

# 1842 Description of the Mennonite Colonies in Russia

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## Origin of Mennonists and Their Settlement in Russia

Under the name of Mennonist are known the adherents of a special religious teaching, whose founder was the minister Menno Simon, not being in agreement with the doctrines regarding baptism with his famous contemporaries: Luther, Butzer [Bucer], and Bullinger. The followers from various places in Germany and Switzerland got together in 1536 with the founder in the Netherlands, forming well-established congregations and from then on have the name Mennonists.

In between the years 1540 and 1549 Polish King Sigismund I called the Mennonists from Holland to the western part of Prussia for draining (?) out the swamps, which were between

Danzig, Marienburg and the river Elbe [?], and gave them these swamps as inheritable possession. In a short time the swamps were drained (?), dikes were built, the land worked and the Mennonists due to their aggressiveness, diligence and their prudence (modest living), became known in all of Germany. Under such conditions, they remained in Prussia until [1]780, sharing with other farmers of the area rights and duties. However, since the 20<sup>th</sup> of March of that year they were ordered to pay annually 5,000 Taler for the upkeep of a cadet corps, which was then established in Kulm. Nine years after that, July 30, 1789 they were prohibited to obtain new land. This way farming was restricted particularly since the Mennonists had turned largely to stock raising. Then the idea of emigrating was conceived.

Besides Mennonists, who had settled in Prussia, many other Mennonite families had settled at various times in Switzerland, Austria, Poland, and even in the United States of North America. These settlers had organized in these various places separate congregations, of which each received a more or less individual character.

The first migration of Mennonists into Russia took place in 1772. At that time Tyrol Mennonists living since the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in the Walachia near Bucharest upon the invitation of Field-marshal Count Rumjanzow migrated to Russia into the Tschernigow Gubernia and settled on an estate Wieschenka, belonging to the count. Yet 16 families joined these first settlers in 1784, coming from Hungaria and Bohemia.

However, these migrations were unimportant in comparison to those that followed in 1786. At that time through the Authorized Collative Advisor Trappe an invitation was given to settlers to migrate to the southern area (midday) of Russia. Mennonists, due to such benevolent invitation and the promise by the Empress Catharine of her protection, delegated to St. Petersburg two deputies in order to ask for the right to practise their religion according to their own beliefs and the permission to examine the land, which was designated for their settlement. The empress, who had in mind the improvement of agriculture and livestock raising in the Nowo-Rossijsk Territory, presented to the Mennonists on the advice of Field-Marshal Count Rumjanzow, the following privileges:

1. Free practice of their religion in Russia, according to their conviction,
2. To give to every family 65 Dessjatene of suitable (good) land,
3. Freedom from any taxes for 10 years,

4. At the expiration of this time, the settlers were to pay 15 kopeks per Dessjatene. They were free from supplying teams, public labour, billeting, except at times of army movements, but they were obliged to keep roads and bridges on their land in proper order,
5. They were permitted to build factories, to trade and to join guilds and corporations according to the bylaws (rules?) of the cities,
6. To swear or affirm according to their faith and tradition,
7. Were free from military service,
8. Each family received a loan of 500 rubles and 125 logs, four Sajhen (at 7 feet) in length,
9. Promise of protection and every help by the government.

These privileges were ratified (confirmed) by the highest Ukaz (order) of Emperor Paul I on September 6, 1800, affirmed an applied to those Mennonists that in the future wish to settle in the Mowo-Rossijsk Territory. In addition, by this Ukaz the above-mentioned have the permission to brew beer and vinegar, smoke (?) bread wine for personal use and for sale on their own territory; others are forbidden to establish within Mennonist territory inns, drinking parlors and taverns.

In 1789, 228 Mennonist families arrived from Western Prussia in the Ekaterinoslaw Gubernia and took over the island of Chortitza [and established eight] villages. [This formerly belonged to Count Potpmkin in 1793. In 1796 another 118 (families) arrived of which 86 settled in the Chortitza Villages. The] remaining 32 families in the [Pavlograd] and Nowo-Moscowsk Districts.

Shortly after this by the Highest Order Court Administrator Continius (?) was sent out to inspect the colonies in Southern Russia. He reported that the Mennonists living on the Chortitza Island lived under unsatisfactory conditions due to repeated poor crops, to the high elevation of their land and to the frequent robbing of their stock.

In consequence by an Ukaz of 1800, their privileged time was extended for another five years; besides in case of resettling to other places another 10 years. On top of this, the debt of the money advanced them for sustenance on their journey to Russia was cancelled. In 1802 from the Secret (?) Advisor (?) Misklashewskij 11,755 Dessjatene land near Chortitz Island was bought for 24,000 rubles and this sum of money was not to be added to their previous debt.

Similar care was also applied to the other Mennonists, living in the Tschernigow and Kiew Gubernias. Upon the request of the first, they were allowed to resettle from the estate of Count Rumjanzew on the crown lands near the town of Radichew and they came under the same privileges of the Mennonists in the Nowa-Rossijskij Territory. Those that lived in the Kiew Gubernia on the land of Prince Pototzkij under Ukas of 1803 were freed from the head tax and had permission to move elsewhere.

Such generous attention (treatment) shown by the government had a great influence on the Mennonists living outside the Russian border. From surroundings of the Elbe [Elbing] and Marienburg whole settlements, from all villages, people came to the Nowo-Rossijskij Territory. Well-to-do owners sold their holdings, many for 30 and 40 thousand guilders, leaving one tenth of the obtained money to the Prussian government and left for Russia.

There were orders from the highest places to the governors of the Litowsky, Bolensk, and other gubernias to give every kind of assistance to the immigrants, if need be even money wise. At arrival at the predesignated places, they received a loan of about a half million rubles for building houses, buying stock and general farm and household articles.

Under these conditions, 362 families arrived from Prussia in the years 1803 and 1804. For their settlement, land was provided in the Melitopol Uezd (County) in the Gubernia of Taurida near the Molotschna River. This land consisted of a wide-open unpopulated steppe, where only nomadic Nogaitze roamed. Here the Mennonists established 19 colonies, of which 10 settled on the shores of the Molotschna River, three near the Tokmak River and six near the Kuru-Yushanlee.

From 1804-1819 migrations were of minor importance, but in 1819, 75 families arrived from abroad and in 1820, 179 more families arrived. After that until the present time, every year approximately 20 families arrived and all of them settled on the left shore of the Molotschna River.

