

S. D. Bondar

MENNONITE SECT

IN RUSSIA

Translated from Russian by Jacob Rempel, 1982

English Translation edited by Peter Rempel and Glenn Penner, 2021

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To the Reader of this Translation

This book by S. D. Bondar, written in the Russian language, has been translated by the undersigned, who, at this time, has forgotten much of his former knowledge of that language, and does not know the English language well enough to write it properly. Please keep this in mind when you find that the sentence structure and grammar is not in line with modern English.

Besides translation is always hard and the contents loses some of its true meaning in the process anyway.

To make this translation worthwhile it would have to be corrected and rewritten.

For me it was an experience, and insight gained well worth the time spent on it.

*Jacob Rempel
76 Mattinee Bay
Winnipeg
July 1983*

Several times since my father's passing in 1988, I have been asked whether I would type and edit his handwritten translation but I was distracted by employment and other interests and restrained by my poor and slow typing abilities. So I was delighted when Conrad Stoesz, director of the Mennonite Heritage Archives, informed me that he had requested Sally Nickel to type the manuscript and invited me to edit it. I am deeply grateful to Conrad for his initiative on a long-neglected manuscript and to Sally for her accurate typing of my father's unique handwriting and to both for giving me the task of editing the translation.

My father's English – which he began learning by himself while a prisoner of war in France and then began speaking after coming to Canada in 1949 as a refugee - was indeed lacking in some respects and needed corrections and improvements in grammar, syntax and vocabulary. For the editing I was handicapped by my lack of knowledge of Russian though that lack was compensated somewhat by my familiarity with the history of the Mennonites in Russia. But it has been a joy-filled challenge to read my father's handwriting and terminology, to correct and improve his translation, and to learn more about the history of my people from the perspective of a Russian scholar.

Certainly some mistranslations and awkward renditions remain after my editing but I trust that our cumulative efforts at making this unique scholarly account accessible in English will benefit all who are interested in the history of Mennonites in Russia, especially the lay historians.

*Peter Rempel
531 Dominion Street
Winnipeg
February 2021*

Note that all comments in [square bracket] are those of Jacob or Peter Rempel.

S. D. Bondar

MENNONITE SECT

IN RUSSIA

(in connection with the History of the German colonization in Southern Russia)

MONOGRAPH

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Preface

The book before us is one of the monographs which the author has written to depict the history of foreign sects in Russia. In the Russian literature there is no separate history of the Mennonite sect in Russia. To fill this gap is the task of the present monograph. In the opinion of the author, the history of the Mennonite sect should consist of three components:

1. Monograph on Mennonite History in Western Europe and America
2. Mennonite History in Russia
3. The "Friends of Jerusalem" and *Stundist* sects related to Mennonites and Protestants in Russia

The first of these topics is already being prepared for printing but has been postponed for unknown reasons. A short extract from the author's survey is presented in the work before us. The third topic is being completed by the author.

Making mistakes during the writing of this monograph was unavoidable. The author humbly asks the reader to correct all these mistakes and inaccuracies according to the appended corrections before reading the book.

Author

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Mennonite Sect in Western Europe and America

Anabaptism and Mennonitism. Anabaptism in Germany ¹⁾

The Mennonite sect arose from the Anabaptism of the Middle Age. Even today the Mennonites still remaining in France and Switzerland are called Anabaptists (*“les Anabaptistes”*).

Anabaptism, in itself, is not a single sect, but a whole religious movement that spread over Western Europe in the years 1520 – 1550. It developed in connection with the German Reformation movement and consisted of elements of this movement.

Luther, Zwingli, and other Reformers rejected the Roman church with its tradition, sacraments, and ceremonies. Before the Reformation, the Roman church was the only state church in the West. The Reformers wanted to replace it with another state church, the Protestant one.

Beside this reformation movement, another one, a more radical one, took place. Their leaders not only demanded a separation from the Roman church, but also from the surrounding world and even from the state and general society. The True Church must be a community of saints, newborn ones - it must not be a state church. This movement was called *Anabaptism*.

The Anabaptist movement was born at two places simultaneously: in Germany (Saxony and Thuringia) and in Switzerland.

¹⁾ Gl. 406, Cr. 595-596, Ul. 481-485.

Right from the beginning the Anabaptist movement in Saxony and Thuringia under the influence of the Hussite movement became quite mystic and enthusiastic in character. This movement grew in Zwickau, a small Saxon town in the Harz Mountains. Thomas Müntzer and Nikolas Storch are considered the fathers of this movement. Müntzer was an educated man but mystically oriented; he was a friend and follower of Luther since 1520 and became a minister in Zwickau. Here he came under the influence of Storch, a local tailor, a man who was thoroughly infused by the mystical-enthusiastic ideas of the Hussites (Chiliasm) ²⁾: the denial of government, military service and oath-swearing, and the sharing of wealth, etc. Müntzer and Storch gathered followers in Zwickau and introduced extreme reforms. Storch surrounded himself with “Apostles” and “Prophets” and established a church in the image of God in Zwickau. Members of this church claimed to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit and a vision from heaven. Storch preached the imminent end of the world, the punishment of the godless and the coming of the Lord’s Kingdom on earth.

This revolutionary preaching led to the prosecution of Storch and his prophets. By the end of 1521 all of them were driven out of Zwickau. Storch went to Wittenberg. The movement he initiated here became one of an extremely fanatical and revolutionary character. The Zwickau prophets rejected not only the Roman church, but the Protestant one also, and demanded the distribution of all wealth among the poor. The movement threatened the whole Reformation in Wittenberg. Luther himself, after hearing about it, went to Wittenberg and stopped the movement with his speeches. Storch and his prophets were driven out from the town and moved from place to place and by 1525 vanished without a trace.

Müntzer visited Prague in 1521-1522. In 1522 he was active in Thuringia; in 1524 he visited

²⁾ Chiliasm – a particular religious trend; its traits include the awaiting of the start of the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

southern Germany and the bordering parts of Switzerland. He spread his teachings in these places. Müntzer envisioned radical revolutionary churches. He wanted to organize a community of saints on earth, a new kingdom, a kingdom of equality, justice, and brotherhood. This kingdom, in Müntzer's opinion, would arise out of the ruins of the existing governments and established churches after the destruction of all hypocrites and godless persons, especially the godless rulers and lords.

The teachings of Müntzer were widely accepted in Germany. As a result, the horrible Peasants' War of 1525 broke out, as well as the persecution and execution of Anabaptists. The civil uprising was suppressed and Müntzer himself was taken prisoner and executed after the defeat at Frankenhausen. German Anabaptism subsided, but the name itself became synonymous with rebel bandits, etc. This explains the subsequent persecution of Anabaptists in Switzerland, Germany and other countries.

Anabaptism (Baptizer Movement) in Switzerland, South Germany and parts of Austria ³⁾

The Anabaptist movement in Switzerland emerged as a completely independent phenomenon. The Swiss Anabaptists had no connection with Müntzer and were strictly against his revolutionary views. The Swiss Anabaptists shared a more peaceful, pious character. Their main characteristic was the rejection of taking up arms.

The Swiss Anabaptists dreamed of the establishment of God's kingdom, a kingdom of saints on earth, the separation from anything earthly, including the state. Contrary to Müntzer, the Swiss Anabaptists tried to establish such a kingdom without force but by personal "evangelical"

³⁾ Gl. 407-409; Cr. 596-605; Ul. 481-485; H. 6-40; VS. 9-35, 87-89; W. II, 12-98; IV, 51-57; Br. 13-55.

renewal of the human heart. True Christianity is attained by personal commitment in faith, and not by being baptized as a child. Baptism without a conscious faith is simply a ceremony and does not give salvation. On these grounds the Swiss Anabaptists rejected the baptism of infants and rebaptized every newcomer to their church. This fact led to naming the movement *Anabaptists*, from a Greek word ἀναβπτίζω – “re-baptizers.” The insistence on baptism as adults was the characteristic sign of the Swiss Anabaptists, and, as a consequence they were called “Baptizers” (*Täufer*) or “Re-baptizers” (*Wiedertäufer*). #

It should be stated that Müntzer and Storch, despite the fact that they were against infant baptism and did not doubt the rightfulness of adult baptism, neither practiced it nor demanded the obligatory baptism of adults. It is not even known if Müntzer and Storch themselves had been rebaptized nor if they baptized other adults. Müntzer even joked about being *baptized as infant* at the time of his installation as a church worker in 1523 in Altstedt, Germany. It is known that the questioning of infant baptism was not a characteristic opinion of Anabaptists alone. During the time of the Reformation, it was widely spread in South Germany and Switzerland. It was shared by several reformers: Bucer, Oecolampadius, and even Zwingli. 4)

The first community of Swiss Anabaptists, or *Baptizers* as they were called in Switzerland (and in south Germany) came into existence in 1523 in Zürich. Zwingli was active here since 1519. His cautious and slow work in matters related to the reformation of the local cantons led to dissatisfaction among the radical circles in Zürich. They demanded the immediate separation from the Roman church and the formation of a “community of saints,” separation from the world and independence from worldly governments. The refusal to accept these demands led to a separation between Zwingli and the supporters of a radical reformation.

4) Gl. 406-407.

[# NOTE: Henceforth Bondar generally uses the Russian word equivalent to “*Täufer*” and rarely uses the word equivalent to “*Wiedertäufer*.” To retain Bondar’s distinction, the word is translated as “Baptizer(s)” rather than “Anabaptist(s)” which is the term generally used to translate both terms.]

The leader of this group organized the first community of Baptizers in Switzerland. In 1525 the new church started to baptize adults.

The leaders and members of this new community actively spread their teachings in Zürich. The rapid growth of this movement alarmed the Zürich government. After a dispute between Zwingli and the Baptizers (in 1525) the government of Zürich prohibited the gathering of Baptizers in Zürich and ordered them to baptize their children within eight days.

Foreign Baptizers were expelled from Zürich. These measures did not stop the Baptizer movement in Zürich. The Zürich government ordered more reprisals, such as fining the Baptizers, putting them into jail, and applying corporal punishment, exile, and even capital punishment. The first martyr in Zürich was Felix Manz (d. January 5, 1527), a prominent leader of the Baptizers in Zürich.

From Zürich the Baptizer movement was carried into the cantons of Switzerland. Very soon Baptizers appeared in St. Gallen. Already in 1525, the Baptizer group in St. Gallen had 500 members. In 1525 the Baptizer movement reached Basel and Bern. About the same time Baptizers appeared also in the Jura, in Schaffhausen and Appenzell. The local canton governments at all these places were alarmed by the rapid spread of the Baptizer movement. The further history of the movement in Switzerland was a history of continuous repression, persecution, and imprisonment. The persecution of Baptizers in Switzerland continued to the end of the 18th Century (capital punishment was continued until the beginning of the 17th Century). As a result of these persecutions many Baptizers moved to Germany, Holland and later to America.

From Switzerland the Baptist movement penetrated South Germany and the Austrian territories. Already in 1526 Baptizers appeared in Strasburg. In South Germany the movement had great success. It was hard to find a place without Baptizers. In 1526 they were found in Austria, Tirol, and Moravia.

The rapid spread of the Baptizer movement in South Germany and Austria was a threat not only for the Catholic Church but also for the Reformation itself. After the Peasants' War, when the Baptizers were generally called "rebels", the Catholics, the Protestants, and the Reformed opposed them. The Assemblies at Speyer (in 1523) and Augsburg (in 1530) condemned them to the "fire and sword." Their persecution in South Germany and Austria differed in its severity from the persecutions in the Middle Ages. Here and in Switzerland the Baptizers were expelled by the thousands, deprived of food and shelter, and subject to imprisonment, torture, corporal and capital punishment. Only Strasburg, Nurnberg, Augsburg, and the territories of Phillip of Hessen were free of persecution of the Baptizers. Moravia was also a "Promised Land" for them.

From South Germany the Baptizer movement was carried to the Rhine *gubernia* of Germany. In Cologne, which during the time of the Reformation was considered a "mother of heresy," Baptizers were officially registered already in 1524. In 1530 they appeared in Aachen. During this time, the Baptizers in the Rhine region were severely persecuted, but despite this they continued to survive. The Baptizer community in Cologne played an important role in the Baptizer sect and it grew in numbers.

In Moravia, serving as a haven for Baptizers, a different wing of the movement developed, known under the name "*Hutterite sect.*"

Its founder, Jacob Hutter, arrived in Moravia from Tirol in 1529. In 1533 he became the leader of the local Baptizers and gave them a communist structure. He introduced the "brother households" to his followers. # The members of each community formed a large family under the leadership of a special manager. Members joining the sect were expected to deny private ownership and to give all personal wealth to the common treasury of the household. In 1536 Hutter died at the stake. But his sect continued to exist. Until the end of the 16th Century the Hutterites in Moravia enjoyed freedom, but after the end of the 16th Century they were exposed to persecution.

[# This is a literal translation of Bondar's translation into Russian of the term "*Bruderhof*".]

In the 17th Century they moved to Hungary and from there to Walachia in 1764. From Walachia they migrated to Russia in 1772.

Melchior Hoffman, Anabaptist Reign in Münster ⁵⁾

As a result of the brutal persecution of the Baptizers in some parts of South Germany a “restless” soul inspired by Müntzer emerged. The source of this movement was Melchior Hoffman.

Hoffman was born in Swabia and was a furrier by vocation. At an early age he accepted Luther’s views and from 1523 to 1528 he spread them in Livonia, Sweden, Denmark, and East Friesland. In 1529 he was in Strasburg and here he sided with the Baptizer movement. Returning to East Friesland (in 1530) Hoffman zealously planted the Baptizer sect in Friesland and Holland. He is responsible for the origin of this sect in Holland.

Even before joining the Baptizers, Hoffman was interested in the Holy Scripture. After he became a Baptizer, he started to preach the “Vision of Revelation.” He forecast the imminent return of Christ on earth and the start of his kingdom. As the date for this, he predicted the year 1533. “The Lord will appear in Strasburg to inaugurate his kingdom. He delivers the sword to the believers for the destruction of the godless.” Hoffman’s teachings caused excitement among Baptizer circles. In 1533 Hoffman came to Strasburg to welcome the Lord. Here he was captured and put into jail where he died after 10 years. His place was taken by his pupil, Jan Matthijs, a baker from Haarlem. He called himself the “Returned prophet Elijah”, to appear before

⁵⁾ Gl. 409-410; Ul. 481-485; H. 40-43; VS. 36-47; W. II, 99-120; Br. 373-407.

