

# A Walk through the Arzis Market

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Note: Information within [brackets] are comments by the translator. For those who might have experienced a Swabian dialect at home, I am providing an English translation of the conversation followed by the original Swabian words in **blue**. After page 1, there was a very long paragraph which I have taken the liberty of dividing up for the sake of easier comprehension.

## Liquid equivalent in reading on page 4:

*Eimer* = Swiss *Eimer* 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
1 *Eimer* = 9.9 gallons / 35.7 liters  
50 *Eimer* = 495 gallons / 1,785 liters

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[Translation Begins]

## A Walk through the Arzis Market

K Bierer

It is difficult to describe the Arzis Market. A person does not know where to start, as big and diverse as it was, as different as the nations that came together there. The eye was delighted by the many and different goods: barrel organs and harmonicas resounded in the loud complaining and cheering clamor. But I do not want to burst into the middle of the market with my story.

In the past, still in Russian time, we only had a market every 14 days. Later, as it grew more and more and could no longer accommodate all the market guests despite the wide street and the large horse market, it was decided in the Romanian post-war period that a market should be held every week. Already on Monday afternoon, when we were still working diligently in the field, you could see many heavily loaded wagons driving into our village and various domestic animals moving along the road. One wanted to do his business quickly on Monday and get back to work; the other was only concerned with getting a good place, the third wanted to sell quickly in order to have money for Tuesday, and for the fourth, the one market day was simply too short, and

therefore he came on Monday. All the heavily loaded wagons, which came with textiles and various other goods, had to settle down first, and often worked deep into the night. On Monday evening, there were already many loaded wagons parked on the street. Especially the vegetable and fruit market was already completely open. In two or three long rows stood heavily loaded wagons, which sent out a wonderful vegetable and fruit aroma. Every now and then, a small fire could be seen glowing through the wagon wheels and spaces. Women and men, guarding their wagons, warmed themselves by the embers in the cool autumn weather. Again and again, wagons could be seen in the dark, whose owners spent the night on the street. But at our parsonage and at the school, a Swabian from Württemberg would have stopped and said: “How does the Württemberger border begin here?” (*Wie fangt do d’ württembergisch Grenz a?*) Our people from Teplitz, Alt-Elft and Krasna had already occupied the whole street with their many new wagons. Lanterns were also burning there, or a small fire flickered in the cool nights. Dressed in long overcoats, the men stood in small groups. Swabian, a person could only hear them speaking Swabian. Each village according to its kind. The flickering embers lit up their cheerful faces. Harmless and carefree, they told each other anecdotes or some other funny story on Monday evening, but already on Tuesday morning they turned out to be capable and cunning businessmen. A romantic picture was offered by the slumbering market, which woke up before sunrise and dashed into the day.

When I called my friend, who lived in a secluded (*einsamen*) village and was already standing in front of the farmyard before sunrise, to get breakfast, he called out to me: “Our German harnessed teams can be recognized among the endless number of wagons that come to the village by the beautiful horses and by the dark green or black painted wagons.” After breakfast, we went out on the street again. For a moment, we watched the Moldovans unloading long Harbi [wagon] poles in front of our farmyard and making the last preparations for the day. Since a great paved street began nearby, I led my friend to it. Close to the road were wagons after wagons, next to which the unharnessed horses ate their fodder. The whole market could be seen stretched far up into the upper village. He stood silently and stared into the hissing, noisy and surging market life: “My God, where do all the wagon-loads and people come from?” he finally blurted out. “Oh, that’s not all! There,” I pointed to the Brienne hill, from which wagon-load after wagon-load slowly came down, “the teams come from every direction into our village. Just look at our farmyards, on each one you can see up to 12 harnessed teams that do not want to be unharnessed on the street.”

