

On a Trip to Bessarabia

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Note: One of the sections of this microfilm contains 6 folders. Within one of these folders are 68 documents, some dated 1939 and others 1940. The microfilm folder from which this translation is given is titled: *Bessarabia*. The articles being translated below are from newspaper clippings which do not indicate the name of the paper nor the date when published. A couple of times, the author makes reference to the attitude of people concerning Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland. This happened after the Munich Agreement in September of 1938. So the speculation is that the following travel documents were of a trip taken between late 1938 and early 1939. Information within [square brackets] indicate translator's comment.

[Translation Begins]

On a Trip to Bessarabia

by Aquilin Ullrich, medical student, Dillingen

Early in the morning, we arrive in Giurgiu, a port city on the Danube, south of Bucharest. Budapest, Belgrade, the Iron Gate, and the moonlight ride through Wallachia are still alive in our memory. This is where our Danube journey should end. Already the first difficulties have arisen. Our papers, which contained the approval of the Romanian Ministry of the Interior for a duty-free import of our luggage, were not recognized. We should wait for the arrival of the customs chief. It was only 6 o'clock.

On an old bus, which perhaps the German troops might have forgotten, we drove to the city. On the way, we overtook teams of oxen and Romanian farmers, who high on their wagons were singing and shouting on the way to the markets. A colorful hustle and bustle drifted through the streets of the city. Romanians, with their white wide courtyards, filled the market square. All of them had the red sash tied around and some of them wore the customary, colorfully embroidered leather vest made of sheepskin. Mountains of tomatoes, peppers, watermelons, apples and grapes were piled up on the pavement. Old women and bearded men crouched in between, surrounded by a haggling crowd. Most of them did not buy at all. For them, it was about the enjoyment of action. Business is a ceremony in the Orient and the dispute over pennies belongs to it as much as paying. A tangle of many voices filled the square, mixed with the noises of the animals waiting for their buyer. Water vendors made their way through the crowd and zealous police officers. Everywhere grubby beggars obstructed the way—a colorful and vivid image that

presented itself to us between the poor houses of Giurgiu, like a colorful page from *One Thousand and One Nights*.

We returned to the port. Our 43 pieces of luggage, mostly containing scientific equipment, were thrown back and forth, finally opened. Our arrival was certainly a sensation and was with all possibilities enjoyed to the fullest. After 4 hours, struggling with each and every questionnaire, we were able to take our boxes under customs seal to Bucharest. There we were sure of the effective support of the embassy.

We could not leave Giurgiu on our own. The conductor in the luggage cart refused to accept our belongings. The papers are not in order. This time we understood his intentions more quickly. A 20 lei piece was the most effective speech we could have given. Everything was fine all of a sudden. Thus the entry ceremonies for us were over for the time being. But five hours of negotiations were also a very impressive reception celebration for our anticipations.

By train to Bucharest. At the stations, farmer wives came to the train with eggs, boiled crabs, grapes, roasted corn on the cob and many other southern produce (*Früchten*). This was all dirt cheap and we began to savor the individual pleasures with a true joy of discovery. We learned very quickly that the “dear German gentleman” was expected to pay double over against what the locals paid. The train passed through endless corn fields, where the produce was almost burned by the glowing sun. We saw the first drawing wells (*Ziehbrunnen*) on the bare plains, a picture of Oriental romanticism. Vineyards were laid out in the plain, whose heavy dark wine was served at the stations. Once, the train stopped on the open stretch. A soldier had thrown himself under the wheels. Maybe he could not stand the heavy duty or the father could not give him the 1,000 lei he had to promise his captain for special leave. Maybe it was just a German who no longer wanted to endure the boot heels and punches of his lieutenant. He was buried in the next field, then the train continued on. Nobody showed sympathy—the Balkans have so many people.

