

**Speech at the 150th Anniversary of the Community of Kulm
in Kornwestheim near Stuttgart on July 31, 1965
by Daniel Woelfle**

Dear sisters and brothers of our dear former Kulm!

First I would like to express my appreciation to all who helped in the preparation of this anniversary celebration and I want to greet all with God's greetings! Can't we rejoice today in a special way, and in particular those who are seeing each other for the first time again after 25 years?

Of the former older women and men most likely only very few are still alive. . Those of my age who formerly were strong and enjoying life, now have become old men and have reached the biblical age of which the psalmist says: The length of our days is seventy years - or eighty if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow. The then younger generation has moved up into our place and is charged with the special assignment to show vivid interest for our home community Kulm - especially for what will be spoken off here, so that their children will not forget our Bessarabian home!

Nobody has to affirm that we lived happily and content in Kulm! Nonetheless in the fall of 1940 we left our community willingly and gladly knowing that we would no longer have an abode there. As evidence for this I would like to mention the Russian laws of 1915 (WWI) which had assigned all German property and the German population for settlement in Siberia. We escaped this cruel fate only thanks to the circumstances that imperial Russia collapsed and Bessarabia was annexed to Romania. Where would we be today? Dispersed among Asian peoples no doubt!

If we look into the former life and activities of the community of Kulm, we discover that in the 125 years of its existence until Resettlement, our village rose from nothing to a rich community. For this we have to thank its diligent colonists and the able men who managed our community! As explanation to the younger generation we have to note that leaders of the community received their office voluntarily and without any advertising. On election days black or white balls were cast. How was this done? The village clerk, called "Schütz", would call the voting assembly together for a certain day and time. At the appointed time, the mayor (called "Primar" during Romanian years) would announce the agenda (only men would be present) and ask for nominations of candidates for the office in question. Usually an ample number of suggestions were given. Often offers had to be restrained. After candidates were established, a simple election followed. Each

voter received a ball and would throw it into a chest which had been partitioned into two compartments, a white one and a black one. The white side was considered the place for the yes-votes and the black for the no-votes. This procedure was repeated for each candidate. The one with the most yes-votes was considered elected. After this simple ballot done without any canvassing, the elected men conducted their office faithfully and conscientiously for several years. Many a mayor was reelected after a term. Some elections were done also by simple raising of hands. Church counsels were elected this way also. If I remember correctly, there were 16 church councilors. The chairman was called "Kurator". Two to three men were responsible for church activities such as services etc. Church councilors as well as community representatives were men with the highest sense of duty and they administered their office to the full satisfaction of the community.

In the beginning the village of Kulm belonged to the district office of Alt-Posttal. In 1873 Kulm became an independent district office being in control of only this one village. We can look back to this as only Tarutino had its own district office! As mentioned before, the community of Kulm was independent with legal powers. Public organizations like the orphan fund and fire-insurance also contributed considerably to the wealth of the community. I would like to give a short explanation of this for the younger ones. An orphan's money had to be deposited into an orphan fund. In this way finances were always available which greatly strengthened their economic condition.

Land acquisition was very important to the Kulmers. In those days the rural exodus of today, did not exist. To be a farmer was considered an honor.

The fire-insurance was administered in the following way: buildings were appraised, then when fire erupted, the damage was assessed, monies collected from the building owners, and paid out immediately to the injured. In this way the injured was assisted immediately and without any formalities.

That Kulm was considered an orderly and exemplary community has to be attributed to the Brethren Fellowships (Brüdergemeinschaften). In 1940 at Resettlement, Kulm had 5 Brethren Fellowships with about 85 brethren and 180 sisters. I could not trace the establishment of the first Brethren Fellowship. Supposedly a Brother Radke from the Elft started it. Revivals occurred in 1912 and 1930. The last one commenced with a young girl who had been spiritually awakened in a neighbouring village. These revivals were glorious times! Fatigue did not exist. Even during hardest working seasons the brethren and sisters gathered every evening often until midnight. Through these revivals new brethren and sisters were added constantly and they in turn incited new spiritual life.

Different villages took turns to organize Brethren conferences which brought about spiritual contact with others. In 1912 and 1931 Kulm welcomed such a brethren conference where brethren and sisters gathered from far and wide to hear God's word in presentations, in song, and in personal interactions. Today we can look back to these events with joy. Even in Werneck Castle (Schloss Werneck) in 1940 and 1941 we celebrated large gatherings of all Brethren of Kulm. What blessed times they were!

Afterwards we were resettled and our lives separated. Every one of you knows that himself! In the years after Resettlement, many of us suffered much. Family member did not return from the war and thus opened up great wounds which to this day have not healed.

Now when we look back to 25 years after our Resettlement, we still can be grateful to our heavenly Father's leading of the way he did and that we found a home and abode again. I wish that this celebration may bless us and provide us with pleasant memories!

(Speech and greetings presented by Daniel Wölfle in Kornwestheim near Stuttgart on July 31, 1965 at the 150th anniversary of the village of Kulm)