Overall, their numbers grew fast; when the sixth census was taken, there were 2,113 persons of both sexes, the seventh census showed 2,555 persons, the eighth, 9,229 and on September 1, 1839, there were 11,381 souls. Now there are 17,439 Mennonists in Russia, i.e. 8,819 males and 8,620 females.

By the highest Ukaz of 1825, it was ordered to demand of the Mennonists only the sum advanced them at the beginning to make a start, which was to be 35 rubles per farmer. The money, however, that was supplied for the purchase of land, wages to officials, erecting of churches and other public buildings, considered to be unreturnable.

Money, given in transit, were to be repaid only in case someone of the Mennonists decided to go back to his original homeland.

At first, the Office of the Guardian over Foreign settlers supervised the colonies. This office was directly responsible to the Expedition (booking office) of the household of the Crown. In 1819 in the city of Ekaterinoslaw a “Fürsorge-komitee” German Guardian Committee for the colonies of the south territory of Russia was established, a kind of curatorship. It was directly responsible to the ministry of the Interior. This committee ruled over three offices of guardians with area sub-divisions. The “Fürsorge-komitee” had its seat first in Ekaterinoslaw, then in Kishinew and now in Odessa. The office of the guardian was closed at the beginning of 1834. Upon the establishment of a ministry of Crown Possessions, the Mennonists together with other foreign settlers came under the jurisdiction of the First Department of Crown Possessions, which has a special section governing the business of colonists, living in Russia.

Now the Mennonists live in Russia in three places: one of their settlements is in the Taurida Gubernia near the Molotschna River and goes under the name of Molotschansk. The other near the Dniepr River in the Ekaterinoslaw Gubernia is called Chortitza. The third, the least important, is in the Tshernigow Gubernia in the town Radichew. These latter, consisting of only 69 families, are far behind in their success in farming from their co-believers. Causes are – small amount of land, the large distance from the colonial governmental office and their habit and prejudice (common Holdings?) of their housekeeping. The Chortitz and Molotschna settlers, being of the same origin and having frequent intercourse with one another, are more related in their life style and regulations regarding their interior set-up of their living.

However, among the Molotschansk settlers one finds considerably more well to do and even rich, since upon their arrival they received better land and besides were settled in an area where they could obtain more land cheaply. This made it possible to buy land and begin sheep breeding – this being one of the sources of wealth in the area.

Here will be given a detailed record of the life and farming in the Molotschna colony. When we describe the other two settlements of the Mennonists, we will point out, so as not to repeat, only what differs from that of Molotschansk.

A. Molotshansk Mennonist Settlement

Position, quantity and quality of their land.

The land of the Molotschna Mennonists lies somewhat south of the 47<sup>th</sup> parallel. On the east side, it touches the land of the village Cherniegowka, in the west the German colonies and the villages of the Dukobore, from which they are separated by the Molotschna River. In the north the Ukrainian (Malorosse) settlement Bolshie Tokmaki, and in the south the holdings of the Malakane and Nogaize.

The total amount of land set aside for the Mennonists is 123,069 Dessjatene.

Of this suitable for farming	103,321 Dessjatene
Not suitable and under roads	<u>19,748 Dessjatene</u>
	123,069 Dessjatene
Of the suitable land	
a) Divided among settlers	68,537 Dessjatene
b) For common undertakings	3,000 Dessjatene
c) For future settlement	31,784 Dessjatene

The richest Mennonists possess their own land bought 44,010 Dessjatene. Of this quantity, the largest part is in the Dneprowsk and Melitopol countries (uezd?), and in the Ekaterinoslaw Gubernia 4,000 Dessjatene. A number of them are quite rich in land; for example William Martens owns 33,691 Dessjatene, for which he paid 298,970 Rub., i.e. approximately 10 Rub. for each of 3,364 Dessjatene of the best land in the country.

Besides using their own lands, the Mennonists rent yet a large quantity of it, namely 65,244 Dessjatene, for which in 1839 they paid 12,857 rubles, which comes to about 20 kopek. assignation on per Dessjation.

The land in the Molotschna Colonies is of loose sandy consistency, mixed with tschernozem (?). On the low places along the Molotschna River, alkali can be found and in one village, Muensterburg there are rolling sands. From east to west, a granite ridge, stretching from the Dniepr rocks to the Sea of Asow, cuts the lands of the Mennonists.

### Occupations

The principal occupations of the Mennonists are: 1) farming, 2) stock raising, 3) forestry and fruit raising, and 4) trades. Farming of the Mennonists is superior to the farming of all citizens of the Southern part of Russia. Out of 5,702 male members, there are 995 farmer owners. Overall there are 1,475 men that do farming only. This is twice the number of tradesmen and manufacturers. Of the 65 Dessjatene, owned by every farmer, no more than 20 Dessjatene are seeded. The remaining 45 Dessjatene are hay land and pasture. Almost in all colonies, the four-field method is introduced. The succession is the following: the first year barley is seeded, the second – wheat, the third either rye or oats, the fourth – fallow. The sections under fallow are worked during the summer with the plow to pulverize the soil without seeding anything on it.

In almost all villages, the land is enriched with horse manure. Cow dung and that of sheep might also be favorably used on the dry places, but is mostly going as fuel. One of the leaders of the Mennonists, Cornies, by experimentation proved that for best results it takes 40 two-horse wagons of 40-50 puds (1 pud = 36 lbs.) manure per Dessjatene. After such improvement of land for 3 and even 4 years he received a crop of 15 [or 20] Tschetwert and even greater (1Tschetwert 10 x 36 lbs. = 360 lbs.) (At 20 tsch. it would be 43 2/3 bu. of wheat).

The farm implements of the Mennonists distinguish themselves by their durability and their lightweight. They use a 4-horse plow. This plow pulls easier than the Malo-Rossijskij with six oxen. The front part of the beam of the plow lies on an axle; at each end of it is a wheel. The right wheel is ½ foot larger than the left. The body of the plow is attached to the axle by means of a chain, which can be used to change the depth of the furrow. Three wedges, one in front, one

on top, and one on the bottom attach the coulter, sharpened only on the right side. The plowshare is in the shape of a uniform slanting surface. The bottom of it is attached to a frame in the form of a triangle and a runner giving the plow a steady direction. There is a long handle made of strong wood. Such plow might cost 30-40 Rubel in silver and might last 20 or more years. With this implement, one can plow a whole Dessjatene in a day and this much better than with the Malo-Rossiisk Sabatz (?).