From the haze of noon appeared Bucharest, the Paris of the East, as the Romanian proudly says. The suburbs came closer, mud huts scattered as in allotment gardens, then dull brick buildings, small and handsome. We were in Bucharest. In the center of the city we found some of the ugly street row houses torn down. In their place, skyscrapers towered in strange contrast to their surroundings. Although there were beautiful parks at the gates of the city, but that could not reduce our disappointment. A triumphal arch was erected to commemorate the victory over the German army. A falsification of history that is supposed to cover up the defeat of a harmless person. We remembered how a few days earlier at night the headlight of our steamer lit a stone cross on the Bulgarian shore and was announced in the loudspeaker in the Balkan languages and German: “At this point, General Field Marshal von Makensen crossed the Danube.” In the evening, we walked across the Bratinau Boulevard in the glow of fantastic advertising light. Now the leading German industrial names shone from the skyscrapers and rewarded us with Romanesque elegance for the efforts of the day. Emigrant newspapers informed of new atrocities committed by the Sudeten Germans against the Czechs. Newspapers that are decisive for some in this country for their opinion (*Urteil*). We should not be surprised that we found more hate than love among the Romanians and more begrudging than friendship. This was already ensured by the many Hebrew noses that stared at us everywhere.

The train took us further to Bessarabia. We crossed the Pruth River, the old border between the Romania of the pre-Cretaceous period and the country of Bessarabia of Imperial Russia. Soon there was no more forest. Only wide treeless steppes, which promised a wonderful corn harvest. Black earth land, whose dark topsoil was about one meter [3.28 feet] thick. We saw the first closed Bulgarian village, clean, even if pitiful mud huts, but overflowing the crown of manicured gardens within which they were located.

Slowly our little train steamed through the Bessarabian lowlands. Sometimes the view of the blue mountains of the Dobrudscha [Dobruja] beyond the Danube becomes clear, then again there was only shining, endless steppe around us.

Village of Teplitz

by Aquilin Ullrich, medical student, Dillingen

We leaned way out of the railcar windows when Teplitz came into view. This village was to accommodate us for seven weeks until our work would be completed. A lot of people had gathered to greet us. Smiling faces everywhere, we hardly found time to squeeze the many hands that stretched out to us. From letters that had already reached us in Germany, we knew of the great joy of the population about our visit, but we had not expected so much friendliness.

Teplitz is one of the oldest colonies of German settlers in Bessarabia. Its founding year is 1817. Like the vast majority of German settlements, this place was also created by Swabians. Today there are 80,000 Germans in Bessarabia. Almost all of them live in a closed settlement area around Teplitz. The cultural center of these German colonies is the municipality of Sarata, founded by folks from East Swabia, from the immediate vicinity of Dillingen [on the Danube River, east of Ulm, Germany].

After the initial welcome at the train station, we went to the village with the quick trot of the tireless steppe horses. People waved out of the windows and in front of the courtyards. It was a day of celebration for everyone: "Our people from Germany are here." We were allocated among our living quarter people and soon became acquainted.

White cleanliness shone everywhere towards us. The generous layout of a steppe settlement was already clear from the village plan. The village is located in the flat hollow of the Kogelnik Valley. This river usually dries up in the summer and carries water for only a few days after one of the tropical cloudbursts. On the slopes, a wonderful wine matures under the southern sun. Teplitz has no picturesque village linden trees, only sparse trees of young acacias. The street is the central point of the village. The church in moderate colonist style is hidden behind house-high acacias. Like a straight pole, the street runs from the east to the west. Here is where the deep wells are located, in the southern heat the sources of life. From morning to evening, the street echoes again with the shouts of the merchants selling salt, fish, vegetables and German benzenamine paint (*Anilinfarben*) [a clear, colorless to slightly yellowish, oily liquid with a peculiar odor]. Here are also on both sides the spacious farmyards to which a narrow driveway

between gate stones (*Torsteinen*) turns off from the street. Low houses, which almost disappear under their mighty thatched roof, contain cool rooms inside against the heat of noon and the annoying dust. Throughout the day, teams of horses chase through the village, followed by meter-high clouds of dust. Here it rarely rains, but when the masses of water fall like glass walls to the earth, the road becomes a riverbed.

About 2,500 people live in this village, all are Swabians except for a few Romanian officials. The best German folk consciousness has remained unadulterated here for over 120 years despite all foreign influences. Alive in their relationship to their ancestral homeland, the latest German development has come to these farmers like a promise. They never tired of listening when we talked about the national four lane highways (*Reichsautobahnen*), about our resurrected armed forces (*Wehrmacht*), about the National Party Day (*Reichsparteitag*). Every evening, when the work was done, we went from house to house with picture books and told stories. Then the whole neighborhood arrived and it was quiet around us despite the many listeners. I still remember an old farmer's wife who showed me a paper cup with the inscription "Special Train Bavaria" (*Hilfszug Bayern*) in a glass cabinet in which she kept the family souvenirs. An acquaintance had brought it from the National Sports Festival (*Reichssportfest*) and now it had become a family shrine here.