Christ's return, and put himself in the center of twelve "apostles." Matthijs, according to his words, received a revelation from God himself. The apostles of Matthijs went to Holland and Westphalia, advocated Matthijs' revelations, conducted "rebaptisms" and installed ministers.

In January of 1534 two of his apostles arrived in Münster. Here they found fertile ground for their teachings. The Reformation had already taken place here in 1532. The Catholic Bishop of the city was driven out. An unusual religious excitement ruled in Münster. "Evangelicals" from surrounding places gathered here. The preaching of the apostle Matthijs was very successful. During a period of eight days, they baptized 1,400 souls.

Soon Jan Leyden (a tailor by vocation), the "apostle" of Matthijs, arrived in Münster. He brought new revelations from Matthijs: the time has come to take revenge and the unclean ones are to be destroyed. Leyden became the leader of the Baptizers in Münster. The Catholics and Protestants fled from the city. Münster was in the hands of the Baptizers.

In February of 1534 Matthijs himself came to Münster. He declared Münster to be the "New Jerusalem" and invited the Baptizers persecuted in Germany to come there. People by the thousands headed to the "Reign of peace and prosperity."

In the meantime, Münster was besieged by the army of the bishop of Münster at the end of February. During one of the attacks, Matthijs was killed. Jan Leyden proclaimed himself to be the ruler of the "New Zion." A wildly fanatic and extremely desultory reign prevailed in this "New Zion." The Baptizers moved to demolish the family structure, to introduce polygamy and communism. Not only the Catholics took up arms against the reign of "New Zion," but also the Protestants, in aid of the bishop of Münster.

In 1535 Münster was occupied and the sons of "New Zion" were captured. The catastrophe of Münster had a great influence on the whole Baptizer movement in Western Europe. The "Reign of Münster" threatened

the whole development and existence of Anabaptist principles. The persecution in Western Europe became even more severe. But despite this the Baptizer movement spread over more and more regions.

Menno Simons and the “Peaceful” Baptizer movement (Mennonitism) ^{6]}

After the catastrophe of Münster, a new “peaceful” trend developed in the Baptizer movement. Menno Simons (1492-1559) became the head of this movement which was named *Mennonite* after him. Menno was not the founder of this sect; it had already existed in Holland for seven years before he joined the movement. He was only the organizer and spokesman for its normative ideas and attributes.

The knowledge of Menno’s activities and life is only partially preserved. He was born in 1492 in the village of Witmarsum in Friesland. In his younger years he became a Roman Catholic priest, first in the village of Pingjum (near Witmarsum) and from 1532 on in Witmarsum. Already in his first years of priesthood he was concerned about the rightness of child baptism and some other teachings of the Roman Catholic church. The reading of the Bible and the writings of the Reformers only increased his doubts. Menno became an “evangelical” clergyman, but did not leave the Roman Catholic Church, and rather used his energy in a battle with the errors of the Anabaptists (Baptizers). In 1534 he wrote a book “About Revenge” in which he exposed the “wrongdoings and great blasphemy of Jan Leyden.” Menno argued that God did not impose his might upon the unclean ones: “The obligation of believers is to suffer persecution, and not to take up the sword.”

At the same time the Anabaptist movement spread in Holland.

^{6]} Cr. 586-594; H. 43-54; VS. 47-62; W. II, 120-144; Br. 56-104.

In February of 1535, a group of armed Anabaptists occupied the old monastery close to Witmarsum. Soon the monastery was recaptured by government troops and the Anabaptists died by decapitation. A brother of Menno was also among those executed.

This event “struck Menno’s heart.” He regarded himself as a culprit of the church and complicit in the death of these people, as he had not shown them the right way. His conscience did not give him rest. The inner battle within Menno ended on January 12, 1536 with him leaving the Roman Catholic Church and joining the Anabaptists.

After this Menno lived for some time in seclusion in Friesland. In 1537 he joined the “peaceful” Baptizers upon their request. Menno became their elder or “presbyter.” Thereafter, his life became that of a wanderer deprived of all privileges. He visited the communities of “peaceful” Baptizers in East Friesland, Holland, the area of Cologne, Holstein, and the present region of Prussia. At these places Menno preached his views, baptized (rebaptized) and installed ministers. The peaceful Baptizers scattered in Holland, the Rhine region, and Lower Germany, were organized by Menno into congregations. The last years of his life Menno spent in Wüstenfeld between Lübeck and Hamburg, where he passed away on January 13, 1559.

Menno has written many books and articles. The most important one is the *Fondamentboeck* written in 1539. Menno did not write in the Dutch language, but in the colloquial Low German language (*Plattdeutsch*) that was spoken and written in the places he lived and worked. After his death, his writings were translated into the language of literature, High German (*Hochdeutsch*). ⁷⁾

⁷⁾ Cr. 594.

Mennonite Sect in Holland ⁸⁾

During Menno's lifetime, his sect spread over large parts of Holland. Already in 1530, as stated, a Baptist movement came into being here, spread by Hoffman. One of his followers organized the first community of Dutch Baptizers in Amsterdam in 1530.

After Hoffman, Jan Matthijs was active in Holland. The catastrophe in Münster caused the ruin of "rebellious" Anabaptism. The "peaceful" Baptizers (Mennonites) led by Menno, disassociated themselves resolutely in 1536 from the "rebellious" Anabaptists of Münster. Already during Menno's lifetime, his sect received wide acceptance in Holland.

From 1530 to 1578 the Mennonite sect was severely persecuted in Holland. After the events in Münster the Mennonites were regarded as "rebels." Executions of Mennonites were frequent. The "Martyrs' Mirror," a Mennonite collection of the 17th Century ⁹⁾ (published in Amsterdam in 1659) lists the names of 800 Baptizers and Mennonites, executed between 1524 and 1600. As a result of these persecutions many Mennonites fled from Holland to North Germany, Holstein, Prussia, and Poland.

With the proclamation of the Netherlands' independence (in 1572) and the publication of the "Edict of Toleration" (in 1578 during the reign of William of Orange) the persecution of the Dutch Mennonites ceased. They received freedom of religion; their basic stance on rejection of military service and swearing oaths received government recognition. In 1795 the government of the Netherlands granted the Mennonites the same rights as those of other confessions. From the time of Napoleon I (under whom the Netherlands were united with France)

⁸⁾ Cr. 605-612; H. 55-62; VS. 63; W. II, 103-105, 110-112; III, 6, 59; Br. 105-172.

⁹⁾ VS. 137 etc.; Br. 234-237.

Dutch Mennonites (from 1810) obtained freedom from military service. In 1838 two deputies in the parliament of the Netherlands voted for the introduction of general military duty in Holland. ¹⁰⁾

At the present time Mennonites in Holland quite often serve in public offices of the government, industry, and trade enterprises.

The internal story of the Mennonite sect in Holland is characterized by constant arguments and separations over religious matters. The main object of disagreement was the question of excommunication. Menno wanted to establish a community of saints on earth. To maintain the holiness of the community, it was necessary to separate from the sinners. In the absence of a definitive confession of faith, various opinions regarding the question of excommunication led to endless arguments within the sect.

Already during Menno's lifetime a few groups among his followers took more severe and less severe positions regarding excommunication. Menno himself at first leaned to the side of more patience and mercy, but under the influence of the "severe" groups, which threatened him with excommunication, he wrote a statement in which he defended the power to excommunicate. This separated him from the Baptizers in Upper Germany and the Rhine regions of Germany and Switzerland. Only in the 17th and 18th Century did the name and writings of Menno receive the deserved recognition among them. ¹¹⁾

In 1555 the *Waterlander* group was formed among the Dutch Mennonites ("Waterlanders" are Mennonites living in the Dutch *gubernia* of "Waterland"). This group demanded mildness and mercy in matters of excommunication. Between 1556 and 1557 all other Dutch Mennonites were divided into two groups: the *Flemish* and the *Frisians*. The Flemish (that is Flemish settlers in Friesland) kept the strict rules for excommunication; Frisians (that is Mennonites of Friesland origin, living in Friesland)

¹⁰⁾ Sch. Zsch. B. IV, page 280.

¹¹⁾ Cr. 593, 594.

maintained a position between the Waterlanders and the Flemish. The Waterlanders were joined by Baptizers who immigrated from South Germany and Holland. All the groups were in constant conflict for a long time. Each one of them considered itself to be the only true community of Christians and excommunicated members of other groups. After 1587 the Flemish split into the *older* (strict) and the *younger* (mild). In the beginning of the 17th Century the Old Flemish split again into the *Groninger* and the *Danziger*. The Groninger Flemish, whose center was the city of Groningen (West Friesland), had the custom of foot washing before or after the breaking of the bread. The Danzig Flemish broke the bread without foot washing. This latter practice was started by the Mennonite communities of Danzig. The Frisians also differentiated between the *old* (or stricter) and *younger* (milder) ones. The latter sided more with the Waterlanders. **12)**

After 1664 a separate “Free Thinking” movement developed among the Mennonites in Amsterdam. Their leader was the Mennonite minister (in Amsterdam), Galenus (a surgeon by profession). His followers were called the *Galenists*. The opposition came from the conservative Mennonite minister in Amsterdam, Apostool. His followers were called the *Apostoolists*. The Galenists in Amsterdam worshipped in the church that had a *lamb* (Lamm) symbol at the front; the Apostoolists worshipped in a building that had a *sun* (Sonne) symbol in the front. Therefore the Galenists were called the *Lamists* and the Apostoolists were the *Zonists*. **13)**

The division into Lamist and Zonist entangled all Mennonite communities in Holland. The former groups of Flemish, Frisians, etc. became secondary in importance. The divisions were all peaceful. There was no talk about excommunicating each other.

12) Cr. 608-609; VS. 64-67; H. 57-58; Br. 120-124; W. III, 21-24; M.L. I, 38.

13) Cr. 610-611; VS. 68, 70, etc.; H. 58; Br. 151-152, etc.; W. III, 39-40.

Around 1800 all divisions among the Dutch Mennonites ended. In 1811 a conference of the "General Baptism-minded Society" (*Allgemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit*) was convened. All Dutch Mennonites joined this body. In Amsterdam in 1849 a Mennonite mission society was established for the missionary work among the natives of the Dutch East Indies.

Missionaries on the islands of Sumatra and Java are supported. The activities of the society are supported financially by Dutch and German Mennonites but mainly by Russian Mennonites. For the preparation of Mennonite ministers there is a Bible seminary in Amsterdam connected with the Faculty of Theology of the Amsterdam University. The Dutch Mennonites publish two periodicals in the Dutch language. In 1910 the number of Mennonites stood at 70,000 in 132 congregations. ¹⁴⁾ Until 1578 the Dutch Mennonites called themselves "Mennonites." By this name they wanted to indicate their difference from the "rebel" Baptizers, with whom they were identified at that time. After the publication of the "Edict of Toleration" (in 1578) the Dutch Mennonites changed their name to "Faith Baptizers" or "Baptizers upon Faith" (*Doopsgezinde, Taufgesinnten*). Since 1801 this has been the official name for all Mennonites in Holland. However, the Dutch Mennonites are still called *Mennisten* (Mennisten) by others. From Holland the name "Mennonite" was carried to North and East Germany, and from there to America and Russia. ¹⁵⁾

Mennonite Sect in Prussia ¹⁶⁾

From Holland the Mennonite sect moved into East and West Prussia (from 1525-1530).

West Prussia

¹⁴⁾ Fr. I, 32; 776.

¹⁵⁾ H. 53-54.

¹⁶⁾ Cr. 612-614; H. 64-83; VS. I, 108-119; W. III, 62-85; 91-118; Br. 242-283; Mnrt. 64-202, LX-XC; Sch 42-76; Fr. I, 36-70.

was part of Poland, but its Catholic kings were very tolerant in matters of faith. East Prussia was under the rule of Prussian dukes.

The Mennonites settled mainly in Polish locations such as Elbing [= Elblag], Danzig [= Gdansk] and Marienburg. Already in the 1530s, Dutch Mennonites, persecuted because of their faith, came to find refuge. After 1540 an unending flow of Mennonites into Poland started, ending at the close of the 16th Century when the religious persecution in Holland ceased. Around 1550 the Mennonites also settled on the Vistula River at Grudziadz [= Graudenz], Culm [= Kulm] and Swiecie [= Schwetz]. These Mennonites came mainly from Moravia, Silesia, and Upper Germany.

Dutch Mennonites, resettling in the Danzig, Elbing and Marienburg areas, settled mainly on the Marienwerder [= Kwidzyn] lowlands and the Vistula Delta. At this time, this area consisted of swamps, sand banks and salt marshes, covered with bushes and forests, flooded by the river and at other times by the sea. This unfriendly area was claimed by the Mennonites from the river and the sea by means of man-made dams and canals, and in this way they transformed this area into a flowering garden and rich haven.

These efforts by Mennonites at improving the Marienwerder lowlands won them the goodwill of the Polish kings. They willingly accepted Mennonite refugees from Holland, allowed them to settle in Poland, gave them various privileges and freedoms, protected them by a "Charter of Toleration," and granted them freedom of faith and freedom from military service.

After the first division of Poland (1772) one set of Mennonites became part of the Prussian Kingdom; the other set remained under the government of Danzig. After the second division the Danzig Mennonites (and others) became part of Prussia.

West Prussia became part of the Prussian duchy. Beginning in 1530, this area was a refuge

for Baptizers and Mennonites from Holland. Until the end of the 17th Century the Prussian dukes were intolerant toward the Mennonites. At the beginning of the 17th Century Prussia became a Kingdom. The first King of Prussia, Frederick I, tolerated the Mennonites. He even invited Mennonites from Switzerland and Poland to come to Prussia. The first ones were settled in the Memel region, others in the Tilsit region. All these immigrants were given (in 1713) various rights and privileges, including freedom from military service. ¹⁷⁾

Frederick I's successor, Frederick William I (the Solider King) dreamed of a mighty Prussia and did not sympathize with the Mennonite stand on not taking up arms. Under him the Mennonites were strictly constrained. ¹⁸⁾ The next Prussian King, Frederick II (the Great), protected the Mennonites, allowed them to settle in Prussia and granted them freedom from military service. In return, the Mennonites of West Prussia had to pay 5,000 *taler* annually for the upkeep of the military academy in Culm. ¹⁹⁾ Additionally, the Mennonites in Prussia were subject to other restrictions. According to the established practice for forming armies (according to the recruitment regulations of 1733), the enlistment period depended on individual land ownership. Therefore, the Prussian government under Frederick II made it difficult in every way for Mennonites to acquire "non-Mennonite" land. Already on July 14, 1773 by an order by Frederick II, whereby the Mennonites were granted various rights and privileges, only the purchase of military and government land was allowed or permitted by the government. ²⁰⁾

¹⁷⁾ W. III, 76; Br. 268, 269; H. 75-76.