For tree planting and similar jobs, where deep furrows are required, an arshin (28 inches) or more in depth, they use a Riegalzew plow, to which they hitch 30 to 40 horses. This plow differs in construction from the regular plow and cost 50-60 Rub. in silver.

Harrows have iron teeth, which break up the soil into minute particles, and at the same time, pull out useless weeds. Such harrows cost up to 7 rubles in silver and might serve for 20 years.

To press the scattered seeds to the soil a roller is used, consisting of a wooden cylinder, one archin in diameter and three archin and three wershok in length (1 archin = 28 inches or 16 wershok). The earth does not dry out as fast if it is pressed once or twice with this implement.

The grain is usually cut (with a scythe). To thresh they use a flail or horse. In 1827 Mennonist Dueck who had just arrived from across the border invented a threshing machine, which taking one pair of horses and five to six men could thresh in a day 15 tchetwert (90 bushels). These threshing machines proved to be very practical and now the Mennonists own about 80 of them. The usefulness of these threshing machines are also acknowledged by the neighboring Russian pomeschchiki (estate holders) and many of them are ordering them from the Mennonists.

Amongst the implements used here, special mention should be made of three communally used large straw cutters, built in 1838 and proving to be very useful.

As to seeding of grain, the varieties having heads do best. There are two kinds of spring wheat: Arnautka and the so-called Gierka (Kiesielsha in the Tatar language), of which the first is preferred, because, having a harder stem, it better withstands the prevailing winds. Besides livestock prefers eating its straw. Next to wheat – rye, oats and barley are the most sought after grains.



Per Dessjatene (2 2/3 acres) they seed no more than six or only five chetwerik (1/4 Tschetwert) wheat or rye, oats one Tschetwert, and barley six or seven chetwerik (chetwerik of wheat – 90 Can. lbs., rye – 82 lbs., barley – 72 lbs., oats – 61 lbs.). The size of the crop in the Mennonist colonies can be determined accurately for the reason, that here an account is kept of how much seed is used and what the crops have been. If these results are taken for 21 years, it follows that the average crop of all grains of Mennonists is eight-fold. The neighboring German colonies and the Mennonists who have not adopted the regular four-field system get a six-fold crop, and the adjacent Malo-Rossiisk people, having the same land, the same position and the same climate, get no more than a fourfold crop. This shows how different the income from the land is that has been worked differently.

In the autumn of 1837 and spring of 1838, the Mennonists seeded 13,041 Tschetwert of all grains and cropped 107,965 Tschetwert. Of this 46,000 Tschetwert were needed for their own consumption, 14,000 for seed. In the 39 magazines (brick storage houses) were about 5,000 Tschetwert and the rest was for sale.

Besides cereal grains, the Mennonists plant large quantities of potatoes. To rid the field of wild weeds and for hilling the potatoes a little one-horse plow called Kuchewnik (Haeufler, hiller) is being used, which can do two Dessjatene in one day. The average crop of potatoes per Dessjatene is 24 Tschetwert. The average price per Tschetwert is around 44 rubles. In 1838 not less than 20,771 Tschetwert were grown, which averages nearly 21 Tschetwert per each of the 995 families.

Since 1835, the Mennonists began to seed long-fibered flax, which produces more linen, but less flax seed. In 1838, they received 1,862 pud (36 Canadian pounds). With the spinning and weaving of the fibres for their own use 2,378 persons of both sexes employed themselves through the winter. In all colonies, beans and peas are grown for their own use.

The Mennonists sell all their produce to the traveling merchants or they have the Nogaitze take it for them to the city of Berdjansk. These earn a good profit in this way.

The grain prices vary according to the size of the crop and the demand; however, on the average the following prices might be quoted: one Tschetwert of wheat 10 rubles, rye five rubles, oats and barley three rubles Assigna (?). However, the Mennonists are not frequently in dire need

and hold their grain until such time when they can sell at a more profitable price. They do not sell the straw, but use it for thatching the roofs, for feeding and as a fuel.

Many Mennonists use hired help. Wages for day-labourers is very high, the reason being the high quantity of land and the short supply of hands. To plow, to seed, and to harrow a Dessjatene of wheat cost 14 rubles and other grains eight rubles. A mower earns one and a half rubles a day, sometimes more. In threshing time, not less than one ruble a day.

In order to improve agriculture the Mennonists have established an organization under the name of "Association for the Perfection and Extension of Village Agriculture." This organization set itself the object to study deficiencies in farming and detecting ways and means to improve farming, taking in consideration local conditions, to perfect farming implements and finally to develop various feed, garden (vegetable) and manufacture plants. The members of this association are recruited from the midst of the best farmers; they are also members of a horticultural society.

Sheep raising. Livestock raising is one of the most important sources of income of the Mennonists. They raise on their steppes – horses, horned cattle and particularly sheep. The horses are of a mixed breed – Russian and German, they are middle-sized, strong and therefore are used for all farm work. In 1839 in all villages together, there were 7,778 horses, of which 216 were breeding stallions of the best breed, owned communally. The colonists not seldom sell horses for 200 or 300 rubles; often the army buys horses for its cavalry.

There were in 1838 – 10,298 cattle, of which 156 were bulls for breeding, also owned communally. The cattle are descendants of an East Friesland variety. To improve cattle, last year there were ordered from Moscow ten cows and two bulls of the Homogorski breed. Besides the earnings from sold cattle, there is a large income from the sale of butter and cheese. These are disposed in the Crimean Peninsula, in the cities of Kremenchug, Ekaterinoslaw, Mariupol, and other cities. The Annual upkeep of a good cow is about 15, and not more than 20 rubles. The income, if butter is made, is from 52-60 rubles, and if cheese is manufactured, around 90 rubles in a year. In 1839, 583 head of cattle were sold for the sum of 34,980 rubles. Above that there

were sold 5,481 pud of butter at eight rubles for 43,848 rubles and 208 pud cheese at 10 rubles for 2,080 rubles; a total of 80,808 rubles.