Teplitz is famous for its wagon builders. Before the war [WWI], their market expanded to the Caucasus, today sales are limited to Bessarabia. Many families have found their bread as a result. This is especially important because today, after the war, it is no longer possible for the German villages to buy Russian property for their younger sons. Of course, the desire for land remains in everyone's blood throughout their lives and they work themselves to death in order to at least be able to buy land for their eldest again. Many families are involved in wagon construction. The spokes are created in one house, in the other the wooden wheels, another family only produces the iron rims. Thus, the wagon construction is a joint work of the place. Of course, the farmers live far better than the craftsmen. The black earth country brings rich harvests. This wealth makes life bearable, as Romanian officials are not difficult to ask to turn a blind eye.

Prosperity becomes visible on the table of the German farmer. A juice in unbelievable abundance was offered to us. Usually the meal begins with one of the Russian vegetable soups. Then there is a delicious selection of meat dishes, especially poultry; with fried potatoes and various salads prepared from the tasty southern produce. Homemade wine is served. Finally, the meal ends with grapes and *Arbusen*, the red-fleshed watermelons. For us these were welcome pleasures, all the more so as the climate and the epidemic situation of the Balkans demands an energetic nourishment.

In the security of this village, we hardly noticed that we were not far from the Russian border. The agitation of the Romanian press, which did incredible things during the Czech crisis, seems impossible and not noteworthy to us. We were at home in Teplitz and saying goodbye after finishing work was painful for everyone. Even today, letters that reach us again and again tell us about the happiness of this summer.

Bulgarians, Russians and Other Neighbors

by Aquilin Ullrich, medical student, Dillingen

When Germans came to the country in 1817, called by the Russian Tsar, they found a deserted, almost devoid of people steppe. The Chronicle of Sarata (Bessarabia) tells about this time how the procession of Swabian farmers moved through the steppe and at night, protected behind the wagon stronghold, watched the fires of nomadic hordes on the horizon. Wild Kivgis and nomadic people had remained on the steppe since the departure of the Kumen and Turks. Even today, Turkish coins and small clay pipes are still found in graves. Burial mounds that rise here and there on the steppe show even older traces: Old Germanic weapons, jewelry and other grave goods come to light and tell of centuries long past, when Goths inhabited this country.. Sometimes a German professor comes, digs up some new hill, collects the find and measures the skulls of the skeletons. Then the German farmers know for a while that their ancestors inhabited this land a long time ago. Otherwise it is quiet around the old graves.

Today, Bessarabia is inhabited by a colorful mixture of people groups. The Romanians are barely in the majority. Russians, Bulgarians and Germans live in the country. The Germans were given a large piece of land by the Tsar during immigration, so that they still live in a closed district today.

All around are the villages of the other people groups, they have all their characteristic uniformities. The Bulgarian village is clean and surrounded by a crown of well-kept gardens. This is where the vegetables for the German farmer's table grow. Several days a week, the Bulgarian loads his cart full of peppers (*Paprika*), lettuce (*Salat*), vegetables (*Gemüse*), tomatoes (*Tomaten*) and drives through the German villages, constantly shouting his *Papritsch, Papritschala*. The huts of the Bulgarians are built of clay like the courtyards of the Russians, but they have a certain technique in plastering. With an watery mixed clay porridge, the house is smeared on the outside and inside until each edge is rounded and every corner is smeared. This plaster is renewed every spring, so that the courtyards always look clean. Every house has its own good room (*Stube*). The icon hangs here in a corner. Against the walls, benches run all around with brightly colored and valuable, hand-woven wool carpets. A parade bed (*Paradebett*) [a bed made after the original design by the Bavarian court artist François de Cuvilliés] stands there, just as the bride brought it into the marriage. It is never used despite the inviting abundance of hand-spun blankets and skins of Karakul sheep. The family itself sleeps in a room with [mattresses-?] filled up with chopped straw and corn straw half a meter high. Of course, these rooms are not accessible to the eyes of strangers.

