

Flood Catastrophe in the Kogälnik Valley

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Translated by: Allen E. Konrad
P.O. Box 157 Rowley, IA - <onamission@lbt.org>
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[Note: Report of a severe downpour of rain on 02 September, 1928, in the northern part of the Kogälnik Valley of Bessarabia which caused terrible damage to the area from Kurudjika to Leipzig to Arzis, with photographs of the damage done in Beresina and Leipzig.]

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[Begin Translation]

Flood Catastrophe in the Kogälnik Valley

The second of September of this past year brought the heaviest affliction to a number of our Bessarabian German villages than they had to go through in more than a hundred years of their existence. Violent water! Our usually so dry and generally water-stressed steppe turned into a large basin of water in a short time and the frightened residents could hardly understand just where this huge amount of water suddenly came from. It was as if wells and springs all around opened themselves, sending their deluge across the country. The sky was only slightly cloudy, one could hardly imagine that it should have contributed to the great flood. And yet, the mass of water that raged on 02 September through the Kogälnik Valley came down from the sky in cloudbursts, even if our unfortunate people from Leipzig and Beresina saw little or nothing of these downpours themselves. But farther up in the Kogälnik Valley, in Kurudjika, it was learned how the water reached our steppes, where the cloud fringes of this massive cloudburst belt moved along in all of Central and Northern Bessarabia, in Bukovina and Poland, sending tremendous rainfall onto the earth and caused great terror and damage everywhere. Many human lives have been destroyed in the whole territory which reached almost from the Baltic to the Black Sea; untold millions had property and possessions ruined in the floods. The dear reader of the *Kalendar* knows from the numerous reports of eye witnesses in our Bessarabian newspaper what terrible havoc the wet element has wreaked in a number of German colonies in Bessarabia; to some degree he has witnessed the disaster which struck about one of the most beautiful and most fertile parts of our country.

But what actually happened? The violent downpour, stretching over a wide area, dumped such an amount of water on the ground that the soil and the natural watercourses could not cope with it; so that a sea arose, which sought to discharge its sea waves by plunging unchecked into the valleys open to it, carrying with it death and devastation into the remote unsuspecting areas.

Like an immense and mighty stream, it came down the valleys of the Tschaga and the Kogälnik, and the latter especially had to suffer severely under its force. Almost three months after the day of the accident, the traces of the terrible flood, which struck such severe wounds on our German villages, are still visible today from Kurudjika to Arzis. And in the few hours the gruesome work of destruction took place, almost on the same day the small, insignificant Kogälnik stream retreated so calmly and peacefully between its banks, as if it tried to bear eloquent testimony to what might be considered an impossible thing to have happened. But this newspaper and *Kalender* man could not be deceived by the later harmless appearances. On that fateful Saturday, he stood on the slopes of the Tarutino hill and saw with his own eyes the vast expanse of water which had flooded the entire valley and searched with greed to find the highest point it could reach, and he visited the devastated sites on the following Sunday, as far as they were already accessible. Immediately, as we descended the chain of hills which separate Tarutino from the Kogälnik Valley, the destruction became apparent. The fields were devastated and silted up, washed up agricultural and household equipment, wood from houses, straw, hay and corn stalks indicated the edge of the sea which had wreaked havoc here yesterday. And right off the deplorable image that unrolled as one approached the human settlements themselves, or rather where once human dwellings had stood! It was a most dreadful picture of havoc and disaster! Some farms were wiped off the ground; others were found to be merely disorderly piles of rubble on the former farmyard. Destruction and ruin all around, nothing seemed spared, each step led to new traces of the disaster, and even inside of those homes that outwardly could have resisted the impact of the elements, one found deterioration and destruction in all parts. Yes, oh dear, when they let go! And three times, oh dear, to the one who was helplessly exposed to the violence of the unleashed elements.

