

# **Bessarabia German Parish School—1891-1914**

*Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1953*

W. Rumpeltin, Buchdruckerei und Zeitungsverlag K.G.

[Book Printing and Newspaper Publishing Limited]

Burgdorf, Hannover/Germany

Pages 44-51

Translated by: Allen E. Konrad

November, 2024

P.O. Box 157, Rowley, IA 52329

onamission1939@gmail.com

Note: As the title of this article reveals, the author takes a look at what the school system was like in the German colonies in Bessarabia from 1891 to the beginning of World War One. Mention is made of the Russian Government's attempt to bring the German colonists into an assimilation with Russian society. A tabulation chart presents how Parish School instruction was modeled—courses taught and the number of hours certain courses had to be taught in Russian. Information in [brackets] are comments made by this translator.

---

## **The Bessarabian German Parish School under Government Supervision—1891-1914**

by J. Becker, Rector

As early as 1851, the local authorities were instructed by the Welfare Committee to see to it that in every school “where possible, also instruction be given in the Russian language”. In a regulation of the Welfare Committee of 25 January, 1866, a book written by Kerkowin for the gaining knowledge of the Russian language was recommended with the following words: “Such a manual can be used for the dissemination of the knowledge of the Russian language in German colonies, where, regrettably, the fatherland language is not yet spread to such a degree as it would be suitable for this colony and would be of great benefit to this colony.” (Weiß: *History of the Teplitz Municipality*, p. 269 — *Chronik der Gemeinde Teplitz*, Seite 269.)

When compulsory military service was introduced in 1874, people first learned to appreciate Russian and showed more good opinion towards this language.

Under the reign of Emperor Alexander III, a Russification policy began in 1883. It ended with the removal of the clergy from the school administration, the subordination of the schools to the control of state authorities and the introduction of the Russian language of instruction in all German schools. This also buried the entire German school system in Russia.

In 1871, the Germans of Russia were deprived of their self-government due to the onset of the agitation against Germans. The church and schools were not affected by this measure. On 28 January, 1891, however, a bill was passed, the most important provisions of which were to threaten the Colonist School the most, to the effect that from that time on the schools were to be placed under the “Ministry of Popular Enlightenment” (Ministry of Education) and that two-thirds of the weekly lessons were to be taught in Russian. Thus, the Colonist School would have stepped out of its exposed position at one stroke and, to judge in the sense of the corresponding law, would have lost the character of a church school. It seemed as if the name church school had only historical value. In reality, however, the law could not prevail in any of the German colonies with all its consequences (Matt—p. 23).

The reasons for this measure were intended to be that the school should serve for Russification. The Russian government took over the administration and supervision of the German church schools and only left the congregations to cover the costs.

The main new regulations were: “They may not be employed as teachers, not even for German language, who have not passed the Russian teacher examination. Of the 30 weekly school hours, 18 are to be designated for Russian language and arithmetic, 12 remain for religious instruction, some of which can also be used for the mother tongue. The supervision and control of the lessons to be carried out by Elementary School inspectors (*Volksschulinspektoren*).” These were Russian officials who, of course, were only interested in school work in the Russian language. The pastor still supervised religious education. German instruction was left uncontrolled, left solely to the diligence and zeal of the German teacher. (E. Schmidt—p. 11.)

On the other hand, it should be said that the colonists paid little attention to such decrees and regulations issued by the government; for the goal of education—as already mentioned—was a one-sided religious, religion of morals. Religion was left to them. On the basis of this new decree, the pastor was still the supervising official for religion, and so it remained for them the novelty given to them by this decree mentioned above. However, perhaps the scope of this decree was not really recognized at the beginning. This was because they were even practically given the opportunity to choose teachers for the teaching of religion and the German language themselves, who of course also had to be paid by the community. Although the Russian inspector came to the larger colonies once a year, it hardly changed anything in the situation of our school at that time—politically very cleverly handled. The policy of denationalization, the intention of denationalization, was not allowed to attract attention at this time. No one has said a word about it. “Linked to the right of supervision was the provision that the choice of a teacher had to be confirmed by the Russian school authorities. However, the confirmation was only granted to teachers who had received the teaching qualification from a state institution, that is, a Russian teacher training college. But the great shortage of Russian teachers made a catastrophic effect of this provision for the Colonist School impossible from the outset; rather, the German teachers had to be left in their office, although they only in very few cases met the requirements of the school administrative authority” (Matt). At that time, the term “Russian teacher” came about. Even though the teacher who taught the Russian language at school was a German, he was still called a “Russian teacher”. Precisely because the teaching of the Russian language was placed in German hands, the colonists even felt fortunate that their children could now also adopt