However, the most important branch of livestock raising and source of income of the Mennonists consists of sheep raising, especially very profitable in Southern Russia. The improvement of sheep raising in the colonies began in 1804, when the Mennonists through the intercession of the unforgettable Richelieu, received from the government a gift of 10 pair of Spanish sheep. The next year, 1805, they established at Kuru-Yushanlee a communal sheep station and added yet several hundred ordinary sheep. In 1824, they obtained from the Zarskoseljskij sheep herd (?) 35 rams and 30 ewes of actual Merinos, and in 1827, they ordered from Saxony 35 rams and 300 ewes. The number of sheep grew annually, showing success. Communally owned sheep were in:

1835 – 4,010

1836 – 4,379

1837 – 4,972

1838 – 5,735

1939 – 5,298\*

\*This last year the number declined, because so many of the sheep died.

In 1838, this sheep farm brought income:

from the sale of sheep	3,227 rubles and 51 kopek
from the sale of wool	<u>17,407 rubles and 05 kopek</u>
	20,634 rubles and 56 kopek

The proceeds, with the permission of the authorities, are applied for salaries of various persons, for the upkeep of public buildings and generally for public needs.

Besides communally owned sheep, each farmer has himself a larger or smaller number of sheep, grazing on communal pastures. In 1838, the flock of these owners consisted of 172,558 sheep and they sold wool in Romno, Ekaterinoslaw, and in other cities:

1. Washed before searing 11,915 pud for 314,802 rubles and 44 kopek

2. Unwashed 281 pud for 4,391 rubles and 75 kopek. A total of 12,196 pud of wool, sold for 319,194 rubles and 19 kopek.

On top of this sheep were sold at the following average price: breeding stock from 12-15 rubles, common at five-six rubles Assign., castrated rams from nine-12 rubles. The proceeds from the sale of sheep was near 30,921 rubles and therefore, the total income of the Mennonists from sheep rearing was close to 370,000 rubles. In the last year, 16,000 sheep dropped (died) which, however, is not so great a number compared to the loss in the flocks of the Nogaitze and several neighboring Mala-Rossijsk villages because of insufficient good feed and terrible scab.

Wishing to obtain better and more abundant feed (pasture) he Mennonists began to artificially irrigate their meadows. This is already applied on 1,400 Dessjatene, which are irrigated by means of 36 dams and the water led to them. These meadows supply twice as much hay. The pastures of the Mennonists are common property. To avoid the possibility of the rich taking advantage at the expense of the poor, a definite norm is set as to the number of head of livestock each colonist can graze on the common pasture, that is 25-30 head of cattle, as to small stock six sheep count as one large animal.

To herd the animals the Mennonists hire Malo-Russians. Now they number 350 men and 160 women. They earn about 26,000 rubles in cash and up to 1,000 Tschetwert grain. On top of this, they have for their use 159 Dessjatene land for seeding grain and 226 Dessjatene of hay land. Overall, some well-to-do Mennonists do sheep raising on a large scale and besides keeping them on the communal pastures, they keep some 80,000 sheep on their own bought or rented land. Of course, a large part of this flock belongs to the well-known Mennonists: William Martens and John Cornies. However, the latter deserves special mention concerning the raising of sheep and especially for improving the flocks of the Nogaitze.

Since 1826, Cornies began to supply the Nogaitze with sheep on the following conditions: those wishing to keep these sheep usually received 50 ewes for the period of six years, after which time the mother sheep were to be returned and the increase was shared equally. The usual procedure was such: [Nogaitze], wishing to have sheep, hands in to Cornies a petition, in which he expresses his wish to take for six years some sheep and makes the promise to keep them clean and well cared for and raise them under the most favorable conditions. Upon receipt of this petition Cornies personally or he would send his supervisor to the village of the

particular [Nogaitze], to examine his place and if found is good appearance, he would let him have of his sheep, but he would periodically investigate (examine?) in what condition the sheep were kept.

Since 1832, Cornies supplied sheep only for a period of four years. However, to encourage the Nogaitzi in sheep raising, he would divide with them not only the increase, but also the breeding stock. Now the Nogaitzi have 11,000 of the sheep belonging to Cornies.

In this way, the influence of a private person has brought about the improvement of sheep raising among the Nogaitzi. After gaining influence on them, he encouraged them to improve their farming methods, forestry and other branches of agriculture. His zeal was successful and the Nogaitzi, lately being nomads, began to appreciate the advantage of a settled life. The best example of this is the Nogaitze village of Akkerman, whose inhabitants have turned to a regular house life, living in clean houses, grow and graft orchard plants; in one word, they imitate the colonists in their ways of living. As an example of the influence of Cornies the following incident may serve, which happened in the mentioned village Akkerman: on top of the county office of this village the Russian coat of arms, a two-headed eagle with a cross on the crown was nailed. When the Nogaitze saw this, they would not enter the building, saying they were not prepared to change their faith. The local authorities in spite of all their exhortations could not persuade them otherwise. Nogaitzi approached Cornies asking him to intervene for them and to cause the cross to be removed. Cornies listened to their complaint, but did not express his opinion on the matter.

Before leaving, Cornies beckoned one of the most dissatisfied men to him and gave him a silver ruble, saying, "I thank you for bread and salt." The [Nogaitze] accepted the money and bowed to Cornies. "You would not take this money, would you?" asked Cornies.

"Of course," answer the [Nogaitze].

"How do you dare to take this money? Does your belief (faith) allow this? Look better, on the coin is the cross and the eagle imprinted!" These words completely convinced the Nogaitzi; they discontinued their complaints and again frequented the county office.

To improve sheep raising, January 11, 1824 by an order of the former Ekaterinoslaw Office for Alien Settlers an Association for the Improvement of Sheep Raising was organized. It

consisted of six Mennonist members, chosen from amongst the best sheep raisers, under the chairmanship of the Oberschulze. This society acts under the instructions of the Active (?) (Wirklichen) Privy Councillor Continuous.\*

\*The late Wirklicher (Real, Active or Actual) Privy Councillor can be counted as one who can be credited with the successes of Mennonists settling in Russia. Constantly advising them, pointing out, what might be advantageous to them and generally looking after the wellbeing of the farm, he has been of great help to them.