There were bad hours which the unfortunate inhabitants had to go through in the flood area. The water shot forward like a stroke of lightning and swelled up into a height, which, in many instances of such flooding, made any escape a hazardous life-threatening undertaking or simply cut it off at the outset. I talked to a young man who was surprised by the flood while on the way from the shed to the house; no longer able to reach the house, he had to seek escape in an acacia tree until the water ran its course. I came to know from others that they were lucky as they huddled with their whole family for hours in the wet and cold of their otherwise collapsed fire-proof walled house, expecting to see this last island of rescue go under at any moment. A lamentable couple is known to me who left their farmyard before the impending flood in order to bring the cattle to safety, and then, when the water came, could no longer get to the house where the children had stayed behind; so they had to watch helplessly as the collapsed house buried the children under its rubble. Our fellow countrymen in the Kogälnik Valley experienced something horrendous. Thirty one human lives fell as victims in the catastrophe; 571 houses and 435 side-buildings such as stables, granaries, etc. were completely destroyed and 357 buildings have been more or less severely damaged; 1,399 house pets and 14,713 domesticated poultry found their death in the waves. Those are terrible numbers! If one also considers the loss of well over 60,000 *Pud* [1 pud = 38 lbs. or 16.38 kg] of grain and large quantities of all kinds of other supplies, you will understand that the whole material damage suffered by the German colonists has been calculated to come to as little or as much as fifty million lei. When it comes to human victims, Leipzig appears to be most severely afflicted with 18, Beresina with 5, but also the other villages like Kurudschika with one and Romanofka with 6; even as Mintschuna, Krasna, Alt-Elft, Teplitz and Arzis must have endure incredible hardship. The first five photos of Beresina,

which were taken by us shortly after the flood, and the last four of Leipzig, taken by the Tarutino photographer Sarkisow, present a persuasive and stirring insight into the general destructive work that has taken place just in these two communities.

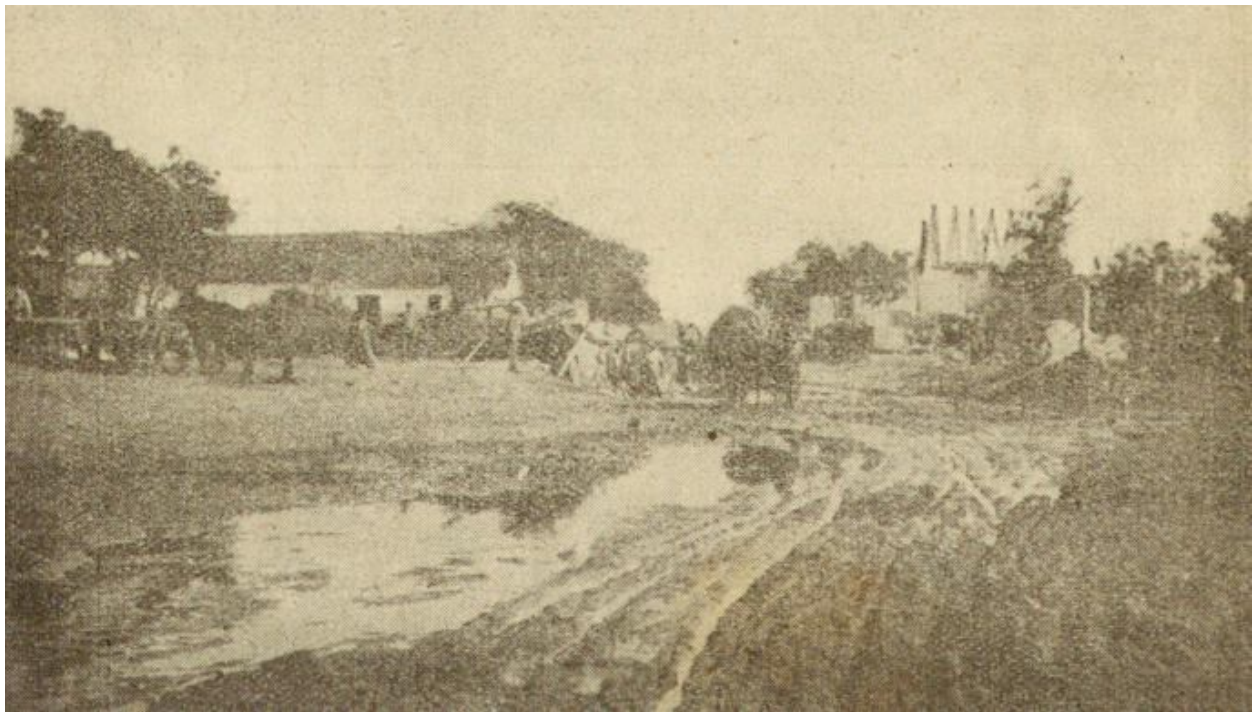
As the deeply moving reports sounded forth, which were made public on the occasion of the disaster in the affected villages, so it seems there is always a warm recognition to dispense charity on the part of those who render the rapid and decisive help, especially by the more fortunate fellow countrymen. Immediately after the arrival of the first bad news from the Kogălnik Valley, surrounding villages from near and far organized collections of food, clothing, etc., and transported whole truckloads to the destitute villages. Workers and aid teams were also not holding back and everywhere, where Germans live in the Romanian State, support actions were deployed to alleviate the emergency and to dry the tears. The State Government also intervened with help; through Lord Minister Inkuletz., when it came up with 460,000 lei on 07 September to be distributed to distressed Leipzig, Beresina and the other villages. Gifts of grain and construction material came from all sides, also from the non-German villages of our homeland, making it possible to allow for the winter sowing and the immediate reconstruction of the houses, and because, in addition, until into December, the weather remained relatively mild, new life again already begins to sprout from the ruins. “Preserve us from fire emergency and water emergency, dear Lord and God!”