the national language. Those who mastered the national language could get very far economically in Tsarist Russia at the time; for illiteracy was still at home in the great empire of the East at that time.

Hahn writes to us in his chapter in *Inner Colonization or the Time after 1871 (Innere Kolonisation oder die Zeit nach 1871)* the following: “From 1891 to 1892, our autonomous Colonist School was destroyed, which up till then still had its own administration. Only the salaries of the teachers were left to the villagers, as well as the construction of school buildings. 18 Russian hours a week were made into obligation. The gates were now open to Russification. Culturally, our people were deprived of any prospect of a good future.” And Dr. Matt: “People listened all too trustingly to the promises, without suspecting a major denationalization policy. This method was better suited to slowly disintegrating Bessarabian Germanism than conspicuous acts of violence would have been able to do so. It was not necessary to enter into a fight, because there was no opponent or oppressor, so one could still hear opinions in recent times. The postscript would have to be called, because no opponent and oppressor was suspected. From now on, the most active advocate of the Church School appeared in the German teaching profession, who unconsciously, guided only by ideal motives, stood up to it.”

The Werner School, founded in 1844, whose task was “to train capable teachers and clerks for the village schools and village offices as well as surveyors and architects from colonists' sons; this boys' school was under the care of the church according to § 3 of the School Act of 1839. In addition to school, the young colonist boy was also educated for the agricultural profession at the same time. Matt says that it is appropriate to prepare the colonist boy from his youth for the difficulties of his class, to accustom him to activity, to strengthen him physically as well as mentally, and to strengthen his health. This is best done by accustoming him to the difficulties of colonist life from childhood and allowing him to take part in all agricultural work (§ 17, p. 223).

We see that the teaching profession has been trained better and better. The training of it became visibly better from year to year.

The idealistic attitude, the consciousness of doing higher, even holy work in the ranks of his little people—at school and outside of school—caused the teaching profession to prepare itself better and better for its great task. Now that these teachers were out in their field of activity—in their churches, they went about their further training. The teachers' conferences also contributed a lot to their self-education. (The first was on 15 August, 1885.) What a prosperous work that has accomplished! Strengthened in body and above all in spirit and soul, the teachers of that time were able to depart these their Sexton and Teachers' Conferences, which were under the leadership of a pastor. For our people, but even more so for the school of our people, they were of the greatest blessing. However, and sad to say, this useful and beneficial work of the conferences was interrupted for a long time in 1910, probably by order of the authorities.

In any case, however, a serious political event must still be pointed out. This is the Japanese War of 1905. The spread of revolutionary ideas made the tsarist government sit up and take notice, and so it loosened its reins. Many political, economic and cultural reliefs came in favor

of the colonists. The colonists, obviously, left these years unused. Their life is only and alone work, remembering the word brought with them from home: Work is the citizen's adornment, blessing is the price of toil. Schmid tells us in *The German Colonies in the Black Sea Region of Southern Russia (Die deutschen Kolonien im Schwarzmeergebiet Südrußlands)*: The revolutionary period of 1906 initially brought relief for the German school. The school was set free. Suddenly, even in colonist circles, a strong striving for education arose, entirely out of private initiative and supported by private funds. In a few years, a whole series of Middle Schools were built for boys and girls: Secondary School with curtailed classical curriculum (*Progymnasium*), several Comprehensive Grammar Schools (*Vollgymnasien*), Secondary School with scientific bias (*Real*) and Commercial (*Handels*) Schools and an Agricultural School. A lot has happened in a short time; earlier omissions were then quickly made up for as soon as the opportunity was given.

