

The Germans in Dobrudscha (Part 6)

The book listed below, containing 248 pages of information, is being translated chapter by chapter and posted as each chapter is completed. Part 1 gives you a summary of each of the 15 chapters in the “Contents” section. The words in the [square brackets] are those of the translator and are not found in the original text.

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The Germans in Dobrudscha

**along with a contribution
to the history of the German
migration in Eastern Europe**

**by
Paul Traeger**

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6.

The Third Period of Immigration 1890-1891

A new series of German colony establishments started in 1890. A strong movement to emigrate went through the South Russian villages again, but stronger than all the earlier ones. The policy of the Russian government, which had already led to the destruction of the old privileges of German immigrants at the beginning of the 1870s, had expanded even more in the same direction. Nationalist streams had come to life in Russia and had an influence; they threatened more and more the national life of the German colonists and spoiled their stay in the Tsar empires. I was informed by various individuals that had come to Dobrudscha at that time that the main reason for their withdrawal from Russia was a new law issued in 1890 that all "Passport holders," that is, those who still had a foreign passport, who had not yet become Russian subjects, were not only prohibited from acquiring an estate and land, but especially also "to cultivate and sow" on Russian soil. This also cut off the possibility for the working of rented land. Other measures taken by the Russian government hampered the construction of new churches in the colonies and were mainly directed against the German village schools. In 1891, they were deprived of the free administration of the municipalities and Russian was made the main language of instruction.

Thousands of German colonists then left the Russian steppes and went to the United States and Canada. Some again turned to Dobrudscha, encouraged by the Romanian government under the influence of the German-friendly Minister Peter Carp. So there arose in 1890 and 1891, some in already existing, some in newly established localities, eight new German settlements: Sarighiol, Balala, Mangalia, Cobadin, Caracicula, Osmancea, Osmanfaca and Ebechioi.

The history of these and other younger colonies is a sorrowful chapter of frustrations and deceived hopes. Their establishment happened especially at a time when the reasonable conditions for obtaining their own sod were no longer available. The benevolent reception and the generosity of the Turkish times was over, but also the land distributions of the Romanian government, as they had taken place until about 1884, had come to an end. Of course, wonderful prospects were made to the new arrivals and land was promised. But only in the form of an alteration in the future.

Becoming Romanian citizens was the precondition for obtaining their own property. However, this was only granted after staying for a decade. Until then, the newly immigrated German farmers would have enough land reserved for them in their settlement locations. In the meantime, they could lease. But the promises of land reservation and allotment after 10 years were kept in only a very few cases. The fulfillment of the promised allotments was dragged on by all kinds of measures and objections, or arbitrarily reduced. The land commissions only became active once every 10 years. If a farmer failed to present himself by the end of that year, he had to wait 10 more years.

Where one finally recognized the legitimate claims of the German immigrants, it almost always happened after many protests and struggles, several times only by the personal intervention of King Carol and Peter Carp.

Even worse were the circumstances, owing to the decision of the government, of giving up homesteads to the veterans of the Russo-Turkish War in their newly acquired Dobrudscha. At the same time, here they ought to be promoting the Romanization of the land and they were therefore placed with preference in the German villages, which they [the Germans] also opposed very much. So the veterans were always given the best land and, to their favor, diminished the developments once reserved for the German immigrants.

The overwhelming majority of arrivals in Dobrudscha since 1890 did not succeed in getting their own sod. They leased land from the government or from one of the landowners, at fifty-fifty, or every third pile, or even in exchange for cash. Sometimes with a longer contract, but often also only from year to year. Should the diligent Germans progress, the landlord, as a rule, immediately sought to mess with the rental conditions until they were unbearable to the unfortunate farmers, so that they preferred to abandon their beautiful yards and clean homes and try their luck somewhere else.. Somewhere else in Dobrudscha itself, overseas, in Bulgaria, again in Russia, or again in the once abandoned old homeland of Germany. In this way we see whole German villages, after rapidly unfolding, suddenly disappearing again, but also again newly springing up in other places in Dobrudscha.

To the misled hopes of receiving their own possessions came the vexations and trickery to which the German settlers were often exposed to on the part of the Romanian authorities and their local agents. As stated above, they had already given reason for complaints and grievances in the 1880s. The nationalist and fear of foreigners aspirations and moods that have become stronger since then have worsened the situation of the colonists in this relationship. One encountered the foreign farmer whose efficiency and advancement aroused more envy than recognition, with jealous and ill-will bearing setback.

