Drang nach Osten. The Vends stuck to their irrepressible moods. A Vend revolt of 982 undid many German conquests. German victories were not taking colonisation much beyond Charlemagne's Elbe-Saale line.

The German princes, frustrated by the failure of sword and torch, enlisted the cross more fervently against the valiant Wends. An 1108 appeal for a crusade against the heathen Wends, issued by secular and ecclesiastical princes of North-East Germany, was in spirit and language not much revised until Hitler's failure to remain in Poland, Russia and other Slav lands:

The most cruel of heathen peoples have risen against us and have become all-powerful: men without mercy, glorifying in their inhuman malignity. Those people are the most wicked of all, but their land is the best of all, abounding in meat, fowl, honey and corn. It need only be cultivated in the right manner to overflow with all the fruits of the soil. Well then, you Saxons, you people of Lorraine, you Flemings, you renowned conquerors of the earth: here is an opportunity not only to save your souls but, if you wish, also to acquire the finest land as your dwelling place.

The Wends were seldom-remembered victims of twelfth century crusades directed more at loot than at souls. The Second Crusade, set moving by the eloquence at Vezelay of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the "Oracle of Christendom", in 1146, was to lessen the total of Wends as well as Muslims. Saint Bernard, one of the most powerful figures in Catholic history – his name has been given to a dog, a mountain pass, the examination and condemnation of the tragic Peter Abelard and to those classics of mystical theology, his sermons on the Song of Solomon – encouraged the division of the Second Crusade into three. One force of crusaders would invade the Holy Land – where the infidels gave it a father of a hiding – another would assail the Muslim Moors across the Pyrenees in Iberia and the third would achieve the final solution of the Wendish problem, and deal at the same time with their co-heathens, the Slavonic Prussians and the Lituanians.

The saintly Cistercian Abbot of Claivaux was indeed a final solution apostle. His appeal – *extirpare de terra christiani nomis* – was made impracticable by Wendish refusal to be extirpated, though the crusaders did their best. However, Henry the Lion's anti-Wend crusade of 1147 and the forays of Albert the Bear gave the Wends a terrible mauling. Villages were left blackened ruins, without inhabitants, and holy places destroyed. Wends rose again in revolt, to be answered by further massacres. Wends declining baptism were denied rights accorded the Christian community, including right to livelihood and too often, to life itself. The Slav nobility were often treacherous, preferring the more skilled Germans on their lands as tenants. The anti-Wend crusade of 1147 did not, as with most past invasions, end in German withdrawals in face of Slav revolts. Germans settled in strength on conquered lands.

Culturally closer to the currents of Western civilisation and the heritages of Greece and Rome, the Germans were technically superior. The disorderly lay-out of Wendish villages gave way to neatly planned German towns, with market places, drainage plants, dykes and water-mills. The "Flemings" from the Netherlands and Frisia were in the forefront of improvement, talented in building dykes and draining marshy lands. Rhinelanders and other West

Germans also transformed the primitive Slav agriculture: the Wends' block system gave way to the German strip system and more advanced husbandry. The Germans and Netherlanders brought their heavier iron plough, tools for forest-clearing, mining, ditch-digging and building.

In the two centuries following the Second Crusade, Wendish lands covering an area equal to one-third of the pre-1938 German Reich were seized by the better organised, better armed and better educated Germans. The battle-exhausted Wends could not for long block penetration without war in Mecklenburg, Pomerania and Brandenburg, though serious fighting continued in Holstein and Prussian lands. The Teutonic Knights nearly exterminated the Slav Prussians.

The Drang nach Osten created a confused patchwork of large and small ethnic zones that mingled or survived over the centuries. Wendish enclaves endured, despite war, hunger and assimilation, east of the Elbe and Saale, first on the fertile treeless land, then on poor sandy soil not wanted by Germans and finally among the near-trackless lakes, swamps and streams of the Spreewald, where Hereward the Wake, the hit-run Saxon scourge of the Norman invaders, secure in the marshes, could be emulated. The Spree runs south to north through Lusatia, a territorial name belonging to the past, not accorded boundaries or marked on modern maps. Here in the water-studded fields and forests by the Sprjewj, their name for the Spree, where marauding armies could only approach by boat, the core of the once numerous and widespread Serbo-Wendish nation lived on. They fished, snared wild-fowl, gathered honey, pastured cattle and tilled pocket-handkerchief-size farms. Most important, they kept their remarkable nation's language and lore alive and retained a sense of national identity.

The agonising reduction of Wendish civilisation to remnants in the Spreewald, enclaves in Saxony, Brandenburg and elsewhere and a few urban ethnic minorities in East Germany could be measured by dates when Wendish was abolished as the language or courts in German-colonised territories. Wendish went out as a court language at Magdeburg in 1290, at Anhalt in 1295, Altenburg, Zwickau and Leipzig in 1327 and Meissen in Jabelheide, South-West Meckllenburg, was still a Wendish-speaking town in the first half of the sixteenth century. The last Elbe Slav communities of separate identity were reported in the Hanoverian district known as Wendland, west of Berlin, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Catholic priests were preaching in the Wendish tongue till the fifteenth century. Wends were trained in the Cathedral of St. Peter in Bautzen, Saxony,

erected in 1213, but in the fifteenth century German was taking over. Most Wends adopted Lutheranism after the Reformation. This did not make Martin Luther their friend. "The worst people God has tossed among us are the Wends," Luther said, branding them as Spitzbuben or rogues. Wends, numerous round Wittenberg, had been too active in the 1524 Peasants' War for Luther's comfort.

However, the Protestant Reformation allowed free use of Wendish in church services, where Wendish pastors were available. The Lutheran Catechism and Bible were translated into Wendish and Wendish literature had its first difficult birth. Protestant persecuted in Bohemia found refuge in Wendish Lusatia. A significant minority of Wends remained Catholic. A Wendish seminary for Catholics was established at Prague in 1706, helping more young Wends to become literate in their own language.

The first Wendish-language newspaper in 1706, published by K. B. Serach of Bautzen and J. A. Janka of Bukecy (Hochkirk), though not a political paper, was banned from its first issue. But other Wend papers followed. By the nineteenth century a few Wends were professionals and, through religious education, a Wendish intelligentsia was developing, allowing stronger defence of Wendish culture against Germanisation. Panslavism filtered into the Wendish communities, influenced by Czechoslovak and Yugoslav struggles against the Austrians and Polish uprisings against the occupying powers. The Wendish press began to hint at national rights and fostered pride in Wendish nationality, though never denying loyalty to the Prussian monarchy. In 1848 a Wendish delegate attended a Slav Congress in Prague, where Wendish was one of five Slavonic languages in which the Congress manifesto was published. In the spirit of 1848, freedom was demanded for oppressed Slavs. Wendish societies began to emerge in Germany, and by the late nineteenth century German chauvinists were complaining of activities among Wends, in line with those of Poles, Czechs and Yugoslavs, that could be a potential danger to the Second Reich.

Not that the Wendish people could ever mount any threat to the Hohenzollern empire: it was dove versus eagle. By the turn of the century there were less than 170,000 Wendish – speaking subjects left in Lusatia. Some of the Spreewald villages remained almost 100 per cent Wendish:

The only Germans were policemen and functionaries. The Germans who had discriminated against Wends in employment and trade, banned them from medieval guilds, deprived them of citizen rights and doomed them to poverty and Servitude were now, to serve the needs of the industrial revolution,

recruiting them as cheap labor for the factories and mines and conscripting them to the imperial army. Today, only about 70,000 speaking Wendish or Sorbic as a first language are left, with perhaps another 60,000 having Wendish as a second language to German. In Bautzen, of about 60,000 population, only about 1,000 Wendish-speakers remain, but there are several Wendish institutions to keep the culture alive. Kottbus has only a small Wendish minority in what was once a Wendish centre. Vast brown coal deposits, fuelling mammoth chemical industries, have meant rapid industrialization in Wendish territories.

Neither religious persecution nor the natural environment could have impelled so many Wends to emigrate to Texas, the American Middle West, South Australia and Victoria. I visited the Wends in 1968 in their fairyland of lakes, ponds, meadows, crystal streams and forests. Flat-bottomed, ornamented boats were tied up at houses on the water's edge. The signposts for lovely, winding village streets were in a language that read rather like Czech. Only intolerable economic and political conditions – and revulsion against war – could drive Wends from a homeland of such fabulous beauty.

The wonder was that any Wends were left alive to introduce their near-forgotten language and indomitable personalities to the farm-lands of Texas and the Wimmera. Pastor Burger of Bundaberg, of Wendish descent, probably has the answer:

One quality which emerges as a vital ingredient in the Wend character is tenacity. Some would call it stubborness. Sure, the Wends were often stubborn in a blind and unreasonable way, but their determination to defend themselves at all costs was a nobler quality and no doubt helped to preserve this race from extinction.

Chapter two
Frederick The Great and Napoleon sent them to Hochkirk

If the Wends goading their oxen through the red gums near Hamilton in Victoria's Western District had stuck to their Slavonic name of Bukecy, instead of using the alternate German name of Hochkirk for the new town, this memorial to the Wendish quest for peace in the Antipodes might have remained on the Australian map. It was the Wendish custom to have Slavonic names in conversation and letters, but to accept the German name for official purposes, as required in their homeland. In the frenzy of British imperial patriotism that swept Australia in 1914 many of the Anglo-Australians of the district felt it reflected on their British credentials to have such an easily identifiable German name as Hochkirk in their midst. (Might not it have something to do with "Hoch der Kaiser!"). Upright citizens of the Hamilton area met in a Hochkirk hall to purge the stain. Probably never having heard of Hochkirk in Saxon Lusatia, uncaring and ignorant of history and of their Wendish guests' antipathy to militarism, they voted to change the name of Hochkirk to a near. meaningless Tarrington, after a sheep station of Henty family connections: the Hentys founded the whaling, sealing and providoring base of Portland, from where the extermination of the Western District Aborigines began.