¹⁸⁾ W. III, 76-77; Br. 270-275; H. 76-78.

¹⁹⁾ W. III, 78-79; Br. 275-283; VS. 117; Mnrt. 131-132; H. 78-79.

²⁰⁾ Mnrt. 126-127.

On May 11, 1774, an order by Frederick II to the Marienwerder government followed. According to the order the Mennonites were to be treated with restraint and restricted in the future. The purchase of “non-Mennonite” land plots was only allowed if, when a Mennonite purchased a part of an estate, a family obligated to military service would remain on the other part of the plot, or if the non-Mennonite seller would be saved from ruin by the purchase of the plot of land.

All these regulations applied to Mennonites who arrived in Prussia from Poland. [21](#)

Under the successor of Frederick II (d. 1786), Frederick William II, the Mennonites in Prussia were subjected to further limitations. On April 14, 1787 Frederick William II confirmed all rights and freedoms of the Mennonites, but at the same time ordered that Mennonites were not allowed to enlarge their plots of land without special permission and were not allowed to obtain new properties. [22](#)

By an order from Frederick William II on July 11, 1789, all Mennonites in East and West Prussia and Lithuania owning land plots were required to pay all Lutheran church levies and obligations. The sale of non-Mennonite land to Mennonites was only permitted when part of the land stayed in the hands of a non-Mennonite (obligated to serve in the army), or if the non-Mennonite would be saved from financial ruin by the sale. The settlement of new Mennonites in East and West Prussia and Lithuania was prohibited. [23](#)

Finally, by royal declaration on December 17, 1801, the right to acquire new land was taken away from the Mennonites in East and West Prussia and Lithuania. These rights were restored only to those who were willing to submit to the recruitment obligations. With regard to religious freedoms, these were preserved for the Mennonites. [24](#)

[21](#) Mnrt. 127 etc.

[22](#) Mnrt. 137.

[23](#) Mnrt. 139-143. LXXVII-LXXXIII.

[24](#) Mnrt. 149-154. LXXXIV-LXXXVII.

All these restrictions forced Prussian Mennonites to emigrate to Russia. Their resettlement took place from 1788 until 1835.

During the period of the Napoleonic wars, the Prussian Mennonites showed their loyalty to the Prussian Royal House. In return, in 1811-1812 King Frederick William II gave them unlimited rights to attain land ownership all over Prussia. ²⁵⁾

In 1848 the Frankfurt parliament proclaimed that “religious confession does not have to hinder the fulfilment of civil responsibilities.” This was not in accordance with the Mennonite stance on rejecting arms. It is interesting that one of the Mennonite deputies present at the parliament spoke up against exempting Mennonites from military service, describing it as a “relic of the past not consistent with the spirit and request of the new government.” Though the government ruling was not implemented, it nevertheless confused the West Prussian Mennonites in terms of their personal stand on military service and prompted some of them to seek resettlement in Russia in the 1850s. ²⁶⁾

In the 1860s a strong sentiment developed among the Prussian Mennonites that war and military service are not in contradiction with the Word of God. Mannhardt, an assistant professor at the Berlin University and a member of the Danzig congregation, did much to spread this view. He declared that with their rejection of military service, the Mennonites of the 16th Century wanted only to manifest their protest against the “rebellious” Anabaptists of Münster with whom they were identified. “In our days, the rejection of military service does not make sense where such obligations exist and where people participate in wars to protect the fatherland. And whereas Mennonites of the 16th Century spoke up against military service, at the present time,” according to Mannhardt, “they can fully accept it without damage to their confession.” ²⁷⁾

²⁵⁾ Mnrt. 156-157.

²⁶⁾ W. III, 100-101.

²⁷⁾ W. III, 102-104; Br. 329.

Upon the introduction of general military service obligations (order November 9, 1867) the Mennonites of West Prussia were inclined to fulfill these obligations. Some of the Mennonites who did not want to submit to this order migrated to America. For those that stayed, their military service was modified by King William (March 3, 1868) into service in construction and transport brigades. ²⁸⁾

In 1871 the Mennonites in Prussia were permitted to accept positions as public school teachers. After 1904 the Prussian government forbade the Mennonites to call their prayer houses “churches.” ²⁹⁾

In their inner life the Prussian Mennonites continued to be Dutch Mennonites for a long time. Mennonites coming from Holland to Poland brought along their group differences. The Flemish and the Frisians coming from Holland had their constant arguments also in Poland. Their split lasted until the beginning of the 19th Century. ³⁰⁾ From Prussia these Mennonite factions were transported to Russia.

The Mennonites in Poland and Prussia kept close relations with the Mennonites in Holland. Up to the middle of the 18th Century the Dutch language was used in Mennonite communities in Prussia and Poland. ³¹⁾ From 1757 onward the Dutch language was replaced by German in all communities. ³²⁾ In the Danzig congregations the Dutch language was used at baptisms up to 1778. ³³⁾ In Mennonite communities of High German origin (in Culm, Schwetz and Graudenz) German was used right from the beginning.

²⁸⁾ H. 82; W. III, 105.

²⁹⁾ Sch. Zsch. B IV, Article: “Mennoniten”, 274.

³⁰⁾ W. III, 68-69, 80-81.

³¹⁾ W. III, 80.

³²⁾ Br. 262.

³³⁾ W. III, 80.

Mennonite Sect in Switzerland ³⁴⁾

In Switzerland during the 16th-18th centuries severe persecution of the Anabaptists continued (executions continued until 1614). As a result of their persecutions Swiss Baptizers fled to Holland, Alsace, South Germany (mainly to the Palatinate) and later to North America. Complete freedom of conscience was proclaimed in Switzerland in 1799, and the Baptizers were treated equally with other confessions. At the present time, the Swiss Baptizers (Mennonites) are called "Old Evangelical Baptism-minded" (*Altevangalische Taufgesinnten*).

At the end of the 17th Century the Swiss Baptizers were split into two groups – the *conservatives* and the *freer ones*. The first group was led by their spiritual leader (from Bern), Amman, and was called *Amish*. The other group was called *Reistschen* from the name of their leader, Reist. The Amish were able to find followers not only among the Mennonites of Switzerland, but also in Alsace and South Germany. At present the Amish make up most of the Mennonites in France and in the Alsace. But most of them live in America to which they choose to migrate from Switzerland. ³⁵⁾

Mennonite Sect in the Lower Rhineland and South Germany ³⁶⁾

In the Lower Rhineland of Germany, the Mennonites were subjected to persecution for a long time. Until the end of the 16th Century executions occurred quite often (especially in Cologne). At the beginning of the 17th Century the Lower Rhine provinces were united with Prussia and the situation of the Mennonites changed for the better. Since 1803 they enlisted for service and duties in the army.

³⁴⁾ Cr. 614-615; H. 93-104; VS. 90-100; W. IV, 6-50; Br. 173-219.

³⁵⁾ W. IV, 31; VS. 147-148; H. 101; M.L. Article: "Amische Mennoniten," "Amman"; 56-57

³⁶⁾ H. 104-109; VS. 101-107; W. IV, 68-120.

In South Germany, the center of Mennonitism was the Palatinate. Since the middle of the 17th Century, Mennonites, driven out from Switzerland because of their faith, settled here. Until the 1730s-1740s they enjoyed religious freedom in the Palatinate. In the 1730s-1740s they were persecuted but not for a long time. Since the middle of the 18th Century the Mennonites were granted widespread religious freedom. Since the time of Napoleon I, the Palatinate Mennonites were drafted to serve in the army.

Mennonites from Switzerland continued to arrive in Baden and Württemberg in the 17th Century. In 1886 the Mennonite communities in South Germany were united into a "Conference of South German Mennonite Congregations." ³⁷⁾

In 1884 the Mennonites of the German Empire were united in a "Union of Mennonites of the German Empire." Most Mennonites in Germany joined this union. ³⁸⁾ The total number of Mennonites in Germany in 1910 was 18,000 persons (adults). ³⁹⁾

Mennonite Sect in North America ⁴⁰⁾

From western Europe the Mennonite sect was transferred to North America. The first Mennonites started to settle in the present state of New York settle in the middle of the 17th Century. The Mennonite migration became an unending flow from Europe to America from the 1680s to the 1740s. The main location of their settlements was the state of Pennsylvania. In the 19th Century the Mennonite immigration to America became a mass movement. An especially large number of Mennonite immigrants came from Russia in the 1870s-1880s. In 1911 there were 856 congregations and 73,746 adult church members (baptized) in America (and Canada).

³⁷⁾ Fr. I, 58.

³⁸⁾ Fr. I, 58.

³⁹⁾ Fr. I, 776.

⁴⁰⁾ Cr. 615-616; H. 110-117; VS. 131-154; W. IV, 126-206; Br. 220-241; Fr. II, 1-154.

Mennonite immigrants from Switzerland and South Germany settling in America in the 17th and 18th centuries belonged to two groups of Swiss Mennonites: *Reistchen* and *Amish*. This first group was also joined by Mennonite immigrants from Holland, Prussia and the Rhine region. In the 19th Century this group received the name “Old” (i.e. original) Mennonite, ⁴¹⁾ In the 1990s, the progressive Amish also joined them. At the present time, the Old Mennonite group is the largest Mennonite organization in America. There are approximately 34,000 adult members.

The Old Mennonites are united in a “General Conference of Old Mennonites.” In addition, there are 16 local (district) conferences, 13 of them being Old Mennonites and 3 Amish. ⁴²⁾

In the 19th Century, a number of different Mennonite groups were formed among the Old Mennonites.

In 1812 in Lancaster a “Reformed Mennonite Church” was formed by the minister John Herr (that is why his followers are called “Herrists”). The Herrists are severe in questions of excommunications. They are intolerant and avoid contact with other Mennonites. There are 30 congregations with approximately 1,600 Herrists. ⁴³⁾

In 1847 another Mennonite group, splitting from the Old Mennonites, was formed in Pennsylvania: “New School Mennonites.” Their founder, the young minister John Oberholtzer, was not satisfied with the stagnation of the religious life of the present Old Mennonites and demanded the opening of Sunday Schools, the organizing of mission fields among the pagans, the publishing of Mennonite periodicals, the establishment of Bible schools for the preparation of ministers, etc.

⁴¹⁾ The “Old Mennonites” of America should not be identified with the “Old Mennonites” of Russia. Prussian “Old Mennonites” immigrated to America and most of them joined the “New School” Mennonites.

⁴²⁾ M.L. I, 43-46; W. IV, 180-181.

⁴³⁾ M.L. I, 45.

For his stance, Oberholtzer was expelled from the Old Mennonite group. In 1860 the group of "New School" Mennonites formed an independent "General Conference of Mennonites in America." In the 1870s-1880s the majority of Russian Mennonites who came to America joined them. At the present time, the "New School" Mennonites or "General Conference" has 6 local conferences, 110 congregations and up to 15,000 members. The "New School" Mennonites have two publishing houses, a few periodicals (in German and in English) and a Bible College (Bethel College) in Newton (state of Kansas). ⁴⁴⁾

Since the 1860s the Old Mennonites also adopted new forms of religious practice. They have one publishing house and several periodicals in the German and English languages. The introduction of these new forms caused dissension among the Old Mennonites, ending with the separation of a smaller group (in Indiana), the so-called "Wisler congregations." In 1890 this group had 15 congregations, 12 churches and 610 members. ⁴⁵⁾

In 1859 a new group was formed among the Old Mennonites, the "Church of God in Christ." Their founder, John Holdeman (d. 1900), claimed to have the gift of prophecy, divine foresight and could interpret dreams and secrets. The Mennonites of other groups were regarded by Holdeman as the "Babylonian godless" who did not have the Holy Spirit. On these grounds, Holdeman forbade his followers to have contact with Mennonites of other groups. In 1899 the "Church of God in Christ" had 32 ministers and 1,000 members. After the death of Holdeman this number diminished considerably. ⁴⁶⁾

In 1856-1858 a small group separated from the "New School" Mennonites desiring to apply a methodical organization and discipline. In 1878 this group, together with other similar groups, formed the Mennonite

⁴⁴⁾ M.L. I, 29-32.

⁴⁵⁾ Carr. 218; W. IV, 185.

⁴⁶⁾ W. IV, 184-185.

group “United Mennonite Brethren in Christ.” In 1910 they had 4,000 members. About half of these are located in Pennsylvania. The “United Mennonite Brethren” have their own periodical (in English). 47)

In the 1860s the Amish group in America split. Part of the group introduced Sunday School and formed conferences, etc. In 1899 these progressive Amish Mennonites united with the Old Mennonites. The other part of the Amish formed the “Old Amish Group.” The total number of their members in 1909-1910 is 3,000 souls. 48)

A special group of the Old Amish group formed the so-called “Defenseless Mennonites” or “Egli Amish” (from the name of their founder, Henry Egli) and “Apostolic Mennonites.” The Egli Amish formed the most pietistic group. In 1909-1910 this group had up to 1,500 members. A large number of these live in Indiana. Apostolic Mennonites live in the state of Ohio. In 1909-1910 they had 300 members. They are less strict in matters of church discipline and excommunication than Mennonites of the Old Amish Church. 49)

Russian Mennonites immigrating to America in the 1870s-1880s sided mostly with the “New School” Mennonites. A smaller portion of them joined the American Old Mennonites. In addition to this, among the Mennonites coming from Russia, are followers of the “Mennonite Brethren Church” and “Hutterite Brethren.”

The Mennonite Brethren congregation emerged in the 1860s in South Russia. This is a group of Mennonites with a Baptist polity and belief. The Mennonite Brethren are united in a “Conference Alliance.” Their total membership reached 5,000 in 1910.

47) VS. 149; Carr. 220; Fr. II, 141.

48) M.L. I, 37; Fr. II, 139.

49) VS. 159; Fr. II, 150; Carr. 214-215.

The Mennonite Brethren in America have their own periodical in the German language. For the preparation of ministers they support a special college in Hillsboro in the state of Kansas (Tabor College). 50)

The Hutterites came from Russia in 1874. In 1910 there were 12 colonies with 250 families (a total of 1,500 members and children). The characteristic peculiarity of the "Hutterite Brethren" is their communistic way of life. 51)

50) W. IV, 198; Fr. II, 33-49.

