

Chronicle of the Village of Caratai, Dobrudscha

Source: DAI Microfilm T-81; Roll #318; Group 1035;

Vomi 931; Frame 2448417

Translated by Allen E. Konrad – March 2012

PO Box 157 Rowley, IA 52329

<onamission@lbt.org>

[Translator's Note: A brief account of how ethnic Germans happened to settle in the village of Caratai/Nisipari, located in the Romanian region of Dobrudscha. The document does not indicate who the author is or when it was written. However, it appears in a folder with other material gathered shortly after the Resettlement of 1940.]

[Translation Begins]

Chronicle of the Village of Caratai (today Nisipari)

Until 1920, the village of CARATAI was a genuine Tatar village. Of the 500 Tatar families, only 13-14 were Romanian. The Friedrich Ziel and Johannes Meyer families were the first Germans to settle there. Friedrich Ziel recounts how in Ciucurova, the village where he was born, the farmland was very expensive and hard to come by and as the number of German families increased the town had no land for them and, also, there was no possibility of buying any. So a German farmer had no other recourse but to look for land somewhere else. He tells of how the Tatars in Caratai had lots of farmland to sell and even at much lower prices. So, to start off, he bought for himself ten hectares of land. Then, one day, Mr. Johannes Meyer showed up, invited by a land-owner from there. Meyer came from Cogealia, Constantza District (*Kreis*) where he had worked for two years as a harness-maker. There also was no land available in his village, the same situation of scarcity as in all German villages. He also purchased ten hectares of land from the Tatars. At first, both families rented living quarters from the Tatars. That is how both new colonists started out working the land.

The year 1921 produced an exceptionally good harvest. Two families from the village of Ciucurova, Tulcea District, came to Caratai to visit and, seeing the harvest, talked about the wonderful, rich farmland. So, many families decided to leave their village and they sold their land and went to settle in Caratai because the land in Ciucurova sold at a high price and they were able to get better and cheaper land in Caratai. The inhabitants of the village of Caratai were happy to receive the Germans. There was enough farmland to purchase or rent and the town had lots of unoccupied land to dispose of. What happened then was that the community of Caratai provided the German settlers with land and so a German quarter-village (*Dorfviertel*) was established. A 16 meter wide street was plotted and farmyards were established all along it. The rule was that every farm family was to occupy a farmyard of 2,000 square meters, but because of the old custom of German farmers to have their threshing place near to the house, the mayor (*Bürgermeister*) was asked to allow for each family to receive between 3,000 and 4,000 square meters. Construction first started in 1923. Until that time, all arriving families were housed by the Tatars. Seven families came in 1922, and each year thereafter some more until there were 65 families who farmed over 700 hectares. The acquisition of land from the Tatars naturally also

had its present-day side to it. There is the saying: “He who buys cheap, buys more expensive” (*wer billig kauft, kauft teurer*). Suddenly, two or three years later, a Tatar showed up from Turkey, with the power of attorney from several heirs of the sold land, now declaring the sale of the land to the German farmers as invalid and initiated a process. The procedures lasted several years. However, the German buyers were not hindered but continued to work the ground, but they all, without exception, lost. So the German settlement shrank to 46.5 hectares of arable land.

Construction of the Evangelical [Lutheran] church was begun in 1923 and dedicated in 1924. The church was built as a joint effort of all the German villages in Dobrudscha. The Romanian government gave 5 hectares of land for the church and a further 5 for the school. Construction of the school first started in 1936 and it was dedicated in 1937. Until then, German instructions were given to the children in the church. The school was built on the 5 hectares, supported by the ethnic German organization in Romania and by funds collected in the Lutheran community.

The church parish was located in Cobadin. The pastor had nine congregations to serve, so showed up no more than once every nine weeks. The school teacher was hired and paid by the members of the German congregation.

In 1921, the colony administration in the village of Caratai was carried out by the Romanian government. The government gave 9 hectares of land to each colonist. The government also gave each colonist property and built a house for them. They also received credit from the State Bank in order to be able to begin and pursue their farming venture. As many as 60 colonist families were settled. Few worked their own land. Most of them rented out all or half of it. It was also a regulation that the Germans who joined the Romanian military during the World War had the right to receive nine hectares of land, which, however, no one ever received. Of course, they would have gotten it if they had just pressed something into the hands of the appropriate official.

Until 1935, living together with the Romanians was bearable and even in some cases the Germans were well thought of and assisted. After 1935, as the German National Socialist movement started, things changed immediately. With the calling up of the troops in 1938, all work horses were taken away. Not even the young horses under the age of three were left behind. So the German farmers suffered much and experienced great material harm. Things were also taken from the Romanian farmers, but their draft animals were not all that good. The German was not allowed to complain about anything because he would always be told “go tell it to Hitler”. When the Polish campaign got started, things intensified even more. Then there was the mobilization, resulting in the interruption of farm work, until the Resettlement.

[End Translation]