(Afforestation?) Forestry. The Mennonists are quite concerned about the establishing of forests, which in the future might have an advantageous effect on the climate and soil of the area. Their forest plantations are mostly quite successful. They do not plant the trees directly into the hole, but break up the soil beforehand to a depth of at least 12 Wershok (19 inches; one arshin = 1.6 Wershok = 28 inches). This is performed with a special plow, which was mentioned above. To insure success in the development of forests there are plantations near every village, where each farmer must plant a half Dessjatene of forest trees. All these plantations of the Mennonists are divided up into five sections. The first one of these, consisting of 18 plantations, was planted in 1832; the second belonging to three colonies, in 1833; the third, belonging to seven colonies, in 1834, the fourth of six colonies, in 1836, and the fifth, consisting of five plantations, which cover 328 Dessjatene 731 fathoms (1 fathom = 7 feet). (Note: 731 square fathoms likely, which would be roughly one-third Dessjatene, one Dessjatene = 2,400 square Sapen or fathom = 117,600 square feet). However, counting the number of farmers, there must be another 100 Dessjatene or more planted.

Successfully here grow the following: oak, birch, beech, alder, box elder, maple, elm, lindentree (basswood), willow, birch (?), American acacia, poplar, wild oilnut (?), [grabena ?], fir, American maple, chestnut, mountain ash, aspen, [hawthorn], and hazelnut.

There was a total of 148,460 trees planted by December 1, 1838, mostly willows (which is not planted in the forest plantations, but only in separate suitable soils), birch (?), box elder and maple, and least of all aspen. Since poplars and aspen spread their root so lavishly they are not planted anymore since 1835 in the forest plantations. Many young saplings perish by frost

and windstorms in the steppes, so in 1838 more than 40,000 of them were lost. To prevent these losses now they plant shelterbelts of hawthorn and white mulberry. Doubtless, after these shelters develop, then under their protection the young plants will not dry up from the summer heat and freeze out in winter.

Horticulture. Every one of the 1,477 farmers has on his homestead (?) an orchard almost a Dessjatene in size. Here they grow apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches, and apricots. These trees are planted two and a half fathoms (18 feet) apart, are annually cultivated, and the young saplings are inoculated (grafted). In 1838, there were 39,664 fruit bearing trees and 144,681 young trees not bearing fruit yet. Totalling 184,345 fruit trees, of which more than 120,000 were apple and cherry trees. The colonists sell young forest trees as well as fruit trees. Until now, forest saplings were sold for close to 10,000 rubles and fruit trees for 2,000 rubles.

In the orchards are grown many mulberry trees, namely 103,550 in 1838. In the forest plantations, in which one third is designated to the planting of mulberry, January 1, 1940 there were 66,320 trees. There were 20 lbs. of silk produced and sold at 12 rubles and 39 kopek per pound for the sum of 250 rubles and 91 kopek. In some orchards, grapes are grown, but they seldom ripen and the plants often are killed by winter frost. In all, there are no more than 200 grape bushes.

For a better success in forestry and horticulture, the Mennonists have established a "Society for the Propagation of Forestry, Horticulture and Vineyards (wine culture?)." It consists of three members and one chairperson.

Of the private plantations of the Mennonists, special attention deserve the forest and fruit tree nurseries there are up to 150,000 saplings. Annually he sells about 6,000 three-year-old grafted young trees of the best varieties at 50 kopek each which is about 3,000 rubles. In his forestry plantation, consisting mainly of maples, oaks, box elders, poplars, basswoods, and birches the number of saplings is considerably larger. The fir, spruce, birches, and basswoods he sells at 10 kopek each, the others at five kopek per sapling.

## BEEKEEPING, FISHING AND VARIOUS OTHER INDUSTRIES

Beekeeping and fishing in these colonies are quite unimportant. In 1838 there were 266 hives, which produced 30 pud of honey and about seven pud wax. Fishing is done in the Molotschna River for their own use only.

In the colonies are four brickyards on which up to 500,000 bricks are produced. The Mennonists begin building brick houses. Such a house costs them 4,000 rubles. In 1838, there were 29 stone houses. Lime formerly was obtained from the Kursk Gubernia; however, in 1838 a good live stone was discovered near the Molotschna River, which turned out to be better than the Belgorod one.

In the village of Halbstadt there was a cloth-factory, belonging to Klassen. In it were 14 looms and 89 people were employed. In 1828, up to 12,000 Arshene (at 28 inches each), of frieze 1,500 cloth of medium quality was produced. This factory on August 1, 1839 became the victim of fire. Also in this village is a co-operatively run beer brewery, which cost 4,700 rubles. In this plant annually are brewed 5,000 pails beer, which sells at one ruble per pail. The expenses run up to 3,500 rubles and therefore there is a net profit of 1,500 rubles. Besides these industries there are in these colonies four cloth fulling mills, 10 painting shops (likely cloth painting), one winery, four vinegar breweries, 19 creameries, 38 wind mills, five watermills, 19 grvats (grits) mills, and 61 blacksmiths.

The colonists that do not possess land carry on various trades and amongst them are excellent artisans. Their number is quite large, namely November 1, 1839 there were 70 carpenters, 50 cabinet makers, 19 turning lathe operations, 43 wagon manufacturers, four coopers, 47 millers, three watchmakers, 16 bricklayers, 60 shoemakers, 47 tailors, 152 weavers, four rope makers, 15 painters, 68 blacksmiths, three locksmiths, two tinsmiths, one baker, one bookbinder, 19 butter makers, one beer brewer, and four vinegar brewers; a total of 629 craftsmen. In this number are also included the 294 possessing a farm. According to statements made by the Mennonists tradesmen they earn nearly 400,000 rubles and after deducting all expenses their total profit is about 150,000 rubles.

In the colonies there are 15 stores selling various goods. A new Mennonists deal in lumber and grain. Many of them travel to Charkow, Romne (250 kilometers northwest of Charkow) and other cities to perform various business deals. There are in the colonies up to 800 hired men, which earn above 70,000 rubles.



## Total of all Income

And so the annual income of the Mennonists comes from the following sources:

1. From grain farming on the average, they receive 45,000 Tschetwert grain for	600,000 rubles.
2. Stock, i.e. from the sale of horses, livestock, butter, and cheese	110,000 rubles.
3. Sheep raising, i.e. from the sale of wool, rams, and calling of sheep	525,000 rubles.
4. Horticulture	10,000 rubles.
5. Trades	150,000 rubles.
6. Industry and merchant trade	30,000 rubles.
7. Custom work	<u>75,000 rubles.</u>
Total	1,500,000 rubles.

Besides this, some Mennonists that own their own purchased lands or rented receive yet a special, quite significant income. The most prominent in regard to size of income are the following colonists:

1. William Martens, receiving up to 100,000 rubles.
2. Johann Cornies, receiving up to 60,000 rubles.

Some from 10,000 to 20,000 rubles.