51) W. IV, 198-199; Fr. II, 84-85; Carr. 213.

MENNONITE SECT

IN RUSSIA

The History of Mennonite Colonization in Russia

The Beginning of Foreign Colonization in Russia

The beginning of Mennonite colonization in Russia goes back to the reign of Empress Catharine II.

The Empress Catharine, at the beginning of her reign, announced that her main objective would be to care for the believers in God in her vast empire, to let them flourish and to let their number increase. ¹⁾

At that time Russia did not have a great surplus of people, and the only way to enlarge the population and settle large sections of land, in the opinion of Empress Catharine and her advisors, was to invite foreign settlers into Russia. It was also hoped that attracting them would raise the cultural and economic level of the native population. ²⁾

The beginning of foreign colonization in Russia was initiated by the Manifesto of Empress Catharine II on December 4, 1762 (*P.C.S.* Vol. 16, No. 11720). By this Manifesto, Empress Catharine promised all foreigners in Russia, except Jews, her royal grace and blessing. Upon her authorization, this Manifesto was translated into various languages and sent to the consulates in the western courts for distribution among the local population.

Due to its general terms this manifesto did not include

1) Royal Manifesto. December 4, 1762 (*P.C.S.* No. 11720), point 48.

2) |Point 46.

a precise definition of the privileges that were promised to foreign settlers in Russia, and therefore it had no practical effect. To address this Empress Catharine II issued a second Manifesto on July 22, 1763 “permitting all foreigners who come to Russia to settle in the *gubernia* of their choice and according to rights granted them.” (*P.C.S.* XIV, Vol. No. 11880). This manifesto opened with the following words:

“We, having vast areas of land in our Empire, are seeking, among other things, suitable settlers to occupy the available spaces of which there are a large number, with vast untouched mineral wealth, as well as rivers, forests, lakes and nearby seas for commerce, and more possibilities for increasing manufacturing, and building factories with great capacity. This gave us and our loyal subjects reason to issue a Manifesto last December 4, 1762, in which we gave our assent in concise terms to foreigners who wish to settle in our empire. In addition, we announce the following arrangements which we approve and promise to fulfill...”

In ten further statements the conditions and privileges for the settlers were spelled out.

1. The immigrants could settle in Russia wherever they wished, in towns (as merchants or manufacturers) as well as in separate settlements (points 1:4).
2. The freedom of religion was granted to the immigrants, but with the prohibition of propaganda among other Christian confessions (point 6:1). They were exempt from military and civil service indefinitely, except for normal local duties, which were to be performed, after the years of privilege had expired, in a similar way as the original settlers perform them. In the case that an immigrant wanted to serve in the army, he would receive 30 *rubles* in addition to the regular grant (point 6:7).
3. The immigrant received not only enough good and proper land for producing bread and building factories and

shops, but also all assistance to meet the expected needs of every immigrant (point 6:3).

4. Poor persons received foreign currency for travel expenses (points 1-4).
5. From the day of their arrival at the Russian border to the day of their arrival at their destination they received money for food and free transportation (point 6:8).
6. Upon their arrival in Russia, they received free accommodation for half a year (point 6:2).
7. For building houses and for purchasing livestock and farm equipment they received interest-free loans, repayable in 10 years (point 6:4).
8. The immigrants were exempted from all duties, taxes, and obligations, and also from ordinary as well as extraordinary civic services: settlers in remote colonies for 30 years, settlers in large cities or towns in the Baltic, Finnish and other regions for 5 years, and in provincial, rural or other cities for 10 years (point 6:2).
9. The immigrants were allowed to bring along all their belongings duty-free and also 300 *rubles* worth of goods to sell (point 6:6).
10. Immigrants were allowed to trade duty-free at markets and fairs in their colony (point 6:11).
11. The immigrants were allowed to build factories and shops, in which case it was permitted to buy serfs and peasants from the crown (point 6:10). Immigrants who built factories that were new in Russia were able to trade duty-free with other countries (point 6:9).
12. Foreigners who settled in separate colonies of their own were allowed to govern themselves, but in all respects subject to the Russian civil law (point 6:5).

All these privileges were also given to the children of the first immigrants (with the exception of freedom from military service which was granted forever). After the 30 years the immigrants were obliged to pay taxes and fulfill civic obligations in line with the Russian citizens (points 7-8). In addition to transiting privileges, the immigrants could also arrange for special advantages (point 10).

Another bill was passed on July 22, 1763 (*P.C.S.* Vol. XVI, No. 11879) in St. Petersburg, establishing the “Office of Guardianship for Foreign Settlers” to supervise the regulation of foreign colonization in Russia, for which it was given supreme authority and instructions on the same date (*P.C.S.* Vol XVI, No. 11881). As can be seen below this office existed until 1782. With the creation of *gubernia* [= provinces], it was abolished (*P.C.S.* Vol. XVI, Imperial order August 22, 1772, No. 15383). The supervision and regulations of matters in connection with settlers was transferred to the provincial governments (*P.C.S.* Vol. XXI, Senate order, May 30, 1782, No. 15411).

The legislation as passed served as a basis for subsequent foreign colonization in Russia.

The Manifesto of 1763, which instructed the Russian legations in foreign countries, was not terminated. The news about the Russian government’s plans for colonization and the giving of special grants, advantages and privileges to new settlers was widely broadcast in foreign countries, especially in Germany. Russian citizens, by themselves or through special agents, gathered settlers and sent them to Russia. To attract the largest possible number of settlers for Russia, the Russian agents turned to private recruiters or “callers”. At that time this was a special profession in Western Europe, always profitable, but not always safe.

Recruiters were also involved in recruiting settlers from several western European countries. In most cases these were people with questionable reputations. As their monetary remuneration depended only on the success of their operation, they were not interested in the quality of settlers. For them only a large number of immigrants was important.

As a result of the actions of recruiters, a very great number of people were accepted as settlers for Russia. Most of them were Germans. From 1763 until 1766

6,342 families (approximately 22,800 persons of both genders) were accepted for resettling in the Volga region.

The vast number of these settlers consisted of unstable, poor, and dissolute persons, or as expressed by the colonists themselves: “*der Abschaum Deutschlands*” - Germany’s scum. The recruiters sent everyone who desired to Russia, not taking their qualifications into consideration. Mostly proletarians from cities in Western Europe immigrated to Russia, as well as ragged fellows and drunkards from various societies. Among the immigrants were also deserters, artists, students, merchants, and even criminals who wanted to escape prosecution. The fewest of them were properly qualified for farming. Most of this motley assortment settled along the lower part of the Volga river in the years 1763 to 1766. **3)**

The shortcomings of this colonization were realized by the government itself, as is affirmed by later official documents. In an uncertified imperial report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs on February 20, 1804 (*P.C.S.* No. 21163) it states: “The invitation of settlers was and continues to be based on the Manifesto of 1763. But exactly what kind of people are to be accepted is not indicated. Rather it covers a wide range of qualities. As a consequence, at the beginning many ignorant persons and mostly poor persons were accepted and were of no value to our government. The colonists of Saratov and some of the Novorossia [= New Russia] *gubernia* prove this to this day.”

Due to the great flow of immigrants, their recruitment was suspended for a short time after 1766. In the meantime, the immigration into Russia, mainly from Germany, continued in negligible numbers until the Pugachev rebellion. **4)**

With the creation of *gubernia* in 1782, the Office of Guardianship for Foreign Settlers was abolished

3) *Kl.* 118-119; *Ps.* 63.

4) *Ps.* 169-171.

(P.C.S. Imperial order August 20, 1782, No. 15383). The colonists came under the jurisdiction of the general rural government, that is the *gubernia* government, district offices and local treasury (see Senate Order of May 30, 1782, No. 15411).

After the Russo-Turkish war, which was initiated by Catharine II, Russia finally established itself on the shores of the Black Sea. Following the Kuchuk-Kainarji peace treaty, we as Russia, also obtained the Crimea (1774). In 1786 the crushing of the Khan society on the Crimea followed, and this territory was fully absorbed by Russia under the name of Taurida *gubernia*. By the Treaty of Jassy (1792) the Dnieper river became our boundary with Turkey and remained as such until the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, after which it was moved to the Prut and Danube rivers.

In this way Russia received a vast expanse of land which was divided into the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav, and Kherson *gubernia*. These areas were great deserts with no inhabitants at that time. The government of Catharine II turned its efforts to the colonization of these areas. The Mennonites formed a large number within the immigrants who were called to settle in South Russia.

The Mennonite-Hutterite Settlement 1

The settlement of Mennonites in Russia began as early as 1772. The first Mennonite settlers in Russia belonged to the so-called "Hutterite Brotherhood."

The Hutterite Brotherhood was founded by Jacob Hutter in Tirol and Moravia in the years 1517-1536. Although having much in common with the "re-baptizers" (*Anabaptists*) and Mennonites, the Hutterites practiced communal ownership, and declared all

1) See C. Hege, *Kurze Geschichte der Mennoniten*. (Frankfurt am Main, 1909) pages 36-40. Carl van der Smissen. *Kurzgefasste Geschichte und Glaubenslehre der Altevangelischen Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten*. (1895) pages 87-89.

private ownership sinful. In Moravia they founded the so-called “Brother Household” [= *Bruderhof*] wherein the Hutterite principles found their practical expression. ⁵⁾

In 1536 Hutter died at the stake. Because of persecution his followers moved from country to country. In 1767 they came to Walachia where they settled near Bucharest. During the Russo-Turkish war (1770), upon the invitation of Rumyantsov-Zadunaiskago, they moved to Russia (1782) ⁶⁾ onto land belonging to him in the *gubernia* of Chernigov. By order of the field marshal, the Hutterites were supplied with the necessary lumber for construction. At this location they built a “*Bruderhof*,” whose internal organization was infused with communistic ideals, according to the spirit of the sect.

The Hutterites, as stated, rejected personal property. At the time of baptism, which took place at the age of 15, the baptized person promised to follow strictly all rules of the “Brotherhood,” including the rejection of personal property. All earnings of the “brothers” belonged to the community which in turn guaranteed their members free sustenance. The spiritual and business matters of the community were handled by the “Spiritual Elder,” whose “decisions were holy.” To assist him, various assistants for spiritual and business functions were elected.

In the spirit of their principles the Hutterites built a common living center in Vyshenka with separate living quarters under one roof for their members according to gender and age groups, for worship, for eating, resting, etc. “Brothers” and “Sisters” dressed in simple and common dress. All field work was done by the community together. Weaving and other crafts gave them considerable income and in a short time they became rich. ⁷⁾ In 1784 an additional 16 families (47 persons) who arrived from Hungary and Bohemia

[NOTE: Footnotes 2-4 are missing in the book.]

5) W. II, 83-98; III, 155-160; *Kl.* 24-55.

6) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 61.

7) *Kl.* 32-33.

were added to the Hutterites. ⁸⁾ In 1780-1787 the Hutterites of Vyshenska came into direct contact with the Mennonites in Prussia. ⁹⁾

The situation of the Hutterites in Vyshenska changed after the death of Rummyantsov-Zadunaiskago. The old field marshal “cared for the brothers as a father.” In the view of the Hutterites, his son and successor, Sergei Petrovich Rummyantsov, tried to change them into serfs. Therefore, they sent two delegates to Petersburg to petition for the official granting of their right to public land. Their petition was granted. By an imperial order, dated May 22, 1801 (*P.C.S.* No. 13887), the Hutterites of Vyshenska were allowed to resettle on an available section of land located twelve kilometers from Vyshenska. Here they founded the colony “Radichev.” By the same order the Hutterite Brotherhood was granted all rights and privileges spelled out in the imperial order dated September 6, 1800 for all Mennonites living in the Novorossia region.

At the time of its founding the Radichev colony consisted of 44 Hutterite families for a total of 202 persons of both genders. They received 753 *desiatini* of land including only 270 *desiatini* of arable land. This allotment was considered by the Brotherhood to be sufficient for their sustenance. ¹⁰⁾

At the new location the Hutterite Brotherhood built a new “*Bruderhof*.” The building in which the “Brothers” lived consisted of several sections. The roof of these sections was very high so that hallways were built lengthwise in the attic, with small rooms on both sides in which the married couples lived. Special rooms were provided for the young men and unmarried girls, 15 years old and older, and also for the boys and girls. A nursery was located in a special room, where children up to a year and a half were cared for. After this age the children were transferred to smaller rooms to be looked after until their 4th year,

8) *Sh. M. G. I*, 1854, VIII, 61.

9) *Kl.* 33.

10) *Kl.* 34.

under the supervision of nannies from the community. At the age of four the children were moved into a special room to be cared for by overseers. After the age of seven the boys were separated from the girls. The boys were taught by a teacher and the girls by female educators.

All groups of the “Brothers” lived under strict supervision. There was no close relationship between parents and children. All rose at 5 o’clock in the morning and went to bed at 9 o’clock in the evening (in summer they rose earlier and went to bed later). Each group and gender dined separately and after dinner rested for one hour. Worship services took place on Sundays in special rooms under the leadership of deacons. The farming by Brotherhood was managed by the elder and his assistants for various church and business affairs. Visitors were considered to be guests of the whole community and were welcomed in its name by the elder. ¹¹⁾

From the beginning of its existence, the Radichev colony stood on solid financial grounds. Farming and cattle-raising brought considerable income. But the main income of the Brothers came from crafts and trades, as well as from gardening and silkworm breeding. The ‘brothers’ had two wineries, which produced up to 5,000 pails of wine per year, and a mill.

¹²⁾

As the time went on some misunderstandings developed among the Hutterites. The communal buildings and the complete rejection of personal property led to misuse and a lack of discipline. Some members started to object to the common work and wanted to live more freely than was required by the Hutterite Brotherhood. Persons placed in charge of various “business sections” started to keep some of the income for themselves, others tried to eat and to dress better. An inclination toward parasitism appeared in the community which in turn led to hostilities, envy, dissatisfaction, and deviations from the common interest among them. The young members of the community especially yearned for more freedom which was resolutely suppressed by the Hutterite community.

11) *Kl.* 35-36.

12) *Kl.* 37.

All this paralyzed everyone's activities and led to intense disorder in the whole community.

13)

In 1817 part of the Brotherhood, dissatisfied with the existing conditions, left the community and founded a separate group. The second leader of the community, Jacob Waltner, became the leader of the dissenting group 14).