Hochkirk is one of Bautzen's outlying villages, a few kilometres east by south from this centre of Lower Lusatia in the Wendish lands. Hochkirk, as it was known to German map-makers and officials, rather than by the ancient Slav name of Bukecy, should have been known as a symbol of humanity's suffering in war before names like Nanking, Lidice, Oradour, Warsaw, Dresden and Hiroshima were included in the chronicle. Tales were handed down from father to son and mother to daughter of fiendish German colonisers, intruding Polish lords, of the Swedes, Austrians, French, Spaniards, English and Irish and Scots mercenaries who rampaged over Europe from west to east and north to south in the half-century struggle (l609–59) reduced by historians to the Thirty Years War (1618–48). The killings and inflation were horrendous and the Wends lost more of their land. While the dynastic squabbles of kings and

princes continued to disturb the Lusatian peace, the Seven Years War inflicted on the Wends costly visitations of Austrians, Prussians and Russians, plus disease and famine. By the time Napoleon came to bivouac at Hochkirk-Bukeny, when leading his Grand Army to the irreparable disaster of Moscow, musket-balls from Field-Marshal Count Leopold von Daun's Austrian infantry were still stuck in the stout oak of the church door and cannon balls kept company with the bell in the tower. Blood and bullets spattered the tombstones of the Wends' ancestors in the village cemetery and blackened beams reminded of the raging fire that swept Hochkirk-Bukecy. The leafy lane running by the church, piled with bleeding bodies, earned the enduring name of Blood Lane.

Tales of blood and fire from the Seven Years War battle of Hochkirk could not be erased from Wendish memory by time or emigration to Australia. Here, the Wendish villages paid dearly for one of Frederick the Great's numerous miscalculations. Danger dogged Frederick's array on the long march to Hochkirk. Marshal Daun defeated the Prussians near Prague and advanced into Silesia and Saxony. Frederick, escaping from Bohemia into Saxony, had to deal with menacing Russian incursions and Cossack depredations as well as face the Austrians. The Scotsman Fermor, in Russian employ, retreated before Frederick's attack at Zorndorf. Frederick's Prussians then marched and road nearly 200 kilometres into Saxony in seven days, hastening to the relief of his brother Prince Henry, who could have been smashed by armies four times stronger, had not Daun been over-cautious.

Frederick, holding Daun in too much contempt, chose Hochkirk for an offensive against an Austrian army twice his own. The village and its church, where Lutheran sermons and hymns were in Wendish, stood picturesquely on the hill. Frederick wrote that "a cemetery of thick masonry, capable of holding a battalion, dominates the country. The village, extended in length, formed a natural flank of the army; it was occupied by six battalions, a battery of fifteen cannon being constructed at the angle of my front and flank. In front of our line ran a stream between rocky cliffs; at the foot of the heights of Hochkirken are a windmill and a few cottages, where a battalion has been stationed to defend the passage, being the more safe as it was under the protection of our cannon toward Rodewitz, where were the general quarters.

Marshal Keith, Frederick's Russian collaborator, did not share his confidence. "If the Austrians leave us unmolested in this camp, they deserve to be hanged," Keith warned him. Frederick, reader of more of Voltaire than of military textbooks, nonchalantly replied: "It is to be hoped they are more afraid of us than of the gallows."

All those plumes and gleaming helmets, the horses and cannon round their cottages, church and cemetery, the Prussians in their midst and the Austrians massed below, must have been rather much for the Wendish villagers. Restless, anxious in their beds, many would have heard the clock of Hochkirk's church tower strike five on the autumn morning of 16 October 1758. Before the fifth chime the Austrian guns barked. Count Daun had never attacked Frederick's armies – his tactics were Fabian. This time he had 65,000 Hapsburg troops against 30,000 Prussians, and a thick fog cover in the pre-dawn darkness. Austrians massacred sleepy Prussians in their tents and lit the battlefield by firing the Wends' thatched cottages. Wendish men, women and children ran screaming from the flames. Men trying to salvage humble possessions were caught in the crossfire. The flames drove the Prussians, choking and half-blind, from the buildings. In the confusion the Austrians speedily took the windmill, the Prussian battery on the village outskirts and the cemetery. On this consecrated ground the bodies draped over the headstones.

Marshal Daun's pre-dawn attack on the unprepared Prussians would have spelled annihilation for most armies. Frederick, his officers and men showed a saving discipline and resource. They flew to arms and fought tigerishly. Above the boom of Austrian cannon Frederick ordered three brigades to advance in darkness. "The flaming village of Hochkirken," Frederick said, "served as a beacon to take my bearings by." Cavalry squadrons charged in the night, barely able to see ahead. The battle was lost after five hours. The Prussian cavalry rode down from the Hochkirk hill to reduce harassment from the Hapsburg hussars. Daun's chronic procrastination saved Frederick again. Back in his old camp as the Prussians escaped, Daun led the singing of the Te Deum for victory, then entrenched his tropps, as if Frederick had won. Ludicrously the Pope sent Daun a consecrated hat and sword, in recognition of his papal slaughter of heretical Protestants, in imitation of papal rewards to Christian crusaders who killed off infidels. The Prussians were Christians, not heathen, and European courts laughed irreverently.

As for the Wendish villagers of Hochkirk-Buceny, they scrabbled in the ash, char and smoke of their cottages for what might be left, buried their own dead and then moved the abandoned heaps of Prussian and Austrian dead from what was to be known as Blood Lane, from the cemetery, streets and slopes in their carts. It was quite an operation for the Wends. Nine-thousand Prussian dead lay with 6,000 Austrian dead. Wounded bled and groaned everywhere. Frederick the Great was slightly wounded: among the dead were Marshal Keith, the Russian in Prussian service and Prince Francis of Brunswick, while the badly wounded Prince Maurice of Dessau was in Austrian hands. The dead soldiers in their mass graves, the Wends began rebuilding their blackened

cottages, repairing the church, rolling the cannon balls to the blacksmith's forge, once more cursing war and its practitioners.

The Hochkirk greybeards were still telling the youngsters about the 1758 blood carnival when Napoleon arrived. Some of the older Wends emigrating to Australia had seen and suffered the Emperor at the height of his power and arrogance. He bivouacked at Hochkirk in 1812, leading the Grand Army to majestic tragedy on the road from Moscow. "A single blow delivered at the heart of the Russian empire, at Moscow the Holy, will instantly put the blind, apathetic mass at my mercy," Napoleon boasted before setting out in March 1812.

The Grand Army hordes came from all over Europe, moving across lands inhabited by the Wends. Polish cavalry were ordered all the way from Valencia in Spain. Portuguese and Spaniards climbed through the Pyrenees passes and the Armee d'ltalie floundered through the autumn snows of the Brenner Pass to join regiments from Austria and the German states – from Prussia, Saxony, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt, Anhalt, Baden, Wurtemburg, Westphalia and Silesia. On the move, too, to the fateful Smolensk-Moscow road were detachments from Illyria on the southern Adriatic coast, from Dalmatia, Lippe, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark and Poland. In what seemed an unceasing stream, Napoleon's marshals in their coaches, soldiers on foot and horseback, guns and powder, cattle and provision carts spilled out of Paris to cross the Rhine at Bonn, Cologne, Coblenz and Mainz. Marshal Macdonald headed for the Prussian fortress, Marshal Ney for Leipzig and the Oder, Marshal Oudinot for Frankfurt-on-Oder, General St. Cyr for Posen and Warsaw, King Jerome's Westphalians to Kalish and Marshal Davout to the Oder. Marshal Murat was putting final polish on a great cavalry force at Posen.

In the East Prussian-Oder region where Wendish populations still counted there were also cantoned reserve cavalry regiments under Marshal Grouchy and others, the troops of Eugene de Beauharnais – Napoleon's stepson made Viceroy of Italy – the Old Guard under Marshal Lefebre and the Young Guard under Marshal Mortier. Some 530,000 troops, 150,000 horses, thousands of officials, farriers, wheelwrights, grooms, cantinieres, batmen and other auxiliaries had to be fedand billeted.

The chroniclers like to describe the Old Guard carrying their eagles, bearskins and the prestige of victory after victory, the plumes waving above the helmets of cuirasseurs and chasseurs, the bright-harnessed horses hauling hundreds of artillery pieces, the pomp and ritual in Saxony and Lusatia. There was no shortage of this. The contemptible Frederick William III of Prussia

was among the German royals to arrive to pay homage to the Emperor who robbed and conscripted his subjects: the Prussian king pledged Napoleon 2 million bottles of beer, 2 million bottles of brandy and 15,000 horses, plus the soldiers. For the Wends the Grand Army's transit was not remembered for proud brass eagles and plumes, gay paper lanterns and fireworks in the sky, pontoon-bridgng gear and green-tinted glasses ready to counter the glare of the Russian snows, of fifes and drums keeping time for the greatest army ever to trample across Europe. They remembered the Grand Array as a locust plague, a horde of horse-thieves, enslavers, expropriators of bread and milk from their children's mouths. Already bowed down with the weight of too much baggage, too much loot, the Grand Army of Napoleon committed crimes against the Wends from which they could not recover in decades.

So hostile were the people of East Germany to the Grand Army's foraging atrocities that a French major of Peninsular War experience reflected: "Here we lack only mountains to make guerillas." Napoleon in Hochkirk had to be provided with the very best, and both officers and rankers of the Grand Army were determined not to be left too far behind the Emperor. The Grand Army, spread over the Wendish lands of East Germany, even took the Wends' seed oats and grains and forced them to buy necessities of life at gross prices. Pastor Ludwig Wilhelm Gottlob Schlosser, a village pastor in the Wendish area, found the French "down to the lowliest drummer" very fastidious. They were "not satisfied with less than soup, meat and vegetables, roast and salad for the midday meal, and there was no sign of their famous frugality. The officers were completely devoid of it! Some of them had to have pike and ham cooked in red wine. They drank great jugs of the richest cream, and cinnamon essence with it."

Wendish suffering was made all the more acute by the disastrous 1811 harvest, with yields of grain, hay and straw down by two-thirds. Some French and Allied officers fed thatch from Wendish cottage roofs to hungry horses or turned them into planted fields to graze. The Grand Army requisitioned horses, cows, pigs, poultry, waggons, carts, hay, wheat, rye, preserves, wine, spirits and beer and forced Wends to fish for them in the lakes and streams. Wends were also impressed into Grand Army service to fell trees and cut tent poles. Cottages were jammed with billeted soldiers, sleeping in Wends beds or on floors covered with straw, littering rooms with uniforms, ration foods, muskets and ammunition and molesting wives and daughters.

The destitution forced on the Wends was made worse by stealing cart and plough horses their wagons and ably-bodied men.