The inner organization as well as some policing regulations deserve the same attention as their business affairs.

## Fire Insurance

This association is built up according to the laws of mutual insurance. It is directed by four trustees, or elders, whose entire responsibility is to answer for the money and to pay out to the people who have sustained fire losses. Under their supervision, there is a fire warden (Brandschulze), who collects premiums, deposits the money in the fire account, does periodically examine the buildings, and satisfies himself that the fire instruments are in proper order, such as hooks, pails, lanterns and whether the chimneys are cleaned satisfactorily. Fire losses are paid according to the usual regulations, which are applied in mutual insurances. Assessed is not only

immovable property, but also equally clothing and all household articles. Farm implements and livestock are insured according to special rules:

Wagon	60 rubles
Plow	35 rubles
Sleigh	16 rubles
Harrow	6 rubles
A Grown Horse	32 rubles
Cow	24 rubles
Sheep	6 rubles
Hog	6 rubles

Young cattle according to size is counted as one-half or one fourth of a fully-grown; stored grain and hay is also being insured.

### Public Moneys

Various public expenses, such as the building, repairing, up-keep, and lighting of public buildings, office expenses, subscription of various magazines, salary of teachers and office clerks, support of students receiving bursaries, expenses at the communal sheep station and various other disbursements annually amounted to 30 to 40,000 rubles. These expenses are covered by the general coffer, which is made up from the communal sheep station and the rent (?) royalties (?) from drinking establishments. Here are the detailed sources of the public sums:

1. Proceeds from the Communal Sheep – Breeding Station. From the sale of wool, that was washed on the sheep and delivered to Moscow. After deducting all expenses 22,000 rubles, on top of that from the sale of scrapped sheep, ewes and castrated rams and fleeces of small sheep and lambs received up to 4,000 rubles.
2. Income from liquor licenses. William Martens and Johann Cornies paid annually 8,660 rubles for the right to sell wine. On January 1, 1839, there was a balance of 260 rubles and 14 kopek.

Besides the money in the general account, the Mennonist administration is also responsible for the moneys of orphans. On January 1, 1839, there were outstanding loans plus interest in the amount of 300,862 rubles and 29 kopek. Out of this sum during the year about 30,000 rubles was paid out to orphans that had come of age.

### Educational Institutions

In each of the 45 villages, there exists one parish school, in which the children are taught to read, write, catechism, arithmetic, and drawing. Pupils of both sexes are accepted from ages eight to 15 and usually attend school only from October to April. In summer, however, the older children stay with their parents to do work on the farm and in the household. In all, there were 1,992 pupils in 1838; consequently, the number attending school to the total number of settlers is in the ratio of one to six. Every school institution is placed in a special for the purpose erected house. Besides these parochial schools in 1821, there was established a higher school in the Village Orloff, in which they teach geometry, geography, drawing, and the Russian language. A similar school has been lately established in the Village Halbstadt, and another privately supported in Steinbach. The aim of these schools is to train good teachers for the other schools and to train secretaries, bookkeepers, and other appointees for their administration. In all, there were 85 students in these three schools in 1838. The general community supports 15 young men, of which 10 attend for the specific purpose of learning the Russian language. In each of these schools, there is a small library, consisting of German books. Teachers' salaries are paid out of general coffers. Through their own effort, some of them have obtained a worthwhile education. The principal supervision of the educational institutions is entrusted to a specially established society for this purpose, which goes under the name of "Society for the Establishment of Maintenance of Schools and Learning Institutions."

### Taxes and Services (in kind)

Farmers, who own land, pay 15 kopek per Dessjatene, about that at present every person on the revision list (might be men ages 21-45) must pay two rubles and ten kopek to the regional national office. The total sum of taxes is 22,529 rubles, one and a quarter kopek in paper money.

The Mennonists have never any arrears. Above that in payment of the debt to the government annually a certain sum must be given, namely 20,240 rubles in 1839, so there is a debt left on January 1, 1840 or 182,871 rubles and 37 kopek.

The Mennonists are free from military service and billeting of soldiers. Other non-monetary services are divided quite equally. They have a special way of calculating these called [Zeichen], which is nothing else but an agreed manner of appraising services and applying units to each for fair distribution. Each service gets a certain number of units. The following rules are observed:

1. If someone is sent to a place more than 24 Werst (1 Werst = 3,500 feet) he is credited:
  - a. From May 1 to the harvest time four [Zeichen]
  - b. During harvest time six [Zeichen]
  - c. After harvest to November 11 four [Zeichen]
  - d. From November 11 to March 15 five [Zeichen]
  - e. From March 15 to May 1 six [Zeichen]

Such number of [Zeichen] is also applied to each horse and the vehicle; if he has to go at night, then the same number is given as in daytime, but if he has to stay away a full day and night, then three times as many [Zeichen] are credited as for one day.

2. If someone is sent with a load on the wagon or horseback to a distance of less than 24 Werst, he is allotted one [Zeichen] for every five Werst. If the wagon is loaded again on the return trip it is counted as one and a half [Zeichen].
3. If someone is sent on foot, then for the first five Werst only one [Zeichen] is credited, but if he has to walk further consideration is given to the fact that a longer walk gets progressively harder, so for the second five Werst, two [Zeichen] given; for the third, three and so on. In the village office is a sheet, indication how many [Zeichen] must be counted from the home village to any other nearby village.
4. For work done in the own village nine [Zeichen] per man is counted daily in the time of harvest, and six at any other time. Above that for (each) horse and (each) wagon four and a half in harvest and three at other times. A day is 12 hours, a night from nine to five o'clock am.

5. If the army passes, so for every soldier staying overnight in a house, three [Zeichen] are allotted to the household; for breakfast, dinner, and supper supplied ten kopek is paid for each, for one pud hay, 25 kopek. This is later calculated into [Zeichen] at eight kopek per [Zeichen].
6. Services rendered by the Schulze is considered 50% higher than other Mennonists, so instead of six [Zeichen] he is credited with nine.
7. The Schulze are free from all services at home.
8. For killing a male wolf, 40 [Zeichen] are counted; for a female, 50. For a rabid dog, 10 [Zeichen].
9. For finding (locating?) of a lost farm animal there are also allotted a certain number of [Zeichen].
10. If a Mennonist has to spend the day with someone in authority in his own village, it counts two [Zeichen] per day, outside his village, three [Zeichen].