Both sides complained at the Novorossia office for the settlement of foreign immigrants. Steps taken by this office to settle the differences were not successful. 15) Waltner's followers, consisting of 24 families, left the community and tried to settle among the Mennonites in the Khortitsa region (Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*). 16) But in 1813 the *Bruderhof* at Radichev was razed with the permission of the Guardian Office. All land of the Radichev community, and all fixed property and livestock was equally divided between both groups of the Hutterite community. Each family received approximately 15 *desiatini* which included 5 ½ *desiatini* of arable land. In this way the communistic lifestyle of the Hutterites came to an end. 17)

After the partition of the land, the Radichev community founded two colonies: one, the stricter one, consisting of 25 households remained at Radichev, the place of the original *Bruderhof*; the other one, the Waltner group, consisting of 24 households, settled not far away, on the left side of the Dnieper river. 18) To manage both colonies a special land office was established. 19) The Hutterite colonies existed under these conditions until 1834.

The small amount of land per family, the large area over which these plots were scattered, and the large increase in population of the Radichev colony, caused the "Brothers" to ask for permission to move to the Novorossia region in 1864. The Guardian Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia, founded in 1818, sympathized with the Hutterite petition. In 1853 the Radichev "brothers"

13) *Kl.* 37-38. 14) *Kl.* 38-39.

15) *Kl.* 39-42. 16) *Kl.* 42-43.

17) *Kl.* 44-45. 18) *Kl.* 44-46.

19) *Kl.* 44-45.

received permission to move to the Taurida *gubernia*, where a portion of state land of 3,300 *desiatini* (65 *desiatini* per family) located 18 *versts* [NOTE: 1 *verst* = 1.067 kilometers] from Melitopol on the river Tashenak was set aside for them. The well-known Mennonite leader, Johann Cornies, took personal care of the re-settlers, fully authorized by the Minister of State Domains at that time, Kiselev. 20)

The re-settlers founded the colony "Huttertal." The land they occupied was an arid steppe. Due to hard work and careful planning, the Hutterite brothers soon reached a high standard of material wealth.

In 1852, 17 young families from the Hutterite colony founded a new colony, "Johannesruh." Both of these colonies were built the same way that all Mennonite colonies in South Russia were built. The characteristic difference of the Hutterites, here and formerly at Radichev, was their simple way of living and dressing. Among other things, the Hutterite men, because of religious beliefs, did not shave their beards, and therefore were called the "Bearded Ones," but the Huttertal and Johannesruh Hutterites were called the "Beardless Ones." 21)

In 1866 some of the colonists in Huttertal and Johannesruh tried to reinstate the former communal way of life of the Hutterite sect. With this in mind 23 families from both colonies united to form a communal *Bruderhof*; houses were built, one for the men, one for the women, a third one for the children, also special houses for worship, eating, working in different trades, etc. Each member of the new *Bruderhof* was assigned to a particular occupation. But the communal way of life was not implemented. The women especially demonstrated the least aptitude for adapting to this way of life. Finally, the community came to the realization that true and right fellowship could only be experienced when the members submitted to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In spring of 1867 the *Bruderhof* collapsed. The property

20) *Kl.* 45-48.

21) *Kl.* 49-51.

of the “Brothers” was split up, whereby many families lost their portion of their common property. 22)

The introduction of military obligation for all residents in Russia in 1874 caused the Hutterites to emigrate to North America in the same year.

First Settlements of Mennonites in Southern Russia (Khortitsa Mennonites)

The foreign colonization of the South Russian region began after the annexation of the Crimea (in 1783). The first foreign settlers came from Danzig. At the first division of Poland (1772) Danzig was surrounded by Prussian settlers. To integrate Danzig into the Prussian state, the Prussian government undertook various steps. The trade and industry of Danzig was hindered, and the local population became dissatisfied. At the same time in 1785-1786 the Manifesto of July 16, 1785 (*P.C.S.* No. 16226) by Empress Catharine II was published in foreign newspapers whereby Empress Catharine invited foreign settlers to come to the Caucasian regions. Besides freedom of religion, she also promised all the rights and privileges of local residents and also exemption from government taxes for the first 6 years. 23)

Inspired by this Manifesto some of the residents of Danzig went to the local Russian representative and asked to be sent to Russia to settle in the Kherson region (rather than the Caucasian region). The governor general of the Novorossia [= New Russia] region, Prince Potemkin very soon learned about this and persistently tried to settle this region. 24)

About this time Prince Potemkin hired into his service a certain Georg Trappe as his assistant,

22) *Kl.* 52-53.

23) *Ps.* 264-265.

24) *Ps.* 265.

* *Ps.* 262-340; *Kl.* 116-118, 149-150; *Epp.* 1-81; *W.* III, 120-141; *Fr.* I, 71-174.

recommended to him by the Grand Princess Mary Theodorovna (the wife of the Grand Prince Paul Petrovich) for the role of governor-general of the Novorossia region. Trappe offered his services for the recruitment of foreign colonists for Russia to Potemkin and in 1786 he reached an agreement with him, whereby Trappe promised to settle foreign colonists in Russia. 25)

In July 1786 Trappe came to Danzig, commissioned by Potemkin. Here he was active among local Lutherans and Mennonites. He spread the cause of his commission among the people; “he spoke to anyone on the street who happened to pass by.” He sent his agents everywhere and he himself went to the villages around Danzig encouraging farmers to move to Russia. 26)

The arrival of Trappe in Danzig and his attempts to find settlers for Russia was welcomed by the local Mennonites.

After the first division of Poland, some Mennonites came under the jurisdiction of Prussia, others stayed in Danzig. These and the others soon experienced all the disadvantages of Poland’s division.

To keep their economy at the proper level, the Mennonites did not allow the dividing of their plots. The Mennonite community acquired new land close by for all new Mennonite families, which was fairly easy due to the close solidarity and wealth of the Mennonites. This spread of Mennonite land ownership led to a shortage of land for the native population. To stop this, the Magistrate of Danzig issued a resolution forbidding Mennonites from buying more land in the Danzig area.

This resolution was in effect until 1786 at the time Trappe appeared in Danzig. It caused the Mennonites to consider emigration. But the prospects of an emigration to Russia did not appear favorable, as the Prussian government began to restrain their fellow believers. In 1780, in lieu of military service

25) *Ps.* 265-268.

26) *Ps* 272-274

they had to pay 5,000 *taler* annually for the upkeep of the cadet academy at Culm. Nine years later the Prussian government, taking the Danzig resolution as an example, forbade the Mennonites from buying more land. This right was granted only to those who submitted to the military recruitment obligations.*

Under these circumstances it was obvious that the appeal of Trappe acted as a spark among Mennonites. They were ready to see in him the “Finger of God” showing them the “New Destination.” 27)

The activities of Trappe in Danzig were very successful. In a short time, during the year of 1786 alone, he was able to send a substantial number of Lutheran proletarians to Southern Russia. 28) As far as the Mennonites were concerned, they were not willing to resettle together with others under the same conditions, but wanted special rights and advantages, and in addition they wanted detailed information about the land on which they were to be settled. This made it necessary to send a special commission or delegation from the Mennonites to Russia to negotiate with Potemkin about conditions and to select and investigate places for settlement. 29) It was the Elder Peter Epp 30) of the Danzig Mennonites who insisted strongly on sending delegates. As delegates (for 270 Mennonite families) two Danzig Mennonites were chosen: Jacob Höppner and Johann Bartsch, who were approved by the Russian government as legitimate delegates. 31) By an agreement with Trappe, signed on September 22, 1786, both delegates were sent to Russia, their expenses paid by the Russian government. During their travel and stay in Russia they received money for food (4 Dutch *ducats* or 11 *rubles* per month), free lodging and travel expenses from Danzig to Kherson and return.

* *KL. 115; Ps. 293-294. Actually such instructions were not issued in 1797 but in 1801 (Mnst. S.S. 146-154; LXXXIV – LXXXVII). In 1787 Fredrick Wilhelm II, the Prussian King, ordered that Mennonites could not enlarge their land holdings and purchase new homesteads without special permission. According to the order of Fredrick Wilhelm II, in 1789 the sale of non-Mennonite property to Mennonites was allowed only in such cases when a reservist family remained on part of the sold land, or if by way of such a transaction, the non-Mennonite escaped financial destruction. This ruling affected the Mennonites in West and East Prussia and Prussian Latvia (Mnrt. pages 137-143, LXXVII-LXXXIII).*

27) *Ps. 292-294; Kl. 115; Epp. 1-9; W. III, 121-123.*

28) *Ps. 274-294. 29) Ps. 294.*

30) *Epp. 10-13.*

31) *Hi. 11-12; Epp. 10-13; W. III, 123-124.*

Furthermore, they received full cooperation from the local governments subordinated to Potemkin. 32)

Together with a group of colonists from Danzig, Höppner and Bartsch travelled to Riga, and from there separately from the colonists they hastened to the South. On November 15, 1786 they arrived in Dubrovna (now a town in the Mogilev *gubernia*) and from here they went to Kremenchuk and Kherson. 33)

In a short span of time, immediately after their arrival, Höppner and Bartsch inspected various local areas in Southern Russia. Finally, they selected a piece of land on the river Konskaya, opposite the town of Berislav (Kherson *gubernia*) including the island Tavan. 34)

On April 22, 1787 Höppner and Bartsch presented to Potemkin the conditions (in the form of 20 articles of petition) under which they were willing to settle in Russia. Not satisfied with the rights granted by the Manifesto of 1763 for all foreign settlers in Russia, Höppner and Bartsch demanded exclusive rights and advantages. Both delegates asked Potemkin to obtain an affirmative writing from the Empress for their articles of petition and then to let the delegates return to Danzig. 35)

Being very busy with receptions on the extensive travel the Empress Catharine was undertaking in Novorossia and the Crimea, Potemkin did not study the “articles” of the delegates for a long time. In early May of 1787 Catharine was in Kremenchuk. Both delegates were introduced to the Empress. She gracefully received them and promised her protection and goodwill for them and the Danzig Mennonites who wished to come to Russia. 36)

On July 5, 1787 the decision of Potemkin regarding the “petitions” of the Mennonite delegates followed.

32) Hi. 17-18; Epp. 17-17; Ps. 294-295. 33) Epp. 17-20; Hi. 13-14; Ps. 295-296.

34) Ps. 295-297; W. III, 124. 35) Ps 297-305; Epp. 25-32. See appendix.

36) Ps. 297-298; Hi. 14-15; Epp. 21-24.

Almost all articles were affirmed, a few were accepted after a minor change in the stipulation or with a condition. 37)

On September 7, 1787 followed the Edict of Empress Catharine II which approved all of the rights and privileges the Mennonite delegates had asked for from Potemkin. 38)

According to this edict, the incoming Mennonites, in unrestricted numbers, were admitted under the following conditions:

1. The Mennonites were granted religious freedom.
2. They received land for settlement on the river Konskaya, opposite Berislav (Kherson *gubernia*) at 65 *desiatini* per family. Additionally, part of the island Tavan, located here, for making hay, and part of the forest on the island of Kairo.
3. They were granted 10 years “freedom from all taxes,” the right to establish factories, trade, and to establish factories and shops, according to local conditions.
4. After 10 tax-free years they were to pay 15 *kopeks* per *desiatini* forever for the upkeep of roads and bridges on their land, at the same time being freed from supplying transportation and lodging for the army except for transiting units.
5. Upon arrival and for their start, the Mennonites were given:
 - a. carts and horses for the travel from the border to Berislav,
 - b. allowances on the road and upkeep during their transit,
 - c. daily food allowance, namely, during the travelling time 12 *kopeks* for all persons under 15 and 25 *kopeks* for everyone older; from the time of their arrival until the first crop 10 *kopeks* for every person, to be repaid 3 years after the termination of the privileged years,
 - d. grain for seeding to be returned in due time,
 - e. loan of 300 *rubles* for every family for provisions within 5 months from the time of their arrival in Riga, to be repaid in 3 years after the termination of the privileged years,
 - f. material to build 120 wooden houses measuring four *sazhens* [1 *sazhen* = 2,134 meters], and enough lumber to build 2 mills and 6 millstones, [and]
 - g. upon becoming Russian citizens, the Mennonites were allowed to take the oath according to their custom and were exempt from military service (*P.C.S.* April 6, 1800 No. 19372).

37) *Ps.* 298. 38) *Ps.* 306.

In addition, the Mennonite delegates were promised that, if their community would be satisfied with the privileges and grants to be presented as points in a decree, they would receive a Letter Patent to be signed by the Imperial Highness and sealed with a government seal (*P.C.S.* April 6, 1799, No. 19372). 39)

In the middle of 1789, on the basis of these conditions, the first transport of Mennonites, consisting of 228 families from Danzig and Prussia, arrived. 40) However, due to the war between Russia and Turkey, they were not settled close to Berislav, but in the vicinity of Khortitsa on the banks of the Dnieper and on the island of the same name. 41) Here they founded 8 villages: Khortitsa, Rosental, Khortitsa Island, Einlage (Kitchkas), Kronsweide, Neuenburg, Neuendorf, and Schönhorst. 42)

At the beginning the situation of these settlers was unenviable. Most of them belonged to the poor class. At their arrival in the Khortitsa region they found nothing except some damaged huts. They did not have their own means, even household articles they brought along from their homeland were spoiled on the journey. Under these conditions they could not think about building their own houses. Thus, for the first four years they lived in *semllins* [= sod huts]. 43) Some of them had to move to the fortress of Alexandrovsk at first. (The present Alexandrovsk, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*). 44)

The most important organizer and protector of the foreign colonization, Prince Potemkin, was occupied in the war with Turkey at the time and died in 1791. The government resources were used up for the war and for a time it could not supply the promised 500 *rubles* per family. 45) The money was handed out to the Mennonites in small amounts and this reduced them into a subsistence level for their daily life.

39) *Kl.* 116-117.

40) *Kl.* 117; *Hi.* 48; *Epp.* 59-60, 71-77; *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850 April, page 30; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 66.

41) *Epp.* 67; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 66.

42) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 66; *Epp.* 77.

43) *Hi.* 69-70; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 67.

44) *Hi.* 69.

45) *Ps.* 336-337.