The villages are very large from our perspective. About 5,000-7,000 people live in such a village. The blueprint is clear. The checkerboard-like streets lead to a large open square in their midst. Here stands the church. Its mighty domes and whitewashed walls stand in stark contrast to the poor huts around. But it makes for a bad impression and may well have come from a century that had more or was wealthier. The women usually sit with a large crowd of children in front of the doors and turn the spindle or comb out wool, while the men work in the herb gardens and haul out vegetables.

On a visit to a Bulgarian village, a Bulgarian ran after me, who remarkably spoke German. "German Lord, you must come to my place! I was in captivity in Germany as a Russian soldier." His gratitude for the human treatment during the war was touching. He got his best wine from the cellar and maybe his only piece of red pepper bacon (*Paprikaspeck*) from the chimney to host us. All the neighbors came together and he beamed among their curious faces about his visitors. We had hardly admired his Karakul skins when he wanted to give us something of them. He could hardly be talked out of it. But I had a spindle given to me as a souvenir. These Bulgarians are good neighbors of German farmers. They are loyal and reliable as they are superstitiously pious, and some votes for the German list were cast in the election by a Bulgarian.

Things are way different in the villages of the Russians and also the Romanians. Here everything goes the course of its fate. The houses are crooked and almost collapse, the door hangs next to the door-hinge, if it is not replaced by a couple of full of holes rags. Everything is dirty and neglected. The priest (*Pope*), who counts his candles after the service because they sometimes burn off so quickly, looks terrifying in his shaggy beard. His black robe stiffened from dirt and would stand up by itself. Some farmers suffer three drunken fits upon the street in one day and probably may not even know how many children they have, such a wealth of children in the villages. Communism haunts these minds. 1923 was also an attempt at an uprising instigated by Russian gangs from beyond the Dnjester River. In those days, the German farmers proved themselves. They were armed and withstood the superiority strength for several days, preventing above all the two armies from uniting, while the Romanian military of the district town, 50 kilometers [31 miles] away, needed three days to intervene. But by then the Germans had already expelled the Russians. During the summer, the Russians are hired as farm-hands in the German villages. After the threshing time, they head on back home. Sometimes even Russian women come to the German settlements for work. Some of them are of an unusual impressive, sorrowful (*melancholischen*) beauty. But the great many make a gloomy impression. They have big sad eyes and are like animals.

The Romanian is not like that in appearance. He is sent by the state to the villages as a municipal official or employee of the post office and railway. As teachers, some have the grateful task of ensuring that not a word of German is spoken at school. They rarely enjoy a good reputation. The German farmer would forgive their honest zeal for duty, even if it were directed against him, even more than their pitiful bribery, from which only a few can keep themselves free. Thus, their great speeches about state and culture stand in stark contrast to the reality in which the German farmers refine the country and are highly respected as a model by Russians and Bulgarians, albeit envied, but highly respected. A German's word is as good to these people as a signature. Today, contracts are concluded on this word just like in Russian times.

Bessarabia has many Jews. Not as farmers. As always, they live from the work of others. The German stays away from them. A Jew moved to Teplitz years ago. His window panes often went into broken pieces until he moved out. Some time ago, the Jews tried to boycott German medicines. *Aspirinosan* and *Pyramidul* were supposed to mislead the buyers. But the plan ran into the sand. The buyers insisted on receiving the German products. Characteristic of the Jewish contamination of the country is the fact that of the 129 pharmacies in Bessarabia, 127 are Jewish-owned.