We pushed past wagons that were standing close together. Horses neighed, people spoke excitedly, shouts rang out, and they were answered with laughter or scolding. Romanian, Russian, German, Bulgarian or various other Balkan languages were heard spoken. We heard a German farmer woman say aloud, “I do not understand your babble, you have to speak German.” (*I versteh’ doi Gepapel net, muscht deitsch schwaetza.*) “Yes, yes. I German” (*Ja, ja. ich deitsch*), the salesman pointed to his goods and rummaged out all the German words he remembered. Every merchant knew that if the German farmer or farmer’s wife once left their work behind to go to the market, they wanted to and could buy. As different as the language was, so was the clothing. Our German farmers drove to the market in good clothing, over which they had mostly pulled a light Stanbrook. The farm woman distinguished herself mainly with her black headscarf and pleated skirt. The daughter was dressed either in our farmer costume or in modern clothes. But no matter how she was dressed, she could be recognized as a German from afar by her facial

features. Our young fellows, strutting around in the market, stopped in their tracks: “Very delicate, where could she come from?” (*Eppes Fois, von wo mag die soi?*) Many a fellow did not give in until he knew who she was, and one day he was seen walking to the pastor with “*eppes fois*” at his side. The Romanian distinguished himself with his national costume, and the Russian *rubashka* [shirt highly embroidered down the front] and the Russian beard are known all over the world. My friend laughed: “Just look at the Bulgarians with their fur trousers in the summer, and how they run away quickly with their Papuches [shoes made out of felt],” he added. “*Fitz, fitz,*” the dry leather pants (*Lederhosen*) rustle. “Hey, you,” I said, “do not laugh at these people; the Bulgarian is a hard-working farmer and the most dangerous competitor for us Germans here in the steppe.” As everywhere, where large business is conducted, there were also many Jews here in our market; Turks with Fez [head dress] and various other types could be seen.

“Do you also have German businessmen?” my friend asked. “For sure. In recent years, they have grown like mushrooms out of the earth. Unfortunately, we do not have time today to look at all our German businesses individually, they are present in every kind of product, in some even several. Also, our branches of the Trade Association, our mill owners and some of our enterprising men snatched a large part of the grain trade from foreigners, which was not so easy with their stubbornness and cunning.” “And do the foreign market visitors also buy from our German shopkeepers?” “Of course, you know that they all say: Give me a German word, and I do not need a change. They have far more trust in us Germans than in their own ethnic group. The Arzis market is, so to speak, one of the few initial sources through which German business life continues to develop.

“There,” I pointed over that way, “is the place for our pottery and for various other little things, but let us go to the fruit and vegetable market.” Wagon after wagon with all kinds of fruit could be seen, the golden yellow apricot with its delicate smell was the most conspicuous. Then there were again long rows of wagons with cabbage, peppers, tomatoes and with an infinite number of other kinds of vegetables. In every open corner sat women with walnuts, hazelnuts, seeds, and other little things. Our farmers could be seen filling bags with peppers and other vegetables on their own wagons. As we walked on, we noticed how a woman did not quite succeed to hold open a sack into which a Bulgarian was counting peppers. I grabbed it and helped hold the sack, and a conversation developed between me and the woman. When the desired number was counted, the woman thanked us, and we walked on. “Who was the woman?” “I don’t know!” “It seemed as if you were old acquaintances.” “Of course, we are acquaintances in a certain respect, we recognized each other as Germans on the small island in the Slavic sea. Believe me, friend, if we Germans had not realized that we all belong to one big family, then the Slavic wave would have washed us away from the surface long ago.”

We pushed on through the masses of people and crossed the street; a fishy smell came towards us. Refreshments and sweets were available on all corners. A person could hear an harmonica playing, beggars sang their lamentations, and the crippled whimpered and begged, but the clamor of the market drowned out everything. It was a diverse mess, we were standing at a corner, and my friend looked in amazement at the surging confusion. We tried to get up to the right side of the road, our destination was not far, and we stopped. We looked at agricultural equipment made of wood, which we absolutely need for our type of threshing. The vast majority of them were produced in Alt-Elft and in Paris.

