

German Boys' Secondary School in Tarutino

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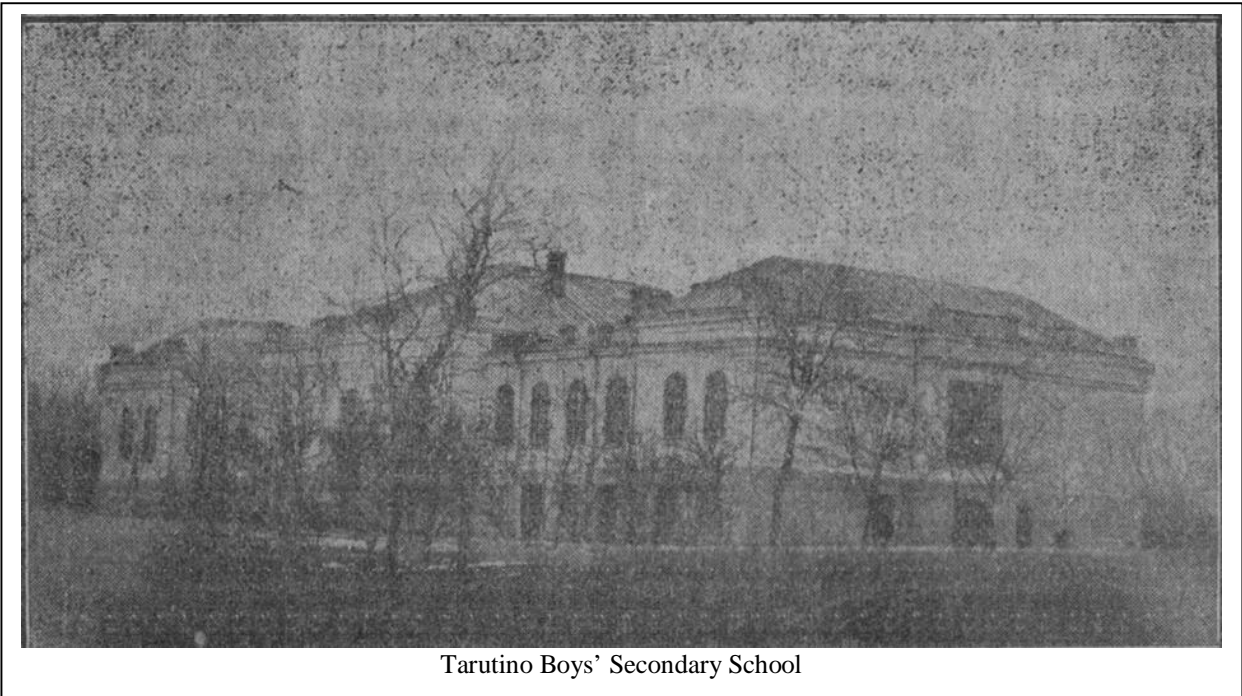
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[Translation Begins]

Our German Boys' Secondary School in Tarutino

Our German Boys' Secondary School (*Knabengymnasium*) in Tarutino is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its existence this year. By decree of the Ministry of Public Enlightenment in Petersburg on 10 July, 1912, the German municipality of Tarutino was given the right to open a private boys' secondary school. In August of the same year, the school was opened with 6 classes. In order to obtain this right, A. Widmer, then a member of the district (*Kreislandschaft*), and A. Erdmann, the representative of the municipality of Tarutino who personally represented the matter before the Ministry, contributed a great deal.

Thus Tarutino had a private secondary school. However, the school could not have been opened immediately consisting of 6 classes if there had not been a school on site before that one that had prepared the students for admission to the various classes. This one was the private school first class (*I. Ordnung*) of Mr. Uno van Beuningen. Mr. Beuningen came to Tarutino on a holiday trip in August of 1907 from Goldingen in Courland [today part of Latvia]. The idea of founding another secondary school in Bessarabia in addition to the Werner School [in Sarata] had been suggested and discussed several years earlier, but especially since 1905 at several meetings. Since it was not possible to agree on the location of the opening of the school, the implementation was postponed again and again. The municipality of Tarutino finally dared to carry out the establishing on its own. Privy Councilor v. Beuningen then turned the idea into reality with the help of brave school friends. On 11 December, 1907, the official permission arrived and the lessons could begin, as the necessary preparations had already been made. Of course, the school had to take advantage of the hospitality of the late Mr. Joseph Heier for

another 4 years, in whose house on the market square (today the Schmidt liquor store) it was accommodated.



