Karl Stumpp and the Hoover Institution Library

As told by Arthur Flegel

Dr. Karl Stumpp

About 1960 I found a file in the Hoover Institution Library titled “Germans in Russia,” with repeated references to a Dr. Karl Stumpp and was determined to get acquainted with him.

After corresponding with Stumpp for several years I went to Tübingen, Germany, to meet him. We became very good friends. Karl Stumpp, born in 1896 to a Pietist colonist family in Alexanderhilf near Odessa, had attended Universities in Estonia and Germany. Stumpp was a mathematics teacher who had been detailed by the German Army during WW II to collect information about Black Sea Germans. Most family data was entered on hand or typewritten sheets which were archived.

When Stumpp returned to Berlin late in WW II where his family had been living, he found his home had been looted and his wife and two of his three daughters had already left. Stumpp had his personal library and copies of genealogy in a small trunk which he hid in the coal bin of his looted house. As the Russians approached he fled on bicycle to rendezvous with his wife and two of his daughters in Tübingen in the French Zone. Tübingen is 680 Km (408 miles) by road from Berlin.

From Tübingen he went to Stuttgart to see what he could do about retrieving the trunk. A third daughter was still in Berlin. The French turned him over to an American chaplain who happened to be in the French Zone who said: I’ll see what I can do.” He was apprehensive but after he returned to Tübingen he finally got a call from Stuttgart telling him that they had the trunk. He went to Stuttgart as soon as possible to get the trunk and its valuable contents which were still intact.

More about Karl Stumpp

Dr Stumpp was born in 1896 to a Pietist colonist family in Alexanderhilf near Odessa. He completed primary in his hometown, central school in Grossliebental and a gymnasium in Dorpat, today’s Tartu in geography and history at the University of Tübingen. During the Weimar Republic, unemployment, economic crises, and inflation were daily and ongoing occurrences, and the Soviet Union was for him too dangerous. Bessarabia seemed a good alternative for him. By 1922, he was able to start an Institute for Pest Control in Tarutino. In 1933 he had to decide between citizenship in Romania or Germany and chose the latter. He became the managing director of what was to become the “General German School Association for the Preservation of German Culture Abroad (later known as VDA) in Stuttgart. In 1938 Stumpp moved to Berlin and from August 1939 to June 1941 was back in Bessarabia.

Between 1950 and 1981 he was chief editor of Volk auf dem Weg (1951-1963) and also editor of the Heimatbücher between 1954 and 1966 and from 1963 to 1975 national president of and speaker of Landsmannschaft der Deutschen Russland.

Dorpat Students

Estonia. In 1918, with some of his fellow students he was able to leave Russia and make a new beginning in Germany. During his studies in