Slowly we went on to our barrel-maker (*Bondern*), who had set up barrels from 1 to 50 *Eimer*. “They do not smell good yet,” I said, pointing with my thumb to the big size (*Kaliber*), “but once a real Muscat grape has aged in them, you do not want to pull your nose back from the bunghole, it’s fragrance is so fine and good. Again we crossed the street at the church, my friend noticed quite soon why even more people were moving back and forth here. “So, so, here are your many taverns,” he said. “Yes, but you can look at them later.” We moved forward slowly, packed into the crowd. On both sides of the street, there were tables packed with goods, which were loudly and admirably praised. A pleasant smell of bratwurst hit us, but after a few steps it turned into an oily smell of leather. Our master saddlers from all over the area had taken off their horse harnesses and many a freshly bought horse had a new garment put on it right there.

The wagon market was very busy, our masters and wagon builders waved their arms, there was no trace of the coziness of the previous evening. The wheels were shaken, and a clear sound was heard. “I am telling you, Hannes,” the master continued, “it keeps on till it is dead. See to it that a drink [grease-?] is provided.” (*J sag’ der, Hannes”, fuhr ein Meister fort, “der halt bis er he isch. Mach daß’s oin Mogritsch gebt.*) But before Hannes could think about it, a Bulgarian had bought the wagon. “Well, what do you say now, Hannes?” The master trumpeted laughing and pocketed his money. “See, I always said: you better agree! How about we go for a drink with this Bulgarian, then we will have time to talk, and you order a little wagon with me.” (*Sischt i hon emmer ge’gesagt: Schlag oi! Woischt, mir gahn mit dem Bulgar oin Morgritsch tränka, no hen mir Zeit zom schwätza, on du bschtelscht dir a Wägele bei mir.*) I am telling you Hannes, ‘You’ (*Ihr* [formal pronoun]) have to do that.” The speaker assured convincingly.

They went to a tavern, and we also tried to get through to the horse market in some way. Swerving now to the right, now to the left, for fear of being hit by the excited horses, they went slowly forward. “My Lord, where do all the horses come from?” Without answering, I climbed onto a wagon in the middle of the horse market. “Well, just come up, from here you can observe the whole horse haggling. Look, over there is the cow and pig market, but as far as the many horses are concerned, do not forget that we live in the steppe. Every German farmer has two to five broodmares and even more. Back there at the river, where the teams are going back and forth, the horses are tried out. From the Balkans, even from Turkey, people come to our market to buy horses.”

We stood for a long time and watched the excited trade and haggling. All the horse neighing, swearing, slapping hands, cracking the whip, laughing, whistling and cursing was simply deafening, and I thought about the way back. Glad that we were finally back on the street in front of the market taverns, we stopped. The sun was glowing hot, the wind also began to stir up dust and without taking long to come to a decision, we went into a tavern. From the open door you could hear a loud noise. Wrapped in the tobacco smoke sat men and women, who refreshed their thirsty throats with the noble wine juice. The fact that there was no German woman to be seen in the pub did not astonish either of us. It was a matter of course for us that the German woman did not go to the tavern and could only be seen there under certain circumstances. Of our young women, so far nothing more to add. Who would have married a girl who goes to the inn and drinks alcohol? We went into an adjoining room, which was not so crowded and was occupied by a large majority of Germans. I ordered half a liter of wine and tapped it with soda water.

“But we will drink the first glass without mixture,” I remarked, and poured wine. “Just look,” I lifted my glass, “what a beautiful dark pink color it has.” Small bubbles could be seen rising up in the wine. “This is the wine from the Brienne hills. Cheers!” Quite quickly our bottle was empty. My friend wanted to return the favor, but I refused, despite all my good appetite. “We have to go home, my wife is probably already waiting for us with the noon meal.” I am right. With the words: “Well, you have taken a close look at the market,” she greeted us. “Just come to the room right away, I will bring the noon meal.” We sat down tired on chairs in the room. The silence that reigned in it was directly soothing after all the market noise.

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[Translation Ends]