This was admitted by one of Napoleon's staff officers, M. de Fezenact:

> "We took their livestock as well; we requisitioned their horses and wagons." He says he often encountered peasants fifty leagues (about 200 km.) from their villages, hauling the baggage of some regiment, "and in the end these unfortunates were lucky if they could run off and abandon their horses."

Conscripted Wends and others from East Germany, forced to drive cartloads of brandy, beer and other loot and war supplies, were often ruthlessly cast aside when wagon-loads of provisions were exhausted, some of them in Poland, others inside the Russian frontier. Numbers of them were put to driving officers' carriages: M. de Fezenac said that each officer had at least one carriage and the generals several, while servants and horses abounded.

The Wends of Hochkirk and other Lusatian towns cheered not for Napoleon but for his departure as the Imperial Guard escort struck up with its pipes and drums. Napoleon in his coach, the Grand Army, were bound for Moscow and the infamy of the Beresina; the coaches and carts were sometimes driven by press-ganged Vends and hauled by stolen Wend horses. Had they been able, the Wends would have liked to send best wishes for victory over Napoleon's thieving horde to General Barclay de Tolly's First Army of the West, Prince Bagration's Second Army of the West and General Platov's Cossacks, waiting across the Russian borders. The Wends had no vision of Napoleon's march on Moscow as a drama of timeless grandeur.

Wendish drivers farewelled mothers, wives, sweethearts and children they might never see again and whipped their horses on toward the Polish marshes, the dark forests and rolling steppes of Byelorussia. The Wends could observe the Grand Army losing the advance to Moscow, before the retreat turned it to a rabble. The Russians were doing well in scorched earth tactics. Fodder shortage began to kill off horses in their thousands. Starving Wendish drivers ate horses to live. Soldiers became ragged, dust-caked, bloody-footed, wrangling for food, racked by dysentry and typhus. It needed no imagination to realise what dysentry did to men on horseback. Thirsty soldiers coming upon rare wells or ponds might have recalled bitterly Napoleon's macabre comment: "How sweet smells the corpse of an enemy." Not when the corpse or part of it is left in the only waterhole around. Desertions were numerous and somehow runaways found means of survival in Smolensk or Minsk. The French visitation has to this day left its mark on many Smolensk citizens, and some Byelorussians could no doubt assume that horseless Wendish drivers were among their ancestors.

Napoleon mustered only 130,000 fit men to face 120,000 Russians at Borodino. The Russians, in their steady and orderly retreat, may have conceded the battle but Napoleon had lost the war. He could no longer overwhelm the foe on the field. Much sooner than they anticipated they were passing again the field on Borodini where unburied corpses were stiff in the morning frost and too generous in numbers for the wolves and birds. The Grand Array held to its priorities in loot, a vast caravan of carts laden with icons, crucifixes, Jewelled statues of saints, tapestries and liquor. At the Beresina, stragglers, camp-followers and others in the rear were drowned. trampled underfoot in the panic or mowed down by Russian guns and Cossack sabres. They would have been lucky Wendish drivers who survived the march on Moscow and the treat, to kiss their families again.

Russia had finished with the Grand Army, but not the hapless Wends. Remnant bands stumbled into Lusatia. Heads that had worn plumes and bearskins were wrapped in rags or stolen Russian women's dresses, feet were wrapped in filthy cloth for want of boots. Gone were the pomp and arrogance, the coaches carrying officers and carts loaded with beer and brandy. Instead, unspeakable misery, hobbling cripples, hands, ears, arms or feet missing from frostbite.

The stench from festering and gangrenous wounds was frightful. Survivors of the retreat might have won sympathy, but their callous thievery on the way to Moscow qualified them for derision and caricature and short shrift when they resumed looting. Grand Array soldiers no longer had power to enforce expropriations, to forage and trample. Now the Wends had to fight off demoralised bandit gangs, and then the depredations of pursuers.

The frost-bitten wreckage of the Grand Army was not the last of Bonapartist afflictions. The crippled giant Napoleon dashed from Smorgini, on the other side of the Niemen River, to his Tuileries Palace in an astounding 14 days. He was resilient to say the least. A new Grand Army moved across Germany toward Leipzig and the Wendish lands – 145,000 infantry, 7,500 cavalry and 372 guns. At Lutzen in East Germany, one of the most terrible cannonades of the Napoleonic wars mowed down the French conscripts like hay on 2 May 1813. Every stable, barn, cottage, pigsty, henhouse and church seemed to be a fortress. Napoleon lost about 12,000 to the 10,000 dead Prussians and Russians, but he snatched victory from disaster.

Oberlausitz (Upper Lusatia) was being overrun by dragoons, hussars, lancers, artillerymen with cannon and caissons and camp followers. They demanded food, fodder and shelter.

After Lutzen the Prussian-Russian forces moved back over the Elbe and Spree to Bautzen. The marauders were again in their locust horders in the Bautzen-Hochkirk zone – Frenchmen, Germans pressed into French service, Bavarians, Saxons, Wurttemburgers and Russians. The great captains were parading and planning: Marshal Macdonald pushed along the Spree banks, Marshals Ney, Marmont, Mortimer, Oudinot and Lauriston, Generals Bessieres and Bertrand. Under Schnarnhorst's command, ably backed by Blucher, Gneisenau and Yorck, on the other side, 90,000 men were concentrated. Marshal Blucher's force of 20,000 came from Silesia; another 11,000 Prussians fought under Kleist. Barclay de Tolly, one of the heroes of Borodino, arrived with 16,000 Russian reinforcements, and encamped near Bautzen. Napoleon himself was there to lead: he marched out of Dresden for the Spree and now commanded 12,000 cavalry and 107,000 in regiments of the line, with Old Guards and new Guardsmen. They all knew how to forage from Wends and East Germans, as well as how to fight.

The Bautzen battle raged for two days – 20 and 21 May 1813. Farms were razed, buildings went up in smoke, new-sown crops trampled and corpses again bobbed along the Spree. Napoleon drove the Russians and Prussians back from the Spree toward the Neisse, but did not have the cavalry to harry them in retreat. If Napoleon had not made grievous errors in the handling of his two-mile long battlefront and superior force of 130,000 men round Bautzen on the Upper Spree and routed the Prussian-Russian armies instead of allowing their withdrawal, there may never have been a Waterloo or a St. Helena exile. Regrouped, the allies sent the French reeling back to Paris, there to surrender on 31 March 1814 and face the humiliation next year at the hands of Wellington and Blucher.

It was thin comfort to the Wends on the Spree that the tricolor could never again fly from Torres Vedras to the Vistula. Hungry after the loss of crops, they were rebuilding again from the ashes and burying their dead alongside the mass graves of Germans, Russians and French.

Little wonder that the Wends thought of escape by emigration, to a land far distant from Europe's blood-letting and misery. The Wendish-origin historian of the coming of the Wends to Australia, Pastor R. J. Burger, in referring to the Napoleonic experience, said: "In the 1840s, many of the older people still mourned their dead and carried vivid memories of the slaughter. The younger folk feared a recurrence of hostilities and wished at all costs to avoid being caught in such a situation." The parish of Hochkirk, where Napoleon bivouacked and cannon-balls were stuck in the church tower above the bullet-scarred tombstones, naturally provided a significant quota of those boarding

ship to Australia. Some 150 Wendish families making this long journey for peace in the 1840's were from the Hochkirk-Bautzen area of Lusatia.

The first three registered at Natimuk State School No. 1544 on its opening in 1875 (Albert Scholes headmaster) were Wends – Mary Levitzka, Frederick and Gustav Levititzka. Spelling was sometimes Lewitzka and finally Germanised to Levitzke. Wendish-sounding names were prominent also in the register of the Natimuk Night School, founded in 1875 to teach adult Germans and Wends English and other subjects, and a small minority of Anglo-Australians literacy. Seventeen of the 23 at the Night School had German or Wendish names; 13 of these had been to school already in Mount Gambier and three in the Hamilton-Hochkirk district, underscoring the role of these staging centres in the settlement of the West Wimmera.

Chapter three
Wimmera Wends

They would have been exceptional Germans in the original Wimmera small-farmer colonisation who did not have Slavs C among their ancestors. The first settlers or their parents had practically all come from east of the Elbe – Brandenburg, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Posen, Silesia and Saxony-Lusatia – and historians and others had for long identified an "East-Elbian character", different from that of West Germans and moulded by historical and ethnic developments, particularly the surviving settlements of Slavs, that made them distinguishable from Rhinelanderst Bavarians and others to the west and south.

The Slavonic tribes moving from the swamps and forests in the second century to settle the black-earth steppes, then pushing along the Baltic and North Sea and down south to the Adriatic coast and beyond Bohemia, left their mark. The language of the Elbe Slavs or Polabians survived till the eighteenth century in Hanoverian pockets, and influences dialects to this day. Slovincian, another Western Slavonic dialect, was spoken in a few parishes in Pomerania up to recent times. Quaint archaisms in accent and intonation were detectable in local dialects.

German was occasionally spoken in the streets and in homes when I was a child, and I picked up a few German words. Later I learned a little German at Wesley College in Melbourne, and as a journalist heard plenty of it in Hitler Germany – from Berlin to the Rhineland and from north to south. West Wimmera German seemed to have differences of vowel sounds and tone. They spoke what was loosely called "Silesian dialect" probably influenced a little at this time (World War I and after) by the Australian accent.

Wends, like some of the English settlers, were prone to drop "h's'.

There were German names in the Wimmera that only needed "zke" or Mske" turned to "ski", "orf" to "ov" and so on. Pastor Burger says that some would be astonished to find themselves on the list of Wends because they had always regarded their ancestors as German. Some Wends carried German names, like Deutscher and Preusker. Wicaz, meaning money-lender, took the German

equivalent, Lehensmann, shortened to Lehmann. Byrgar became Burger, Brindt became Freund, to quote a few examples given. Spelling of names was loose and changing.

What kind of people were the Wendish settlers in the Wimmera and Western District? In the main they were more devoutly religions than those of German families, the various strands of Pietism and mysticism prevalent in the Lusatian communities not yet worked out of their systems. They worshipped a thundering and punishing God, Old Testament warnings were at the ready and interests did not usually radiate far beyond ploughing, sowing and harvesting, home and church among the first and second generations. Most of the Wends round Natimuk tended to spurn the joys of carnival, the light embraces of schottische and polka mazurka at local dances, card parties, horse races, the tennis courts and golf links.