For this reason, the Mennonites sold the construction lumber which was supplied to them by the government, not only late but also in lesser quantities. Hunger, cold and extreme poverty overcame the settlers, and at the beginning (1789-1790) the government even had to feed them from its provisions. 47)

Despite this the migration of Mennonites from Prussia to Russia did not stop. Between 1793 and 1796 a total of 118 families arrived from Prussia, forming a second Mennonite settlement. 48) As there were only 20,000 *desiatini* available land on the island of Khortitsa and in the Khortitsa region for the settlement of all Mennonites here (based on 65 *desiatini* per family), the delegate Höppner asked the government to “send Mennonites to the site initially chosen near Berislav.” But an even more desirable way out of their misery, in the view of Höppner and his leaders, would be to resettle the Russian peasants from the island of Khortitsa to another place, so that all of the Mennonites could move into cottages on the island of Khortitsa, and so that they could find a “first shelter” in the houses of the peasants, instead of in uncomfortable huts. In spite of the arrangements with the Mennonites, the government did not agree with either of these ideas. 49) Eighty-six of the 118 families of the second Mennonite group were settled in the existing Khortitsa villages; 32 families founded two new villages: Schönwiese (Alexandrovsk *gubernia*) and Kronsgarten (Nowomoskovsk *uezd* [= county] Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*). 50) All these immigrants were given the same grants and privileges as the previous immigrants. 51)

Mennonites of the second settlement arrived in Russia with financial means. They brought along a considerable number of horses and cattle. In addition

46) *Sh. M.G. I.* 1854, VIII, 67; *Ps.* 336-337.

47) *Ps.* 336-337; *W.* III, 131-132; see *Epp.* 71-80.

48) *Sh. M.G. I* 1854, VIII, 67-69; *Ps.* 337; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 4; *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, April 30; *Ps.* 337; *Epp.* 80.

49) *Ps.* 337; *Hi.* 69.

50) *Sh. M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 66-67; *Ps.* 337.

51) *Ps.* 337; *Kl.* 117; see *Epp.* 80.

they received temporary loans and promises from the government. As a consequence, their arrival strongly boosted the failing spirit of the Mennonites of the first settlement who at that time also received the loans promised earlier. But the material wealth of the Mennonites emerged later. ⁵²⁾

Like Empress Catharine II, Emperor Paul I showed serious interest in matters of Mennonite colonization in Russia.

Desiring more Mennonite immigration from foreign countries, in 1797 the government of Emperor Paul I declared "that all current and future Mennonite immigrants to the Novorossia region, as well as all previous groups, were completely satisfied with promises given to them." Therefore, all re-settlers were "inspired to come and live in the Novorossia region. (P.C.S. No. 17813 Imperial Order, February 17, 1797).

It must be mentioned that during Emperor Paul's reign, the foreign colonization in Russia was not increased. ⁵³⁾ The main concern of the government was the building up and betterment of existing foreign settlements in Russia.

In 1782 the system of governing foreign settlements in 1782 (by means of *gubernia* governments) turned out to be inadequate. Tempers flared in the settlements, discipline and productivity declined. The colonists complained of oppression, bribery and other misdeeds of officials - complaints which were confirmed by a subsequent investigation. ⁵⁴⁾ Thus the government was forced, in the interest of colonization, to create a special office for the management of foreign colonization in Russia. In the name of the emperor, on March 7, 1797 (P.C.S. No. 17865)

52) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 67.

53) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 69.

54) Keller, Conrad. Die Deutschen Kolonien in Südrussland, Volume I, Odessa 1905, page 44.

a “Board of State Domains, Guardianship of Foreigners and Rural Husbandry” was established by the Senate. One of its obligations was the active acquisition of foreign colonists. The government separated the colonists into a special category, so “that foreign settlers would not deal with the local treasury, police or commissioners.” (*P.C.S. No. 18022, decree July 30, 1797, point 9*).

The Board of State Domains first visited all the foreign and Mennonite settlements in South Russia. The reason for the visit to the Mennonite settlements was a petition of the Khortitsa Mennonites in 1799 to “improve the lot” given to them.

Despite the enormous privileges given to the Mennonites in Russia, and despite their reputation, they did not become model entrepreneurs. The start of their colonization in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* was not at all successful. The conditions forced them to apply for “betterment of their lot” in 1799. In 1799 the royal counsel, Contenius, upon visiting the colonies in Novorossia by imperial order, reported to the Board of State Domains that the Khortitsa Mennonites “are in an unsatisfactory condition because of crop failures and loss of cattle.” (*P.C.S. Letter Patent, September 6, 1800, No. 19546, point 9*). Despite the hard work and sobriety of the Mennonites, Contenius doubted that they would attain a good condition. “The fate of the Khortitsa settlement,” wrote Contenius, “depends to a great deal on the hilly terrain, where, due to dryness, and not enough moisture and no rain, grapes burn out, grain grows poorly and often the plowman reworks and reseeds the land, so that not only is no profit made from farming, but there is no grain for the whole year. Only cattle-raising gives them any income and they are occupied with this form of farming most of the time, bringing with them enough foreign horses and cattle, but with insufficient

pasture and available hay, they could not diversify as they had desired. Furthermore, the cruel winter conditions kept them at the present level.”

In addition, 86 families of the last transport had to wait two years and did not receive their allotment of land, and so had to be resettled among the already settled communities, thus hindering these. All this led to deficiencies in their homes. As a result of the slow arrival of subsidies by the government they could not build good houses for themselves. Thirty-eight families did not have a house. “The support came scattered and in small amounts resulting in a prolonged settlement, providing no supply of food,” and leaving no means for further development. The royal counsel Contenius did not see any possibility that the Mennonites would repay the government loans given to them in time (*P.C.S.* April 6, 1800, No. 19372).

55)

For the improvement of the “ruinous condition” of the Mennonites, a statement was presented to the Senate on April 6, 1800 recommending:

1. Resettling 150 families from Khortitsa onto a piece of better land to be purchased by the government for the allocation of the 65 *desiatini* plots for these remaining re-settlers; leaving all other land for their use; providing all families with 65 *desiatini* of land; paying 15 *kopeks* per day and taxing the remaining land at 2½ *kopeks* per *desiatini* after the expiry of the privileged years, the same rate as for all settlers on government land in the Novorossia region.
2. Granting 5 more years of privileges for the remaining settlers and granting those who had been resettled for more than 10 years, counting from the expiration of the first privileged years, for repaying the resettlement money at the end of these years at 15 *kopeks* per *desiatini*, and in addition to this, for repaying loans given for starting at the new site,

55) *Kl.* 117-118.

so that the Mennonites would repay within 10 years; and those resettled at another site would repay in 20 years. *)

3. Due to the “ruinous condition and poverty” of the Mennonites, they did not have to repay 22,738 rubles, 12 kopecks, but rather transfer to the Board of State Domains the amount of 358,237 *rubles* expended for travel expenses and loan obligations “to improve their condition” (*P.C.S.* April 6, 1800, No. 19372, September 9, 1805, No. 21909).

As we will see below, upon their petition, in 1802 a piece of land (11,755 *desiatini*) was purchased from Miklashevskago in the lower Khortitsa region for the Khortitsa Mennonite settlement with government money. For this the government paid 24,000 rubles, which sum was added to the original loan the Mennonites were to repay. (This sum was added in 1805.) Sixty-five Mennonite families were resettled on this land (*P.C.S.* July 14, 1802, No. 20343, point 4, September 9, 1805, No. 21909).

By the same law of April 6, 1802, an “Office of Guardianship for Foreign Settlers in Novorossia” was established in Ekaterinoslav, under the management of the “Board of State Domains,” to take over the supervision of the South-Russian colonies (*P.C.S.* July 26, 1800, No. 19492). The office was also mandated to look after the “Mennonite well-being” mentioned in the law of April 6, 1800. Until the founding of the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers, the office was the highest governing body for the colonists in South Russia.

On September 6, 1800 the Mennonites received an imperial letter, already promised them in 1787 (*P.C.S.* No. 19546). In this letter all rights and privileges were confirmed, as promised them according in an agreement with the government in 1787. In addition, to stimulate them to “greater efforts in domestic matters,”

*) These grants then were confirmed in a “Patent Letter” by Emperor Paul I for the Mennonites on September 6, 1800 (point 8, see *P.C.S.* No. 19546).

they were granted several other privileges. These advantages and privileges were not only granted to those Mennonites already there, but also to those arriving in Russia at a later date.

The Letters Patent affirmed for the Mennonites and their descendants the freedom of religion, and the oath was changed to an affirmation for the Mennonites (point 1). Land plots given them (65 *desiatini* per family) were declared as their “indisputable and eternal hereditary ownership” (point 2). All Mennonites already settled and arriving in the future were allowed to establish factories, shops, and trades, and to join guilds and factories (point 3). Equally, all Mennonites already settled and arriving in the future, including their children and descendants, were reassured by imperial word that none of them, at any time would be recruited or forced to do civil or military service against their will (point 6). The villages and homes of Mennonites were exempt from all “lodging and billeting, with the exception of transiting military units; the Mennonites were freed from all civic duties but were responsible for the upkeep of bridges and roads located on their territory and for participating in the maintenance of the postal service” (point 7). For settled Mennonites and those yet to be settled in the Novorossia region, a 10-year duty-free exemption was granted (point 9). All military and civil governments were to protect the Mennonites and their descendants in their “quiet lifestyle,” their property and privileges, and also give them aid, defense and protection.

Additionally, the Letter Patent granted the Mennonites new advantages. They and their descendants received the right to manage their property freely (except land given to them by the government) (point 8). They were allowed to brew beer and vinegar and to distil beverages for their own use and also for selling these wholesale in their region. Non-Mennonites were forbidden to build restaurants and drinking establishments on Mennonite land. Traders were not allowed to sell wine or to open taverns without the consent of the Mennonites (points 4 & 5).

The Charter of September 6, 1800 concluded the efforts of Emperor Paul I regarding the development of Mennonite life in Russia. This Charter was of very great importance in the life of the Mennonites in Russia. It determined to a great extent their future privileged position in Russia. The Russian government stance toward the Mennonites in later years was based on its content.

It must be said that the Mennonites in Russia received special unrestricted privileges. Their settlement in Russia under Catharine II and Paul I was recognized as important for the government. The government did everything for them - whatever they requested. Their settlement in Russia was accomplished and all conveniences were arranged at the expense of the government. They were given generous quantities of land, they received such rights and privileges which the Russian settlers could not even dream of – this, according to Professor Bagalia, offended the representatives of the majority Russian population. 56)

Such special consideration for the Mennonites the Russian government was also evident under the reign of Emperor Alexander I. These circumstances drew so much more attention that at the time of the reign of Alexander I the foreign colonization in Russia was subjected to gradual restriction.

Foreign and Mennonite Colonization under Emperor Alexander I

As stated above, at the time of Catharine II all colonists were accepted with no criteria applied. Among them many people were sick, lower class, miscreants and capable of nothing. They turned out to be a burden for the government. 57) The settlement of each foreign family cost the government a great deal of money. 58)

56) D.I. Bagalia. The Colonization of the Novorossia region, and the First steps on their Way to Culture. (Kiev, 1889) pages 89-90.

57) *Sh.M.W.D.* 1837, book 26, page 444.

58) Same book, pages 446-447; *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, April, 42-43.

With the founding of a new Ministry (in 1803) all matters relating to foreign colonists were transferred to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*P.C.S.* July 18, 1803, No. 20852). The first Minister of Internal Affairs, Col. Kochubey, turned his attention to the lack of selection criteria “in foreign colonization.” For its regulation, “Rules for the acceptance and settlement of foreign colonists” were published on February 20, 1804 (*P.C.S.* No. 21163). According to these rules, foreigners were not indiscriminately accepted as colonists, but only persons who were in families, prosperous, well-behaved, inclined to agriculture, namely, farmers, gardeners, vintners, sheep breeders, etc.; or in trades needed for agriculture such as shoemakers, carpenters, etc. were accepted. The yearly quota of colonists from Germany was limited to 200 families. And so that they would not be living at government expense for a long period, their place of settlement was to be chosen in advance. Thereby it was clarified “that no colonists would be indiscriminately invited to resettle in Russia, but only those who applied at their diplomatic agencies in foreign countries, which reviewed the evidence and found proof of their good behavior, and would issue a passport for their move to Russia.” All these colonists were granted the same rights and privileges as those who had settled earlier (*P.C.S.* February 20, 1804, No. 21163). 59)

In 1810 the government ceased to give loans and grants to foreign immigrants whose settlement was a burden to the government’s treasury. “Peasants, natural subjects, moving from a *gubernia* with a large population to an unsettled area and being useful to the population of the colonies, received no loans at all, as the compensation for a German family, freed from military service and other obligations, probably would have been enough to resettle 50 Russian peasants under the conditions they lived. Nevertheless

59) *Sh.M.W.D.* 1837, Book 26, page 444; 1850 April, page 42, 1854, 1-2.

the settlement of foreign immigrants at their own expense was not prohibited. They were given land for settlement and granted all rights and advantages (*P.C.S.* No. 21163) that all foreign colonists in Russia were given (*P.C.S.* February 25, 1810, No. 24131).

In 1819 the admission of foreign colonists into Russia was terminated (*P.C.S.* August 5, 1819, No. 27912) and Russian foreign diplomatic missions were forbidden to issue passports to foreigners wishing to settle in Russia (*P.C.S.* October 25, 1819, No. 27954). Foreign colonization in Russia “slowed down” ⁶⁰⁾ even though it continued to the 1840s. ^{*)}

None of these restrictions applied to the Mennonites. In its relationships to the Mennonites the government of Alexander I displayed the same consideration as had been characteristic for the two preceding imperial governments.

In 1802, 11,755 *desiatini* of land were purchased from the Privy Councilor Miklaschewsky in the lower Khortitsa region for the Khortitsa colony upon the request and choice of the Mennonites. The government paid 24,000 *rubles* for it, which sum was added to the previous obligations of the Mennonites. Sixty-five Mennonite families were then re-settled on this land. (*P.C.S.* July 24, 1802, No. 20343,

60) Stach. *Die Deutschen Kolonien in Sud-Russland. I Theil* (Prischib 1904,) page 26.

*) From 1813 – 1822 about 100 German pietists from Württemberg, settled in the Melitopol (and Berdyansk) *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*. At about the same time approximately 500 Prussian colonist families were settled in the Mariupol *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*. In 1821 many immigrants from Württemberg settled in Bessarabia. In 1823, 139 families, subjects of Baden, wanted to settle in the Novorossia region; they received 9,340 *desiatini* of land in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*. As not all the colonists from Baden arrived, some of the land was made available to colonists from Hessen-Darmstadt and France (*Sh.M.W.D.* 1837, book 26, pages 449-450). In 1828 crown land in the Taurida *gubernia*, loans and grants were given to settlers from Anhalt. (*P.C.S.* March 3, 1828, No. 1841).