The Bessarabian Germans were also inspired by this urge for education and tried to start such schools. Gottlieb Hahn reports the following: "It was not until 1905 that our people were allowed to dare to approach the state with the demand for the founding of higher schools. In 1907, the Baltic Uno van Beuningenn from Courland, after hearing of the intention of the Bessarabian Germans, succeeded in opening a 'Private School of the First Order' for boys in Tarutino. In 1912, the Tarutino parish took over the school, for which they built a stately building in 1911. Since the Russification of the Elementary Schools in 1892, knowledge has generally declined, but the students have not made any significant progress in Russian. Taking this state of affairs into account, Mr. van Beuningen had already created, in the autumn of 1909, a Preparatory Class with two departments, as they were also present throughout the State Grammar Schools, and who were to remedy this evil. Uno van Beuningen also founded a One-Class Private School in the villages of Arzis, Gnadental and Posttal, which were intended to recruit for entry into his Middle School and to encourage the students to follow this process (*vorgereiten*). How much Russian had to be emphasized here as well can be seen from the timetable of the Gnadental students, which is still preserved in the files. According to that, the following lessons were taught: 6 hours a week of religion with practice in the mother tongue, 8 hours of Russian language, 6 hours of arithmetic, 2 hours of calligraphy (*Schönschreiben*), 1 hour of drawing, 1 hour of singing, all together 24 hours a week. With regard to the subject matter, the greatest possible agreement with the State Schools was also sought. (p. 16—Pictures from the German settlements in southern Bessarabia by Fritz Hauß.)

Unfortunately, this freedom of the school did not last longer than the revolution itself. The Russian Tsarist government slowly pulled the reins that had slipped away from it again through the system of authorizations in the school. If the school leaving (*Abgangs*) and annual reports of the new school were to guarantee privileges for military service, for employment with the authorities, for transfer to higher schools, they would have to submit to the Russian School Program. In this way, however, the Middle Schools became to a much greater extent institutions of Russification than the Elementary Schools, for here the instruction was exclusively Russian, and German language instruction was pursued only as a subject like the others. Teachers were also bound to this chain, as they could only obtain rights as state teachers in schools with Russian programs. And they all aspired to rights, such as: The school contractor—to get students; the teachers, in order to obtain a secure existence, [to get] the pupils and parents—in order to obtain a diploma, which is the universal remedy for all worries about the future. (Schmid—p. 11.)

Dr. Matt, however, tells us the following about it: “The last two decades before the World War are characterized by educational efforts that no longer find satisfaction in the German church school. All attempts to meet the corresponding needs, such as the founding of a Secondary School with scientific bias and a Girl’s Secondary School (*Lyceum*) in the German colonies, the better education of the Elementary School teachers, did not yield the desired result; many German children moved on and went to Russian Grammar Schools (*Gymnasien*), never again to return to the colonies, and these still lacked the intellectual level they consciously aspired to. Here the reverse shows itself of the colonist character, the preservation of his individuality advancement inclination to resolute recognition of the inheritance: the over-estimation of what is already out of date and old, which in many cases became the fate of the life of the colonist. “This sentence must certainly be a bit too harsh for our Bessarabian German colonists. Especially our splinter of people has hardly anyone to show who would have been lost to our Swabian splinter as a completely Russified one. Perhaps it should be more true for other groups of the former Russian Germans than for the Bessarabian Germans.

In order to take a brief look into the inner workings of a school, it must be pointed out that the teachers, in their schools, were hardly bothered by the authorities. It was necessary to place his man. So, it can be concluded with certainty that the teachers were not disturbed in their school work, that they were quite independent and that their struggle for the preservation of German culture in Bessarabia had a high and responsible task. This question will be returned to later.

Herbert Weiß reports on the discipline in the old school on page 260 in the *History of the Teplitz Colony (Geschichte der Kolonie Teplitz)*: “Since, with the large number of students, there were always many without something to do, the children out of boredom committed various harmless pranks, the discovery of which usually brought with it a nasty consequence by the schoolmaster. During the breaks, iron strictness prevailed. Ball games and shouting were not tolerated. Woe to the student who was caught skating on the ice! He usually received an abundance of blows, peppered with various moral sayings.”

