

Krasna Parish Report

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[Translator's Note: Krasna, settled in 1815, was the only Roman Catholic settlement among the first 24 mother colonies settled in Bessarabia, South Russia between 1814 and 1842. The following document is in two parts (Report #1—pages 1-4; Report #2—pages 5-8. Both present activities within the colony as regards the Catholic Church in Krasna. No author is identified, but both reports seem to have been authored by the Catholic priest and directed to the people of Krasna. The author of each document typed the information without paragraphs and “justified” the margins. So this translation will not try to guess where the paragraphs should be, but present it just as it was originally typed. Information within [square brackets] is that of the translator.]

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[Translation Begins]

Krasna, 01 January, 1939

The year 1938 began with great hopes. We had permission to work in the home [rectory] and the better youth can happily work from home. On the 2nd of January, we were together for a cozy evening, the old and the new church council and the youth. Music was played and sung, some poems were recited and a Christmas story was read. Happily, we headed home through the snow. Winter was serious. Meters high, the wind had piled up the snow in the parish garden. On 7 January, the house [rectory] consecration began. The proceeds of the house consecration were to be used to purchase a light generator. However, the revenues were still too low, so that for the time being the purchase had to be refrained from. On 15 January, a thaw occurred, the frost had caused damage to the balcony of the home, it had rained through and the plaster from the ceiling had dropped down inside. More and more people signed up for work. We already had too much of the singer. The men gathered for an evening discussion in the rectory and talked about the topic: priests and laymen in the church. The participation was good and the interest was lively. On 22 January, the new Cuza-Goga government took place. Immediately our work was forbidden. On 25 January, however, the then Mayor Josef Volk and I drove to Cetatea Alba [Akkerman], where there was a political meeting at which Minister Tomescu spoke in particular. Through the mediation of Dr. Koch, we came to the lords, the Minister, the Prefect and the rest and presented our situation to them. Immediately, we were given permission to work again, which was largely due to the active intervention of the mayor. With new courage we started to set up our brass music. The most important provisions that were to promote the existence of music, firstly that the instruments should belong to the home and furthermore that it should not be trashy music that everyone could order for several lei, forced us to eliminate three men (Müller, Schreiber, Volk) but it was unfortunate for us that the new government resigned on 11 February. A state of siege was imposed on the country, and thus all gatherings were prohibited. In anticipation that this condition could only be

