

A Bessarabian School Regulation 100 Years Ago

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[Translation Begins]

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Wilhelm Mutschall, the tireless collector and chronicler of his German Bessarabian homeland, took note some years ago of an old school regulation which was published in 1838 for our then church schools, and which, for us descendants today, after exactly one hundred years ago, lacks a certain historical appeal.

William Mutschall had, during his time (it was in 1914), expressed it as follows:

In the old parish and school archives there is many a document that deserves to be brought to light because it quite clearly reflects the life and death of the good old days, the efforts and struggles for the cultural improvement of the colonies. The document referred to in the title, dating back to 1838, and resting in the parish archives at Tarutino seems to be worth publishing and it will be presented here in part. It is that “regulation,” so to speak, which is an assault against very poor schooling in the village schools; where one wants to take the bull by the two horns and defeat him, cost what it may.

Sent out is the “regulation” from the *Komptoir* (Welfare Committee in Odessa) at the request of Haftig, the pastor of Arzis and vicar preacher of the Tarutino Parish.

The main points are:

1. A school tribunal is to be established in each colony.
2. The school tribunal is to consist from the administration (*Schulzen*), the oldest member, one of the church elders, and 2 members of the congregation.
3. The regulation shall be in force on Sunday afternoon: from the 1st of November to the 1st of May, every 14 days, in the remaining months every 4 weeks.

4. It has to be urged that the eligible children, without fail, be sent to school; upon the notification of the teacher concerning the absence of children or other disorders associated with measures to be met; to see to it strictly that all children are without fail to be sent to the parsonage for confirmation instruction.

5. The school is to be held: every day from the 1st of November to the 1st of May, from 8-11 in the morning, from 1-3 in the afternoon; twice weekly from the 1st of May to the 1st of June, namely, on Wednesday and Friday, for 2 hours, after sunrise; from the 1st of June to the 1st of September, Sunday school is to be held for 1 hour in the afternoon; the school is to be held from the 1st of September to the 1st of November as it is held in May.

6 The obligation of the teacher is: to instruct the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic, to get them to persevere in cleanliness, modesty, obedience, and courtesy towards everyone, concerning every absence of the child or other disorder, which he himself cannot control, the mayor (*Schulzen*) is to be notified, who, in turn, is to repeat the report of the same disorders to the school tribunal.

7. Upon a notice concerning the absence of children, or that they are not clean or are poorly dressed, etc., the school tribunal, in its first session, must examine the situation and punish the guilty parents or guardians with a fine of from 25 kopec up to 1 ruble. By willful obstinacy or recalcitrance of the child, it is sentenced to rods [beating]. The verdict is to be carried out immediately after the meeting.

8. If the colonists are not submissive to the school tribunal, they are to be brought to obedience by more stringent punishment, if necessary, presented to the Welfare Committee in Odessa.

9. The district office has to see to it that the judgment of the school tribunal is fair and the report of the teacher dealt with satisfactorily; in an adverse case, each member of the school tribunal is to be punished with a 1 ruble fine. However, the carrying out of the judgment depends on confirmation by the Welfare Committee in Odessa.

10. The fines are to be entered into a string-bound book (*Schnurbuch*), used, with the approval of the pastor, for the purchase of writing materials for poor schoolchildren.

This the most important from the “regulation.”

In the “circular mandate” to all mayoral jurisdictions of the Tarutino parish, the pastor laid upon the hearts of the officials the practical implementation and shared some explanations and suggestions that went beyond the scope of the regulation in any case, but showed that he was in bitter earnest about the schools

Entrusted with the administration of the Tarutino Parish, he wanted the official and professional to work with force, as long as there was time, in correcting as quickly as possible the evil existing up to now. He came to understand that not only did the highest priority and blessed instruction have to talk place for the youth to flee from recklessness, forgetting about God, and pursuing secular festivities, but also that many children are still encouraged by their parents and

guardians in such evil ways of thinking and prevented from taking part in the instruction. Therefore, he saw it as a requirement for himself, as caretaker of souls, to take strong measures against this and carry them out:

1. that school tribunals are to be introduced where they do not already exist;
2. that the youth of both sexes, even the servants, with the exception of those already married, to diligently attend Sunday school until the end of their 20th year of age, always giving due respect to the schoolteacher, producing for him at least a quarter sheet of good written material and diligently recite the Catechism, so that he, the pastor, will not have cause to turn away a bride and groom due to their ignorance of religion and first send them to school;
3. that a member of the school tribunal should attend Sunday school every Sunday in order to help the teacher if it becomes necessary;
4. that all those who have not yet reached the 20th year and refuse to attend the Sunday school be penalized by the school tribunal—10 kopec for the first failure to attend, 20 kopec for the second, and so forth; for each additional failure, a doubling of the penalty to be allocated for the third with 40 kopec, for the fourth with 80 kopec, the penalty money going to the church treasury. If the fine for the last failure to attend has reached 10 rubles *Banko*, then the troublesome and unruly person, at the discretion of the school tribunal, is to receive corporal punishment, and this penalty should be continued until the person becomes willing to attend Sunday school;
5. that only illness and urgent events are to be viewed as an excuse for staying away from the Sunday school;
6. that if the school tribunal is opposed to this most important appropriate arrangement, or exempts the youth out of friendship or kinship, it will be fined 2 rubles for the first time, 3 rubles for the second time, and so forth, and, at best, paid into the church treasury. And in case of the absence of success against all moral and civil order and mandate, a punishment to be administered by the higher authority of the Church Consistory and the Welfare Committee of Odessa according to Russian law.

All this is to be made known at the end of a worship service in the church by the mayor of the community and the teacher.

A disciplinary punishment of almost draconian severity, no less than out of the spirit of the time, born from the head of a man who is trying to promote with good intention and under hot pursuit that which is good.

W.M.

[End of Translation]