At the end of the year all [Zeichen] are calculated, the average is figured out and [Zeichen] are credited for the following year or billed against one. More often the persons with excess [Zeichen] give them to the ones that are short of them. In Halbstadt [Zeichen] are sold for ten kopek each, elsewhere cheaper. By the Wolost (municipality) order each year the [Zeichen] of each village are calculated, to equalize the burdens of the individual village as far as possible.

### Mennonist Administration

The government of each village consists of the Schulze (mayor) and two Beisitzer (assistants) elected for the term of two years. The first draws a small salary paid by the village community; the others serve gratis, being relieved from the regular non-monetary services. Besides these persons, there is a desiatski (chief of ten) who is responsible for ten households and who is replaced every month. All village administrations are subservient to the wolost (municipal) office in Halbstadt. The wolost administration consists of three members: the ruling Oberschulze (reeve) and two members (municipal assistants). The first is elected by the general community for a period of three years and receives 500 rubles a year; the others are two years and receive 200 rubles each.

The business of the wolost and village administration is in substance the same as that of the regional and village governments. The Wolost administration is responsible to the colonial

trustee (?) of the second District, which resides in Prishib, and the trustee is responsible to the Guardian Committee over the colonies in Southern Russia. As to the interior condition of the administrative office, everything is kept in proper order and everything has the appearance as is to be expected in an accountable place. In the regional office a portrait of His Majesty the Emperor is displayed and the code of laws also.

### Civic and Criminal Regulations: Inheritance Rules

Land parcels, originally supplied by the crown, must be inherited by one of the deceased sons or upon the instruction of the local administration by the nearest relative that does not own any land. If after the death of a farmer a widow with daughters remains, then they own the land till such time that the widow remarries or one of the daughters' marriage. The first man, entering such house by marriage, receives the inherited land as a permanent possession. At the same time, it becomes his duty to keep in his house and to sustain the stepdaughters or sisters-in-law till their marriage and the mother-in-law until her death. If a person dies without leaving a will, then his moveable possessions are disposed of in the following manner: the widow receives one-half of the property and the other half is divided among the children evenly.

All civil affairs regarding the Mennonists are dealt with according to volume 12 of the Code of Law set for foreign colonies. Minor offences like obstinacy, quarrels, carelessness in paying taxes and performing duties and generally failing to heed rules of general welfare are punishable by the verdict of the village or wolost administration in the form of fines or work done for general benefit, and sometimes depending on the person and the misdeed by corporal punishment. In each village office is a record book, in which are entered the offences and punishments allotted to the offender. For example, if someone is late for a public meeting, he must pay ten kopek, if, however, he is late because of laziness or obstinacy, he is charged 30 kopek. The Schulze and his assistants pay double, a higher authority fourfold (?). Criminal cases are taken to the regular courts.

### Morals

The moral life of the Mennonists is worth of great praise. During the five years from 1834-1839 one person has been convicted by the courts for illegal trafficking in spirits. In 1838, there were two illegitimate children born, i.e. one for 285 births.

### Creed

The principal doctrine of their faith consists in that they do not baptize children, but adults when they are able to comprehend their sins and understand the importance of this mystery (?). The doctrines of the faith of the Mennonists are discussed in detail in the essay: “Das Religion-Kirchen und Schulwesen der Mennonisten oder Taufgesinnten, wahr und unpartheilisch dargestellt und mit besondern Betrachtungen über einige Dogmen und mit Verbesserungsvorschläge versehen,” von Abraham Heinriger. Riga, 1850. All deviations from the accepted traditional faith are considered to be the main offence and when admonitions given do not lead the erring on the path of truth, then he is excommunicated from his church.

The Mennonists have three levels of church officials. 1) The Elder who has the right to perform sacraments (?), baptisms and Holy Communion, who interprets the doctrines of the faith and the ordination of the other ministers. 2) Besides the elders they have two more church teachers, who are picked from the number of the most educated members; they are responsible to preach and to watch over a righteous way of living of the brethren and finally, 3) deacons, i.e. church warden. Now there are in the Molotschna colony, five dioceses, five elders, 38 ministers (church teachers) and 17 deacons.

### Life Style

The Mennonists live in clean wooden small houses. There are still not many stone buildings. On the outside, all houses are well painted; they have steep roofs. The houses are surrounded by orchards, barns, and other farm buildings. Indoor cleanliness and orderliness is noticeable. There are usually two or three rooms, seldom only one. Furniture consists of several chairs, large closet with dishes, well made bed, large trunks and a wall clock.

The men wear worsted coats and jackets, just about always of blue colour, a silk or woollen vest, a hat or a round cap; the women are dressed very cleanly, they wear a German dress and a little cap on the head.

Mennonists have good food. The main food consists of various soups. The well-to-do dress better and live somewhat better and cleaner, but no luxury is evident.

Cleanliness in dress orderliness in living (life style?) is the main reason that there is little sickness among the Mennonists and the death rate is low. In 1838, out of a population of 11,262 both sexes there were only 204 deaths, i.e. the dying make up one fifth of the population. Entertainments of the Mennonists consist generally in that, being [closely related], they visit each other in their houses on festive days, and they drink coffee, smoke tobacco, and converse (chat). The young men and women visit and spend their leisure (vacant?) holiday time in similar pastime; dancing and music is strongly forbidden by Mennonists, although they happen sometimes, without the knowledge of their elders.

#### B. The Chortitz Mennonist Settlement

In the Mennonist settlement, called the Chortitz District, there are 17 colonies (villages). There are 2,839 males, 2,859 females, totalling 5,898 and constituting 774 family households; having land are 445 persons. The total of land obtained from the crown to these Mennonists is 32,265 Dessjatene suitable for farming, and 5,657 unsuitable; of this quantity are 2,958 Dessjatene under communal orchards and forest plantations. To make up for the shortage of land to the Mennonists the right is extended to move to a vacant section in the Alexandrosk Uesd (district), which was originally allocated for the settlement of Jewish Christians, and later placed under the authority of the colonial administration. On this land already, three colonies are established: Bergthal, Schoenfeld, and Schoenthal, in which in 1839 were 77 families. The main source of income are here, like in the Molotschna Colonies, grain farming and livestock raising.