temporary, I went to Czernowitz and bought a lot of instruments, including 2 piano, 1 cello, 1 viola, a guitar, 2 violins and 12 wind instruments. Almost at the same time as the instruments from Czernowitz, the saplings of our spring order arrived from Ajud. Among them were the magnificent elms, 35 of which were planted around the church and developed splendidly over the summer. We can probably hope that these trees will withstand the local climate and give us all a lot of pleasure. But also many other trees, such as maple, acacia, roses, cherry and plum trees have brought a lot of joy in the course of the year in addition to the smaller ones, such as sophorae and rhubarb and as they are all called. (The housekeeper Dorothea Steiert dies after a short pneumonia, Rosa Gedak takes her place) Since work in the home was forbidden, a quiet time followed. First came Lent, which gives a lot of work through the confessional. But Mr. Kampe of Emental and Father Zezurek of Tighina came to the rescue. While the provisions of the siege were slowly softened in other villages, such a siege could not be achieved here in Krasna. Nevertheless, we dared to do a lottery on 8 May, which had some very attractive numbers, but on the other hand was a bit tiring due to the oversized number of booklets. Quite a few of the booklets are likely to be in the families today. But it was fun and the booklet lottery will remain in our memory. On 17 May, the plastering began on one side of the home, for all around the money did not run out. On 5 June, after our beautiful celebration in the church, where the baptismal vow had been solemnly made and the children had promised faithfulness to Christ in a fresh way with their hands raised, we led the first communicants to the home for a little snack. Three hours later, however, there was a new ban on organizing anything in the home. Now a barren time followed. Any gathering was forbidden. The youth was allowed to come together on some farmyard and sing their songs often very raw, only in the vicarage or in the home was everything forbidden. This even went so far that the head once threatened 6 ten-year-old boys and forbade them to go to the home, who had been here to learn how to serve the Mass from a student from Jasi [Romania]. The interest in the home disappeared more and more. Nevertheless, I bought a forest stand that was still cheap to have, albeit with great concern, since no funds were available. For our future work, the trees were cut into wide, narrow, thick and thin boards, into poles, the rest came as trunks. When the 43 *cbm* arrived and the men got the wood from Berezina, the wood was not yet completely dry. One and the other began to voice his derogatory criticism about the wood and soon enough was enough for the men who had paid nothing for the wood, but who thought it was a dirt (*Dreck*) that I had bought. That was bitter for me at the time, but then I overlooked the ignorance of people, swallowed the bitter pill in the name of community work and in the awareness of doing my best for the people. It should not be forgotten that the *cbm* cost just under 1,000 lei. The mood for the home was now bad. The church council only wanted to deal with the church. Some came up with nonsensical proposals, such as, whitewash the church. But since I had bigger plans for our church, I had to constantly defend myself against petty proposals. I saw that a great deal of work could not be done in that year except for the restoration of the roof. That is why I tried to at least fix the way in front of the church in order to create a pleasant path for the people for the winter. I had a solid path of cement plates in mind, but only encountered opposition, one wanted a cement layer that would certainly have cracked at the first frost, the other wanted red bricks, the third person wanted red blocks of clay, the fourth wanted to start working in the church, some stirred up Prelate Glaser, who should take a stand against me, so I have given up the path and wait until people have become more mature in thinking and some in action. So finally the roof had to be repaired. A shed was made. The respectable people paid and initially brought a little something. Others mostly resisted, those who had already become known as grievance citizens (*Drückeberger*), the collections for the home. Finally, however, we were able to buy sheet metal for 60,000 lei and a master craftsman who began to cover the roof anew in reliable work. For the second time around, we bought sheet metal for 44,330 lei. Along with donated labor, the roof cost 122,000 lei. The masters then built two ventilation fans into the home, in the place where they once

were. It almost seemed as if the fans had brought us air. On the 13th, we finally got permission to work in the home. That was a difficult decision. Should we start building now, where the frost could destroy all our work? Or should we wait another whole year? The mood was won over more and more for the further construction in the community, also the men of the church council were unanimous this time. So that is where we already sat as of 16 October. Brodenski came on the 19th and took over the plastering, 30 lei in the hall and 20 lei in the *Bühnenraum* [a podium stage higher than the auditorium]. On 24 October, the huge scaffolding was already standing, now every board was already in place for us. The mood among the people got better and better. I had the nicest job, I had to go out for the collection. In the upper village, on the side of the town hall, we made a good start. Then we came to the church side in the upper village, where things went bad for us. Especially among the rich, the complaints about the hail did not end. It is true that the hail has hit some in the summer, but the hail was not as heavy as the stinginess. A man who has two hectares [4.9 acres] of land came to meet us and said: One person cannot build such a house, put me down for 2% of the crop. Therefore, someone with so fruitful a 70 hectares [173 acres] of land would not have had to complain about 3% of the barley harvest. I was so happy when I had got done with the church side and often the song came to my mind: The more he has, the more he wants, his complaints never become silent. There was a time when I was so filled with regret that I wanted to give up on the collection. We had just received 3% of barley graciously from a rich man with difficulty and hardship. A very poor child with a sparkling eyes came towards us and proudly carrying one leu coin in his hands. He gave it for the home. Actually, I preferred the one lei to the agonizing percent (the miser) and I said: Let's move on! Let us go for the good folks and for the children. Meanwhile, Zieman from Arzis had installed the electrical wiring, which had to come underneath the plaster. That alone cost more than 4,000 lei. The difficulties piled up. Everything had to go fast and people were not used to fast work. Then this was missing, then that. Now pipe was missing. A trip to Arzis, nothing. A wagon to Bebe, nothing. A transport from Ishmael, uncertain. It all cost money and it did not go any further. Then there was a lack of lime. A man (Hinz) might have been able to help out. But he said that it was not worthwhile for him to open the lime pit, it was of too little use to him to sell the product at 32 lei. And again and again we looked for a way out. Then the frost threatened. On 14 November, it was 6 degrees frost. A large brick kiln was quickly set up and heated day and night. But fortunately, the frost soon subsided and let us finish the plastering. Then it was quickly to the floorboards of the hall. Four carpenters took over the work: Peter Leinz, Jos. Dirk, Eduard Gross and Joseph Söhn. Others that helped now and again, Boniakowski and Rükert. The rest pitched in as best they could. In self-shame, they made themselves invisible. One should also not first promise to maybe fit together the stage boards and afterwards neither to come yourself nor to send the apprentices even for an hour to help. These self-centered people will be the suitable carpenters for some misers. It may still take a lot of work to convince these grievance citizens how immature their thinking is towards the people among whom they live. The help was sometimes good, then up to 20 men worked in the hall. Sometimes, however, there was also growing concern about how it would be possible to finish it all. But in the end it succeeded. The helpers in the work that serves the general public find the best thanks in the conviction that a different blood, a different spirit flows in their veins than in the blood of those who withdraw from community service. So it finally came to Christmas Eve. The festival justified some measures that had not yet been resurrected. If there was still a little sense of honor in the people, then one must have said to himself: I have not yet paid the first money that I promised, you are a pathetic guy. And the carpenter, who had grievances, had to say to himself, I should have sacrificed a day, we would not have starved to death, and would not be so despised by the contempt of the public. The evening made a strong impression on everyone, especially on the stranger guests who had already experienced more similar evenings. They did not expect anything like that in Krasna. The following

