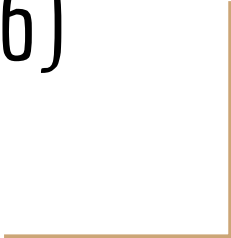




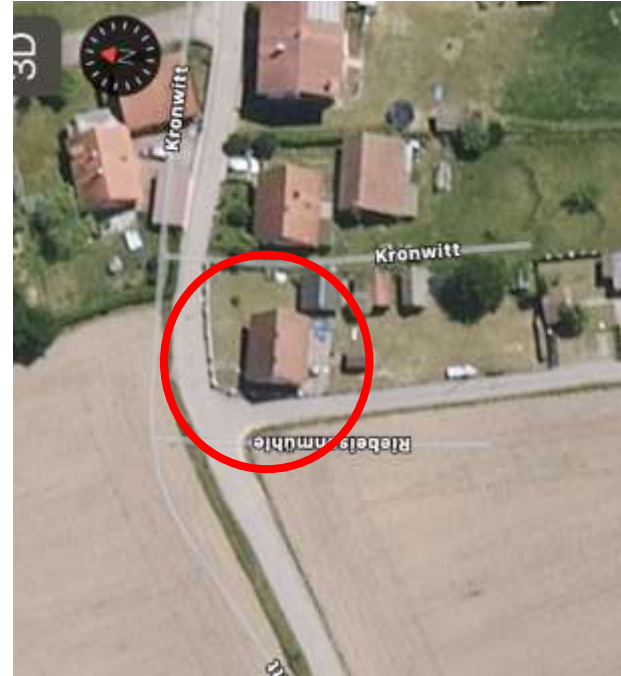
The diary of Elfriede Clauss

(1931-2006)



Introduction

At the beginning, when Hitler came to power in 1933, we hardly noticed anything because we lived on the countryside, but over time we had to deal with the so-called rules. I can no longer remember everything that I have experienced, but I have the things that I still know now and I will never forget in my life. The house is still in property of my family. (the cousin of my grandmother owns it today)



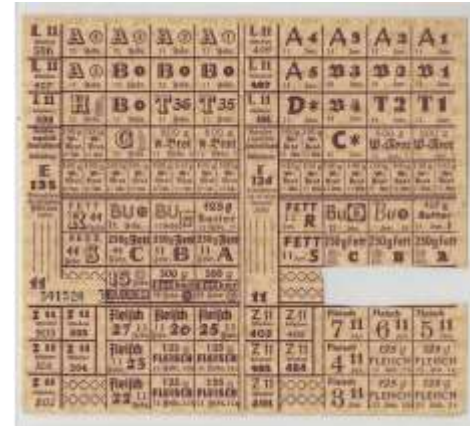
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(source: Google Earth)

The following stories are told out
of the perspective of Elfriede
Clauss, my great-grandmother.

Everyday life back then

After a while, when there was little left to eat, food vouchers were given. We always had to queue for a piece of bread for three hours. So that we even had a chance to get bread, my sister and I always stood in line at two different bakeries. Soon there were also clothing points marked with numbers. On certain days, numbers were called and if you were lucky, your own was called. So, of course, it was often inevitable that we all had self-sewn clothes made of the same material in school. But my mother always made "three make one" clothes for us. We even came up with names for the clothes.

Grocery cards are government-issued certificates that assign a certain amount of food to the population in times of need. During the Second World War, food stamps and vouchers for petrol were issued in Germany on August 28, 1939, a few days before the start of the war. The Reich clothing card followed a little later.



Nutritional problems

Once we had nothing to eat at home, not even a bit of salt left in the house. Fortunately, our neighbor had a grocery store and every now and then gave us something to eat, such as the packet of raspberry pudding. My mother made a raspberry soup out of it for us. But when my mother noticed that my sister and I were not full, she said to us that she has an insane stomach ache today and that she cannot eat her soup, we should eat it and she also gave us her daily ration of bread. My mother even came to the hospital because she had always given us her food because of malnutrition. Out of all the hunger and cravings, we even imagined that we were going to eat a banana. It actually worked for me, I thought I was eating a banana. At some point each of us in the village got a banana, it was almost like Christmas.

Coping with lack of food or other

After a while, when we had nothing left, we even started stealing. My mother even sewed bags for us from scraps of fabric that we could hang around ourselves. Since we lived at the train station, we were always on the lookout for the lost coke on the trains. We stole groceries from the freight cars. Sometimes we were allowed to search the farmers' potato fields for forgotten potatoes or beets.

Since the winters in Bavaria were always very cold, our wood was of course soon used up. We were offered to cut down trees in the forest and cut off the branches, for which we were given a sack full of wood. With over a meter of snow, you can imagine that it wasn't easy, especially, because my father wasn't there and my mother was too weak for it.

Appreciating the little things

Christmas and birthdays have always been the best for us. My sister got a fresh chicken egg and a spoonful of sugar for her birthday. But just as we were about to eat it, there was an air raid alarm and we all had to go to the basement. When we were almost down, my sister remembered that she had forgotten her egg upstairs and, to my mother's horror, ran back upstairs, but she returned unhurt. We then ate her egg in the cellar.