September 9, 1805, No. 21909. They founded the two villages: Burwalde and Nieder Khortitsa.

In 1803 the Mennonites living in the Novorossia region were freed from general service obligations for the remaining privileged years. (*P.C.S.* February 6, 1803, No. 20610).

Settlement of the Molochnaia Mennonites *)

In the same year of 1803, about 150 Mennonite families, living in the district of Elbing and Marienburg in Prussia, wanted to resettle in Russia and had already prepared to sell their property. "Wishing to speed up this resettlement" our government ordered the Military Governor of Latvia to welcome these colonists at the border, "with signs of care and well wishes," supply them with means for their transit, without obstacles or physical exhaustion, to the Novorossia region, and have the governments of the *gubernia* through which they had to travel, supply them with everything needed for their "comfort and well-being." Poor persons were to be helped financially (*P.C.S.* March 28, 1803, No. 20705).

All these Mennonites were settled on the Molochnaia watershed (in the Berdyansk *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*). At that time the Berdyansk and Melitopol *uezd* in the Taurida *gubernia* were a large steppe where the Nogai people roamed. The Molokans and Doukhobors began to settle along the Molochnaia river from 1802 onward and after 1803-1804 Mennonites started to settle here. For the Mennonites,

*) *Is.* 8-26; *Fr* 1, 24; *W.* III, 142-148.

120,000 *desiatini* of land beside the Molochnaia river were set aside. ⁶¹⁾ (The Khortitsa colony totaled 35,000 *desiatini* of land.)

The gracious attention which our government gave the Mennonites had an enormous impact on their further immigration to Russia. From the vicinity of Danzig, Elbing and Marienburg they came as entire villages to live in Russia. Rich landowners sold their property, sometimes for as much as 30-40,000 gulden and moved to Russia. ⁶²⁾ In 1804 162 families left Prussia and settled along the Molochnaia river. ⁶³⁾ In the next year (1805), 42 families left Prussia of which 20 families were settled in the Vilenka *gubernia* and the rest along the Molochnaia river. ⁶⁴⁾ During 1806 a total of 15 Mennonite families left Prussia and also settled along the Molochnaia river. ⁶⁵⁾ In total, from 1803-1806, 362 Prussian Mennonite families were settled here. ⁶⁶⁾ All of these people were well-to-do. They brought a considerable number of horses, cattle, implements and money along from Prussia. ⁶⁷⁾ Upon their arrival at the place of settlement they received about half a million *rubles* or credit from the crown to build houses, to buy cattle, and in general for the acquisition of property. ⁶⁸⁾ The Mennonites of this (third) wave of founded 17 villages, 11 of them on the banks of the Molochnaia river, two of them close to the Tokmak river and four close to Kuru Yushanlee river. ⁶⁹⁾

In 1805 the time granted for repaying crown loans expired for many Khortitsa Mennonites. Their leaders and church elders turned to the Guardianship office with a presentation in which they stated, "that among them

61) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1854, X, 15.

62) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, part IV, 5-6.

63) Varadinov. History of *M.W.D.* part I, 124.

64) Varadinov. History of *M.W.D.* part I, 141.

65) Varadinov. History of *M.W.D.* part I, 164.

66) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1854, X, 15; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 5; Fr. I, 74.

67) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1854, X, 15-16; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 5.

68) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1854, X, 15-16; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 5.

69) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, IV, 6; 1854, X, 15, No. 12, map at the end of the book.

are a number of families who, as a result of the unhappy experiences of the last years, are in poor condition and cannot repay the received loans in the near future. To improve conditions, it was decided to build vessels for sailing on the Dnieper river to the shores of the Black Sea in the next spring (1806). Thereby the local villages, situated at the lower end of the rapids, would have the ability to build more vessels, (and) when their success would be what they hoped for, they could sell their products for higher prices in those places. In addition, they would not neglect planting more mulberry trees and improving the quality of the sheep they tried to import from Prussia. Clothing would be made by themselves and in this way they hoped to be in a position to repay the crown loans fully and without burdening themselves." On this basis, the Mennonites solicited permission to repay 25 *rubles* annually, with the understanding that 10 rubles, 42½ kopek went for land grants, and 14 rubles, 57½ *kopeks* for the repayment of loans, instead of the previous strictly set payments. The Mennonites promised to double these payments "if their conditions improved." These requests were granted by the government. In connection with this, 24,000 *rubles* paid by the crown for the land of Privy Councilor Miklashevsky in Khortitsa were added by the supreme authority to the debt owed by the Mennonites. This land was purchased in 1802 for the settlement of the Khortitsa Mennonites (*P.C.S.* September 9, 1805, No. 21909).

The immigration of Prussian Mennonites continued in the following years. In 1808-1809, 99 families arrived from Prussia. ⁷⁰⁾ From 1810 to 1818 the flow from Prussia was not large. In 1819, 75 Mennonite families arrived from Prussia, but 179 arrived in 1820 ⁷¹⁾. All of these immigrants were settled beside the Molochnaia river.

70) *Fr.* I, 74.

71) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 6; 1854, X, 15.

The prohibition against foreign immigrants settling in Russia (1813) did not apply to Mennonites. “Out of respect for the excellent industriousness and the improvement of property by all Mennonites living in the Novorossia region,” on November 18, 1820, the ministerial committee, with the highest approval, granted the Mennonites permission “to leave Prussia and settle on the land of their fellow believers on the Molochnaia river, until all land assigned to them will be occupied.” The crown made 300,000 *rubles* available for their settlement. ⁷²⁾ Upon the wish of the government, the Prussian Mennonites were not advised by official (diplomatic) channels about these regulations, but through private channels, as suggested by the South Russian Mennonites. The annual limit for Mennonites leaving Prussia was set at 200 families. ⁷³⁾ But the further flow of Mennonites from Prussia was insignificant and did not reach 20 families per year. All of these immigrants settled on the Molochnaia river. ⁷⁴⁾

At the same time that arrangements were made to regulate foreign colonization in Russia, the government of Emperor Alexander I introduced measures to build up the internal governance of the colonies. In 1801 the Novorossia colonists received self-government analogous to the governance of urban communities. In the colonies village civil authorities were introduced, composed of elected officials: village mayor (*Schulz*) and two assistants. The villages were grouped into *okrugs* [= district], with a *okrug* office at its head. The *okrug* authority consisted of an elected *okrug* mayor (*Oberschulz*) and two *okrug* assistants (*Gebiets-beisitzer*). The elected positions were elected by the colonists themselves. The village authorities reported to the *okrug* authority. The colonists’ *okrugs* and *okrug*

72) General Archives D. No. 233 for 1827. Rep. Dta. Royal Household L. 33-34.

73) Report of Managing Director dated January 24, 1820 V, 48 (see brochure “Who are the Mennonites,” 2nd edition, Halbstadt, 1915, pages 48-49).

74) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 6; 1854, X 15.

authorities were under the supervision of the colony mayor, above whom stood the local Guardianship office ⁷⁵ (*P.C.S.* May 16, 1801, No. 19873). This arrangement was also applied to the Mennonite settlements. In addition, the supervision of the settlements was assigned to the *gubernia* government (until the founding of the Guardianship Committee). ⁷⁶ The Mennonite settlements in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* formed a special Mennonite *okrug* – Khortitsa. The Mennonite settlement on the Molochnaia river (Taurida *gubernia*) were united as the Molochnaia Mennonite *okrug*.

This way of handling matters created a government within a government (state within a state) in the Mennonite settlements. Self-government, as granted to the Mennonites, was one of the reasons for their future economic success and the organization of their settlements. It protected them from interference by the pre-reform Russian administration (*gubernia* and *uezd*). It also gave the Mennonites the freedom and the possibility to create conditions and institutions that were in the best economic interest of the Mennonites.

It cannot be said that the introduction of self-government by the government met with the general and unanimous approval of the Mennonite community at first. The issue was that among the Mennonites there was a sentiment that forbade Mennonites to take up government responsibilities “so as not to belong to the world as special communities of God.” There were followers of such ideas among the Russian Mennonites. “Authorities,” “village mayors” and other officers of the colony administration, chosen by the Mennonites from among themselves, received great authority and power over their “brethren”: they could place them under arrest, and even apply corporal punishment upon them. Such “innovations” seemed to some Mennonites to be in contradiction with Christian suffering and love of your neighbour.

Special opposition against such trends came from

75) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1852, IV, 32; *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, April, 37-39.

76) *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, April, 44-45.

some of the Mennonite elders. Only slowly did such opposition disappear on its own. 77)

As the foreign settlements in South Russia grew and multiplied with every year, the Novorossia Guardianship office soon found itself to be in no position to deal with the huge problems of the foreign settlements in South Russia. Therefore, in 1818, “for the administration, in three Novorossia *gubernia* (Ekaterinoslav, Taurida and Kherson) and the Bessarabia region, of the foreign colonists settled there in the past and to be settled in the future, a Guardianship Committee for Foreign Colonists in the southern part of Russia was established, placed under the supervision of Ministry of Internal Affairs. This committee was also put in charge of the local Guardianship officers and partially of the Novorossia region and relocated to Ekaterinoslav (*P.C.S.* supreme ruling March 22, 1818 No. 27312). 78)

Thanks to the significant support of the Russian government, the Mennonite settlements in South Russia enhanced their strength on a new, though not always favorable, basis. The information about the flourishing conditions of the Khortitsa and Molochnaia Mennonites is preserved in 1810. According to the “News from Ekaterinoslav” printed in the *Svernaya Pochta* [= Northern Post] in 1810, the number of Khortitsa Mennonites of both genders reached 1,972 in 1809-18. “The Mennonites may boast especially about their prosperity. Whoever has seen their previous way of life in Danzig and the Elbing region, “sees their great advantages in their present condition, the large land areas, plentiful excellent pastures, hay-making and overall favorable possibilities in all respects. They introduced good fruit, and some even introduced vineyards, planted mulberry trees, and even produced silk, have the best kinds of horses and cattle, which they brought along,

77) W. III, 139-141, 146-148.

78) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, X, 6; Keller, *Die Deutschen Kolonien in Südrussland*, Volume I, page 45.

and increase daily; they also took up sheep-raising, for which the government supported them in a special way, giving them about 100 sheep of the Spanish merino breed. Beekeeping was also an important part of their agriculture. Additionally, they built a common winery, a beer brewery and a malt factory and water- and windmills. As the privileged years ended, the Mennonites (and colonists) started to pay the principal on the loans given to them by the crown, these payments being rather small and not comparable with usual payments, also considering the fact that they were free from recruitment [into military service] and billeting [of military units]. They sold their products in nearby towns at a price favorable to them. Their industry spread over a wide area, they built vessels and travelled with them on the Black Sea to Odessa with their produce, which is also delivered over land roads to the seaport of Taganrog, 500 *versts* [NOTE: 1 verst = 1.067 kilometers] distant. ⁷⁹⁾

According to “News from Simferopol” printed in *Svernaya Pochta* in 1810, “Mennonites recently settled on the steppe areas of the Crimea at the ‘Molochnaia watershed’ and ‘like the colonists formed their own *okrugs*” and by 1810 they already reached a flourishing state. “Now they occupy a total of 26 villages in which the Mennonite population stands at 1,902, and the number of colonists is 998 of both genders. As it is their habit, they build farms and wealthy estates, while having large areas of land which does not require any fertilization, which generously rewards their agricultural labor. Cattle-raising, beekeeping and gardening are very successful. In the present year (1809) they already had 25 silk plantations containing 30,000 planted trees. They deliver their products to the nearest towns and villages and make a good profit.” ⁸⁰⁾

79) *Svernaya Pochta* 1810, No. 23. News from Ekaterinoslav for January 5.

80) *Svernaya Pochta* 1810, No. 25. News from Simferopol for January 8.

Foreign and Mennonite Colonization under Emperor Nikolas I

The reign of Emperor Nikolas I was not favorable for the Mennonite colonization in Russia. The resettlement of Mennonites from Prussia to the Novorossia area continued, but was small in numbers, and was administered under several crucial limitations.

The settling of Prussian Mennonites in Novorossia was allowed until 1820 by which time the land made available to the Mennonites on the Molochnaia river was completely allocated. 300,000 *rubles* had also been allocated for their resettlement. By 1817 this sum was totally spent. In the meantime, the Mennonite land on the Molochnaia river was not completely settled and land for 600 families was still available. As a result, in 1817 Prussian Mennonites were allowed to settle along the Molochnaia river again, but with the condition that each immigrating family would send 400 guilders to the colony authorities to secure its property.

81)

The resettlement of Mennonites continued until 1835. Even in 1834 twenty-six Mennonite families coming from Prussia were settled on the Molochnaia river. 82)

On February 27, 1835, an order was issued by the highest governmental level to prohibit “accepting those foreigners into Russia who did not have at least 10 *reichsthaler* with them” (P.C.S. 27, February 1835 No. 7908). From this point until the end of the reign of Nikolas I, foreign (and most Mennonite) colonization in South Russia ceased. Only with the special permission of the supreme ruler did about 40 Mennonite families from Prussia settle on the Molochnaia river in 1835. They received all rights and privileges that were granted to former Mennonite settlers. 83)

81) General Archive of Ministry of State Domains, 1827, 33-34.

82) Baradinov. History *M.B.D.* Part III, Vol. I, page 588.

83) Fr. I, 80.

The cessation of foreign colonization in 1835 caused alarm among the Mennonites with regard to their future situation in Russia. The Mennonites feared that the rights and privileges granted to them by Emperor Paul I might lose force over the years. In their fear they sought the grace of the crown. By a supreme order on November 9, 1838, the Mennonites in the Ekaterinoslav and Taurida *gubernia* were informed that their fears were baseless and that the rights and privileges granted to them by Emperor Paul I would not change even in the future. ⁸⁴⁾

At the termination by the government of resettlement activities in 1833, the local Guardianship offices (Ekaterinoslav, Odessa and Bessarabia) were dissolved, and only one office was established for the management of the settlements in Novorossia: the "Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers in the Southern Region" (*P.C.S.* July 1, 1833 No. 6298). ⁸⁵⁾

With the establishment of the Ministry of State Domains (in 1837) foreign settlements in Russia and the "Guardians Committee" came under the supervision of this Ministry.

