

The Germans in Dobrudscha

While doing some research on the history of the southeast corner of Romania known in the German language as Dobrudscha, I discovered that there was a book written back in 1922 that dealt with this specific topic. The book, by Paul Traeger, is titled: *Die Deutschen in der Dobrudscha*. Since I was having a difficult time finding a book written in English about the subject I was interested in, I thought I would take the time and try to translate this German book into English so that others, who might have a German heritage going back to Dobrudscha but have little or no knowledge of the German language, can have the opportunity to read something about the history of their German ancestors who lived in Dobrudscha at one time.

Some years ago, I had taken on the challenge of translating another German book which dealt with the history of a village in Bessarabia, so I am well aware of how much time this can take. I was a lot younger when that first book was translated. I am facing a dilemma. This book has 248 pages of material. Now, at my present age, the clock is slowly winding down and how much more time is left for me to get the translation of this book done is questionable. If I wait to make public the translation only after all 248 pages are translated, I may not get it finished before the Lord Jesus calls me to my eternal rest. Then, as often happens, the next generation may not discover the unfinished work, pitching or deleting it, and all was done in vain. So I have decided to approach the translation in this manner. The book is made up of 15 chapters. As I finish the translation of a chapter, I will make it public. The first chapter, which I will call Part 1, also contains a summary of each of the 15 chapters. In this way, the reader will be aware of what is yet to follow in my process of translating and releasing the work via single chapters. So it will be up to those interested in reading the whole book in my English translation to stay tuned and keep up-dating their acquisition of new releases.

The name of the southeastern region of Romania has several different spelling, depending on which language you are familiar with. The Germans called it Dobrudscha. It is also known as Dobruja, Dobrudja, or Dobrogea. I am going to stick with the German spelling throughout the translation. Also, when you come across information within [square brackets], that is something I have added and is not within the German text. As for the footnotes, I am leaving the biographical information in its original form and not give it its English equivalent.

Translator: Allen E. Konrad
31 December, 2016

The Germans in Dobrudscha

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

**by
Paul Traeger**

**With 73 illustrations in the text and tables
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Forward.

The first impetus to the present work was the occasion of the founding ceremony of the German Ausland Institute. While talking about the work I initially suggested, shortly before the German occupation of Dobrudscha, a favorable opportunity was created for a study of the local German settlements of which very little was known. The director asked me to take over the task on their behalf and with the financial support of the Institute itself. So my first, basic trip took place in the spring and summer of 1917, to learn about all parts of the country. A second, a few months stay in Dobrudscha in the autumn of the same year, was in connection with archaeological work, but I had the time and opportunity to revisit a large part of the German villages and to supplement my earlier observations in many respects. In particular, during this time, my ethnographic studies for the work issued by the German administration concerning Dobrudscha prompted a precise statistical recording of the existing groups of people which would be carried out on the basis of a questionnaire designed by me to be used in all the places to be travelled through and also allow for a reliable documentation concerning all individuals, drawn from the colonies and scattered places where the Germans were living. Thanks to some important clarifications in yet a third trip in the Dobrudscha in the autumn of 1918, unfortunately, shortened by the withdrawal of our troops.

I considered the exploration of these German settlements as a purely scientific undertaking. It was not my intention to give a more or less beautiful and appealing general portrayal of them, but basically to systematically, accurately, and in as many directions as possible bring to light previous sources of research and observations of these people detached from their origins for generations and self-contained branch of our people. I have for that purpose drawn up questions and things in a way of thinking which the traditional way of German overseas territories representation has hardly observed, whose research, however, seems very necessary for an in depth exploration of things German overseas. Thanks to the favorable circumstances available, it was possible to visit personally, without exception even the smallest territory of the

Dobrudscha as defined by the Berlin Congress and to make my findings on the spot. I have done that for most of the villages where I somehow learned that Germans had once lived there.

The work was generally finished already in the winter of 1919-1920, describing as such the situations as they were before the war. I have made no changes, even where my assumptions no longer apply under the provisions of the peace agreement with Bulgaria. As a result, a part of the colonies which I had added to the Bulgarian Dobrudscha are again part of Romania. But only a detailed knowledge of the history of the new border would have made corrections possible here. However, such details were not available. Also, the few reports that came to us out of Dobrudscha after the war were also not significant and reliable enough upon which to base changes.

That I was able to carry out my work in the countryside as desired is first and foremost due to the service of the German Communication Administration. In sincerely grateful memory, I remember the kind reception of all those who personally saw to all my wishes such as the Chief Administrator, His Excellency General Lieutenant von Unger, along with all the men of his staff and all local commandants. And I owe this thanks also to the High Command of the Bulgarian Army which facilitated and fully allowed me to travel around in their areas of operation and to the Front.