So our teachers were left to compile and design the timetable. After official approval, it became effective. In *The German Schools of Bessarabia (Die deutschen Schulen Bessarabiens)* by Dr. Matt, we find on page 26 a timetable for the year 1902/03 for a Three-Class School with three teachers.

	<b>I. Class</b>	<b>II. Class</b>	<b>III. Class</b>
Monday	1. Arithmetic—r 2. Religion 3. Calligraphy 4. Speech instruction 5. Calligraphy 6. —	1. Religion 2. Read/Speech inst.—r 3. Arithmetic—r 4. Calligraphy—r 5. Speech inst.—r 6. Singing—r	1. Read/Speech inst.—r 2. Religion 3. Arithmetic—r 4. Dictation—r 5. Writing 6. Singing—r
Tuesday	1. Reading—r 2. Religion 3. Arithmetic —r	1. Arithmetic —r 2. Read/Speech inst.—r 3. Writing	1. Religion 2. Arithmetic —r 3. Read/Speech inst.—r

	4. Speech inst.—r 5. Reading 6. Speech practice.	4. Reading 5. Dictation —r 6. Religion	4. Calligraphy—r 5. Reading 6. Composition practice
Wednesday	1. Arithmetic—r 2. Reading—r 3. Writing 4. —	1. Read/Speech inst.—r 2. Religion 3. Arithmetic—r 4. Singing	1. Religion 2. Arithmetic—r 3. Read/Speech inst.—r 4. Singing
Thursday	1. Read/Speech inst.—r 2. Religion 3. Arithmetic—r 4. Calligraphy—r 5. Reading 6. Speech inst.—r	1. Religion 2. Read/Speech inst.—r 3. Composition practice 4. Calligraphy—r 5. Arithmetic—r 6. Memorization—r	1. Arithmetic—r 2. Read/Speech inst.—r 3. Religion 4. Calligraphy—r 5. Reading 6. Memorization—r
Friday	1. Read/Speech inst.—r 2. Religion 3. Arithmetic —r 4. Speech inst.—r. 5. Reading 6. Memorization—r	1. Religion 2. Arithmetic —r 3. Read/Speech inst.—r 4. Reading 5. Dictation—r 6. Writing	1. Arithmetic—r 2. Speech inst.—r 3. Writing 4. Read/Speech inst.—r 5. Dictation—r 6. Religion
Saturday	1. Singing—r 2. Read/Speech inst.—r 3. Writing 4. —	1. Read/Speech inst.—r 2. Religion 3. Speech practice—r 4. Singing	1. Religion 2. Speech inst.—r 3. Read/Speech inst.—r 4. Singing
=====			
	29 (18 r)	32 (19 r)	32 (19 r)

The “r” indicates where instructions must be given in the Russian language.

This was the usual form of a timetable, the approval of which was mainly based on seeing the required number of lessons in the Russian language reached. Other demands, such as the introduction of new methods and new teaching subjects, were unknown to the Russian school authorities at that time, as they had to use the Russian Elementary School in the area as a yardstick. In its two-year, at most three-year courses, the latter had by no means the success in mastering the subject matter that was achieved in all German Elementary Schools in the last school years. In addition, the performance in the Russian Elementary School was made worse by the irregular school attendance, which is brought about by the absence of compulsory schooling (Matt—p. 27).

If we look at the timetable a little more closely, we find that the main thing was and remained religion until the World War. This subject was taught by the sexton teacher. This was very important on the part of the municipality. As already mentioned, religious education was under the supervision of the parish pastor. It is perhaps also due to the fact that a certain maximum

performance could be achieved in this field. The curriculum of this subject was enormously overloaded. The same can perhaps still be said of the Württemberg religious curriculum today. Religious instruction remained the sole purpose of the Colonist School until the annexation of Bessarabia to Romania.

“While the Russian Elementary Schools were entirely maintained by the state, each German colony, in spite of paying the same taxes, had to pay the salaries of its own teachers and the high expenses for the establishment of its schools. It was only thanks to this circumstance that the colonist teacher was given as extensive freedom of action in the handling of the state timetable as was actually the case throughout Bessarabia.”