However, the number of students grew from year to year, the necessity and viability of a secondary school was beyond a doubt. In 1910, the municipality of Tarutino started to build a school building from its own resources and built the splendid building in one of the most beautiful places in the village. In August of 1911, Director U. v. Beuningen permanently transferred his school of 2 preparatory classes and 5 grammar school classes to the new rooms.

Now the municipality of Tarutino sought the right to open a private secondary school with state rights. This was granted to it by the above-mentioned decree of the Ministry. So, after five years of existence, the private school of Mr. U. v. Beuningen was transformed into a private secondary school with constitutional rights in August of 1912.

Of course, this school did not yet meet all the wishes of a German community and the population. The language of instruction was Russian, the curriculum had to be completely that of a Russian State Secondary School, German language was taught very poorly as a subject and after the departure of Mr. U. v. Beuningen. In order to obtain the rights for the school, the municipality had to elect a Russian as director in place of Mr. U. v. Beuningen. It is therefore understandable that the first graduates, who were released in 1915 with the school leaving certificate, were strongly Russified.

Of the 14 who graduated this year, only 7 were Germans. The same resulted in 1916 (out of 12 who graduated, 6 Germans) and also in the following 4 years.

A significant change occurred. Any insightful German who knew the conditions in school and saw the result of its work was aware that it did not correspond to its purpose. However, the evil wartime with its terrible German agitation made any change impossible. Then came the Revolution of 1917, which toppled the Russian state structure and wiped away the worst German agitators. Now there was elbow room. The municipality of Tarutino, under the leadership of its leading men and the German-minded teachers of the secondary school, was the first to take advantage of it and already in March of 1918 took the decision to transform its high school into a German Secondary School. In the summer of 1918, the representatives of the municipality of Tarutino collected the funds to maintain the school, as it was expected that more than half of the pupils would withdraw. And all the German communities, to which the call was made at that time, were joyfully involved. In the course of a few weeks, the capital of about 30,000 rubles, which was considerable for that time, was collected. And that was good, because what the community feared actually happened. After the decision to nationalize in August of 1918 was officially announced, 154 out of 240 students, almost exclusively non-Germans, announced their resignation. The opponents of the change were convinced that the school would be forced for material reasons to reintroduce the Russian language of instruction and to take back all those who had left, since the school fees were the only income of the school. However, the school made good for itself, although it was among the most difficult material struggles.

Today, every German-Bessarabian takes it for granted that we must have a German Secondary School. This is an unmistakable sign of the strengthening of German consciousness. After all, there were still Germans who were against the transformation. A festival day for the school and the men of the municipality of Tarutino, who have always sacrificed work, time and effort for its preservation, was when on 10 June, 1920, eighteen German young people could be handed the school leaving certificate, who had made their school leaving exam in German.

What far-sighted and courageous men (at that time a lot of courage was required) decided in March of 1918 at the municipal meeting in Tarutino and carried out in the following months, received the highest confirmation in the autumn of the same year. In the autumn of 1918, the royal decree was issued, which guaranteed our secondary school its German character. And we hope that future legislation will not diminish this royal word.

The German Secondary School in Tarutino emerged from modest beginnings, it has overcome the difficult years of Russification, it is today on the way to becoming what our German-Bessarabian people need: a haven of German education and upbringing.

The fact that it took the first probing steps on the difficult new path, that it fought a hard battle with great material difficulties, with mistrust and resentment, even with malicious slander, could probably delay its development, but it cannot interrupt it. It has experienced worse times than today's.

But one thing must be clear to everyone. The secondary school will survive, flourish and fully live up to its task if the community stands behind it and makes it its task to provide for its maintenance. So far, the burdens have been borne by some men from the community, some volunteer donors and, above all, the teachers who have worked for insufficient salaries just to keep the school.

If we express a wish for the school on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the school, it is that the German-Bessarabian communities will soon set to work energetically to take on the maintenance of their secondary schools as a national duty.

H.R.

[Translation Ends]