

Brief History of Andreas Demmler

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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. This document is a summary report of an encounter with Andreas Demmler of the Crimea. It speaks about his family history in the Volga and the Crimea, the severe famine of mid-1930s and the advance of the German Army.]

[Transcription Begins]

2. Extract from a report of one of our [DAI] assistants, 06 August, 1941

Today, (06 August), finally met up with a Volga German, Andreas Demmler. He was born on 18 August, 1918 in Armawir, North Caucasus. His parents left Laub on the Volga in 1917 and settled in Armawir. The father died in 1919. The mother married someone from Laub; she is a Schneider from Prutschik. The German villages in North Caucasus have remained pure German. In 1939, many from this area were exiled to Kotlos, Gouv. Wologodsk.

Demmler was in Laub on the Volga from 1928 to 1935. He noted that the worst famine was not 1921-1922, but from 1930 to 1936, especially 1934. People died in large numbers. Sausage was made out of human and dog flesh; sometimes one would find human fingernails in the sausage. For a unit of work, one received 50-100 grams of wheat, which amounted at best to 50 kg in a year. The families had to make do with this. In 1930 to 1936, one ate no bread at all. Now and then they would stir in a table spoon of flour into the meal. Otherwise, one lived on turnips, cabbage, potatoes.... Something like 700-750 Germans lived in Laub, of which 350-400 were exiled. The houses of the banished were torn down and were used to put up the collective buildings.

There was no mixed blood in Laub. Only German was spoken. From 1936 to 1940, Demmler was in the Crimea, in the village International near the Kolai. There he lived among Russians and married a Ukrainian woman. However, he spoke good German and specifically the Hessian dialect; though he himself preferred to speak Plattdeutsch. Of the German villages in the Crimea, he was familiar only with Barin. There too the villagers were pure Germans and spoke only German. The German settlements, compared to the rest, give a neat impression.

He settled in Stepanzi in 1940, 100 km. from Kiev and here he became a locksmith. With the German advance they had to march 4 days and nights without food. Only one night did they receive a piece of dry bread. Their strength diminished. They were told that they should not allow themselves to be captured because then everyone would be shot. However, to them either

choice seemed to end up with the same result. Along with some comrades, he hid in the standing grain, then with a Ukrainian until the Germans came, then they surrendered.

Today, a comrade, who was farther in the East, shared with me that he was in a closed Volhynian German community. They had been spared. The people decorated their wagons and brought them bread and eggs. I have a burning desire to get to these villages. At the beginning of next week I will move on and I am happy about that.

[End of Translation]