

Tschemtschelly—Hectare Community

Bessarabischer Heimatkalender—1987

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Note: Information within [brackets] are comments by the translator.

[Translation Begins]

Memories of the Former German Hectare Community

Tschemtschelly

Erich Kallmeier

The German community of Tschemtschelly was founded in 1862 on leased land. The first settlers came from the mother communities of Paris, Alt-Posttal, Katzbach, Alt-Elft, and from communities of the Lower Land. They were Low Germans (*Plattdeutsche*) and Swabians, but the Swabian gradually became more dominant. The youth spoke only Swabian.

The beginning of the founding the village was difficult. There was nothing to be found in the barren steppe. So initially, earth huts were built, which gradually gave way to proper stone houses. Through diligent work, the virgin land was made arable step by step. The farm sizes were on average 40-60 *Desjatinen* [108-162 acres / 43.6-65.4 hectares]. The first shelters and stables for the livestock were constructed. After a few years, certain prosperity began to emerge more and more. As my father told me, they had failed to purchase the plentifully available leased land. The money for it would have been available, but the settlers could not agree on whether they should buy the land or remain tenants. Some were of the opinion that the land belonged to them anyway, so why should they buy what was already theirs. So the land was managed as tenant farm after tenant farm from decade to decade, and horses were bred with which good money could be made, not knowing what would happen in 1920 due to the Romanian Agrarian Reform when the Romanian government took the land away from the tenants and distributed it to landless Russians from neighboring villages. Thus, every married farmer in our village was also allocated 6 hectares [14.7 acres] of land. This is how the village of Tschemtschelly became a Hectare Village at that time. Many did not want to agree to this harsh measure. There were fierce disputes with the new landowners who came from the surrounding area. But hope and faith in the future were not abandoned. The pioneering spirit continued to stir. Land was leased wherever possible, and the agricultural enterprises gradually flourished again. However, many Six-Hectare farmers did

become impoverished and remained Smallholders. There was no longer enough space for the numerous children on the small farm of their father. So many sons and daughters went to work in the surrounding German villages, where they were highly valued. Some families or individuals went to the Banat or Transylvania and worked there in factories or in agriculture. In years of crop failure, they would then help those who had stayed home. There were always some farmers who were doing quite well. By the end of the 1920s, more and more were able to make a good living. In any case, life in the village was on the rise again. Some bought land again, while others leased land in addition to their own. People began building large residential houses and also constructed new farm buildings, modeled after other German communities. There were plans to build a new Prayer House, but the plan could no longer be realized due to the sudden Resettlement.



Resettlement Camp Taschwitz 1941. Double wedding: left—Alfred Lehr and Else née Klein, right—Rudolf Klein and Alma née Kallmaier, all from Tschemtschelly

Young newlyweds did not have it easy to get ahead, because they had no land. The men worked as day laborers. During the harvest season, they took up work elsewhere, mainly for grain as payment, and in this way earned their bread for the current year.

In Tschemtschelly, besides farmers, there were also skilled craftsmen: blacksmiths, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, fork makers. One of them made the well-known Bessarabian cleaning mills [*Putzmühlen*].

Tschemtschelly was located in the valley by a stream. In March, the stream would increase in water volume and become a raging river. Efforts were made to beautify the village by planting young acacia trees. In general, everyone took care of their property as well as circumstances

allowed. Many farmers and craftsmen had created beautiful orchards. The village had two abundant springs with good drinking water. In the middle of the village, the water from one of the springs was collected in a well. It served the herders for watering the livestock, but neighboring villagers also fetched their drinking water from there. The second spring was located at the northern end of the village. It was mainly used to water the sheep. The water from this spring was blocked by a large dam and provided a wonderful swimming area in the summer, where plenty of people took bathes. In addition, the water in the reservoir was used to irrigate a four-hectare [9.9 acre] vegetable garden. This vegetable garden had long been tended by villagers, but more recently by a Bulgarian leaseholder. In this way, our village was supplied with fresh vegetables, which were also delivered to the neighboring market towns.



Tschemtschelly, Easter Monday 1939, Youth Egg Gathering

The population of Tschemtschelly was generally open to public benefit tasks within the village community, which, however, was often financially extremely difficult for some of them. The Resettlement in 1940 was welcomed with relief. During the war, Tschemtschelly had to pay a fairly high blood toll for the new Germany homeland. To my knowledge, 30 young men were killed in action. At the time of the Resettlement, the population of Tschemtschelly consisted of 435 people. Whether everyone found their fortune in Germany is unknown to me.

This record was made without documents, from my own knowledge and from statements made by my father Jakob Kallmeier.

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Since 1860, there was a formal shortage of land, so that in each of the mother communities, land seekers came together and in the south and southeast, in the southwest and northeast, from 1860 until just before the First World War, so-called daughter communities were founded. *Homeland Book of the Bessarabian Germans*, page 13.



Mannsburg, founded in 1862. Wind Orchestra, which was established at the beginning of the 1920s. It played at many private and public events, such as the visits of King Ferdinand and King Carol, as well as at the inauguration of Bad Burnas.

[Translation Ends]



[Stumpp Map of Bessarabia reworked by Rolf Jethon—not in original document]