day, the German consul from Galatz [Romania] came up and said: They talk about Krasna everywhere I go, so I decided to come here right away. He was surprised by the beautiful work, which he called the work of German energy. But this energy is carried by all those who have somehow participated in the great work through money or work. The speeches on the festive evening announced that work should be done there in the home in the same spirit. The basis of all work is religion, in addition to work for the people and the fatherland. We sought to express that this was meant seriously by sending an address of allegiance to His Majesty King Charles II in Bucharest and, in the same way, to his Excellency the Bishop of Jasi. Some things for the church were also taken care of in the past years. Church singing developed better than last year and has already made many friends. Some altar purchases, or like one donated entirely by Mrs. Pancenko. New altar boy garments were purchased, 1,000 lei were collected for the path in front of the church, the church received a new roof worth 120,000 lei. Things were started on the facilities around the church. The cemetery, which I would like to turn into a kind of style, remained the most neglected. However, no understanding can yet be found here. I had hoped to receive something for a new gate and for an enclosure at the consecration of the graves. But most have also neglected the blessing of the graves. In 1937, the consecration of the graves yielded 3,275 lei; in 1938, 961 lei were received. The money is untouched. So the resting place of your dead and your resting place for later remains a desert. Hopefully, the joint work in the home brings us closer together internally, as some immature minds mature, and one or the other can be softened in feeling. On the other hand, however, it must also be acknowledged that many things, especially by the better people here, have been worked and accomplished. The home is the pride of the community and other villages will surely envy you. If you want to continue to work with me in increasing numbers, God willing, you should later have not only one of the most beautiful homes but also one of the most beautiful churches. I would just like to ask you to support me in my work, because I can't do it alone. The restoration of the Church must also be a community service. Finally, I would like to thank once again all those who have somehow cooperated and achieved something. It serves our ideals and thus ultimately God. To him rest and honor in eternity.

Number of Births	1934	115	Weddings	15	Deaths	68
+ 55	1935	115		20		60
+ 59	1936	105		40		46
+ 68	1937	108		28		40
+ 69	1938	115		28		46
	1939	106		13		---

[Second Report]