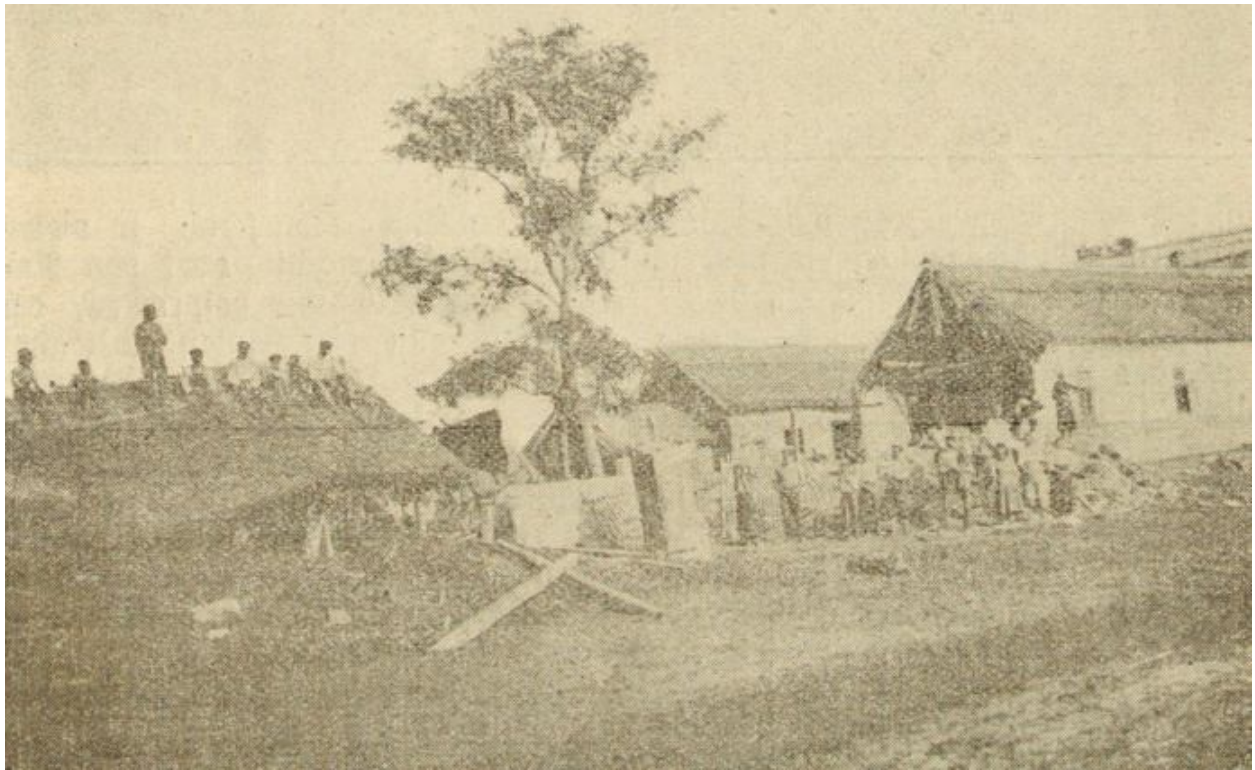
Beresina



Beresina



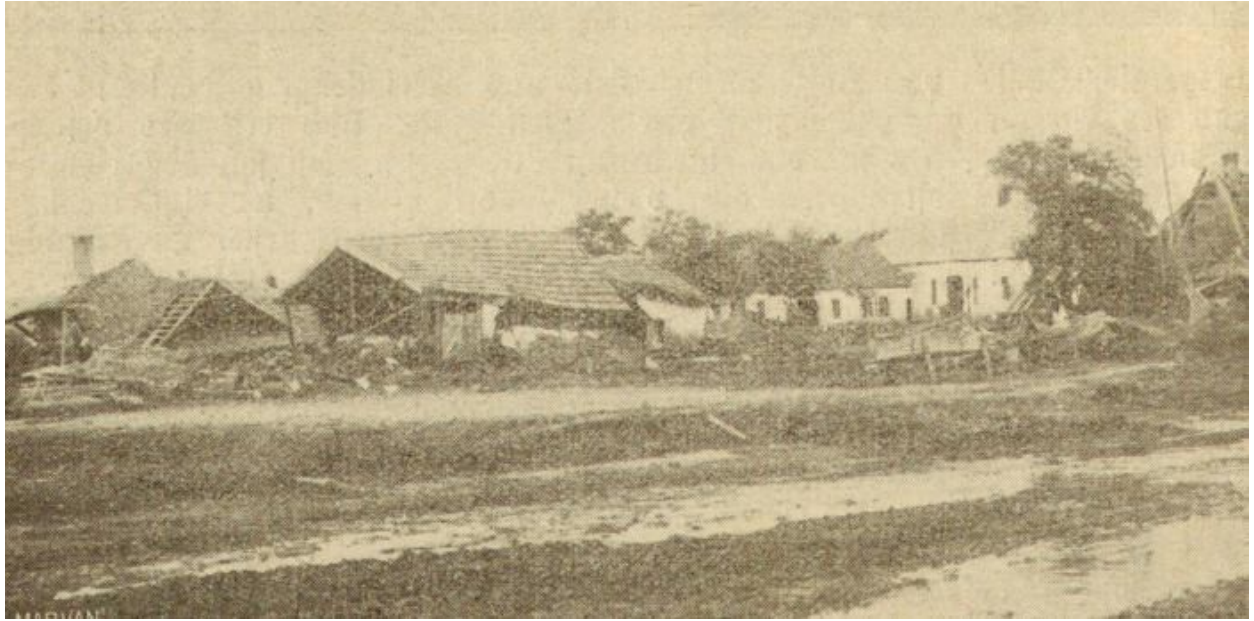