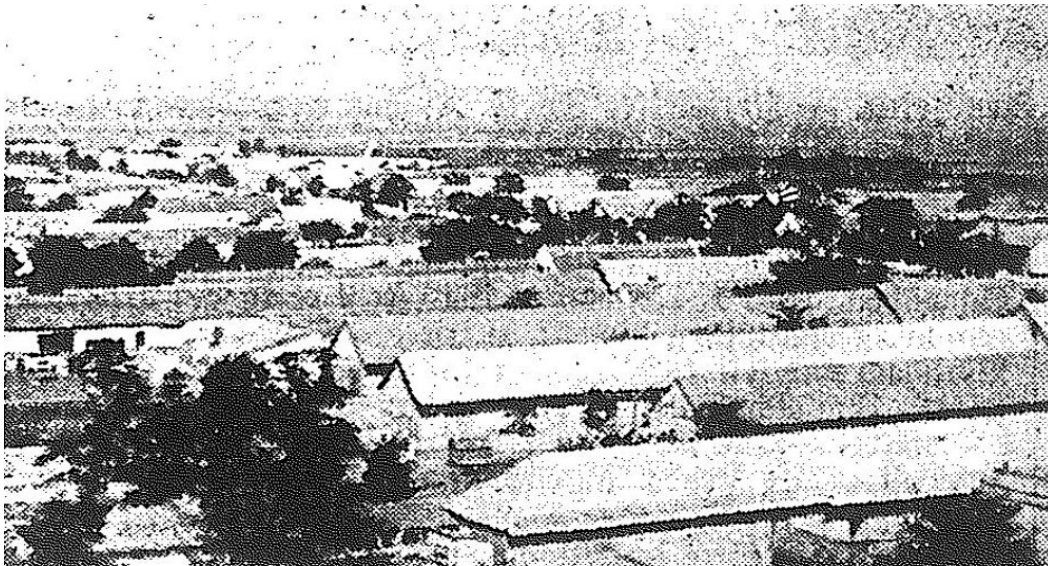
The German has many neighbors in this country. He gets along well with some. He is respected as befits his diligence and efficiency: by some with envy and hatred, by others with admiration and gratitude. But the German keeps his blood pure from everything foreign and has not known dozens of mixed marriages in the country since as long as people can remember.

Sarata, the Colony of East Swabians in Bessarabia Founders of the Village—Originating from the Dillinger Area

by Aquilin Ullrich, medical student, Dillingen

During a visit to the German Museum in Sarata, I found to my great surprise that the founders of this village come, for the most part, from my homeland.

This place has become the cultural center of the German ethnic group of Bessarabia. Here is the German hospital, which is supervised by an excellent surgeon. His home is the municipality of Teplitz, where we conducted our investigations. Of course, the equipment of the house does not meet the requirements of a large clinic. Under the difficult circumstances dictated by the state and the financial situation of the ethnic group, the management of the hospital is an admirable achievement. There is also the German Teacher Training College in Sarata, which was founded by the merchant Christoph Friedrich Werner from Giengen on the Brenz [northeast of Ulm, Germany]. It is impressive to read this man's will, in which he bequeaths his fortune to the community for the construction of a German Teacher Training College. The document bears the date of 06 September, 1823. If today, as a result of the ill-will of the state, which does not allow teachers trained in Sarata to be employed in state schools, the training college only looks after the next generation of church schools, it is to be expected that one day the rights of the ethnic group will be satisfied again.



One of the oldest colonies of the German settlers in Bessarabia: The village of Teplitz, in whose settlement area Sarata is located. (Taken by: Ullrich, Dillingen.)

A great cultural-historical act is the founding of the German Museum in Sarata. Here the most valuable documents of the ethnic group are collected in a small room. The regional files from 1822-1892 are compiled here and can become a treasure trove for the upcoming historian of the ethnic group. Grave finds from the *Coten* period, remains of the Turkish rule, and many souvenirs from the old Swabian homeland are exhibited here. Even today, valuable contributions come from all German villages of Bessarabia.

I remember with joy a visit to the director of the museum, the teacher Immanuel Wagner, whose ancestors come from Bächingen on the Brenz. I told him about his ancestral homeland; about Ulrich Fraf, who on 09 November stood protectively in front of the Führer; about the newly built castle. "Yes," he said after a break, while tears were in his eyes, "I think we Swabians are faithful people." He brought me a Chronicle of Sarata, which he had compiled with much effort. Unfortunately, he has no money to put it into print. From this old exercise book I have written down the most important dates and names:

Sarata was founded in 1822. At that time the easternmost village of the Germans in Bessarabia. The founder was Ignaz Lindl, a follower of the Chiliastic movement. His home village is Baidlkirch. He had to leave his parish at Gundremmingen after only one year. Through the Russian legation in Munich, he was invited to Petersburg at the end of 1819, where he was employed as a preacher at the Maltese Church. A year later, he was provost of the Catholic Church in Odessa. At the request of Alexander the First, he received 16,000 *Deßjatinen* [43,200 acres / 17,440 hectares] of land for settlement for his followers. They enthusiastically heeded his call in the hope of awaiting the end of the world there in a 1,000-year-old empire of peace. Necessity then raised from these strange fantasies a kernel of German-conscious farmer families that have a good eye for reality.