1 January, 1940. The year 1939 was a difficult year, characterized by low revenues and large taxes. The barley harvest was weak, the maize harvest almost a complete crop failure as a result of little rainfall. New groups were then called up for military service again and again. Finally, 130 horses and 20 wagons had to be handed over to the state, which just hit many a poor man. (While some rich people understood better how to approach it). Even the hopes that we had placed on the work in the home at the beginning of the year were not fulfilled. The first two months things were still going. We were able on 1 January to repeat our Christmas festival. This celebration has also left a deep impression throughout the surrounding area, which is still heard of today. The image of the woman's world has not yet been forgotten. But then there were serious disagreements with the Romanian teachers. (This was due to the unworthy behavior of the Russian teacher, who lived with the Kotocek family, and the behavior of the director Tataru and the wife Luba Jonica. When on 12 January the pastor had to pass through the schoolyard during a walk, about 80 schoolchildren knelt in front of the Blessed Sacrament, while the teachers did not care in the slightest, the director turned his back to the Blessed Sacrament, hands in his pocket, cap on his head. He later claimed not to have noticed this—that is, that 80 children stopped playing, became silent, and solemnly knelt down.) At a meeting of the cultural *camin* in the town hall, the teachers sought to get the home into their hands with the request of a complete fusion of mutual work. The position of the pastor, who spoke out in favor of cooperation but resisted a complete fusion, but rather demanded religious and ethnic autonomy of his work, became the cause of a verbal process in which all sorts of accusations were made against him. The charges went in the sharpest presentation to several higher authorities. While they were turned away in Chisinau [capital and official seat of government in Bessarabia], they then went all the way to the *Ministerium*. Nevertheless, we were still able to work until after the carnival (*Fasching*), even if the difficulties did not subside. (So Georg Habrisch, because he came to sing, was beaten by the *Chef de post*, who held his fist under his nose and shouted at him that he wanted to pull his intestines out of his living body). On 19 February, after great efforts, we managed to get permission to conduct the carnival evening. It moved along wonderfully again. It was introduced by a group of horsemen who marched through Krasna with the music out in front. Basael Bachmeier, "a genuine Hussar," rode out in front in a handsome blue uniform. Valerian Furch, Adalbert Marte and Daniel Ternes halted in front of the honorary father of music to sing the song of the genuine hussar. The two evenings were attended so well that you could hardly make your way through. But there was also a fine, valuable humor shown, which influences a cheerful attitude to life and, in addition to faith, is one of the best foundations of happiness in life. Especially liked was the "shocking state of affairs" (*Die polnische Wirtschaft*) singing and music, and Michel the Bold Airship Man, which was very well performed by Kaspar Volk. Unfortunately, death would soon take him out of our midst. On 5 May, we gave him the last honorary escort as solemnly as we could with music and singing. Meanwhile, the importance of the home was increasingly recognized. It served the community. On 23 February, the sports society (*Weidegesellschaft*) worked in the home, on 27 February it was available to the community at the drawing up ceremony (*Verfassungsfeier*). But then the sad, unproductive times came over Krasna to the detriment of the people as a whole, the authorization of the State *Chef de Post* from Cetatea Alba for us the church to work was cancelled. The complaints of the Romanian teachers had meanwhile caused the Ministry of Culture to deny the pastor a further stay in the country. That is why the priest went to Bucharest to clarify things with the highest authorities. He was initially rejected because it was found that he was engaged in anti-Romanian propaganda. There was a long back and forth. The Ministries were themselves not in agreement on this case. The Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Interior stood with the *Sikkuranza*, insisting on my