Class I	—	11 German Students
Class II	—	13 German Students
Class III	—	13 German Students

And so there were in

<b>Class I:</b>	<b>Class II:</b>	<b>Class III:</b>
4 Religion	6 Religion	6 Religion
1 Singing	2 Singing	2 Singing
1 Calligraphy	1 Calligraphy	1 Calligraphy
5 German	4 German	4 German

When the timetable appears like this, we are surprised that the Bessarabian Swabians still knew German at all?! It can only be explained by the fact that the Russian authorities left the reins quite loose, and thus the German teachers were practically left complete freedom of action. On the other hand, it was the conviction and pedagogical insight of the German teachers that one should not—and cannot — begin teaching a foreign language immediately in the first years of instruction. Therefore, great importance was attached to the fact that the lessons should take place in the mother tongue. Only intensive and methodical instruction in the mother tongue ensured the necessary instruction in the foreign language. Therefore, Russian lessons were not started in the first two school years, but only in the third. For the same reason, arithmetic has been taught in Russian in the whole of Bessarabia only in the last two years. So also in this department the demand of the authorities was not met. So everything was on the paper—it was wonderfully solved.

“So, it may be maintained that the instruction in the German language played the most important role alongside religious instruction, and there can be no question of a Russification of the German Church School, as is still being claimed recently. A state which knew no compulsory schooling and no uniform school law, and which, moreover, left the material care for the most distinguished cultural institution to even the smallest and poorest colony itself, had no right to intervene in the external and internal structure of the Colonist School, which had been created with the greatest sacrifice.”

I think that the above statement (Matt—p. 2) goes too far. A Russification of our schools would certainly have occurred; for the agitation against everything German has been artificially and intentionally conjured up and supported. The hatred of everything German could never be expressed in our closed purely German settlements as it could be the case in a big city. One day the most terrible thing would come, but of that later.

“The waves of pan-Slavism became stronger and stronger, and in 1891 it also reached the German schools. From then on, Russian inspectors had to give orders, and the Germans were only allowed to pay for the expenses. The Russian language was introduced as the language of instruction for all subjects. Various prohibitions were issued regarding the immigration (*Zuzug*) and land acquisition of Germans. (Eckert: *The Dialect of the German Mother Colonies in Bessarabia and their Homeland Source*—p. 21 — *Die Mundarten der deutschen Mutterkolonien Bessarabiens und ihre Stammheimat*—S. 21.)”

In spite of the fact that our people clung so strongly to tradition, the results could not be achieved as was the case in Germany—in Württemberg; for the teaching time—school time—was much too short, the classes overcrowded. This could not be any longer because the economic conditions required that the children at home had to be used as far as possible in the farming operations. This is how they had to act; because only on a good, stable economic foundation could a higher cultural life flourish. This is a well-known and well-recognized fact. While the teaching time in Bessarabia lasts 4-5 months per year, in Germany it looked quite different. At this point, however, it should also be pointed out that our splinter of the people stood as a minority and had to subordinate itself to the laws and orders of its host country.

Who would have thought of learning a foreign language in the Elementary School in their German homeland at that time? On the other hand, the German native results could not be achieved in the Bessarabian Colonist School, since the preparation of the teachers did not correspond to that of Württemberg. What a struggle it cost our colonists just to make the idea of introducing the reading-book a reality. The conservative attitude of our colonists, which went to the extreme, did not allow any new textbooks, new methods and new pedagogical views to enter our school. I just want to remind you of the struggle with the introduction of the reading-book. The Bible alone was the Book of Life, from which everything and for all situations in life could be learned.

The author writes about the situation of the broad masses in *How it was at Home (Wie's daheim war)*: “The government took the position that the knowledge of the Russian language can best be taught to the German child by national Russians. For this reason, vacant positions at multi-class schools were only awarded to them. Germans could only fill these positions if they had passed the Russian Elementary School Teacher Examination. The teacher was exempt from military service. For this reason, many took up the profession, even if they did not feel an inner calling for it.” Teaching and lesson plans made teaching easier for the teacher.

A petition by the Synod in Odessa in 1906, in the association with the representatives of the congregations, had the success that the government allowed the German language to be used as the language of instruction in the first two years of instruction and to learn to read in Russian



only when the children had completed the process of reading in German. This pedagogically correct measure then also produced its good fruits. At that time, most schools had about 100 children per teacher.