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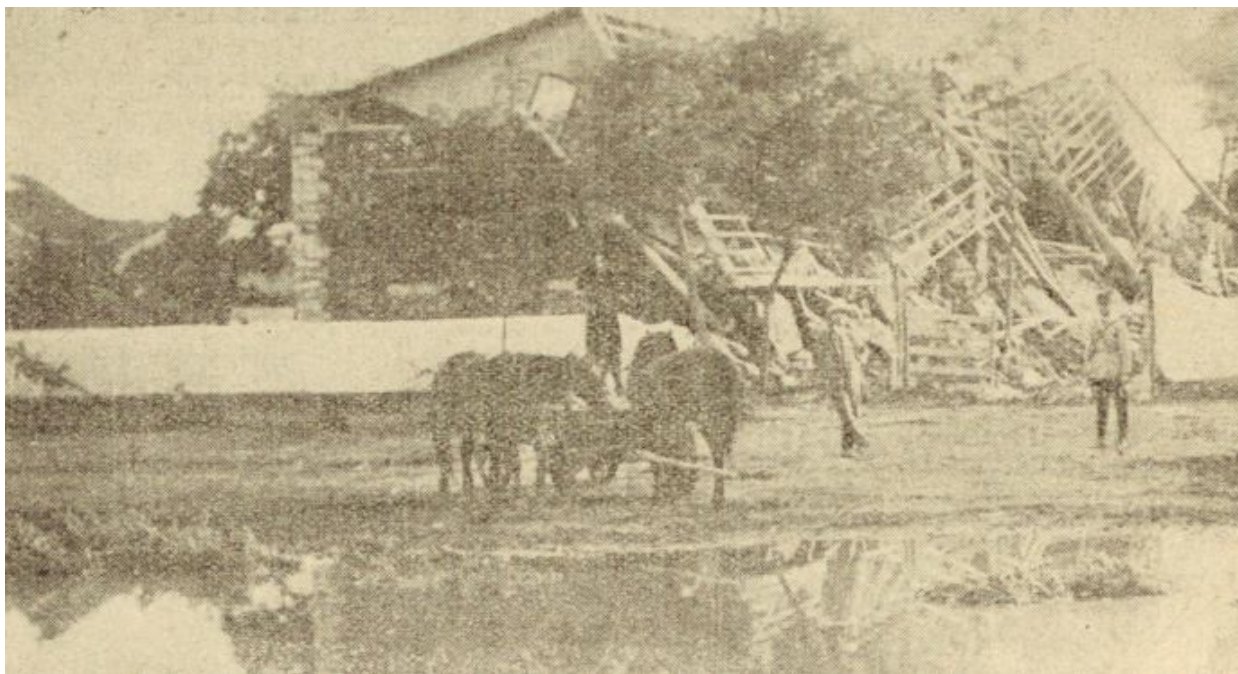
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