expulsion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Minorities could not prevail, the German Association asked the Romanian government to investigate the charges. In the meantime, the pastor had the opportunity to get to know large areas of the country. The inhabitants of Krasna, who all knew that the pastor could not be accused of any state-unfriendly or Hitlerist activity, had meanwhile sent a large number of signatures to the *Ministerium*, which served to show the truth over against the false accusations. On June 30, the investigation (*Enquete*) took place when Mr. Esam of the *Sikkuranza* from Chisinau met with Prefect Popp of Cetatea Alba and, on behalf of the Bishop, Monsignor Dr. Glaser. The charges piled up and were presented more and more passionately. But of the many charges, not a single one could be upheld. Of the 6 testifying witnesses, one was absent, one (Alexius Riehl) knew nothing, two (mill-grinders) did not want to come, 2 spoke in favor of the pastor! On the other hand, the Commission recognized the right to independent religious and ethnic work. On 25 July, a second investigation was made by the *Sikkuranza* and the gendarmerie [military police]. This was extremely intensive. The construction of the home was shown to be unlawful. The accusations had increased, for example, because of unlawful influence toward Romanian children to become Catholic. The father of the child himself stood as a prosecutor. And what had taken place? At the beginning of the school year, I had distributed catechisms to the newcomers for the religious instruction, and among the children, without the knowledge of the pastor, was a Romanian child who had also accepted a catechism and had not said that it was not Catholic. Despite all the intensity, the Commission was a place where I had not been granted a representative of my case and where only Romanian was spoken. However, the Prefect had seen through the whole thing and judged quite conscientiously—so the Commission had to slowly acknowledge the accusations as baseless. At the departure from Krasna, the members of the intensive investigation were not yet united. The Commission later went to the seaside resorts to hear from the German teachers who had not been present at the second investigation. In any case, the end result was that nothing could be proven against the pastor. He received a new residence permit. But the youth work lay completely fallow as a result of these struggles. Not only the meetings, but also the music lessons were forbidden, although a large drum arrived, mostly donated by Father Pieger in Bucharest, but it was not allowed to be used, (even the practice of hymns was forbidden in the home.) In this difficult situation, the work on the renovation of our church and the rectory continued. However, the purchase of the electrical system was waived because of these circumstances. A first-class generator, as they are used on the luxury steamers, was bought and was already prepared for dispatch in Hamburg. The pastor received a grant of 50,000 lei so that the machine could be set up without further delay. But since the light in the home that we were not allowed to enter had no effect, the pastor declined the electric light and also the 50,000 lei. Thus, a beautiful cultural work has been destroyed by hatred. A new garden was created in front of the rectory. 26 new pyramid acacias surround the rectory today. Roses, cotoneasters, lilacs, creeping plants, and so forth were replanted. The old fence in the driveway disappeared. In its place came a new path which was aligned with the house wall. This created a new path that leads through a new gate to the road. Early in the year, work began on the renovation of the rectory. Since it rained in many places, a new roof is to be put up. Since old money pledges (*Remontgeld*) from less willing people was still outstanding, we did not dare to make a new shed, because it was always said that the others should pay first. But since they did not pay, the work on the church and the rectory was severely inhibited. Nevertheless, in 1939, a job was done without a shed that will never ever get done! During the roof repair of the rectory, the house was built one *Arshin* [28 inches / 71.11 cm] higher. As a result, the rectory increased strongly in value. Because not only is there now a beautiful airy floor, but the summer heat was strongly absorbed by simultaneously underlaying the new roof with boards. Last summer, the temperature in the rectory was on average 2-3 degrees lower than in previous years, when the lower roof and the glass frame in front of the house generated

unbearable heat. The glass corridor disappeared and was replaced by a very stable and beautiful stone corridor, which can now be used as a waiting room (*Vorzimmer*). The absence of the pastor in the spring made the continuation of work stop. This also led to disagreements in the church council, which later led to a fierce dispute on 22 July. It was not until the end of the summer that the corridor was completed. Meanwhile, the costly work in the church continued without the help of the parish. First the work on the windows in the sanctuary. On New Year's Day 1939, the pastor surprised the church council with the plans for two beautiful stained glass windows in the sanctuary. The church council was not in the mood to purchase the windows. The pastor therefore decided to act against it. The company Schumpela and Scappanoz in Timisoara, after a long exchange of letters, finally went with the plans of the pastor and then began to work out the design of the pastor with enthusiasm. The windows were completed, despite the fact that the church council cancelled them in the absence of the pastor, and arrived on 20 July. The mason, Meier from Elft, even built two new stoves (*Öfen*) in the rectory. But he demanded so much for the insertion of the windows that we declined his work. The Russian Brosenski then inserted the windows. They generally appeal and are a magnificent embellishment to our church. The enlarged window alcoves also allow their being viewed from the nave of the church. For the two windows, about 3,000 lei have been collected by the municipality so far. In this year, the painting of the church also began. The plans for this work had already matured in 1938 and had been worked through with one of the most capable painters in the country. Unfortunately, there was initially no understanding in the community for this work. Many demanded only a simple whitewashing of the church. Despite the weak help, the work began, which lasted 10 weeks. Since the church is dedicated to St. Joseph, the pictures should refer to his life. From the Old Testament, pictures were taken from the life of the Egyptian Joseph. Joseph tells his dreams—as an image of kindness and trust. Opposite the picture from the life of St. Joseph, the scene where Mary goes across the hills to Elizabeth to help her in difficult days. A picture of the kindness and helpfulness. As a second picture on the women's side [of the church]: Joseph is sold to Egypt. The suffering in Joseph's life will build him up. Opposite him on the men's side [of the church]: The flight to Egypt. The suffering in the Holy Family. It follows at the top of the arch on the women's side: The Triumph of the Egyptian Joseph. Like the sale of the Egyptian Joseph after the painting by Fugel. On the opposite side, a picture of the Holy Family, which shows a kind of triumphal position of St. Joseph. He, in the midst of the Holy Persons, is visited by Elizabeth and John. The content of the pictures is identified by the words below them: Through kindness and suffering to happiness and bliss. But the last one, bliss, is reserved for heaven, here the most sacred space above the altar. There we look for the redemption that is shown to us in the two windows with beginning and completion, the Triumph in eternity. Following the subject of Raphael, we see the Most Holy Trinity, surrounded by our trusted saints. Although the harvest was weak, the pastor went to collect when the work was already in full swing, and most of them helped again to the best of their ability, as they were happy to have everything beautiful even as was their property. Work in the rectory also continued. The rectory was repainted. The corridor was decorated and a second corridor was built behind the church to create an enclosed and beautiful residence for the coming assistant priest. The shed, which threatened to collapse here and there, was courageously torn down and the construction of a solid shed began. It was difficult because the unfortunate times kept the farmers all in the fields so that hardly a wagon could be obtained. But here, too, the best helped again and again, who are always there and did not ask how often the other has already driven. It is especially beneficial to remember Mr. Kaneil Ternes. The payment of the material was a bit difficult, because some people had not yet paid the pledged money from the year 1938, who could have easily paid with some good will. So we were left with a debt of over 20,000 lei that we still have to pay off. On 15 August, the new assistant priest, Reverend Jakob Schmegner, arrived who soon settled into our parish life and in addition to the work of

