

Immanuel Fiechtner

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[Translation Begins]

Immanuel Fiechtner †

A black framed corner in our Bessarabian homeland leaflet stirred me deeply: It reported to the extended readership about Immanuel Fiechtner's death on 8 July, 1938.

You were my friend, Immanuel, my schoolmate, and my colleague, probably in the hardest times of our German Bessarabian school. The attempt at russification on the part of the Russian Government reached its peak in the 90s of the 19th century. In the struggle for our German school, you were at the forefront, surrounded by only a very small number of struggling comrades.

There is just one incident that I would like to mention. Among others, the Russian school authorities had ordered that every morning, at the start of school, a prayer had to be prayed for King and Country in the language of the nation.

However, our church governing body failed completely at that time. It believed it had found a solution out of the difficult situation by proposing a prayer to the Russian school authorities for this morning devotion which was translated into Russian from our Church Agenda. Mercifully, this proposal was accepted and recommended to all German schools by the St. Petersburg Evangelical Lutheran General Consistory—I must confess—it was an extremely long prayer.

In those difficult days, Mr. Fiechtner invited the members of the Tarutino parish to a meeting: A position should be adopted concerning the prayer regulation. I hear colleague Fiechtner talking even today: “We cannot wait on pastor and congregation in this serious situation; this approach is too long, too cumbersome. It has to be acted upon quickly. We teachers must take hold of matters ourselves and speak with the school governing body.”

Two colleagues travelled to the District School Inspector's Office. After a long back and forth, they were allowed to see the Inspector. “As an opening statement, Mr. Inspector, in great distress,” Mr. Fiechtner began. “Our German communities are extremely agitated, and rightly



so, because the most sacred thing has been taken from their children—prayer in their mother tongue. I, as a teacher at the Tarutino school, of course, find a way out of the awkward situation. I have 15 pupils of the Jewish people; I let their row stand aside every morning during the speaking of the prescribed prayer and the law does not concern me. But, Mr. Inspector, is this praying? Where is the gravity of the moment?”

The school inspector is touched. He could not come up with a counter argument to Mr. Fiechtner’s persuasive words and promised to put no obstacle in the way in the future to the German prayer of the German students.

Satisfied, the two colleagues returned to Tarutino. Nothing concerning their victory was allowed to be revealed to the public; but the word got out anyway and the Consistorium generated morning prayer was slowly considered finished.

Society saw it as a matter of course that one could again hold the morning devotions in the German school in the mother tongue.

Dear comrade Fiechtner, only a few colleagues knew that the solution of this important issue was thanks to your fighter’s courage, your energy. Your correct word in the right place was decisive. You left our teacher circle all too soon! However, years later, it became clear that it had to belong to your life’s task to work in another direction for our things Bessarabian. A leading force was missing in commerce and industry. Fate had a plan for you as a leader. In already a very short time, your name had a good ring to it in most circles. As things got better for you materially as for the ordinary average person, so also the adversary and envy did not fail. What I so often liked about you, dear friend, was the disposition in your life that could bring you self-control whether it be extravagant praise or ill-will. Firm and secure, you strode on life’s course, recognized by you to be correct.

The wartime and post-war period was devastating for Mr. Fiechtner and his precious family values, materially and health-wise. In this difficult situation—sadly, sadly!— Fiechtner’s circle of friends diminished more and more. A cold shoulder was given to the once revered or from a poor disposition feared bank manager.

Dear reader, you are probably saying, “The world moves on!” But is this any consolation?

From 1760-1790, the well-known musician Haydn was conductor for Prince Esterhazy, the descendant of an Hungarian magnate family. The prince became impoverished; got to the point that he had to give notice to his beloved Haydn and his orchestra. Out of gratitude, the orchestra played a symphony as a goodbye to its generous benefactor which Hayden composed just for this occasion. In this symphony, at the conclusion, one member after the other of the orchestra stops playing, packs up his instrument, extinguishes the light at his music stand, and departs in a measured pace through a narrow door, beckoning with his hand to the vaulted podium. Only one

violin is still singing like the last nightingale in the garden. Then Haydn turns around, extinguishes his light, spreads his arms and departs.

It is something like that for me: the friends go out, the surroundings thin out, the players of life depart. Sextet, quartet, trio, duet. When will my solo be played?

Michael Neumann, teacher emeritus.

[Translation Ends]