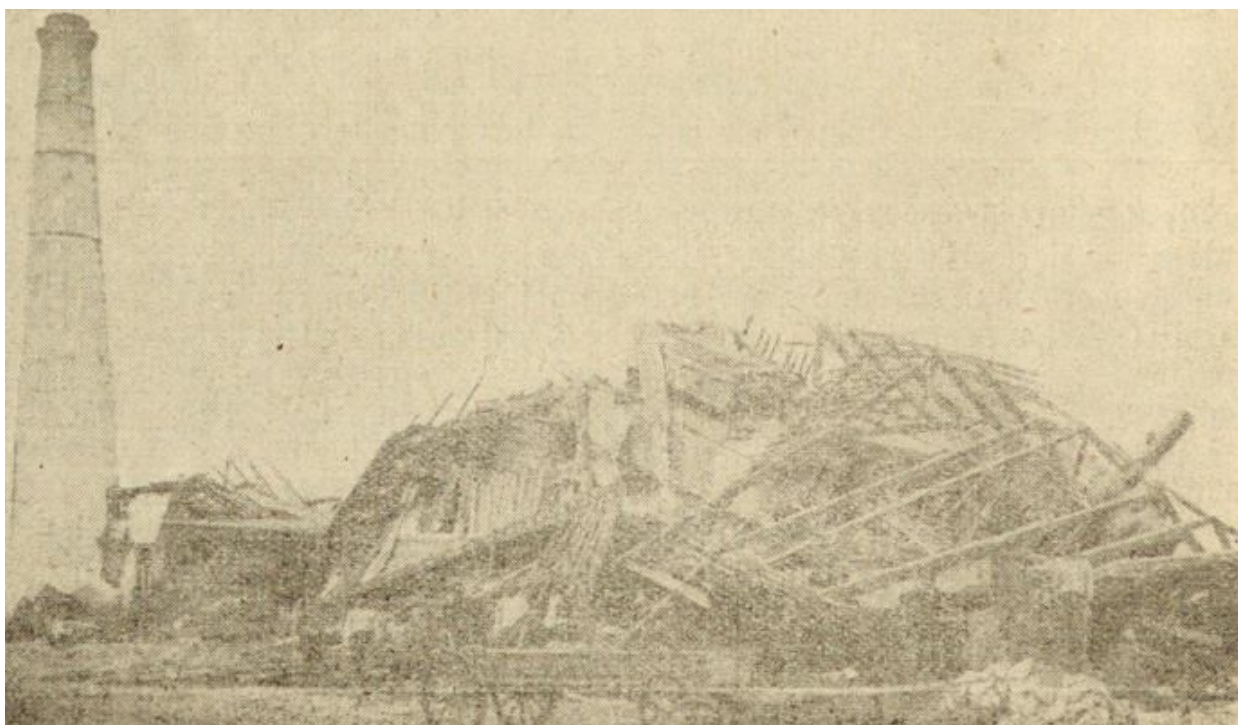
Leipzig



Leipzig



Leipzig



Leipzig

[End Translation]