In 1903, Inspector Sukurukov thoroughly inspected the schools and sent a circular to all school offices, in which the shortcomings of the German schools were enumerated. These, in the opinion of the inspector, were as follows: overcrowded classes, the absence of schoolbooks, weak knowledge of Russian, by the students as well as by the teachers. For the improvement of the German schools, he emphasized the following measures: (1) Conversion of German schools into one-class and two-class Ministerial Schools, (2) Employment of teachers with good previous education (the German teachers are recommended to finish Teacher Training Seminars and attend Pedagogical Courses, (3) Organization of Summer Courses and Teachers' Conferences, (4) Establishment of libraries, (5) Rewarding teachers who have achieved good results (regardless of their origin), (6) Organization of excursions to the interior of Russia, (7) Opening of language courses for adults.

“The following were used as textbooks: the Bible, the New Testament, Zahn's Biblical Stories, the Lutheran Catechism, the Odessa Hymnal, an ABC-book, Müller's Arithmetic Book and Golotusov's Reading Book. (Note the lack of a purely German Reading Book and the large number of books with religious content.)” In 1871, Rempel from Halbstadt also sent 25 Guidelines for the Teaching of Geography (Weiß—p. 270). In the years 1909-1912, the library of the Municipality of Teplitz had grown to 1,801 volumes for students and 29 volumes for teachers, representing a total value of 341 rubles and 85 kopecks. (Weiß, p. 273.)

The fact that the Bessarabian German Elementary School System had taken such a great upswing in the years before the First World War is probably also due, to a certain extent, to the *Odessa Newspaper* (*Odessaer Zeitung*). It brought conference reports, treatises on pedagogical topics, references to existing shortcomings in the internal and external school system. During this time, a school newspaper—*The New School Newspaper* (*Das neue Schulblatt*)—was also published. Unfortunately, it was banned by the Russian government after the publication of the 6 months booklet—*How-it-was-at-Home-author* (*Wie's=da=heim=war=Verfasser*).

As far as the school buildings and school operations are concerned, perhaps a short excerpt from *How it was at Home* can be given. The school buildings were quite poor buildings at that time. In most of them there was still clay soil flooring. Only in a few municipalities was the floor in the school boarded, but not painted. The equipment of the school rooms was very poor. The school benches were 8-10 seats and of the same size for all age groups; for [the school] also served as a House of Prayer—a church. Clothes hangers (*Kleiderrechen*) were not known.

Reading was learned in the hands of spelling and reading charts. In addition, they learned: writing, arithmetic, singing and religion. The spelling method was used to give the reading lessons. The Belle-Lancaster System was mostly used. After the Primer (*Fiebel*), the students came directly into the Scripture (*Testament*). The stick was made use of as a universal remedy for new and better successes.

The pastor visited the school every spring and held so-called School Visitation (equivalent to the Württemberg Main Examination) in which he tested the students for their knowledge and skills. The School Visitation usually had the character of a festival. Hard-working children were given ring-shaped rolls (*Kringeln*), books, paper and other objects. Sometimes the Provost [senior Lutheran Church official] also paid a visit to the schools, as was the case in Teplitz in 1850. If a School Visitation of the Provost was in prospect, great preparations were always made. The results of the School Visitation were usually the subject of so-called Censorship Lists (*Zensurlisten*) or Visitation Tables. As an example, some Censorship Lists are listed:

<b>Year #</b>	<b>Student #</b>	<b>Can Read Real Good</b>	<b>Know the Catehcism</b>	<b>Remarks by the Pastor</b>
1845	206	78	80	Excellent
1846	211	131	109	Good
1847	208	125	129	Excellent
1849	194	87	95	Good
1850	199	119	111	Excellent
1851	201	116	110	Good

Some particular data was given in the School Visitation List. The List of 1861 contains, for example, the following:

**Students: 125 Boys 115 Girls**

- 142—Good at Reading
- 132—Know the Catechism
- 125—Have a Good Understanding of the Songs
- 75—Are Able to Write
- 90—Know the Four First Rules of Arithmetic
- 40—Can Do Mental Calculation
- 40—Have a Good Understanding in Religion
  
- 114—Unmarried Persons
- 120—Married Couples

(Weiß: *History of Teplitz Municipality*, page 265)

Just as the desert has oases, so of course there were also very progressive-minded teachers in the beginning, who increased knowledge and ability through intensive self-study and preserved a pleasant memory of their communities through their conscientiousness. These conditions improved with the opening of the Werner School.