Visiting the old farmhouse of the Wendish Dymke family – a farm that once belonged to my father and my uncle, Ernest Francis – by the old Gold Escort road out from Natimuk, I was reminded by a prominent wall sign that Christ was a guest in the house. Children often received a most secluded upbringing, in semi-isolation from others of their age. But the Australian environment, the absorption of continental cultures and habits, the State school system with its compulsory education in English and the rapid unshackling from the ties of their homeland in Prussia meant a losing battle for traditionalist parents.

The small Wendish minority in Australia could scarcely survive for long the two-front cultural incursions, first from the Germans whose language they had to adopt in the Lutheran churches and schools and, more hopelessly, the engulfing Anglo-Australian culture. Children might learn to speak Wendish at home, but the Lutheran school gave instruction in German and the State school in English. And English was the language of bread and butter, of communication. There was sufficient difference between Upper Lucatian and Lower Lusatian dialects to make German a lingua franca among Wends, before English conquered German.

Wendish or Sorbic even had two literary languages, though it was by far the least spoken of the four recognised Western Slavonic languages, after Polish, Czech and Slovak, the latter a variant of Czech. The tiniest of the Slavonic nations of the world, reduced to a remnant of about 70,000 speaking Sorbic as their first tongue, had almost left the stage of history by the time World War II ended. Wends were conscripted by Prussians to fight Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870. Disproportionate numbers of Wend conscripts were sacrificed in the German High Command's vain attempt to make mockery of the French cry of *Il ne passerant pas* at Verdun.

While they might dream amid the dry creek beds, yellowed grass and straggly eucalypts and bullokes of the Wimmera about majestic streams and the serenity of Spreewald lakes, the wide oceans were not needed to serve as a wall to block a Wendish return from Australia. The vacancy of the Australian bush had given way to their pug or stone houses and thatched sheds, the tensions of disorientation soon disappeared and they had no desire whatever to experience again life often torn by anguish under Prussian rule. The Wends merged smoothly into the German Lutheran communities and became significant office-holders.

Pastor Brauer, in his 1956 history, said that out of a total of about 100 pastors in the Australian Lutheran church "at least 15 are wholly or partly of Wendish origin." He noted that of the first small batch of teachers graduating from Hahndorf Lutheran College, 75 per cent were of Wendish origin. The Wends had their farms, jobs, homes and church communities – and a level of democratic freedom never known in their history – and so were immune to home-sickness.

Before the Wendish identity sank almost without trace in the Wimmera, liberalising influences had been at work, in South Australia, particularly at Mount Gambier, and at Hamilton-Hochkirk. At Hochkirk Pastor Clamor Schurmann, though very conservative, was confronting "mystical and emotional tendencies" and the Pietism reflected in Wendish-language religious books. Pastor Andreas Kappler (Handrej Kapler), the Wend clergyman whose liberal opinions were considered way-out for those times, had preached and worked among Wends near Adelaide and at Mount Gambier. Kappler, born at Klein Hanchen, Saxony, left the Bautzen district of Upper Lusatia in the year of blood and tumult, 1848, to join the barque *Victoria* for Adelaide. The 216 Wends in the *Victoria* recognised Kappler as their leader on the voyage from Hamburg and some were later in flock at Mount Gambier, before moving to the Wimmera.

Kappler found that some of the Germans and Wends in Mount Gambier had their heads bowed more often over a pot of beer in "Black Byng's" slab inn than over the Bible. He noted "numbers of children not baptised and numbers of people living together as husband and wife without any blessing of church or State." The Gerhardts from the Victoria supplemented the reliefs from pioneering trials by opining a brewery. On the first Mount Gambier Lutheran congregation register were names such as Sassanowsky, Levitzke and others of Slav sound.

The first Wend to sight the Natimuk creeks and lake was 26 year-old Gottlieb Klowss, born at Drewitz, Brandenburg, in the Lusation region, on 8 February 1845. His parents took him aboard the 450-ton barque *Ohio*, master H. Ranges, Adelaide-bound, when he was 12. Landing from the *Ohio* at Adelaide in 1858 were five who spelled their names Klows and six Klowss. After the tiresome 15-weeks voyage, Johann Klowss, the father, and family trekked to Mount Gambier, where the Wendish Pastor Kappler was to offer guidance.

Arable Mount Gambier land was all taken, so relatives and friends helped the young Wend to load his waggon for the Wimmera, about whose opportunities rumours were thick and fast. By dodging his waggons through the gums and brush, he came at last to the gentle hill at the Natimuk creek estuary, overlooking Natimuk Lake. Here the Wend accustomed to inland water views pegged out 320 acres for one of the most picturesque farm sites in the Wimmera, on the rim of the basin that holds Natimuk Lake and reaching to the slopes of the Wimmera Valley. Klowss wandered around the lake shore, saw the fish jumping as he camped in the evening, the black swans, divers, pelicans, wild duck, blue cranes and ibis feeding by the shores – and could hardly wait to file his selection papers. He harnessed his horses and went back to Mount Gambier to collect his tools, cow and hens and what utensils and furnishings would fit in the rack waggon.

Klowss's 1871 selection papers showed he would pay £1 an acre for 320 acres at 320 shillings a year, with 20 years to pay off the farm, interest free. If after five years he had earned enough, he could pay the whole off and call the farm his own. Things were never like that for Wends in Germany.

Gottlieb Klowss built a pug and thatch hut on the lake bank – it stood there still in the early 1920s when we went swimming.

He cleared land for tillage and garden and proposed to Augusta Gladigau, Hahndorf-born daughter of a pioneer Natimuk settler. Gottlieb and Augusta were among the first couples married in the new Natimuk Lutheran church in 1874.

Good seasons blessed the selectors of the early 1870s, and the farm title was in Gottlieb Klowss's hands. Twelve children – quite a usual total for those times – were born to the marriage. One, the second, died from typhoid, quite a killer in the countryside, and was buried in the new cemetery on the farm boundary, not far from an Aboriginal mass grave in the Wimmera valley. The youngest child, Elsie (Mrs. Fred Uebergang) was alive in 1979. The second youngest, Ida Dorothea, became my stepmother.

Klowss built a beautiful, commodious brick homestead, iron-laced verandah all round, cellar, smokehouse, orchard and garden alongside, and magnificent views of lake and creek. He expanded his farm to about 1,000 acres, some about four miles away on the southern side of the town, to which Klowss girls, up at 4 a.m., carried harvest workers' meals by buggy.

Gottlieb Klowss was not among the pietist Lutherans of the eastern hill. He liked his glass of beer, his Jokes and entertainment when not ploughing, planting, harvesting or carting. Relaxation was paid for in sweat. Before the crops could be garnered, tough gums fell resistingly to the axe, were split up or burned and stumps gribbed out where possible. Then the single-furrow plough opened the virgin soil, for seed cast by hand. Grain stalks were harvested by sickle and scythe and the sheaves hauled to the threshing floor, where the beaters relied on the wind to carry away the chaff. Not until the early 1890s did the first reapers and binders appear, though the stripper was now in use in South Australia. Klowss was technology conscious and soon discarded primitive methods. H. V. McKay, inventor of the harvester, already manufacturing them at Sunshine, Melbourne, stayed at the Klowss homestead near the turn of the century and sold Klowss the first harvester to operate in the Natimuk district.

Augusta Klowss and daughters were Just as hard-working as the menfolk. They baked bread, Deutscher Kuchen and scones. Scraps were fed to pigs and fowls. After livestock were killed on the farm, the women smoked bacon and ham, pickled beef, mutton or pork, produced skin rugs, soap, candles, lard, dripping, blutwurst, metwurst, lieberwurst and other by-products. Except for items like tea, sugar, coffee, pepper (there were plenty salt lakes) and cloth, they were at first near enough to self-sufficient: vegetables from the garden, eggs and poultry-meat from the fowlyard, milk, cream cheese and butter from the cows, fresh, dried and preserved fruits from the orchard, honey from the hives, perch from the lake. Eggs and butter were sold to the general store. In Schurmann's store people often asked for Klowss's butter. To keep up the supply of netted fish, Klowss had 200 perch transferred to the lake from the Wimmera River.

In the first hard years, while clearing and preparing ground for the plough and for fruit and vegetable gardens and founding livestock herds, the narrow range of edible native game sometimes had to supplement the table. Rabbits and hares were breeding fast in the Wimmera and Mallee before the selectors arrived and were on the menu. Wild duck were in plenty on the lakes, streams and swamps for those who owned guns capable of shooting them or knew

how to snare. It was a rare pioneer family not acquainted with kangaroo-tail soup which, by a strange reversal, is now consumed more in Germany than in Australia.

Very soon housewives were learning to make the tough kangaroo and wallaby meat palatable. The Natimuk Historical Society resurrected the recipe for wallaby rissoles:

> Mince leg of wallaby, then put in dish, add one egg, mix well, then add stale bread-crumbs and a little flour, pepper and salt, herbs and one onion chopped fine. Make into little balls and fry nice and brown.

This takes a little longer to fry than other meat, but they are delicious.

For wallaby roast, seasoned and improved with butter and egg a - long bake in the oven was recommended – "the longer the better." This was good advice – it took hours in the wood stove oven to make the wallaby chewable.

On Sundays, the Klowss family piled into a big buggy for church services in Natimuk. Sunday lunchtime and afternoon was the time to entertain visitors. All daughters seemed able to play the piano or organ. On Sunday nights they gathered round to sing Lutheran hymns. The girls walked about three miles to the Lutheran church on the town's western side, along the dark creek valley and across paddocks, to attend choir practice once a week. It was then safe for young ladies to walk abroad at night.

Schooling was at Natimuk Lake State School, where they learned to read and to write in good hand, and to recite selected English poems and dates from English history. The Klowss girls did better than a girl from a neighbouring Wendish family, who did not get much past drawing ladies with square heads on a slate and, after school, cracking a stockwhip with great eclat.

Illnesses, now not feared, killed in pioneer families. Remedies sometimes bore no relation to medical science. Bread poultices, taking over from cowdung poultices, would "draw out the infection" by their heat. The Natimuk Historical Society collected some of the early treatments. Raw potato was "an excellent remedy for sunburn." Baking soda and castor oil mixed had been "tested with success" for warts. One large cup of linseed, two quarts of water, one stick of licorice, two cups of honey, two small cups of vinegar, two cups of rum, plus aniseed, peppermint, laudanum and paregoric, mixed according to instructions, was for coughs. After that mixture the victim should never be able to cough again.