#### Grain Farming



The land is divided into three parts: grain fields, hay meadows, and pasture. On the same field they seed three or four years in a row, the first year always wheat, the last rye. After this they let the land rest for two or three years at the expiration of which time the same order is observed. Each farmer has his own field and hay meadow, but the pasture is communal. On it, every landowner may keep 27 head of large animals, where five sheep are counted as one horse or one head of cattle. Some Mennonists improve their land every two or three years by spreading 50-60 wagon loads of manure per Dessjatene. They work the land with a plow, hitching four horses or a pair of horses and a pair of oxen to the plow. They seed mostly spring wheat, after that rye, barley, and oats, the latter mostly for their own use. The average crops are six and seven fold. The wheat is usually sold for nine rubles per Tschetwert, rye for four and a half rubles, and oats and barley at three rubles in bills (assignatzi).

Wages of farm help is high here also: the mover is paid one ruble and 50 kopek. Per day besides his board, in threshing time half that. Men hired for a year receive 120-150 rubles a year plus board and room. Besides seeding grains, they plant potatoes, of which they receive up to 4,000 Tschetwert a year; above this for home use peas, beans, etc.

### Livestock Raising

Cattle breeding is here also a prominent source of income. They have a good breed of horses, many colonists keep their horses in stalls and then sell them at a good price; horses all told are 3,671. Horned cattle are also of an improved variety. In 1839, they had 6,693 head of cattle, 78,877 fine fleeced sheep. Their wool sells for 30 rubles per pud on the average. A total of 250,000 rubles a year is obtained from the sale of wool, butter, cheese etc. To cover general expenses of the colony a communal sheep station is established. In every village are kept communally rams, stallions of the best breed, which in most cases are bought from the neighboring "Pomeschiki" (Russian estate owners).

Forestation (Forestry?) Here there are also concerned with the growing of forests, under which there are now 832 Dessjatene. Mostly acacia, willows, and poplars. Lately they began growing pines, which by a diligent cultivation of the soil grows here as well as in the north. To make afforestation more successful an association for the perfection of forestry is established. It consists of the best informed in this regard Mennonists. They have the responsibility annually to reserve a plot of land for seeding or planting forests.

### Horticulture

Each of the 445 landowners has a fruit orchards; a total of 50,000 trees is estimated. Mostly apples and plums, besides these cherries and apricots are kept. In the colonies there is a communal plantation, in which in 1837 there were 2,219 trees, bearing fruit, and not bearing yet 42,616; of these 6,000 seedlings were distributed to the settlers free of charge. They also grow grapes, but they freeze often. Mulberry trees grow successfully and up to 26 pounds of silk is produced in the colonies.

### Industry

Besides the farming occupation, the colonists busy themselves with trades. There are estimated to be up to 200 tradesmen; there are mostly millers, joiners (cabinetmakers), carpenters, and weavers. Their work finds a market in Ekaterinoslaw, Alexandrowsky, Mariupol, and at home from the merchants coming from Charkow.

### Taxes

Here they also pay a land tax of 15 kopek per Dessjatene, on top of that two rubles and ten one fifty second kopek per person on the revision list to the sum of 10,182 rubles and 61 kopek in total taxes.

### Buildings

The houses are almost all of lumber, high, painted, surrounded by orchards, and well kept. There are 271 wooden houses, 163 adole brick (not fired brick), and 334 clay-walled.

#### Educational Institutions

In every village, there is a school, in which are taught reading, writing and the first four rules of arithmetic. Male pupils are 387, female 576 for a total of 963, i.e. one sixth of the whole population. In Chortitz in the regional office is a small library, consisting of the best writings on village husbandry. Everything concerning assessment of taxes, methods used to protect property, morals and religion of the Chortitz Mennonists, completely coincide with those of the Molotschna Colonists.

Beside the Chortitza District, in the Nowo-Moscow Uesd in 1796 some Mennonist families settled in the villages Krongarten, belonging to the Josephtal District. At present there live 30 families, occupied mainly with stock raising; alone sheep in their possession are 2,054 and 207 horses.

#### C. Mennonist Settlement at Raditchewo [Meaning Hutterites]

The Mennonists living on the lands of Count (Earl) Rumiantzow delegated their elder in 1799 to St. Petersburg with the petition to re-settle. May 22, 1901 they received permission to settle on crown lands in the town Raditchew, near the Desna River, in the Krolewetz Uesd and they received all rights and advantages of other Mennonists living in the Nowo-Russijski Territory.

The Raditchewo colony distinguishes itself in that until 1820 the Mennonists lived as one family, renouncing by vowed promise all personal possessions and turning over all fruits (?) of their labour to the general possessions of the brethren. They all lived in apartments in one house, had dinner together always at 12 o'clock and supper at eight. The men ate on one side of the dining room, the women on the other. Everybody received the same number of underwear, boots, and clothes. Women, just given birth, lived together in one room. The breast-fed children were taken away at the age of one and a half years and placed in the so-called little school, and after

that in the big, where both sexes were kept together until six. After which, according to their capabilities, they were placed under the tutorship of various artisans, where they were occupied until adulthood. They did not know any punishments except admonishments. In this way these Mennonists lived from the very beginning, when they colony consisted of a few families only; yet later, when their population grew, this order could not be sustained, some families, especially skilled craftsmen, refused to comply by the laws of their fathers and concerned themselves with own separate property.

In 1818, 28 families, separated from their brethren and moved to the Nowo-Russijski Territory. However, later to end the disagreement with the Mennonists, remaining in Malo-Russia, which was caused on dividing their communally held property, they returned to Radichew and established a new colony Neudorf. The remaining families changed their communal way of living, and decided to establish a new village with individual holdings. Now in these two colonies are 69 families, consisting of 170 males and 190 female members. They own 775 Dessjatene land on the two sides of the Desna River. They seed principally rye, buckwheat and in less quantity millet. Generally it must be stated, that economically they lag behind the Mennonists living in other parts of Russia.

## SUGGESTED SPELLING OF RUSSIAN MEASUREMENTS

[by John P. Dyck]

Dessjatene = two and two thirds = 2,400 square fathoms = 117,600 square feet

Chetvert = 336 pounds

Ruble = 100 kopek

Pud = 36 pounds (40 Russian pounds)

Assignatzi = paper bills (?), price apparently varied, sometimes higher or lower than silver

Nogaitzi [Nogai - nomadic people in Southern Russia]

Arshene = 16 werschock = 28 inches

Fathom = seven feet

Verst = 500 fathoms or sashen = 3,500 feet

Volost = Gebietsamt = Municipal office