

Letter from Johann Karl Krause of Tarutino, Bessarabia

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[Translator's Note: The following information is taken from a file folder of DAI (Deutsches Ausland-Institut) documents captured in Germany during World War II which contains documents dealing with ethnic Germans from Russia between 1940 and 1941. As ethnic Germans from the East were brought to Germany, they stayed in transit camps, awaiting assignment to where they would be sent to live. This document is a copy of a letter written by Johann Krause to his child from a transit camp in Middle-Franconia.]

[Transcription Begins]

From a Letter written by Master Locksmith Johann Karl Krause of Tarutino, Bessarabia, at the time staying in Bad Windsheim, Middle-Franconia, Kurhaus Room 25

Received your letter through our camp commander, read it all and then he gave it to Emil Hommel, which he used to write up a report. I will add something of my own. We lived quite good under Romanian protection, except that we had to pay high taxes until this past year, in May, they even took the horses with their harnesses. Our black stud was also taken, with the harness, but I got the harness back again in the spring of this year, but the horse is gone, so that only the chestnut bay remained, and he was also taken, but he was still a bit too young. They took both of Uncle Ferdinand's horses and one from Emil, the other had died, a pair of very good and beautiful horses, one got sick due to the long trip and it died. Now our farmyard was free of horses, but there had been work to be done so they were hitched up together. However, the horses were only taken away this year, shortly before the departure of the Romanians from Bessarabia. In the final days things were quite brutal because they wanted to seize everything: wagon, harness and the remaining horses, whatever they were able to pack up for their departure. They were terribly rough as they moved among the people. They even made use of their guns, shot, acted with contempt, even shot a Russian in the upper half of our yard near Karl Heims. He was brought to the hospital but died a few days later, and more like that were discovered out in the countryside. And then, on Sunday morning, 28 July, everything went topsy-turvy as the Romanians sought to take everything with them as they were fleeing. A Russian plane flew over real low and then it was "vine rus" [flowing blood from Russian action]. Then it became clear what kind of soldiers the Romanians had, pure rabbits feet, down-right thieves. Now they dropped everything, the guns, all their ammunition, their heavy clothing. Wagons packed with all their provisions, even the Jews took the liberty of ordering the officers to dismount and took away the horses. Everything flew like the sparrows before a hawk, and now the Russian tanks approached with their artillery, such as we had never seen before: no horses, everything by vehicle, up to 40 men on a truck. This was something else and, as the Jews became aware of it, they immediately, in a figure of speech, headed for the hills and welcomed them and even highly praised them, as it must be with the Jew. And so we were not under the Russians, but under Jewish rule. Every position was taken on by Jews and so – the most shabby, the "working folk"

– they directed the Commando. Now the administration started off with something new: Everyone must give an account, how much land he has, how much and with what it is sowed, and, at the harvest, an account has to be given again, how much was cut each day. Then, at the time of threshing, every evening, how much grain was processed on the threshing floor. The Jews had to know all this in order to come up with a calculation as to how much each person had to pay. A lot of grain was delivered up. Until finally the German Commission arrived, then we were finally set free a little bit. One simply told himself, "Berlin should settle its accounts with Moscow." There were still big bears before us, but it was not that noteworthy; we had to gather in the large room of Lukas and there their orders were revealed: no one is allowed to leave the village until he has paid up the appropriate taxes, plowed all his acreage, sowed as much wheat as was sown the previous year and, above all, whatever was written to his account, to deliver it, everything to be in order, only then could we depart. But as the time arrived and the big German vehicles arrives, one did not ask whether things were paid up or not, it was simply –get up and leave. It was not the same in all the villages as it was in Tarutino, many had to put up millions and only then could they leave. Thanks and praise to God that we are out of the hellish kettle and finally here in our old fatherland. We live here without any worries.

Heil Hitler!

Your Papa J. Krause

[End of Translation]