P. L.

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1.

Dobrudscha and its Inhabitants

It was shortly after 1840 that the first German immigrating farmers came into Dobrudscha.

At that time, the cultural world of Europe knew still little about this area on the lower Danube. There were no cities that would have made their names known. Neither old nor new cultural monuments had spoken about it. Constanta was a half-ruined nest of a few inhabitants and not yet recognized as was the ancient Greek settlement of Tomi, the unfortunate longtime exile site of Ovid. The famous walls between the Danube and the sea, named after Trajan, which later have kept the scientific circles diligently busy for so long, had barely attracted their attention. Also the high natural attractions that would be able to attract European travelers were missing in the country. Only once there was a war between Russia and Turkey did one also hear about Dobrudscha. Eventually, in 1828-1829, when the Turkish Danube fortresses were conquered and the Russian armies crossed the country. In general, it was an unattractive and unknown piece of Europe.

Just around the time of the first immigration of German farmers there also appeared the first valuable and to this day the most famous portrayal of Dobrudscha in the German language. In 1841, the publisher Ernst Siegfried Mittler, in Berlin, launched a 432 pages thick book, with some pleasing woodblock prints, to which none other than the great geographer Carl Ritter had written a preface to the introduction of the “unpretentious, but content rich book” and mentioned: “Letters about conditions and events in Turkey in the years 1835-1839.” The unnamed author of these “letters” was the then Captain of the Prussian General Staff, Helmuth von Moltke.

Four years earlier, in the autumn of 1837, he had been in the services of the Turkish Government and had roamed Dobrudscha with three Prussian comrades, Captains Karl Freiherr von Bincke and Friedrich Leopold Fischer of the General Staff and Captain Heinrich Mühlbach of the Engineer Corps. The 32nd letter, dated November 2, 1837, Barna, is dedicated to it. It is a grisly picture of monotony and abandonment, desolation and poverty, charting this portrayal with superb clarity of the countryside and its conditions.

“This way,” it is said, “is probably 200 square miles of land between the sea and a navigable stream in a so desolate wasteland, as one can only imagine it, and I don't think that it has 20,000 inhabitants. So far the eye can see, you see not a tree or shrub; the high curved ridges are covered with high sunburned yellow grasses, which wave back and forth in the wind, and you ride along for many hours in this monotonous desert before you discover a miserable village in some waterless valley with no trees or gardens. It is as if this invigorating element sank into the loose soil, one can see no trace of a stream in the dry bed in the valleys; only from out of the soil of the earth, from wells, is water drawn on long velvet ropes.” — — — “In recent time, the war has severely depopulated this place; certainly one-third of the villages, which the maps indicate, no longer exist; Hirsova consists of 30 houses, and Isaktschi and Touldscha have had their situation softened by 1,000 to 5,000. — The Cossacks, who formerly lived on this ground, relocated to the Russians, and there remains only a small and mixed population of Tatars, Wallachians, Moldavians, Bulgarians and a few Turks.

After a person drove out the people from this region, the realm seems to have fallen prey to the animals. Never have I seen so many and mighty eagles as here; they were so daring we could actually get up close to them with our hunting whips, and only unwillingly did they rise up for a moment from their perch on the old giant hills. Countless flocks of partridges scattered with loud fluttering up out of the arid grass almost under the hooves of our horses, where usually a hawk circled, observing them. Large flocks of bustards rose up cumbersome from the ground when we approached them, during which time long trains of cranes and wild geese cut through the air. Many thousands of sheep and goats come over here every year from Transylvania and the military border to graze; permission to be allowed to do this, one pays 4 *Para* or 2½ Pfennig per head and every 50th head of cattle. The buffalo with the protruding nose hang around in the mud-holes by the Danube, and wolves, similar to dogs, stray ownerless through the field.”

In some respects, Moltke’s description of Dobrudscha in the “letters” was added to in his 1845 published work: “The Russian-Turkish campaign in European Turkey in 1828 and 1829, described in 1845 by Baron von Moltke.” The country is a desert, as one should hardly expect in Europe. The municipal population adds up to hardly more than 300 inhabitants to the square mile. The soil consists of a treacherous mass of sand into which all the water dries up and seeps through the underlying limestone layer. One searched in vain for streams and springs in the valleys. Both because of this water poverty as well as the sparse population, agriculture is extremely limited. There are only 40 occupied houses in Constanta.