My sister and I only had one ball but unfortunately it broke because of a heavy truck. There were only two halves left, which of course could no longer be used. However, my mother sewed it together, darned it, and painted it with blue oil paint. To our surprise, it was under the tree for Christmas. It looked like new, it didn't bounce as well, but the effort she'd made to make us happy counted.

Retribution weapon

One day a V1 (retribution weapon) was driven into the station. It was as long as three freight cars and almost as dangerous as the atomic bomb is today. It was heavily guarded because the slightest shock could have caused an explosion. When it was supposed to be defused at the end of the war, we all had to go to the basement. But before that we had to open the windows all over the house. When we sat in the basement, we had to cover our ears and open our mouths wide. But when after about three hours the all-clear was still not there, one of us went upstairs to see how far they were. To our relief, the V1 was already defused and we were allowed to go back upstairs.

A retribution weapon was used to attack the civilian population of the enemy. The V-weapons should have brought a decisive turning point in the Second World War, but their military-strategic effect was very little because they lacked accuracy. The psychological effects - supported by Nazi propaganda - were enormous: In Germany, the belief in a possible final victory was strengthened among many civilians and soldiers.



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Horriying way to school

Our way to school was a long ditch that led from the house to just before the school. We had to go to school for half an hour every morning and always stay in the ditch. But one day the weather was so nice that we decided to run next to the ditch, which almost cost us our lives. It didn't take long for planes to approach us. But we were so scared that we couldn't move. It wasn't until they shot us that we came to and jumped into the ditch as quickly as possible and just ran.

Panic due to the Czechs

In the middle of the war, the Czechs were our greatest enemies. When they were on the way to us, my mother once said to the neighbor that if she thought we would go to sleep before the Czechs rape and torture my children, I would rather kill them myself with the fin dagger under my pillow. Since my mother normally couldn't harm a fly, we knew it was going to be very serious. My sister and I take turns sleeping so we can see when the Czechs are coming. Once our mother hid us in the dovecote in front of the house for three days and nights when looters and rapists were near us.

One day they even came into our house and we had to hide in the bathroom, the door of which was right behind the front door. My mother stayed outside the front door the whole time so she couldn't see the bathroom door. The worst for me, however, was when the bodies of looters and rapists lay on the streets. They were released from the nearby concentration camp a few days earlier and were thirsty to drink vinegar. When my sister and I went into the village, we had to overcome all the corpses. As I was about to cross one, the alleged corpse opened my eyes and gave me an indescribable look that I will never forget.

BDM (Bund deutscher Mädchen)

The best was, when I spent time with the BDMs (Bund deutscher Mädchen). You can play, do handicrafts, read, sing and went on hikes. One day, when I finally saw myself being led by my own girls, the war was over.

At the BDM, the girls were given the most beautiful offers, which is why the stay there was of great importance for the girls. The women were raised in the BDM to be strong for the men, to cook and to run the household,



(My great-great-grandfather Otto Michel)



(My Great-great-aunt in BDM uniform)

Certain death experience

Since we lived next to the train station, transports with prisoners from the concentration camp often came. Once they were unloaded and had to spend the night behind a fence. They were totally emaciated because they hadn't had anything to eat for a long time. My mother crouched through the night and pushed a wad of bread under the fence. If she had been caught, it would have meant certain death for her.

Otto Michel (my great-great-grandfather)

Otto Michel (1904-1985), the father of Elfriede Clauss was in the Air Force, with Fritz Todt. Fritz Todt was a minister, who joined the NSDAP in 1923 and was born at the Luisenplatz in Pforzheim, 1891. My great-great-grandfather was in the Air Force in Finland and Russia, together with Fritz Todt, as you can see on the photos, which were taken back then.



Fritz
Todt

Otto
Michel



They even switched their hats out of fun on this picture. As Fritz Todt had a higher rank than Otto Michel.

More about Fritz Todt

Fritz Todt was born on September 4, 1891 at Luisenplatz in Pforzheim and had passed the Abitur with 1.0 at the Reuchlin-Gymnasium. The civil engineer joined the NSDAP as early as 1923. He later became "Hitler's builder", planned the first highways, was commissioned to build the west wall and was finally appointed minister. The former ardent admirer of the Chancellor realized after a trip through Russia that in view of the great losses the war could no longer be won. When he was about to take off from the Führer Headquarters in Wolfschanze for Munich on February 8, 1942, the plane exploded on take-off. Historians are certain that the Führer had got rid of the annoying warning. Nevertheless, there were noble words at the state funeral.



The Todt organization

From 1933 to 1945, the Todt (OT) organization was part of the National Socialist federal government that carried out major construction projects. Todd built facilities and equipment, infrastructure, and other important sites for the German Empire. In addition to Germany, the combat area also includes conquered areas and allied forces. At its peak, Todd had more than 1 million employees, and forced labor was widely used. The organization was active in Finland from 1941 to 1944.

The Michel family

Otto

Helga



Maria

Elfriede