Around and after the turn of the century, our communities reached the economic culmination point. One community flourished more than the other. But around 1914, at the outbreak of the War, a much more pleasant picture presents itself to us. In the larger communities, we find

stately school buildings, ornaments of our villages. Now the teacher had visual and other learning and teaching materials at his disposal. If our children had only the Bible, Catechism and Hymnal, then each child had his or her own practically arranged textbook for the individual subjects. The working groups or conferences of the teaching staff have already been reported elsewhere.

“Through summer courses, the teachers got closer to each other and expanded their knowledge in pedagogy, psychology and methodology. A library was created in each school in which classical works, specialist literature and periodicals were available. The number of teachers who already enjoyed a more solid professional education and entered office with much better equipment grew steadily. We also get a special insight into the school conditions before the First World Wars when we read Dr. Matt’s *The German Schools of Bessarabia*—p. 28—where it reads: “What is striking in the timetable discussed above is the monotonous alternation between religion, reading, arithmetic and writing; [sic] geography, history, signs that the Elementary School of the colonists is in danger of becoming numbed in its tradition, and, on the other hand, that the Russian state, which nevertheless assumed legal responsibility for the German Church School under the supervision of the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment, was content with the primitive demands made on the extremely deficient Russian Elementary Schools, where the given conditions would have made a highly developed school system possible. The assumption that the Russian state respected the tradition of the German Colonist School proves to be invalid when one considers that in 1909 a particularly intensive German-agitation began, carried on by higher state officials, the effects of which were felt mainly in the field of the school at the beginning of the World War, when the German Church School had to abruptly stop its teaching for three years. But this measure is at the same time a proof that the Russification of the Church School was only an apparent one, because the existence of the higher German schools, which in their attitude corresponded to the demands of the Russian officials, was not endangered in their existence. Thus, there is no doubt about Russia’s tendency to Russify the German Colonist School. But the existing intentions, apart from other reasons already indicated, could not be put into practice because of the permanent money, and the most essential “National Teacher” shortage with regard to the Elementary Schools.” (p. 29)

In conclusion, it can perhaps be said in summary: The Russian Tsarist state intended to destroy the Parish School of the German colonists by placing it under state supervision and, above all, by introducing the state language as the language of instruction to a very large extent and by allowing the native language of the colonists to be tolerated and practiced only as a subject. Although at the beginning the Colonist School retained the character of a German school, even if we Germans allowed ourselves to be deceived by the Tsarist Empire and we had the firm belief that our school was “an ecclesiastical institution whose all concerns were local or a matter of the entire Germans of Bessarabia”, the definite intention of the government of that time must not be lost sight of. The subsequent anti-German agitation and propaganda showed the true state of affairs, the true face and the true intention of the Tsarist government: the destruction of the German element through the destruction of its school. It was natural for the colonists to adopt the language of their host country; it was in their best interest.

Our Bessarabian-Swabians stayed away from political life. Consequently, it was and is a matter of course that a political current has never found its way into our schools. Of course, it was a disadvantage for our people that we did not have a national organization that would have created a uniform Elementary School System. Although our school had the ecclesiastical character, it was only supported by the community and could not be adequately defended uniformly.

But just at this time the inner development of our villages was completed; they were under the sign of the highest bloom. What German skill had achieved under the Russian sun stood unsurpassed in the world. The Black Sea steppe had been transformed into a fertile land, waving wheat fields covered the steppe earth and stylish German villages gave eloquent testimony to cultural work done. The Russian peasant stood in front of it in amazement, it all seemed too big, too mysterious to him. “You German, you have a different, a better God than we do, therefore you succeed in everything better than us!?” That was the response of the Russian peasant when he was made aware of the mistakes of his agriculture.

[Translation Ends]