It is surprising and deserves to be highlighted how fruitful this short tour of four German officers has been for an understanding of Dobrudscha. The observations of companion Moltke were, after various alignments, of crucial importance. Since a few years earlier, the Russians had built a quarantine station on the Danube estuary at Sulina, the Central European powers feared a disruption of shipping and the free trade route to the Orient. They considered the plan of a canal between Rassoava and Constantza through the Valley of Kacha Lake under the assumption that here the Danube at one time had had a shorter runoff to the sea, which could be restored without too much difficulty. Captain von Wincke made it his task to check the validity of this theory by reliable site investigations. Already in the year before the advent of the “letters”, he announced his findings in a lecture at the Berlin Geographical Society.¹ It refuted the possibility of an old branch of the Danube and also nipped the channel plans in the bud by the detection of the existing major barriers. Through this presentation, the scientific world also learned for the first time something about the monument and the ruins of Adamklisi, despite their short distance from the Danube, which until then had remained completely unknown. He provided as well the first detailed description of the Trajan Walls. Captain von Mühlbach’s research also had an important result. He discovered and copied two inscriptions in Constanta which contained the name of Tomi. The location of the old Greek colony was definitely determined, which had before this time been looked for further south of Constanta, around Techirghiol or Mangalia.

The concern for free shipping on the mouths of the Danube led to somewhat strange thoughts to come up around that time in Germany, which were discussed in all earnest and a reminder of

¹ Das Karasu-Tal zwischen der Donau unterhalb Rossoava und dem Schwarzen Meer bei Konstanza. Monatsberichte üb. die Verh. d. Ges. f. Erdkunde zu Berlin, 1. Jahrg. 1840, S. 179-186

which probably deserve to be brought up here. A publication appeared in 1844² which advanced a fundamental challenge that Germany, to secure an assurance against the closing off of the entrance to the mouths of the river and undertake to guarantee protection from foreign attacks, must endeavor to obtain the transfer of the northern part of Dobrudscha in exchange for a payment of money. Among the advantages that the writer argues for the acquisition, he also points out the prospects that this would offer the German emigrants without misgiving, which, in fact, at this very time, German peasants were looking for a new home in Dobrudscha. Instead of surrendering to the treacherous ocean and the yellow fever of the American swamps and to be forever separated from their homeland people, the emigrants could inhabit this beautiful country and always stay connected with the fatherland and remain an integral part of it. The description that the author gives of Dobrudscha proves that he had no idea of the real conditions. So he assumes that this northern part already has 300,000 inhabitants and in our possession would feed at least 1½ million people.

The wide, slightly undulating steppe land that Moltke portrays does not extend over the whole of Dobrudscha.

That is how it looks in the southern and middle parts.

Here, it offers the endless barren image with thin grasses and tall thistle covering the expanses, moving along the low ridges and depressions.

A sober, treeless country, as it already oppressed the mind of Ovid:

You see neither tree nor bushes on bare fields.
The field here produces no fruit, no lovely herbs.³

And in 1840, even also almost uncurtailed:

Wherever one looks, the field of the farmer is absent,
And the field, which no one here desires, lies uncultivated.⁴

Only in the spring, when the grass stands in a new green and the vast distances are yellow with the blooming hedge mustard, does life and color come into the drab image. But the scorching sun begins to kill all freshness already in early summer and the hot grey dust sweeps over the arid land.

The northern part of Dobrudscha presents a different, friendlier image. Starting just north of Lake Golvitza (*Ezerul Golovitza*), long high mountain ridges traverse in a northwesterly direction. Green valleys accompany and cut through them. For great distances, the heights are densely forested, and one encounters magnificent growths of mighty oak, beech, linden and ash. Because the highest summits do not reach 500 meters [ca. 152 feet], one has the impression of hill country everywhere. The one who, from Braila, looks out toward Dobrudscha from the high

² Teutschland und die Donaumündungen. Von einem Offizier. Siegen und Wiesbaden 1844. 8. Die Schrift erlebte sogar noch 1854 eine 2. Auflage

³ Tristia III, 10, 75

⁴ Epistulae ex Ponto I, 3, 55

river bank over the wide flood land of the Danube, sees a long line of looming dark heights and domes against the clear sky. There are areas here of great scenic beauty, which are sometimes reminiscent of Thuringia. Streams and springs are also not absent here. The first German newcomers settled in this part of Dobrudscha.