The German settlements, which were created from 1890 on, lie on the Cernavoda—Constanta railway line, both in the south. There was only one which grew to be large and developed good: **Cobadin**, about 20 km [12.4 miles] south of Medgidia and established on the railway to Dobritsch. It was a large Tatar village when, in the spring of 1891, the first 16 families arrived from the Bessarabian colonies of Tarutino and Mintschuna. They were predominantly Swabians. They had already left their Russian place of residence in 1874, when the first conscription into the military took place. At that time, they withdrew into the Walachie and settled in the often mentioned settlement of Neu-Plotzki. They stayed there for about 8 years and then returned to Russia. The first group was soon followed by more families from Neu-Arzis, Katzbach, Teplitz and other villages. What was explained about the surroundings of Cogealac and Tariverde also holds true for Cobadin: It appears today as a thoroughly Swabian village, although, according to the family surnames and the individual explanations of many colonists, almost half is of North German origin (West Prussia and East Prussia, Silesia, etc.). As Swabian, among others, are the families Klett, Wirth, Lück, Hermann (migrated first to Poland), Binder, Schöttle, Jeß (Hessen), Nagel, Wilhelm, Metzger, Leier, Brenner, Schalo, Haberer, Dabert, Edinger; as North and Middle Germany: Drews, Grieb, Gabert, Seefried, Welk, Thielmann, Kraus, Rösner, Schwarz, Schlaps, Bossert, Radomski, Almert, Arndt, Schmolke, Rothärmel, Bobermann und Götz (Silesia). The German colony numbers 71 families with 397 souls. In the second half of the 1890s, about 16 families emigrated to North America and Argentina, 8 to West Prussia. The

somewhat off to the side Tatars and Turks, with approximately 120 families, now make up the majority in the village. There are also around 30 Romanian families.

A land distribution to the German immigrants from the government did not take place in Cobadin. But there was much to buy from the migrating Tatars and Turks. So it happens that the conditions for ownership for the farmers are strikingly different. Three have over 300 hectares [741 acres], even as much as 100-200 hectares [247-494 acres], eleven have 39-85 hectares [96-210 acres], a dozen only 2½-15 hectares [6-37 acres], all the other do not own their own ground. But the good soil of the village and also of the rented land was very productive. Planted first and foremost are oats and barley, then wheat and corn. The vineyards cover 24 hectares [59 acres]. Cattle breeding is also important. The community maintained three stallions before the war, and individual farmers had sheep herds of 1.999-2000 head. So, Cobadin is one of the richest German Dobrudscha villages, and its wide and string straight, over a kilometer-long road makes an equally beautiful and imposing impression. A narrow row of tall acacia trees are located on both sides of the roadway and foot paths. Small, well-kept flower gardens are located in front of all houses.

The German school here was somewhat better taken care of in as much as the efforts of the community had managed to work things out so that the German teacher was allowed to teach four hours a day, so that each child received 2.

The greater prosperity of some of the people of Cobadin had remarkably also led to an entering into a further direct relationship with the old homeland for the better education of the youth: several young girls received their education in Weimar, and just before the outbreak of war, 8 to 10 young people were to be sent to German schools.

Sarighiol Colony was founded in 1890, 13 km [8 miles] west of Mangalia, in a narrow, high ridge enclosed valley. In contrast to Cobadin, it is considered as poor. The soil is poor and stony. According to the reports of the farmers it is “the worst in the whole of Dobrudscha.”



Church in Sarighiol

Crop failures happen often and the economic situation of most farmers is not a favorable one. But this does not prevent Sarighiol from making a very advantageous impression with its two typical German streets. After many struggles and long period of waiting, the German settlers here managed to get land from the government. Nothing was issued up to 1893. A few received 10 hectares [24.7 acres] the next year. When the Land Commission was back at it again in 1904, instead of the promised and reserved 15 hectares [37 acres] for each family, they gave only 5 [12 acres]. Veterans were to be located on the land that had been reserved. Urgent complaints with the resolute explanation that otherwise all Germans would emigrate again, finally went through, supposedly without the knowledge of the Ministry, only at the instigation of the King and Peter Carp, that the Romanians stay away and everyone received his 15 hectares. So he had to pay an annual rent of about 5 lei per hectare for 30 years, only then would he achieve full ownership.

Among the settlers of Sarighiol were several who were previously in the German colonies in the Caucasus. It was initially the largest of the settlements of those years. Already in the summer of 1891, it had 204 inhabitants.¹ The majority of them were South German in origin. Many family names meet us here for the first time: Strom (a Hessian family coming by way of Galicia), Weiß, Stubert, Neubauer, Bänder, Manthei, Stadel, Ziehmann, Karl, Bascht, Will, Hirth, Beeg, Klengmann, Gähmert, Ziegle, Zink, Brücke, Fritz, Gebhard, Würfel, Dürr, Groß, Kreuz, Ochsler. The colony currently number 61 families with 375 souls. By emigration in 1903, it lost 11 families, of whom 9 went to West Prussia in settlements of the Poznań Settlement Commission. A further 10 Romanian and about 30 Tatar families belong to the village.

Of the German settlement in **Ebechioi**, a small Tatar village 10 km [6 miles] east of Cobadin, there is only a poor remnant of 3 families left with 18 souls and a woman married to a Bulgarian. They rented land.