The following founders of the Sarata Municipality came from the area around Dillingen

The leaders of the first group were: Joseph Schwarzmann,; Schäffler, from Gundremmingen; and Michael Wagner, wagon maker, from Büchingen on the Brenz.

The following East Swabian families were involved in the founding of Sarata in 1822:

Jakob Schaufelberger, weaver, Bächingenn-Brenz
Alois Offenwanger, cabinet-maker, Gundremmingen
Salomon Mack, harness-maker, Brenz
Johann Seifried, carpenter, Gundelfingen
Johann Seßle, weaver, Bächingen
Heinrich Keck, weaver, Hermaringen
Jakob Waldenmaier, carpenter, Sontheim
Joseph Hobbacher, nail smith and church worker, Beil (?) near Günzburg
Johann Peter Geßle, blacksmith, Bächingen
Johann Peter Häußler, locksmith, Kittental b. Wertingen
Johan Michael Häußler, weaver, Kittental b. Wertingen
Johannes Kastler, weaver, Bächingen

Margaretha Schaffelberger, Bächingen
Ditus Steudle, mason, Herbrechtingen
Balthasar Blatter, weaver, Gundelfingen
Georg Matt, weaver, Gundremmingen
Melchior Bandel, tailor, Haunsheim
Heinrich Mauz, brick-maker, Giengen-Brenz
Johannes Brenner, butcher, Lauingen
Erasmus Ilg, gardener, Gundelfingen
Thomas Müller, tanner, Gundelfingen
Kaspar Oßwald, Gundelfingen
Friedrich Geigle, weaver, Hermaringen
Albert Unterseher, carpenter, Lauingen
Johann Roßmann, weaver, Herbrechtingen
Johann Paulin, baker, Gundelfingen
Anton Schmucker, builder, Offingen b. Günzburg
Joseph Wiedemann, weaver, Gundelfingen
Johannes Keller, weaver, Bächingen
Georg Schönherr, mason, Gundelfingen
Joseph Wölfle, weaver, Gundremmingen
Martin Keller, shoemaker, Sontheim
Georg Schmucker, blacksmith, Offingen
Johann Georg Beck, harness-maker, Gundremmingen
Christian Gäßdler, butcher, Sontheim
Johann Michael wagon-maker, Wagner, Bächingen
Martin Deisinger, shoemaker, Giengen
Paul Büchele, weaver, Brenz
Georg Maier, tailor, Haunsheim
Georg Hommel, harness-maker, Brenz
Johann Georg Keller, weaver, Bächingen
Jakob Friedrich Seßler, weaver, Bächingen
Joseph Schwarzmann, barrel and tub maker, Gundremmingen
Matthäus Schmidt, builder, Gundelfingen
Johann Georg Büchele, horseshoe blacksmith, Hürben
Michael Bauer, builder, Gundremmingen
Jakob Bendele, weaver, Bächingen
Appollonia Keller, Bächingen
Johannes Lagger, Aislingen
Anton Beck, master tailor, Gundremmingen
Joseph Oberlander, Schuster, Gundremmingen
Christine Pfaudler, Bächingen
Anton Matt, weaver, Gundremmingen
Johannes Bantel, tailor, Haunsheim
Matthias Winkler, weaver, Haunsheim
Theresia Folg, Aislingen
Veronika Berger, Gundelfingen
Marianne Demmeter, Gundremmingen

Finally, I would like to quote a few sentences that a Teplitz family wrote in a letter:

“We celebrated Christmas with you. We heard the speech of Rudolf Hess and sang with you our old and eternally new songs. It was really as if we were gathered with you in a room around the Christmas tree. We thought of the great deed of the Führer in the Sudetenland [occupied by Germany in 1938]. We also overheard that at the time. Even our eyes were not without tears; because if you are doing well, then we are doing well too.”

[Translation Ends]

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