According to Moltke's depiction, it was a deserted country almost bare of people. However, this condition was not only the result of the devastating wars of the last decades. As far back as we can follow the history of Dobrudscha, it has always been low on people. It never had a dense and steady population over a long period of time. From the oldest times, through the whole Middle Ages and up to the modern era, struggle and movement has ruled in it almost without interruption. What was common at all times was the change of heterogeneous clans through the collapsing and again displacing of people groups. In between were periods of war which almost exterminated the total population. For all the tribes who gravitated to the South from the North and East, Dobrudscha was the gateway, and a colorful mixture took up residence next to each other, and one after the other in its steppes. But no specific ethnicity tied itself firmly and indisputably to its ground. It was at all time a land to pass thought rather than a land to settle. There is hardly another area in Europe in which in the recent past an almost complete change of the population has occurred so often. Apart from the very early days of the first Bulgarian Empire, which had its beginning from here, Dobrudscha was never the heartland of a strong State. It was always only an appendage, a mostly neglected and little protected land area that was open to invasion for booty and land seeking hordes. Even at the time of the powerful Bulgarian kingdoms, we see new people breaking into Dobrudscha again and again and establishing themselves for a shorter or longer period of time. There were the Hungarians, Russians, Pechenegs [a semi-nomadic Turkic people of the Central Asian steppes], Cumans [people from east of the Yellow River in China], Wallachians, Turkoman, Tatars of Khan Nogai and those from the realm of Kipchak [people from the east who settled in Georgia in the 12th Century]. Shortly before the conquest by the Ottomans, the region of Dobrudscha was torn away from the Bulgarian Empire by the Cuman Prince Dobrotic, probably from whom its name is derived, and formed into an independent State. Cumans were also the predominant race at that time.

Under the rule of the Turks, many of them settled in Dobrudscha. Around the middle of the 17th century, Babadag had 1,700 Turkish houses next to only 300 Bulgarians, Greeks and Romanians.⁵ A Polish traveler, who crossed the northern part at the end of the 18th century, seems to have observed only Turks in Isaccea and Tulcea.⁶ The beautiful old mosques, that we find in the larger towns, indicate a sizable Ottoman population. In the long run, Dobrudscha remained a sparsely settled country during the long period of the Turks, during which time neither agriculture nor a fixed landed property developed.

The unsettled condition and low density of its population brought with it something that no other area in Europe, at any time starting from the Romans and Byzantines, had been used to, that is the numerous forced colonizations. It is interesting to note that the first people who entered Europe and settled down as colonists in Dobrudscha were the Turk people. It was a crowd of

5 Bericht des Bischofs Philipp Stanilavov aus dem Jahr 1659. Acts Bulgariae ecclesiastica Monum. Der südslav. Akab. Bd. XVIII, p. 264

6 Mikoscha, Jos. Reise eines Polen durch die Moldau nach der Türkei. Aus dem Polnischen. Leipzig 1793

10,000-12,000 Turkman, who already settled at the time of the Seljuk sultans, in 1263, under the leadership of a Dede Sultan (*Saltukdedes*).⁷ After the seizure, the Turkish rulers sought immediately to remedy the lack of people by colonizing. It was already reported by Conqueror Sultan Vajesid I, that he brought Tatars into the neighborhood of Babadag and reduced their taxes in order to ease their progress.⁸ His successor, Mohamed I, colonized again with Tatars and, besides that, Turkoman from Asia Minor. In the aftermath, Turkey's leaders seem to have paid little attention to this little profitable corner of their great empire. They were occupied, but there was not much regulating and even allowed an unusual tolerance so that Christian residents of a diverse kind arrived on its wide open spaces. Especially in the 18th century, the neighboring countries in the North and East considered Dobrudscha as a free asylum which offered a safe haven to persecuted and displaced persons. Out of Wallachia and Moldavia came Romanian peasants who wanted to evade the pressure of their Boyar [highest ranking feudal aristocrat next to the ruling prince]. Don Cossacks, who had fled their homeland for political reasons, settled down in the north, on the "Five Hills."⁹ Most importantly though, there were numerous members of Russian sects who sought protection from the persecution of the Orthodox Church, including Old Believer (*altgläubige*) Cossacks, who built their villages on the Danube, north of Harsova.¹⁰ As a land for controlled colonization and as a refuge for refugees, we will come to learn more about Dobrudscha later.