The "cough mixture and tonic" of the Natimuk pioneers was even more exciting:

> Take three new-laid eggs. Place them whole in a basin. Then squeeze lemons on till covered with juice. Strain out pips from lemon juice first. Take put eggs after three days and break them up. Take out any hard shell, but retain the dissolved shell. Mix together three ounces of honey, two ounces of sugar candy, crushed very fine, and half a pint of the best old rum. Beat the eggs and lemon juice well. Then add the other ingredients and beat well together, put in a bottle and keep well corked.
>
> Dose: A wineglass first thing every morning.

While the cough relief properties of this concoction were open to question, the tonic effect was assured by that half-pint of best old rum.

Chilblains were common in winter on hands and feet made cold by frosts and warmed by the wood stove. The chilblains on the pioneers were rubbed with a piece of raw onion before bed and on rising.

These days workers get penalty payments for handling sulphur, because of its noxious effects. The Wimmera Wends and Germans, a marathon buggy ride from the nearest chemist, were recommended to treat their sore throats by adding two teaspoons of warm glycerine to "as much sulphur as will go on a threepenny piece, and swallow slowly." My stepmother, the daughter of the Wend Gottlieb Klowss, gave us a mix of sulphur and honey to swallow. My throat survived the sulphur to stand the test of 30 years of open-air oratory.

Lest any should think these drastic and dangerous "remedies" handed down by generations of European peasants and refined in the Australian outback were a German or Wendish monopoly, the treatments of British-origin farmers should be kept in mind. Jim Butler out at Grass Flat, across the Black Swamp from the Lockwood-Francis farm, would lay-preach in the Church of Christ by the Wimmera's Polkemmaet bridge. He would recommend kerosine as a cure for colds and influenza.

My father often laughed over the substantial sales of a medicine from Jory's shop up the street, labelled "Harry Davies' Painkiller", among the teetotal Methodists of Grass Flat. My father had tried the mixture – he said it was nearly two-thirds rum.

The old cemetery headstones suggest if death didn't come in childhood – which was too often – then the pioneers were tough enough to stand both the illnesses and the medicines and could anticipate ripe old age.

Scarlet fever remained a curse in my childhood. It struck my younger brother and I, keeping us away from school for the regulation six weeks. Scarlet fever affected the ears and hearing: I was half-deaf for a few weeks. My stepmother applied the old family remedy for hearing difficulties – pouring very hot olive oil into the ears. By some miracle my hearing was restored.

Appendicitis, like scarlet fever, typhoid and diphtheria, was often fatal before country doctors improved their skills. Appendicitis sent Gottlieb Klowss, aged 58, to the cemetery on the hill that overlooks the Wimmera River, in a black-plumed hearse, drawn by plumed black horses and followed by a long procession of mourners in their buggies, gigs and traps. As a lover of horses, he was spared the sight of a chugging, smoking "motor buggy" – no automobile had reached the district. His two black buggy horses were the smartest pair in the area, causing people to stand and admire when they hauled the family to church or went through their paces at the annual agricultural show. He was distressed when one of his fine horses was killed by lightning in 1890. Gottlieb Klowss's Hahndorf-born widow, Augusta, lived till 1928, retaining a German accent inherited from her parents and able to make a Joke in her ailing years. I remember being taken to her bedroom to say farewell. "I'm dying, Rupert, goodbye", was all she could get through her white lips.

The stern upbringing typical of Wendish families moulded Ida Dorothea Klowss's attitude to the young step-children she was called on to supervise. The Bible had warned that to spare the rod was to spare the child. A large leather-bound Bible entered the home with her, and my father was obliged to read a chapter every morning after Sunday morning's oatmeal porridge from Noske Brothers' Mill and eggs from our own fowl yard.

There was no breach of biblical injunctions in the use of the rod. Lionel, the eldest, was out of reach by age and by distance at Ballarat High School. Elfreda, the only sister, very like her mother in looks and spirit, was old enough to fight back. She had the courage to intervene when the youngest, Raymond, a lively child, copped a terrible hiding with a leather belt for leaving a few droppings on the floor of the bird-cage, which he was ordered to clean. I remember Elfreda, sitting in a chair in the lounge-room of the old house, "Caxton", reading a book, while stepmother belted into her hard and long with a strap. Elfreda kept on reading, never changing expression. On occasions my father, never keen on taking a stand, had to issue weak remonstrances.

Instead of romping around with the other boys on the Saturday holiday, as had been our custom, my younger brother and I were put to work, cleaning fowl-

yards, cow-bails, the backyard, the bird-cage, helping in the kitchen, running to the shops and so on. These chores were added to odd jobs in my father's printery. This adjustment to work didn't do us any harm. My stepmother faced quite a task in repairing my father's inefficiencies and neglect, mostly excusable because of his preoccupations with earning the family living in a period when domestic help was becoming scarcer. Some relief from Saturday work came when I was put into the Wolf Cubs.

Once when my stepmother's sister, Minnie, married to a Ballarat postmaster named Snowden, the son, Albert Snowden, aged three, rushed away from my care in the garden, raced down the bank of the creek flowing on our boundary and was drowning in about three and a half feet of cold water. I dashed in after him, pulled him out and took him inside to change. My stepmother gave me a terrible belting for letting him fall in the creek. This rank injustice must have troubled her conscience: that night when I had gone to bed she came in and apologized.

On the other side of the coin, my stepmother worked like a slave to keep us clean, well fed and well dressed. The house was spick and span, socks and other clothing darned, patched or altered, the food of high quality with nothing wasted. She made sure we did our homework and were off to bed on the tick of nine. Soon she had three young children of her own and the depression, bad debts and privation were looming. There probably isn't a housewife and mother left in Australia able to cope with the volume of work and worry that fell to her lot.

The chief interest of the Klowss daughters was Pastor Lohe's Lutheran church on the hill, with regular attendance at services, choir practice and church socials and sincere attempts to apply religious principles as they interpreted them. My stepmother had the Lutheran suspicion of Catholicism and told me that she feared the next war would be a religious one, between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Once when the Lutheran church was in Sunday morning session, a loud explosion was heard by worshippers and an earth tremor rattled the church. Bertha Klowss, my stepmother's sister, thought that if the explosion and tremor signalled the end of the world, how fortunate to be in church on Judgment Day. My stepmother's unswerving loyalty to the Lutheran religion influenced her youngest son, Allan Lockwood, and, as a result, two of her grand-children bear the title of Pastor Lockwood.

The Starick and Janetski families, or the older generation among them in my youth, were also very strict and restricted in their social activities. These Slavonic-origin families were among the first in the Natimuk district. A

Wendish Starick girl from Werben, East Germany, was married in the Natimuk Lutheran church in 1875. A Starick also married a Maroske (Wendish) later on, and Ian Maroske, taking a keen interest in the Wendish settlement, is now headmaster of Horsham High School. In I877, Johann Wilhelm Pelchen of Vectis East, born in Baruyi, East Germany, married a Harnath girl (Wendish) from Hochkirk. A descendant, Otto Pelchen, was to be persecuted by returned soldiers, without justification, after World War I. The Pumpas of the Wimmera, like Gottlieb Klowss, originated in Drewitz.

The Natimuk Lutheran church archives have Cottbus in the Wendish lands as the birthplace of another Starick, Maria.

Alf Duschka or Duschke, whose parents also came from Drewitz, a witty, lively painter in Natimuk, was the exception to the Wendish rules of conduct. He liked his glass of wine at Kiefel's saloon and was not a religious man. Sometimes Duschke and friends gathered in an outbuilding that survived the Noske Brothers' flour mill conflagration for a convivial drink of wine on Sundays. The little weatherboard hut was to them the Taj Mahal.

Neither religious persecution nor the natural environment could have impelled so many Wends to emigrate to Texas, the American Middle West, South Australia and Victoria. I visited the Wends in 1968 in their fairyland of lakes, ponds, meadows, crystal streams and forests. Flat-bottomed, ornamented boats were tied up at houses on the water's edge. The signposts for lovely, winding village streets were in a language that read rather like Czech. Only intolerable economic and political conditions – and revulsion against war – could drive Wends from a homeland of such fabulous beauty.

Two of the Natimuk Wendish families – Kroschel and Nitschke – lost sons fighting the Kaiser's armies, which included conscript Wends.

The Kroschel and Nitschke parents had the strait-laced Wendish approach. Their children were thoroughly "Australianised" and took part in local social activities.

As a boy I sometimes rode a bicycle or horse over the wooden creek bridge and along the creek's west bank to deliver a West Wimmera Mail or printing job to "Miss Levitzke", as we knew her, or to collect a contribution to the Lockwood paper in copper-plate handwriting. Miss Levistzke, from another of the Wendish families, was a cultured woman, very communicative, difficult to escape on the telephone once she got started, living in a stone homestead of saddle-bag furniture, horse-hair-stuffed chairs, embroideries, books and Meissen crockery. She wrote learnedly: when Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Sudholz,

after good wheat and wool prices, became about the first from Natimuk to go off on a grand world tour, Miss Levistzke handled their travel chronicles, rewrote them in stylish English and supplemented them from her own knowledge of the world, for serial publication in the Mail.

The Levitzke (Levistkwa, Levitzka) selection was one of the first. Christian Levitzke signed up for the farm on Natimuk Creek in 1872. Another Levitzke family lived near Mount Arapiles: here, too, the children became part of the local community, not identifiable as Wendish or German.

Christian Levitzke was born in the Werben district of Brandenburg in 1859, and married Christina Habner, born at Werben in 1836. They moved from a farm near Adelaide to Mount Gambier, then to Natimuk. Nine sons and two daughters – two sons died early – had to be fed and clothed. Christian was dead in 1894; son Gustav carried on – "his mother's staff and support", as Pastor Lohe said at his funeral in 1910 – then responsibility went to son Hermann. "My poor Hermann," old Mrs. Levitzke used to say after his death in 1912. "Yes, she has gone through many a deep water since Hermann's death," the eldest daughter, Christina, would say of her mother. Christina became the mother's right hand and help, until the mother's death in 1920.

Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer was one of the original founders of the Lutheran church in Natimuk and had the first German-language (1878-80) school on his property, overlooking the Natimuk Creek-Lake confluence. Pastor Burger lists the Meyers among his Wendish families. Ludwig's father, Conrad, and his mother, Dorothea Johanna (nee Homan), lived at Andreasberg in the Harz Mountains of Hanover, where Wendish-speaking people then survived in a few pockets. Pastor Lohe, at Ludwig's funeral in 1919 said that he was a very sick babe and so received emergency baptism on 11 February 1826, six days after his birth. Hard work at Natimuk Lake must have been good for him. Pastor Lohe buried him in his 94th year.

At Osterode at the foot of the Harz Mountains, Ludwig Wilhelm Meyer was apprenticed to a blacksmith. Migrating to South Australia he was a blacksmith at Port Lincoln, then a miner till the mine petered out. In Adelaide he became a blacksmith again, but, still in poor health, moved to a Mount Gambier farm in 1860. In Port Lincoln he had married Carline Auguste Koehler, who died in 1866, leaving him four children. A year later, he married Johanne Fredericke, youngest daughter of the Sandvoss family, born at Gruenblan, Brunswick, who came to Melbourne with her sister in 1861 and moved to the German community at Mount Gambier. The second Meyer marriage produced sons and five daughters, followed by 27 grand-children.

Chapter four
Church Burners

Burning of churches is usually rated by Australians as an Hispanic custom, an aberration of peasant-anarchists in Spain or Mexico, in misguided protest against burdensome tithes, rents and other imposts, against hierarchs of medieval outlook who raise their hands against political and social reform. Australian historians have been loth to award Australia her merited place among church-burning nations.

During the 1914–18 Great War and after Lutheran churches were burned and vandalised. Those carrying the kerosine and matches would assuredly have been fellow-Protestants, anxious to light the skies with proof of their service to the British Empire. God cared for the fallen sparrow and the lilies of the field, but not for the weatherboard Lutheran churches, with their galvanised iron roofs and rainwater tanks glinting in the sun. God, as the angels of Mons and a million sermons had demonstrated, endorsed British virtue and condemned Germans to the outer darkness. Martin Luther was to the holy incendiarists the best known German name.

Leading Lutheran historians gave no full lists of church burnings and wreckings and governments and police were not stirred to deal with sacrilege, a serious crime on the statute books. The archives in Adelaide of two prominent Lutheran church heads, Dr. J. P. Lohe and his son Dr. Max Lohe, showed that among Lutheran churches burned to the ground were those at Angaston, Edithburgh on the Yorke Peninsula and Forster in South Australia and at Netherby, west of Jeparit in the Wimmera-Mallee borderlands and Bendigo. The Bendigo Lutheran church was established in the last century by Germans migrating to the Bendigo fields for the Gold Rush of the 1850s and 1860s. In various unburned Lutheran churches windows were smashed, altars, religious vestments and furnishings smeared, torn or otherwise damaged. Four Queensland churches suffered heavy vandalisation. Worshippers were not always left in peace at their prayers: louts attacked while services were in progress. A Lutheran deputation to SA Premier Crawford Vaughan yielded no ministerial orders to the police to arrest the disturbers. The Register of 21 March 1917 reported Mr. F. F. G. Kernick from Bagot's Well as telling Premier Vaughan:

Since the war began the Lutheran churches, he was sorry to say, had been molested. Windows had been smashed, doors and other portions of buildings had been besmirched with tar and divine services had been interrupted by the throwing of stones, etc. Yet their church members had not retaliated. They had born their cross in silence.

Internments of Lutheran pastors, banning and censoring of Lutheran journals and the clamorous pressures that forced many to desert to other Protestant congregations, mostly Anglican, greatly affected the church. It became difficult to train new pastors and for six years neither synods nor pastors' conference could be held in Australia.

As Military Intelligence put pastors behind barbed wire, Pastor W. Janzow and Pastor C. F. Graebner, two main Lutheran spokemen, told the Adelaide Advertiser of 6 November 1916: "The Lutheran pastors of South Australia are British subjects and would be interned in Germany, as really happened to one of them who was travelling in Germany when war broke out." Actually, three Lutheran pastors from Australia, caught in Germany by war's outbreak, were interned by German Intelligence. The German Government had given up hope of persuading the Australian Germans that they were volksdeutsch. Of 46 Australian civilian prisoners in Ruhleben internment camp, Germany, petitioning the Red Cross for parcels in 1917, 22 had German names.

Were communications possible across the war fronts, Lutheran pastors interned by the Germans in Huhleben could have sent greetings to their brother pastors interned by Australian Military Intelligence in Holdsworthy camp, just west of Sydney. The military made something of a Roman.carnival of Pastor W. Poland's arrest for internment: he was paraded through the streets, bound, in the back of a lorry. Like most of the other Queensland pastors interned, he had been trained as a missionary. The Rev. Poland was sent from Neuendetteslau, Germany, to serve among the Aborigines at Hope Valley, near Cooktown, North Queensland, in 1889. He was getting on in years when arrested.

Pastor G. Heuer, trained as a missionary at Hermannsuburg, Hanover before he served in Queensland, was so advanced in years that the military released him after seven weeks' internment – the only Queensland Lutheran pastor to be freed from arrest in wartime. Pastor G. Fisher, Australian-born, also trained at Hermannsburg, was in Holdsworthy from 1916 to 1919, as were Pastors T. J. Fuhlbohm (Hermannsburg and St. Paul, Minnesota seminaries), Theo Frank (Basle seminary for missionaries, Switzerland), Pastor E. Gutekunst, a missionary serving in the Toowoomba area. Pastor C. Seybold and Pastor C. E.

Treuz, former President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, both trained at Basle missionary seminary, were deported to Germany after the war.

Lutheran church religious journals were first prevented from using the German language and then some were closed down altogether. Kirchenbote, official Lutheran organ, was held up by the censors for several weeks after war's outbreak. The military restored permission to print articles in German, but a Cabinet order at the end of 1917 forced the exclusive use of English. The same happened to other religious publications. Kirchen-und Missions-Zeitung became Church and Mission News. Christenbote was changed to The Pilgrim. Der Australische Chriatenbote, as The Australian Christian Messenger, was banned before the war ended.

Far from the blood and bandages of war many patriots sustained up to Armistice Day and beyond their demands for denial of religious freedom to Lutherans by outlawry of their church rituals. The Rev. E. Graebner reported in the Australian Lutheran of 16 May 1918 that at Forbes, rural centre west of Sydney, "there was some talk of compelling Lutherans in the district to discontinue divine service altogether, at the least for the duration of the war," Pastor Graebner noted *Sydney Morning Herald* reports that protests against the visits of a Lutheran clergyman to the "German settlement" at Barreenong, about nine miles from Forbes, were lodged with State and Federal MPs for the district, A week or so later, Pastor Graebner received a call from an officer of the law about this. He discovered that the Mayor of Forbes had written to the authorities complaining of "German" services at Bareenong and "expressing the wish, at least indirectly, that I not be permitted to visit Barreenong again," Pastor Graebner wrote to the Mayor of Forbes, requesting publication of his letter denying charges being levelled against the Lutheran church. The letter was published but "the leader of the section inimical to us" published in reply "a mass of abusive statements and absurd assertions."

Although there were no longer services in German, the NSW Chief Secretary, as head of the Police Department, wrote to Pastor Graebner to warn him that complaints had been lodged against him preaching in German and ordering him to desist. The Chief Secretary did not reply to his denial. Next the Defence Department through the NSW Police, ordered Pastor Graebner to stop preaching in German. "The Evil One is at work," said the bewildered Pastor Graebner, Mr. A, G, F, James, MLA for Goulburn in NSW Parliament, quoted a Kiverlna schoolteacher for the charge: "Germans never say a word in church unless in the German language, and never hold a meeting unless they speak German." Fabrications about conspiratorial discussions in German

– second and third generations in the Riverins had forgotten the language – were in concert with the agitation to close the churches.

While "intense hatred of inoffensive people, of fellow-countrymen", with Lutheran being taken as synonymous with German and church members "treated as though they were German nationals and therefore the natural enemies of the British and of Australians", as Pastor F. Otto Thiele complained, Good Samaritans were thin on the ground. "The Lutheran church," Pastor Thiele, the historian recalled, "was treated with the utmost contempt and, what hurt most, was that so much of the contempt found its loudest expression from ministers of the Gospel, even in the houses of divine worship. The members of the Lutheran church were subjected to much enmity and direct opposition and persecution. In many cases, membership with a Lutheran congregation meant boycott and ostracism, and man, afraid of economic loss and ruin, dissociated themselves from the church."

Only the most harrowing pressures could have induced so many Lutherans to switch from the old-time religion, commanding the loyalty of grand-parents in face of persecution in Prussia. In the west Wimmera Lutherans did not have to cope with the same furies as their relatives in South Australia. But before the war ended worshippers with German names were almost the backbone of St. Aldan's Church of England in Natimuk. Two of the Kiefel girls taught us at Sunday school. Mabel and Stella Schmidt played the church organ. Fred or Hans Finch and Bill Kubale took round the collection plate. Members of the Schunke family drove past Pastor Lohe's church to the Church of England. Heinrich Sudholz and his large family and Johann (Jack Sudholz) swelled the Anglican congregation, Heinrich to stay and Jack to return to the Lutheran fold after the war, to suffer the rebuke that they had managed without him through the difficult war years and that he should not feel any obligation to come back again.

Germany's surrender on 11 November 1918 tore to tatters the mask of "national security in wartime": continued agitation against Lutheran churches and schools became stark and tyrannical assaults on religious liberty. But the hue and cry was carried into the years of peace. The Commonwealth Government, under William Morris Hughes as a Nationalist till 1923 and, till 1929, under the very conservative Stanley Melbourne Bruce, later to become Australia's second peer, remained the exemplar, keeping the Lutheran religion in a legal twilight. By proclamation in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* of 8 July 1920, the Minister for Trade and Customs prohibited the import of Lutheran bibles, prayer-books and hymn-books in the German language without prior Ministerial consent in writing. The Synodical Report

by the President-General to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod at its Australian Convention of 15–20 October 1920 revealed that when application was made to the Minister for Customs to import Lutheran Bibles in German, the reply was "The importation of German Bibles cannot be permitted." The Hughes Government was proferring further evidence that the God of the Australians was monocultural, as so many of them wished to be. "Just imagine," the Synodical Report commented, "a Government under the British flag forbids the Lutheran church to import German Bibles, the Book to which, according to Queen Victoria's conviction, Britain owes her greatness." (Queen Victoria had given credit to Luther's Bible). The Synodical Report noted that the religious organ Kirchenbote remained under ban.