In the old seaside town of **Mangalia**, 8 German families with 49 souls live without a special quarter among Bulgarians, Romanians, Turks, Tatars and Greeks. There were still over 20 towards the end of the century. The immigrants went off to Canada, one to Posen, because they received no land. Even now, only 2 own their own property. The first came in 1890, most of them were from Bessarabia, some from Volhynia: of these one was born in Landsburg on the Vistula River, another in the German colony of Czyzemin near Lodz (4 Verst [2.6 miles] from Pabianice). It seem that all are of North German descent. There is no German school. A colonist gave some instruction to the children on Sundays, some families send them to the Bulgarian school.

Caracicula was established in 1890 as a purely German colony 4 km [2.5 miles] in a westerly direction from Mangalia by immigrants from Bessarabia, Volhynia and the Caucasus. In the summer of 1891, it numbered 121 souls and quickly developed to about 40-45 families and to a beautiful village with a German school where a teacher from Breslau taught. Every family had been promised about 10 hectares [24.71 acres], but the survey did not take place. On the contrary, around the middle of the decade, veterans were suddenly brought into the village, to whom was immediately freely distributed the land promised to the German. The Germans then withdrew and dispersed. Some migrated to Bulgaria to the area of Plevna, others went to

¹ Kobbelt, Rud. Die deutsche evangelische Diaspora, II. Heft, Gotha 1893, S. 85.

America and back to Russia, or to other settlements of Dobrudscha. At this point in time, there are about half a dozen Germans living in the area.

From the other aforementioned establishments of the years 1890-1891, the German immigrants have again completely disappeared.

40 Bessarabian families had settled in **Osmancea**. When they saw that they were being defrauded in their hopes for land, they broke up their colony and sought mostly other places in Dobrudscha.

41 Catholic families settled on government land in **Balala**, built a prayer house and established a school. They had contracted a lease on a year by year basis. After a presence of a decade, the land was supposed to become theirs. But also here again, the best part was given to the Romanian veterans which made it necessary for the German immigrants to up and leave in 1896. Most of them rented land in Mangeapunar and established for themselves there, as will still be shown, a new village. A smaller group took refuge in Chiragi.

The settlement in **Osmanfaca** lasted somewhat longer, until about 1908, which was made up roughly of an equal number of Catholic families from the Kherson *Gouvernement* and Lutherans (*evangelischen*) from Bessarabia and Volhynia. They had rented land from a landowner, after whose death the contract was not renewed. 15 families emigrated together to America, the Catholic folks we will find again in Palaz Mare.

A smaller colony of 12 or 13 families was created near Constanta on the **Steppe Georgefscu**. It broke up already in the spring of 1891, when the landowner modified the existing contract. The colonists went to the new settlements to the south of Mangalia.²

On the other hand, another settlement in the surroundings of Constanta, half an hour south of it, has taken on a lasting good development: **Neuen Weingärten**. Families settled here in 1892, some of whom had come directly from Russia, some of whom belonged to the immigrants of the two previous years and had already tried their luck in other of the new colonies, in Cobadin and Sarighiol. Mentioned to me as places of origin were Borodino, Leipzig, Teplitz, Friedensthal and the first 1830 established Gnadenthal Colony in the Sarata district. A goodly number of new surnames are represented here; Litz (from the area of Briesen in West Prussia), Freimuth (Kashubian), Deg, Seefried, Weichsel, Trautwein, Weimann, Grenz, Bohn, Hirschmann, Sabal, Schneider. The village does not show the usual plan with the typical long street. The houses are scattered, and among the 34 German families with 201 souls also live 8-9 Romanian families. A few families emigrated to America and Posen. Before the outbreak of war, school was conducted in a farmhouse by a female teacher from Germany. The colony is a headquarters for the Seventh-Day Adventist sect and they have a prayer house here. The settlement has done quite well economically. In addition to growing cereal grains, it has mainly emphasized fruit growing and growing grapes, whose products find good paying customers in nearby Constanta. Extensive and well-tended gardens encircle almost every one of these clean premises.

² Pfarrerbericht in den Akten von Atmagea.

Neuen Weingärten was the last of the German colony settlements whose emergence went back to direct immigration. The influx of larger closed groups from Russia had reached its end. It stopped almost exactly half a century ago. It was by no means a smooth move from one home to another. For many it meant a time of restless journeys, heavy work, severe deprivation and bitter frustrations. Many of the farmers in search of land had to again leave the sod on which they had erected their house and inserted the plow before they found a firm foothold. Two great wars attacked, devastated or drove off the inhabitants during the development of the settlements. Many lost faith in Dobrudscha and set their hopes on distant countries. Sadly, of the about 3 dozen places where the German immigrants tried to establish larger or smaller settlements in this half-century, hardly half of them have continued to existence up to our days.

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