the pastor still finds enough work for him to do. After painting the sanctuary, the churchyard was put in order. The main path was covered with cement walkway blocks in modern ornamentation. If everyone had given their 7 lei for the paths, the side paths could also have been covered with blocks. But since the main path was far from being paid for, we tried to make do with a simple stone path behind the side exit. Finally, the renewal of the Stations of the Cross began. The pictures were painted over, some partly repainted, the frames renewed, symbols are placed at the top of the picture, the station number applied, all brought to the same height, it should then also become an ornament of the church. The war that broke out between Germany, France and England has led to major international entanglements and is forcing all countries to pay heavy military expenses in order to maintain their armed neutrality. This also led to a loan by the state, to which everyone is called upon to assume bonds to the best of their ability. Citizens are divided into 5 groups. 20,000 lei are expected from the first group, 10,000 lei from the second, 5,000 lei from the third, 1,000 lei from the last groups. The businessmen pay the tax amount of a year immediately. Krasna alone is expected to raise 1,000 lei. So far, about 300,000 lei have been signed. Securities against an eventual invasion of the Russians were prepared for with a defense line, trenches, which extends over the height in front of Tarutino. Our people were also involved in the production of the works. Since we declared ourselves ready to hold a festive evening for armament purposes, we were told about 14 days before Christmas about the work. Of course, it was impossible to prepare an evening like the one before in such a short time. But we managed to hold a good New Year's Eve (*Sylvesterabend*). It was divided into 3 parts: Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year. In addition to poems and singing, the Christmas part brought *Der Christkinds Sendunf* by Hermann Matthiä. The New Year's Eve part was a modern jubilee play that sums up the mid-summer festival (*Jubel der Sonnwend*) in the closing words: You shall be children of the light! The undefeated sun, which is now beginning to rise again, is the golden ball that the earth has now found again. At the same time, Else Kringel's fairy tale play that marks the new spirit that refuses admittance to the deeper idea of deliverance of the Christmas festival. United we went into the new year in the home with speech and the choir: The hymns on the night. We expect little from the new year. The harvest was weak, the expenditures are very large. In addition, some still lack goodwill. 1940 will fall far short of 1939. May it bring inner profit and peace.

1934	Number of Births	115	Weddings	15	Deaths	68	+ 97
1935	“	115	“	20	“	60	+ 55
1936	“	105	“	40	“	46	+ 59
1937	“	108	“	28	“	40	+ 68
1938	“	115	“	28	“	46	+ 69
1939	“	106	“	13	“	59	+ 47

[Translation Ends]