Without drawing reproof from any Protestant leader or newspaper, a conference of country delegates of the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia, as the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) was then known, demanded, according to the Melbourne Argus of 5 July 1919 "that all Lutheran schools, churches and clubs should be closed. Eight months after the last shot in France the slogans that took them to the front were in discard.

Even Quaker humanity could be seditious. Returned soldier speakers at a 1919 RSSAILA conference rated as disloyal an appeal sponsored by the Society of Friends in London for relief of distress among German and Austrian ex-prisoners of war, many of them reduced to beggary. Relief money was being collected in the Dimboola district on the Wimmera River where many of German descent lived. There was a call from the conference floor to confiscate the relief money. Mr. Quinn (Richmond) said the Federal Ministry was deporting men for offences less serious than he had heard quoted. Immediate steps, he said, should be taken to deport all Germans from the Dimboola district. The "Dimboola Germans" were by this mostly Australian-born.

Lutheran worshippers continued to suffer outrage. The *Australian Lutheran* of 1 February 1922 reported an attack by about 30 returned soldiers on a church service at Port Victoria on the last Sunday in January 1922. These Lutherans on the SA Gulf coast were to meet in the Institute Hall, having no local church available. Pastor Hoopman arrived to find the door locked and no key to be found. Press reports were that the Lutherans forced a back door, but this was not true – the key turned up. As soon as Lutherans began singing the first hymn returned soldiers invaded the building, singing "God Save the King" and "Song of Australia" (written by a German). They drowned out the hymn-singers. Amid argument and abuse the returned soldiers tried but failed to force a promise that no further Lutheran service would be held

there. The Australian Lutheran commented that "this sad occurrence should show that the Australian public, or at least a certain section of it, require to be educated not only as regards law and order and common decency, but chiefly concerning the Australian Lutheran church, its history, aims and objects."

Children and grand-children of Wendish pioneers in the NSW Riverina were not immune. Military Intelligence, leaders of the RSSAILA and other Anglo-Australians did not know the distinction between a Slavonic Wend and a German, or the saga of the trek across Victoria and the Murray to Walla Walla, responsible for the presence in the Riverina of men like Hermann A. Paech and Johann Wenke. While serving as respected members of Culcairn municipal council, Paech and Wenke were interned by the Defence Department's intelligence officers. The internments were so scandalously unjust that the Minister for Defence ordered their release. Each had two sons fighting at the war fronts.

Paech and Wenke nominated again for Culcairn council early in 1920. Election seemed assured. An Albury conference of the RSSAILA's Culcairn, Henty and Walla Walla branches tried to flout the democratic process by illegal devices. The Melbourne Argus of 22 January 1920 said: "The soldiers say they are determined to prevent the performance of shire work if the candidates take their seats." The chairman of the Albury conference said that 400,000 boys left these shores "to clean up the other side." Now, when they came back, the soldiers found that "owing to the domination of the German residents in NSW and other States, they had a lot of cleaning up to do in this State." NSW Premier W. A. Holman, who left the Labour Party to support Hughes' military conscription campaign, was in the camp of the lawless. Senator Jupp Gardiner (Labour, NSW) accused Holman of "being prepared to use the power of the Minister" to deny Paech and Wenke their democratic rights. The Australian-wendish ex-internees stood their ground and were elected again.

Those of German descent, impatient and angry over the discrimination and slander that carried over into the postwar years found a friend in the national parliament, still sitting in Melbourne, in Joel Moses Gabb, Independent Member of the House of Representatives for the South Australian electorate of Angas, named in honor of the Klemzig pilgrims' patron. They also had an unexpected ally in the struggle against discriminatory legislation in the Commander-in-Chief of Australian Forces, General Sir John Monash.

Moses Gabb was almost eccentrically puritanical. When I served in the Canberra press gallery in the 1930s he was called the "Quorum King." Moses objected to politicians drawing taxpayers' money to sit in parliament and then

spending too much time in the Parliament House bar. He would count the numbers in the House and if they fell one below quorum level he would cause the bells to be rung and the politicians at the bar to return grumpily to their seats. He despised those who unleashed the old demons of racism and violence against peaceful citizens of German descent. On 3 March 1920 when he demanded an end to unfair treatment of Lutherans and all others of German origin, Mr. (later Sir) Charles Marr, knowing there were many of German names in Angas electorate, saw the chance to Jibe: "Did the Hun vote put you in?" Moses Gabb retorted: "There are no Huns in Australia, unless it be those who used their powers to persecute Australian-born Germans in this country."

Gabb moved again in 1924 to lift persisting restrictions on Lutherans and those of German birth, including the prohibition on any of German citizenship entering Australia. Mr. James McNeil, MHR for Wannon, the electorate embracing Western District and Wimmera lands in Victoria where many Germans settled, supported Moses Gabb. McNeil claimed that Australia remained the only country in the world prohibiting entry of German citizens to its territory. The prohibition prevented Germans joining relatives arriving in Australia before the war. McNeil blamed ex-Prime Minister Hughes for this "pernicious Act." He also protested at the continuing ban on Kirchenbote.

Sir John Monash was thumbing his nose at the Hughes and Bruce Governments' denials to Germans of legal entry to Australia. He was in charge of Victoria's great brown coal project at Morwell-Yallourn in Gippsland. He could not build briquetting plants andorganise the lignite deposits for electric power without German experts, world leaders in lignite processing. Under the patronage of the prestigious Sir John Monash, German scientists and technicians brought wives and families with them and the Hughes and Bruce Governments did not see them. The Melbourne Morning Post of 27 February 1926 reported a Governor-General's proclamation ending the immigration ban, opening the door after the illegal immigrants had entered. The ban on the Lutherans' Kirchenbote was lifted in September 1924. Australian citizens of German origin looked back with bitterness on the time of oppression and injustice, on what Pastor Theodor Hebart branded as "the horrible years of the Great War" when Lutheran Australians "were made to feel that they were not looked upon as Australians but as hostile Germans."

Chapter 5
The Wends Came for Peace

BEFORE Rome was built Biskupin, a city showing that people of the "Lausitz culture" – from which the name Lusatia derives – stood on a fortified island in a lake about 55 miles from where Poznan in Poland stands. The study of the Lausitz culture is mostly for archeologists. Tidal waves of Slavs were joining the Indo-European push into Europe; they went to beyond the sites of Hamburg and Prague, to the Adriatic and through the Alps. "Wendish" was often conferred as a general title for Slavs in Europe until nations and cultures were better defined. Alfred the Great, anxious to learn more of continental coast raiders, ordered Wulfstan, a Danish skipper, to report on coastal peoples round the Vistula estuary. After hearing Wulfstan's report, King Alfred dictated to his secretary a second-hand description of "the lands of the Wends". "Wendland," the Danish skipper told him, "remained on the starboard side the whole way as far as the Vistula estuary."

As late as Hanseatic League trading days the busy ports of Lubeck, Wismar, Rostock, Straslund, Griefswald and Stettin were to the Deutsche Hanse "Wendish towns."

Teuton tribes, skills improved by Roman and Frankish contacts, began their Drang nach Osten, the eastward drive to displace the Slavs which was to die in Hitler's bunker more than a thousand years after. Wendish tribes, living on berries, waterfowl, fish, honey, nuts and what meat they could spear, stubbornly resisted and suffered terrible massacres. The Drang nach Osten could be given a crusade blessing, for the Wends were pagans of naturalistic and pantheistic beliefs.

Saint Boniface (675–754), born as Wynfrith in Saxon Wessex, had Wendish idols destroyed and tried conversions in Thuringia but was not pleased with the responses and so heaped curses on the Wends. Charlemagne (771–814), King-Emperor of the Franks, made Magdeburg a missionary base between Teuton and Slav worlds, and from here forays burned sensual Wend images along with thatched huts. Henry I (919–936), proclaimed founder of the German Empire, and Otto the Great (936–973) rolled the Wends back to steal their lands, but the Wends exacted heavy price. Widikun of Corvey, tenth

century Saxon historian, chronicled the Wends' desperate fight for their lands: they "preferred war to peace, ignoring the greatest of misery when it was a question of defending their precious freedom." Sticking to these irrepressible moods the Wends rose in revolt in 982 and undid many German conquests.

German princes, frustrated by failure of sword and torch, enlisted the cross more fervently. "The most cruel of all heathen peoples have risen against us and have become all powerful," said an 1108 appeal from secular and ecclesiastic German princes for a crusade. They made the rationale clear in their call for action against Wends "the most wicked of all", for "their land is the best of all, abounding in meat, fowl, honey and corn. It need only be cultivated to overflow with all the fruits of the soil." Here was the opportunity for Saxons, Flemings, men of Lorraine "not only to save your souls but, if you wish, also to acquire the finest land as your dwelling place.'

Wends were seldom remembered victims of the Second Crusade, set moving by the eloquence at Vezelay in 1146 by the fire-breathing eloquence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the "Oracle of Christendom." Saint Bernard, one of the most powerful figures in Catholic history – his name has been given to a mountain pass, a dog to those classics of mystical theology, his sermons on the Song of Solomon, and the condemnation of tragic Peter Abelard – promoted division of the Second Crusade into three forces. One would invade the Holy Land, where infidels were to given drunken German soldiers and others a father of a hiding; another would assail the Moors across the Pyrenees in Iberia and the third would achieve the final solution of the Wendish barrier to German colonisation, and deal at the same time with the Wends' co-heathens, the Slavonic Prussian tribes and the Lithuanians. The Cistercian Abbot Bernard's final solution appeal – extirpare de terra christianinomis – was rendered impracticable by Wendish refusal to be extirpated, though his crusaders did their best. Henry the Lion's anti-Wendish crusade of 1147 and the invasion by Albert the Bear gave the Wends a terrible mauling. Villages were left blackened ruins, without people, and sacred places destroyed. Wends declining baptism were denied rights accorded the Christian community; Germans could now settle in force on conquered lands. Culturally closer to the heritages of Greece and Rome, the Germans, including Netherlanders, were technically superior. The disorderly lay-out of Wendish villages gave way to planned German towns, with market places, drainage plants, dykes and water-mills. The colonisers from the Netherlands and Frisia were in the forefront, talented in dyke-building marsh-drainage. Rhinelanders and other West Germans also transformed primitive Wend farming: the Wends' block system gave way to the German strip system and advanced husbandry, aided by the heavier iron plough and tools.