The Russian-Turkish wars brought new times of terror and constant unrest to Dobrudscha. The first one, 1768-1774, was when "the 40 hours-long stretch between Babadag and Basareik disclosed all the horrors of war and the devastation."¹¹ The third one, 1806-1812, raged from the Danube to the sea. The unbridled Cossack Army crossed the country consuming and scorching, and the Christian population was little spared just as it was with the Turkish. Those who did not flee were captured and hauled off to Bessarabia. The fourth one, after which Moltke got to see Dobrudscha,¹² also only completed the work of destruction and devastation. And the outbreak of the plague in the middle of May, 1829 also contributed to that. It was not only the acts of war itself that had robbed the land of its people: the Russians led away large sections of the population to colonize the uninhabited areas of Bessarabia. In the second war, it is reported in particular of thousands of Bulgarians and Lipovan [an ethnic minority of "Old Believers"] people. In 1828, a large number of Cossacks, located on the left bank of the Danube, were settled in Bessarabia. Also Greeks were mentioned in the new colonies, who were established on the right bank during the time of removal.¹³ In the Peace Treaty of Adrianople, which concluded the fourth war, the right of unrestricted emigration was expressly assured for a period 18 months to the residents still remaining in the areas cleared by the Russians. Some of the Bulgarian population had sympathized with the Russians and feared the revenge of the returning Turks. Many of them left for Bessarabia with General Roth, who was in charge of the emigration.¹⁴

⁷ Hammer-Purgstall, Jos. V., Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches. 2. A. Pesth 1840. Bd. I, S. 117

⁸ Rumili und Bosna, geograph. Beschrieben von Mustafa Ben Abdalla Hadschi Chalfa. Wien 1812. S. 28

⁹ Hanner-Purgstall. Bd. IV, S. 621

¹⁰ Lejean, G. Ethnographie der Europäischen Türkei. Petermanns Mitt. Erg.=Heft 4. Gotha 1861. S. 30

¹¹ Hammer=Purgstall IV, S. 144

¹² In diesem Kriege hat auch ein Deutscher, Maximilian Heine, als Arzt der russischen Armee den Zug durch die Dobrudscha mitgemacht und ueber seine Erlebnisse ein Buch veroeffentlich: Bilder aus der Tuerkei. St. Petersburg 1833

¹³ Schlatter Bruchstuecke aus einigen Reisen nach dem suedlichen Russland in dem Jahren 1822-1828. St. Gallen 1830. S. 486

¹⁴ Kanitz, F. Donau=Bulgarien und der Balkan. Leipzig 1875. I. Band, Seite 292

Even some Tatars, under various pretenses, were led away. Some individuals returned later to a totally stripped territory.¹⁵

When Moltke made his observations, eight years had already passed since the war. The pitiful state of the country changed very little in the next decade. The meager folks that had been left behind or residents that returned later, which the first German immigrants encountered, was a colorful mixture of all possible kinds of people.

Under consideration first of all are the Tatars. As mentioned, they had been called several times by the Turkish Government to colonize the country. After the Russian-Turkish wars and the seizure of their areas by Catherine II, there was a strong influx from the Crimea and Don regions. They were the only ones at that time that gave Dobrudscha a certain ethnic coloring so that they were simply called "Dobrudscha Tatars." The Wallachian Jonesco, who traveled in Dobrudscha at the end of the 5th decade on behalf of the Turkish Government, estimated the number of Tatars to be 33,000.¹⁶ Their head was a hereditary Khan. They dealt mainly in cattle breeding. Slow (*Träg*) and indolent, but generally a harmless, friendly people, with whom the Germans have, then as now, always maintained a peaceful neighborly relationship.

The Turks had suffered the most due to the wars. They had always been the first ones forced to escape, and probably only a small part had found the courage to return. But we will see that the first village in which the German farmers settled was inhabited by Turks. The Bulgarian population was even more in decline, primarily by the afore mentioned emigration to Bessarabia, but still existing in large numbers. The Wallachians and Moldovans, though also scattered throughout the interior, lived mainly along the Danube. The Romanian people increased in number from time to time by way of the sheep herding people (*Mokanen*). These Transylvanian nomadic herders came to Dobrudscha every year in significant numbers from their distant mountains, to winter here with their herds, following a centuries-old tradition that was already contractually set in the Treaty of Passarowitz (1718). Their herds numbered about 50,000 head of cattle. They had to pay a fee for each head and submit, in addition, every fiftieth animal to the Pasha [high ranking official in the Ottoman Empire political and military system] of Tulcea.¹⁷ There were also Bulgarian nomad herders from the Balkans, from Kotel, who came to Dobrudscha.