Wendish lands equal to about one-third of the pre-1938 German Reich's area were seized in the two centuries following the Second Crusade by the better organised, armed and educated Germans. The Drang nach Osten created a confused patchwork of large and small ethnic zones that mingled or survived over the centuries. Wendish enclaves endured, despite war, hunger and assimilation, east of the Elbe and Saale Rivers, first on the fertile treeless land, then on poor sandy soil not wanted by Germans and finally among the lakes, swamps and streams of the Spreewald and its environs. In the water-studded fields and forests by the Sprjewj, their name for the Spree, marauding armies could only approach by boat, vulnerable to ambush. The core of the once numerous and widespread Serbo-Wendish nation lived on, clinging to their language and lore.

Wendish went out as a court language at Magdeburg in 1290, at Anhalt in 1295, Altenburg, Zwickau and Leipzig in 1327 and Meissen in 1224. Catholic priests preached in Wendish till the fifteenth century; Wends were trained in the Cathedral of St. Peter at Bautzen on the Spree, into the fifteenth century. Most Wends adopted Lutheranism after the Reformation. This did not make Martin Luther their friend. "The worst people God has tossed among us are the Wends," Luther said. Wends, then numerous round Wittenburg, had been too active in the 1524 Peasants' War for Luther's comfort. However, the Reformation allowed more use of Wendish in church services, translations of Catechism and Bible into Wendish and a first difficult birth of Wendish literature. The first Wendish-language paper was not a political paper but the Prussian authorities banned its first issue in 1706.

Stubborness was a Wendish characteristic. They refused to give up their near-vestigial culture. Other papers followed and a Wendish intelligentsia emerged. The Wendish press began to hint at national rights and fostered pride in Wendish nationality. In 1848, the year of European revolutions, a Wendish delegate attended a Slav Congress in Prague. Wendish was one of five Slavonic languages in which the Prague Congress manifesto was published, demanding freedom for oppressed Slav minorities. With Wendish societies being formed, late nineteenth century German nationalists were complaining of Wendish activities claimed as a danger to the Second Reich.

Not that the Wends could ever mount any threat: it was dove versus eagle. By the turn of the century there were less than 170,000 Wendish-speaking subjects left in Lusatia. Some Spreewald villages remained almost 100 per cent. Wendish. Only policemen and functionaries were German. Wends had been banned from medieval guilds but they were now being recruited as cheap labour for the new industries of Prussia. They were conscripted for

the 1870 Franco-Prussian War and the 1914–18 holocaust. Wend losses at Verdun left many a Spreewald cottage in mourning. Wends made their move for national rights at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919. Persecuted by the Kaiser's Government, their intellectuals exiled, they pleaded in vain. The Wend delegate to Versailles was among those gaoled for "preparing to commit treason." The Weimar Republic guaranteed national minority rights but denied them to Wends. They were the only Slav nation that did not win some degree of independence through the Allied victory of 1918.

War-depleted reserves of the Wendish nation could not cope with crop failures of the hungry 1840s. Blighting of grain and potato crops brought new agonies and civil disturbances to Wendish lands and elders recalled the desperate Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic years. Wendish families from Hochkirk, Bautzen, Cottbus and the water-edge villages of the Spreewald lakes took more or less the same waterways through Berlin to the Elbe and Hamburg as had the pilgrims of 1838. For men, women and children to whom the broad ocean was a stranger the voyage could be frightening. The little sailing ships pitched and heaved, the wind shrieked through the rigging and, as Wends from the tranquility of Lusatia gazed day after day on green seas, they survived on rationed fresh water, salt meat and fish and dried preserves.

The barque *Victoria*'s 848 voyage to land Wends in Australia, inspired an agonised letter from Mjertyn Tesnar, which Pastor Burger discovered in a rare booklet in Wendish, Do Cuzeje Zemje (To Distant Lands). Translation was made possible by the help of a Melbourne Slovak, Pastor Michael Brondos, whose language has affinity with Sorbic. Tesnar recorded that Wends boarding *Victoria* bade Germany *dobruc noc* (good night) with heavy spirits: "An indescribable terror seized us. We were sea-sick for a whole week and very weak afterward." They caught fish and porpoises to eat, and birds when *Victoria* was becalmed. At Rio in Brazil they were thankful to step on solid ground and eat fresh fruit. "We were greatly saddened," wrote Tesnar, "by the sight of so many coloured slaves, who seemed to be treated almost like cattle."

Things worsened after Rio: "the swell often reached mountain height with the ship rocking like a cradle or pitching and tossing like a bucking horse. We had to hold on to our bunks or we would have been thrown out." Imagine trying to eat under such conditions! On the voyage 12 died; nine children and three men. The adults were sewn in sail-cloth and the children were paid in little coffins weighted with stones. After a short service they were lowered into the sea. Nothing can be sadder than such a burial."

Pastor Andreas Kappler, radical Wendish clergyman who served in Mount Gambier and on the goldfields, described the joy when after nearly five months a land-bird and a butterfly settled on the ship. Soon everyone cried out: *"Kraj, kraj jo wizes!"* ("Land, we can see land!") There were "weeping eyes but happy hearts." "Once on shore," said Pastor Kappler, "we waited in vain for someone to help us. We quickly learned that here it's a case of every man for himself." The Wends had no desire to remain Prussian citizens. "Quite a number," wrote Pastor Burger, "applied for Australian citizenship soon after arrival."

The Wends spread out over the South Australian German settlements, down to Mount Gambier and over the Victorian border to Portland and Heywood, then to the Hamilton district of Western Victoria and the Wimmera. Wendish families were identified in Melbourne, on the Victorian and NSW goldfields, in the NSW Riverina and at various metal mining centres. Pastor Noack, the Natimuk owner of a Wendish bible, claimed that in the early years of the Peter's Hill congregation in South Australia many understood Wendish better than German. The school established by Lower Lusatia Wends at Peter's Hill was suppressed as a gesture of loyalty to the British Empire during the 1914-18 war.

Wends were among the Lutherans who built their township in a picturesque depression called Hoffnungsthal Just east of Lyndoch Valley in the Barossa. As they began building Aborigines gesticulated their warnings but were not understood. Thunder-storms brought rain in buckets on a hot October day in 1853. Hoffnungsthal or Valley of Hope went under water and some were drowned.

Land was not easy to come by in South Australia by the 1850s and Western Victoria beckoned. The first nine Wend families, in 11 covered wagons, drove 50 livestock over the rutty track to Mount Gambier, along the Coorong coast and over steep wooded hills, fording marshes and streams. They lived on bread baked over campfires and what fish and game they could catch as they pushed through Mount Gambier and along the Victorian coast to Portland. No farm land awaited them round Portland and so they pushed north to Hamilton by their wagons, pack-horses and weary feet. Just south of Hamilton (then The Grange) they got government land at exorbitant prices – four to eight guineas an acre. Of the seven title-holders acquiring land at what were then astronomical prices, all but one were Wends. Wends kept coming and founded Hochkirk, Tabor, Gnadenthal and Byaduk – at first called Neukirch after a Lusatian village – and struggled to preserve their language. Old Mrs. Rentsch, dying in 1915 was the last at Byaduk to speak Wendish as a first language.

Stone cottages and churches arose; Wendish women dug wells while men hauled up the earth in buckets. They read and sang from Wendish bibles and hymn-books. Among the Wends of the district was Peter Burger, from whom the historian Pastor Burger is descended.

Hochkirk to the tax-collectors, Bukecy to the Wends, became a sizable town not far out of Hamilton. Soon there were three blacksmiths' shops, several hotels, a general store, a well-stocked bookshop, saddlery, shoemaker, church and school to serve the Wends and Germans. The school-teacher, Oscar Mueller, ran the printery after he finished classes and in week-ends. He must have been a frenziedly busy man, for he printed periodicals at Hochkirk that were distributed widely in Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales.

Hochkirk, bloodied and depleted in so many wars and now by emigration, had two offspring abroad – one in the Wannon district and one in Texas. One of the Wendish emigrants to Texas was Peter Zieschang, who spent several years at Hochkirk in Victoria and called his Texan settlement for Wendish families Hochkirk.

A wagon train rumbled all the way from Adelaide zone, across mallee, near-desert, mountains, rivers and marshes to cross the Murray at Albury and place Wends on Riverina land. Dust-bowl conditions were reducing opportunities in South Australia: the soil there was not as in the Spreewald, grain-cropping exhausted cultivated fields in the era before superphosphate. The Wends in the Riverina had to surrender their language in schools and churches. Germans could not understand Wendish but Wends could understand German, and there were sufficient distinctions between Upper and Lower Lusatia dialects to encourage German as a lingua franca.

Among Wends to turn up round Melbourne in the German-settled villages and in the city itself the best known were the Zwar family. Dr. Traugott Bernard Zwar, son of Johann Zwar, a Wend, became chairman of the Royal Melbourne Hospital, surgeon and soldier. He improved the keeping of medical records in Australia. Michael Zwar went to Broadford, north of Melbourne, and his son Albert moved on to Beechworth in the Kelly country, to establish a tannery. Michael's son, Peter Zwar, was in the Victorian Legislative Assembly for 13 years, while his brother, Albert Michael Zwar, served the same period in the Legislative Council.

Wends began to drive their wagons into my native West Wimmera not long after the epic Wendish trek from South Australia to Walla Walla and other Riverina districts.

First Conscript to Die In Vietnam

Private Errol Wayne Noack, aged 21, was ordered into a helicopter assault against a Vietnamese position on 25 May 1966. A shot from answering Vietnamese fire struck him in the stomach. He died on the way to hospital.

Private Noack received media attention only because he was the first of Prime Minister Harold Holt's conscripts to be killed in Vietnam. Neither in print nor telecast was it noted that Private Noack belonged by ancestry to a unique nation, the Vends or Sorbs of Lusatia in Germany, victims of near-successful genocide m. that began a thousand years before the closed waggons rolled through the arched gate of Auschwitz. The tragedy of Private Errol Wayne Noack was not understood in Australia, where the vast majority did not have an inkling that Wendish people were part of the national community, nor perhaps, had they ever heard of the long-suffering Wends of Europe.