The various groups of Russians constituted a significant part of the inhabitants. Of the cultists who fled to this place because of their beliefs, the majority belonged to the Lipovan. They settled in a large number of villages and some founded their own. Already in 1809, the Russians captured many as they were moving from Macin to Constanta and brought them to Galatz. They are the most efficient fishermen on the Danube and on the sea. Currently, they number approximately 12,000, and their villages are among the richest and most beautiful of Dobrudscha. Other Russian sects were and are the *Nemolioki*, the *Molokan* and the *Skopzen*. Even Orthodox Russians came and the Cossacks mentioned above. Little Russians, or Ukrainians as we call them today, were located in some areas in the hill-country around Babadag.¹⁸

¹⁵ Wutzer, C.W. Reise in den Orient Europas und einen Theil Westasiens. Elberfeld 1860-61. II. Bd., S. 264

¹⁶ Jonesco et Jorano, Voyage agricole dans la Dobroudja. Const. 1850

¹⁷ Peters, Karl F. Grundlinien zur Geographie und Geologie der Dobrudscha. Wien 1867. S. 52

¹⁸ Allard, C. Souvenirs d'Orient. La Bulgarie orientale. Suivie d'une notice sur le Danube par M. Michel. Paris 1864

Greeks, Armenians and Jews lived from ancient times in significant numbers in the cities on the sea coast and on the lower Danube. Especially in Tulcea, the Danube trade had brought many together. Scattered in the area of Isaccea, but also elsewhere in the country, were members of the Karthwelier group which belonged to the Laz (*Lasen*) [a predominantly Sunni Muslim people] in the Caucasus. These evidently came to the Dobrudscha as refugees. The German immigrants had a lot to do with these “wild people” in their first settlements. Among the old native inhabitants to be recognized is the ethnologically most interesting people of the Dobrudscha, the Gagauz, Turkish-speaking Christians who live primarily in separate communities along the Pontus coast, but some are also in other parts of the country. One has long been faced with a puzzle as to how one is to describe these fanatical Christians in Turkish costume and speaking the Turkish language. You saw in them Bulgarians or Greeks who, due to force or intentionally, joined themselves to things Turkish (*Osmanentum*). However, there can no longer be any doubt today, as we have come to know that it had to do with the direct arrival of the Turkish Cuman nomads, which the first Bulgarian poet Petko R. Slavejko and, after him, Constantin Jiricek have pointed out.¹⁹ The southern Danube country already suffered under their sudden arrival in the 11th century. After their subjugation by the Mongols in the first half of the 13th century, some of them spent some time in Dobrudscha. The name *Gagauzi* suggests that the Cumans were referred to by the name of *Uzen* or *Usen* at their first appearance in Europe.²⁰ They were Christians in the old Bulgarian kingdoms long before the Turkish conquest, but preserved the old Turkish language idioms to which they were related to. In the Russian-Turkish conflicts, they seem to have been protected more than other residents by both opponents, one reason because of their dress and language, another reason because of their confession of Christianity. Another significant movement in the make-up of the Dobrudscha population was the numerous Gypsies who called themselves “Turkish” and more or less settled, leading a nomadic life similar to that of the “Wallachians.”

A new and very significant shift of the population came about during and after the Crimean War. Again, death and misery resided in the unfortunate land. Again, some fled before the Russians, other driven off by the Turkish Bashi-bazouk (*Baschibozuks*) [irregular soldiers in the Ottoman army], who destroyed all Christian homes on their retreat. Again, we are shown images of horrible devastation. Professor Wutzer from Bonn, who travelled through the southern part of Dobrudscha in the autumn of 1856,²¹ considered Molke’s population calculation of 300 to the square mile as being too high. “In fact,” he writes, “the dismal condition can hardly be put down in writing that every civilized visitor gets at a glance as things get more gloomy with every step forward. The people-less flat country reveals for great distances only miserable, thatch roofed villages. A few open spots, which are called towns, do not deserve the name. They bear the disheartened characteristics of their often repeated overwhelming destruction. We will see how the young German settlements were also severely affected by this war.

19 Jiricek, C. Einige Bemerkungen ueber die Ueberreste der Petschenegen und Kumanen sowie ueber die Voelkerschaften der sogenannten Gaganzi und Sugurei im heutigen Bulgarien. Sitzungsber. Der boehmischen Ges. d. Miss. Prag 1890

20 Zeuß, K. Die Deutschen und ihre Nachbarstämme. München 1837. S. 743

21 Wutzer, C.W. Reise in den Orient Europas und einen Teil Westasiens. 2 Bde. Elberfeld 1860/61. 1. Bd. S. 263ff. — Vergl. Auch: Bazancourt, Baron de, L’Expedition de Crimée, Paris 1856. T.I.P. 130ff. Bekanntlich fand in diesem Feldzug auch eine französische Expedition in der Dobrudscha ein schreckliches Ende

But a brutal and sustained large scale settlement politics also worked on the combined population, which the Turkish Government started with surprising energy after the war. The sad fate of the Christian *Rajah* in the Turkish provinces of the Danube had not played a significant role in the outbreak of the war and at the conclusion of peace. The introduction of reforms to improve their situation was one of the conditions of the Peace of Paris. Complaints and interventions of the European powers were to be expected with each new complaint of the Christian inhabitants. They were awakened from their lengthy lethargy and could be dangerous to future hostile clashes with the Christian kingdoms. Turkey recognized the need to strengthen its position in the country, where the Moslem population was in the minority everywhere. A ruthlessly carried out resettlement in the southern Danube region seemed the simplest and most effective way.

Much appropriate material from the colonists has itself just about confirmed this. Immediately after the war, in 1854 and 1855, Tatars, from the areas of Kerch and Eupatoria which had moved against the Russians and, with the plundering at the conquest of Kerch, fearing Russian punishment, fled into Dobrudscha. They were readily accepted and founded the town of Medgidie. Wutzer, who saw it shortly after their arrival, stated their number at 18,000-20,000. With a new colonization plan, it was not unreasonable to once again consider the fellow countrymen immigrants. The invitation of the Turkish Government had good results with the Crimean Tatars. They were assured that upon arrival they would receive free residence and stables. Also a couple of oxen, a milk cow and tax exemption for 15 years. From 1856-1861, there were no less than 60,000 Tatars that immigrated into the Bulgarian Danube, of which the greater part were brought into Dobrudscha. There were a number of pure Tatar branches, usually Mongolians of the Muslim faith, that were pushed within and between the Christian villages, whose inhabitants were forced to give them the best fields and pastures and to also build for them the promised houses and stables. The animosity that this generated caused many Bulgarians to emigrate, accepting the Russian Government's sweet business promises. "In 1861," F. Kanitz, reported, "a very big drama took place on the banks of the Danube and on the shores of the Crimea. One saw a large number of people caught up in the migration, here Bulgarians, there Tatars, exchanging with each other places to live."²² With these newly arrived Tatars, who were settled mainly in the central and southern part of Dobrudscha, the later German immigrants came into especially closer contact. In almost all younger colonies, these Tatars were fellow citizens of the village.

A few years later, Turkish colonizers showed up in large numbers, new people not previously represented in Dobrudscha: the Circassians. After about twenty years, their fate was decided in a death-defying battle in the spring of 1864. They lost their freedom. The Russian champion was looking to get rid of all the people with one stroke and moved then under threats of emigration. In the course of the year, over 400,000 Circassians left their mountain country and accepted Turkey's offer of refuge.²³ 20,000 were settled in Dobrudscha under the care of a special Pasha, mostly in the highlands in the northern part. For the German villages located here, as will be shown in more detail, these wild, hostility working arrivals were a dangerous plague,

²² Donau=Bulgarien. I. S. 291

²³ Kanitz, F. Die Tscherkessenemigration nach der Donau. Oesterreichische Revue, Jahrg. 1865, S. 227 ff.

On the other hand, a folk element from the Dobrudscha, the above mentioned *Mokanen*, disappears at this time. In 1865, the agreement on their grazing permission expired and it was not renewed. But few who had become sedentary stayed behind.

After the Crimean War, folks from the Western European Nations also appeared in Dobrudscha for the first time in notable numbers. Previously, there had been hardly more than the representatives in the harbor area at the 1830 founding of the Danube Steam Ship Company. Through the Treaty of Paris, the European Danube Commission was established and with it Germans, English, French and Italians came to the region as civil servants, engineers, craftsmen and workers. The construction of the railway from Cernavoda to Constanta brought more Europeans. In 1864, Karl F. Peters, a scientific researcher, indeed a German, later Professor at the University of Graz, devoted for the first time his attention especially on Dobrudscha. His "Point of Reference for the Geography and Geology of Dobrudscha" ("*Grundlinien zur Geographie und Geologie der Dobrudscha*")²⁴ is the first work of importance that deals with Dobrudscha as a self-contained area. As the title indicates, it is a representation of its geographical and geological nature first and foremost, but Peters had his sights focused on various aspects and gives some clues about the ethnographic conditions. A year before him, an Austrian Vice Consul in Tulcea, L. Viscovich, had collected statistical recordings of the population, so we are informed about this time from two sides.²⁵ Details from both do not match at every point, but they show that a rapid and strong people proliferation had taken place after the Crimean War. Viscovich comes up with a total of 169,500 souls, while Peters referred to 140,000 as a maximum acceptable number; however, 20,000 Circassians are not included in the count.

Once again, the population of Dobrudscha was shaken by a Russian-Turkish war in 1877-1878 which led to profound changes in population composition. In its course, it also touched the destinies of various German colonies. It brought an end to the Turkish rule in the southern Danube areas. Dobrudscha fell through the Treaty of San Stefano and the decisions of the Berlin Congress concerning Romania.

This change significantly affected large parts of its population. Many Turks and Tatars left for good. The Circassians, who had fought bravely during the war against their old enemy, disappear completely from the country,²⁶ as well as most of the Cossacks. On the other hand, the Romanian population grew naturally and strongly with the arrival of the Romanian administration. And this happened even more in the aftermath when the Government endeavored to methodically Romanianize the country and, with this in mind, settled their veterans in the new country. We will see that as a result of this nationalistic policy and veterans colonization, the German colonies suffered a lot directly. Besides the Romanian population, the Bulgarian population also increased after the end of the Turkish rule.

²⁴ Wien 1867, 4. — Derselbe: Reisebriefe eines deutschen Naturforschers aus der Dobrudscha. Oesterreichische Revue 1865 und 1866. — Ferner: Vorläufiger Bericht ueber eine geologische Untersuchung der Dobrudscha. Sitzungsbericht d. Kais. Ak. d. Wiss., Wien, Oktober 1864

²⁵ Zur Statistik der Dobrudscha. Auszug aus einem Bericht ufw. Zeitschrift "Austria" Wien 1868. Der Originalbericht war mir leider nicht zugaenglich, und ich konnte nur die von Peters angezogenen Zahlen benutzen.

²⁶ Nur wenige Familien sollen sich noch in der Gegend von Macin befinden. Vergl. Pittard, Eugene, Dans la Dobrodja. Notes de voyage. Geneva 1902

Despite these changes, the image of the population is still a colorful mosaic right up to today. None of the existing nations succeeded in unconditionally becoming the dominant group and in that way impress their national ways on the land. For most of Dobrudscha, in November 1917, I was able, by way of an accurate questionnaire which I drew up, with the support of the German Communication Administration, to absorb from each side objective and statistical surveys in all inhabited places, as far as they were in the zone of our administration. The northern strip had to remain closed as it formed the operation area of the Bulgarian Army. For this area, I have supplemented the results partly by findings on the spot, partly through the use of the latest Romanian statistics. In assessing this recording, of course, one must take into account that it was done during the war. On the one hand, after the outbreak of the war, there were a significant number of inhabitants whose ethnic group belonged to the Central Powers; also, that Bulgarians, Turks and Germans either fled or were dragged off by the Romanians. On the other hand, the invasion by the victor not only drove away the Romanian authorities, but also many Romanian inhabitants. As a result, compared to the last period of peace, the numbers of both sides were certainly significantly decreased, the ethnographic image, as a whole, has hardly been referred to.

The population of Dobrudscha, in round numbers, amounts to about the following: Romanians 135,000; Bulgarians 65,000; Tatar 31,000; Turks 20,000; Russians 20,000; Greeks 10,000; Germans 8,500; Gypsies 8,000; Jews 4,500; Armenians 3,500; Italians 2,000. Added to this also a small number of Gagauzen, Magyars, Poles, Albanians, Lasen, Montenegro, Persians, Serbians, and Kurds.

As one can see, there is proportionally little chance to find together a whole row of groups or small groups that are a very heterogeneous element of folk groups, they are by race, language, belief and culture separate and feel disconnected. The richness of this mosaic emerges even more when you consider that the colors of its stones and pebbles still do not overwhelm each other, so they also only present the image of larger uniform fields, but prevail more or less as a colorful mix. The number of national built-up areas is low compared with those where two, three, four and more different nationalities formed a community. But despite a close neighborhood, the partitions between them are fixed and not penetrated. One can easily see what nationality folks belong to whenever you enter a village. Also, in places where several nationalities live together, as a rule, those with the same heritage live close to each other, somewhat apart from the others, and have arranged their living facilities in a similar fashion. The Bulgarian builds his house and his village differently from that of the Romanian, and both again different than the Tatar, Turk, Russian or German. Each group remains strictly to itself, living its own way of life and remains faithful to its individuality, language and customs. Intermarriages are rare exceptions, and something like this starting to happen in this or that smaller group with a larger one is still nowhere to be seen.

And what is true of all those applies fully also to the German farmers who have looked for a home between each of these other strange and unfamiliar groups of people.²⁷

²⁷ Eine ausführlichere Darstellung der Geschichte und der ethnographischen Verhältnisse der Dobrudscha habe ich zu begeben versucht in dem von der Deutschen Etappen-Verwaltung unter meiner Mitwirkung herausgegebenen Buche: Bilder aus der Dobrudscha. Contanza 1918. S. 210-292