Due to the inflow of Mennonites from Prussia and the natural growth of the Mennonite population, the number of Mennonite villages in South Russia grew constantly.

The first Mennonites settlers in the Khortitsa region founded 8 villages (in 1789 -1790). ^{*)} By 1824 18 villages could already be counted in the Khortitsa region. ^{**)}

84) Report of the Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers in the South Russian Region, Molotschansk *okrug*. Order of December 2, 1838, No. 5281 (Issue 21-23).

85) *Sh.M.W.D.* 1837 Book 26, page 456.

*) Villages founded in 1789-1790: Khortitsa, Rosental (Kantzerovka), Insel Chortitsa (Khortitsa Island), Einlage (Kitchkas), Kronsweide, Neuenberg (Melashovka), Neuendorf (Schirokaya) and Schönhorst.

***) Villages founded in 1795: Schönwiese (near Alexandrovsk); in 1797: Kronsgarten (in Novomosk *uezd*); in 1803: Burwalde (Baburka) and Nieder Khortitsa; in 1809: Kronstal; in 1812: Neuosterwick; in 1816: Schöneberg (Smolyania); in 1824: Rosengart (Popovka), Blumengart (Kapustyanka), and Neuhorst (Ternobatya); *Kl.* 31-32; Epp. 80-81.

In 1835, as a result of a population surplus, more land was needed in the Khortitsa *okrug*. A section of 9,492 *desiatini* was assigned in the Alexandrovsk (present Mariupol) *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*) on which 145 young Khortitsa families settled. From 1836 until 1852 they founded five new villages here. *** The whole "Alexandrovsk" section was distributed with 65 *desiatini* allotted per family. In 1856 this section was separated and a new Mennonite *okrug*, Mariupol, created. In 1874 this whole *okrug* emigrated to America.

A particularly large number of villages were founded in the Molochnaia Mennonite *okrug*. The first Mennonites settled on the Molochnaia river in 1804-1806 in 18 villages. **** Forty villages existed in the Molochnaia *okrug* by 1824. ***** From 1828 until 1839 five villages were founded. ^ From 1842-1848 - 2 ^^), from 1851-1857 - 7 ^^) and from 1862 - 1866 3 more ^^^^).

Until 1824 the colonization of the Khortitsa and Molochnaia

***) Bergthal (Bodnya) in 1836, Schöpfung (1837), Heubuden (1841), Friedrichstal (1854) *Kl.* 151, appendix 32; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, page 37.

****) Villages founded in 1804: Halbstadt, Muntau, Schönau, Fischau, Lindenau, Lichtenau, Blumstein, Münsterberg, and Altonau. In 1805: Schönsee, Petershagen, Tiegenhagen, Orloff, Tiege, Blumenort, and Rosenort; in 1806 Fürstenau.

*****) Villages founded in 1811: Rückenau; in 1819: Margenau, Lichtfelde, Neukirch; in 1820: Alexandertal, Schardau, Pordenau, Mariental, Rudnerweide, Grossweide, Franztal, and Pastwa; in 1821: Fürstenwerder, Alexanderwohl, and Gnadenheim; in 1821: Tiegerweide; in 1823: Liebenau, Elisabeththal; in 1824: Wernersdorf, Friedensdorf, Prangenau (*Is.* 12-13; *Kl.* 36-38).

^ In 1828 Sparrau was founded; in 1831: Konteniusfeld; in 1835: Gnadenfeld; in 1836: Waldheim; in 1839: Landskrone (*Is.* 19; *Kl.* 37-38).

^^ In 1828 Hirschau was founded (*Is.* 19; *Kl.* 36-38).

^^^ In 1851 Nikolaidorf was founded; in 1852: Paulsheim; in 1854: Kleefeld; in 1857: Alexanderkrone, Mariawohl, Friedensruh, Steinfeld (*Is.* 26; *Kl.* 36-38).

^^^^ In 1862 Gnadental was founded; in 1863: Hamberg and Klippenfeld (*Is.* 26; *Kl.* 36-38).

okrugs was carried out exclusively by settlers from Prussia. After 1824 no new villages were founded in the Khortitsa *okrug*; the colonization of the Molochnaia land area was carried out by settlers from Prussia and by local growth. Since 1835 the colonization of the Molochnaia (and Mariupol) *okrug* was carried out exclusively by local growth.

Economic Development of Mennonite Settlements in Russia to the Middle of the 19th Century

The general growth of the Mennonite colonization coincided with the economic development of the Mennonite settlements. An especially high level of economic conditions was attained in the Molochnaia Mennonite settlement, well-known all over Russia by 1830-1840. ⁸⁶⁾ In the 1840s Mennonite agriculture was considered to be such a good model that the government dispatched officers from the army to the Molochnaia settlement to study it. ⁸⁷⁾ The official report of the Ministry for State Domains about the Mennonite settlements, printed in its journal for 1841, draws a clear picture of the well-being and success prevailing in these settlements.

“Coming into a Mennonite settlement one feels as if one is being transferred into another world. All buildings that one can see here are in sharp contrast those of other settlers. The streets are laid out in order, between their houses are orchards, and along the street there are sufficient trees planted and everything is optimally arranged. The houses are mostly built from bricks, but there are still many wooden ones not made with fireproof bricks; at present (in 1840) the Mennonites do not build wooden houses at all because they are less desirable and lumber for building material is hard to get. The internal arrangement

86) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1854, X, 15.

87) A. Skalkowskiy. A Statistical Report of the Novorossia Region II, Odessa 1853, page 63.

of the houses is very comfortable, the finish is clean and attractive. The exteriors are excellently built and durable for good housekeeping. Everything gives the Mennonite houses a welcoming and neat appearance. Abundance in all things is evident in the Mennonite setting, there are no poor, all have enough. Many are wealthy in their peasant way of life, and the income of some reaches 15 to 20 thousand silver *rubles* per year.” According to records, “it can be said that the majority of Mennonite villages in the *Taurida gubernia* depict exemplary farms and model estates, in which everything moves forward and strives for betterment in all respects; they use every new improvement for updating the current operations - if it serves the purpose, is helpful and convenient in application. With them all aspects of agriculture perform equally well: grains, cattle, sheep-raising, forestry, gardening, beekeeping and trades.” 88)

The good condition of Mennonite villages was not only a result of the diligence and economic ability of the Mennonites, but also due to the stance which the Russian government took in its relations to the Mennonites. By assisting the building of Mennonite villages and giving them land in abundance, the Russia government protected them from *gubernia* and *okrug* governmental interference and constantly supported their economic undertakings. Under these conditions the Mennonites, especially the *Molochnaia* Mennonites, could successfully take steps to raise their economic well-being with the sympathy of the government. And indeed, beginning in the 1820s a number of societies arose in the *Molochnaia* Mennonite settlement to pursue the goal of the economic improvement of the land, such as the “Society for the Fostering of the Development of Agriculture,” the “Society for the Development of Forestry, Gardening, Silk- and Winemaking,” the “Society for the Improvement of the Sheep-raising Industry,” “Society for Fire Insurance.” 89)

88) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1841, Volume I, Book 2, pages 553-562.

89) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, IV, 10-26.

Of special importance was the “Society for the Improvement of Agriculture.” It emerged in 1830 at the initiative of the government for the purpose of “watching over the farm of every Mennonite, to be assured that he takes good care of his land under cultivation, specifically, does he plant trees as required? is his house well-kept? and does he have all the agricultural implements?” The Society punished the lazy and, if this did not succeed, it assigned them to civic duties, and if this did not help, the society removed them from the farm. The demands of the Society were strict and enforced and, thanks to this strict order and industriousness reigned in the Molochnaia Mennonite villages. ⁹⁰⁾

Cornies ^{*}

The soul of the agricultural community and its lifelong representative was the well-known figure among the Molochnaia Mennonites, Johann Cornies. He was a man of extraordinary intelligence, resolute will and tireless energy. He was born in Prussia. At 16 years of age (in 1805) he, together with his parents, resettled on the Molochnaia river, and here he settled in the village of Orloff. Cornies came from a poor family. Having saved some capital, Cornies began to rent crown land on the Yushanlee river (a tributary of the Molochnaia river in the Berdyansk *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*). Here he built an estate for sheep-raising and a tree farm. At his estate Cornies undertook experiments for the improvement of agriculture and fertilizers, experiments in planting trees, nurturing forests and the improvement of cattle, which was then applied by the Mennonites in their farming.

90) *Sh.M.G.I.* 1841, Volume I, book 2, pages 559-560.

* D.H. Epp. *Johann Cornies: Züge aus seinem Leben und Wirken*, (Ekaterinoslav, Berdyansk 1909); Fr. I. 155-162.

The work of Cornies made him widely known, and in the process he became rich. In 1817, at the age of 28 he was promoted to the "Commissioner for Mennonite Affairs in Russia." In 1830 an "Agricultural Society" was formed in the Molochnaia settlement, and Cornies became its chairman. He pursued the aims of this Society with tremendous energy. The plans for the improvement of agriculture among the Mennonites were implemented with persistence, even strictness. It is said that he sometimes used corporal punishment on Mennonites who were not conforming to the rules. Cornies' activities benefited the Mennonites enormously and were recognized by the highest level of government.

With his natural intellect and fine gifts Cornies did not receive a school education. The reading of books and travel gave him a rich supply of information in various fields of knowledge, and he, a simple peasant, could maintain lively cordial relationships with well-known scientists of his time. The Academy of Science elected him to be a corresponding member. ⁹¹⁾

His ownership of property was extensive. In the 1840s his yearly income reached 60,000 rubles. ⁹²⁾ Cornies hosted the Emperors Alexander I and Alexander II (while crown prince) in his home. The Novorossia Governor General Prince Vorontsov often visited the Cornies estate. In addition, Cornies maintained friendly relations with the Minister of State Domains, Kiselev, and corresponded with him. The well-known traveler of South Russia, Haxthausen, tells us that the position of governor was offered to Cornies, but he rejected the offer, not wanting to break the promise at his baptism "not to rule nor bear arms." ⁹³⁾ Cornies died in 1848.

91) *Kl.* 168-169; "Who are the Mennonites? A Short Historical Sketch", (Halbstadt. 1915), pages 52-53; *Fr. I.*, 155-161.

92) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, IV, 26.

93) *Fr. I.*, 157-158; "Who are the Mennonites," pages 52-53.

The Molochnaia “Agricultural Society” existed until 1871. After the division of the Molochnaia settlement into two *volosts*, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld (in 1871), the society was split into two independent societies (by *volost*) which exist at the present time ⁹⁴.

In 1832 upon recommendation of the government the “Khortitsa Agricultural Society” was founded in Khortitsa. It existed until 1880. It had the same aims as the Molochnaia society, but it played a considerably less important role in the Khortitsa region. ⁹⁵

Prussian Mennonite Aspirations to Resettle in Russia.

Samara Mennonite Settlement.

Despite the termination of foreign colonization (in 1835) Prussian Mennonites managed to continue resettling in Russia. In their aspirations and challenges, they received the support of Cornies who made use of the confidence that the Petersburg circles had in him. The Minister of State Domains, Kiselev himself, not uninfluenced by Cornies, looked upon the Mennonite petition with sympathy. On October 22, 1841 he wrote to Cornies, that “the Mennonites stand higher than others, and serve as economic models for others, and he realized this significance.” “All this,” wrote Kiselev, “causes me to desire an increase in number of Mennonites and I await their petition which you (Cornies) told me about in Yushanlee” (Cornies estate). ⁹⁶

The petition was not left waiting for a response, - in the 1840s, Kiselev ordered the member of the Scientific Committee of the Ministry of State Domains, D.S.S. Keppen, to contact the Prussian Mennonites who wanted to resettle in Russia. These Mennonites decided to leave Prussia out of fear of being drafted into military service.

94) Fr. I, 162.

95) Epp. 120-121.

96) “Who are the Mennonites”, brochure. (2nd edition, Halbstadt. 1915), page 53.

The delegates of the Prussian Mennonites met with Keppen in South Russia and asked him to allow them to settle in Russia. 97)

Despite the sympathy of the Ministry for State Domains, the petition of the Mennonites was not satisfied *at the outset*. As a result of “troublesome events” in Western Europe in 1848 any addition to the [number of] foreign colonists in Russia was forbidden by supreme decrees. 98)

The petitioning of the Mennonites continued nevertheless. In 1850 some of the Prussian Mennonites turned to the Russian government with a petition to be allowed to settle in Russia “under the same rights granted to their fellow believers, with an allocation of crown land, or the right to buy such land.” 99)

According to a report by the Ministry of State Domains on November 15, 1851, the supreme government permitted the settlement of up to 100 Prussian Mennonites families on crown land in the Novozensk *uezd* in the Samara *gubernia*. The resettlement was arranged by several organizations. The settlers were required to deposit at least 350 Prussian *taler* per family at our diplomatic mission in Prussia to guarantee their resettlement. These monies, marked as “remittance” expenses, were to be returned to the settlers upon their arrival at the place of settlement. The settlers were allotted 65 *desiatini* of land per family; they were freed from taxes for 10 years. At the end of the privileged years, they were obliged to pay for the land, according to the arrangements made for the Mennonites in the South Russian region; namely 4.5 *kopeks* per *desiatini*. The settlers and their descendants were also granted exemption from personal service in the army. Instead of these obligations, after 20 years from their arrival at the settlement

97) Ministry of Government Domains, Volume I (beginning December 29, 1850, ending November 17, 1861; No. 145-4454; No. 14397 for 1850) list 32-33.

98) Same – list 50-51.

99) Same – Volume I, list 50-56.

a regular contribution toward military recruitment was collected. The amount was set according to the standard value of a recruit, which was 300 *rubles* in 1851-1852. The awarding of the exclusive right to make wine and to sell it in their community was not conferred to the Samara Mennonites, and they had to conform to rules for commerce in effect at that time. Finally, the Mennonites were granted the duty-free import of goods from abroad in the value of 100 silver *rubles* per family, in addition to clothing and agricultural equipment, etc. In all other matters, the Samara Mennonites were settled under the same conditions as former foreign colonists, particularly the Mennonites. (*P.C.S.* supreme order, November 19, 1851, No. 25752a; announced in the Senate, July 31, 1852).

The first Mennonites of the Samara settlement received 17,301 *desiatini* of land in the Novozensk *uezd*, Samara *gubernia*. From 1855 until 1870 they founded 10 villages here, forming a separate Mennonite *okrug* (*volost*) – Malyshinsk, with its center in the village of Köppental. *)

After the first group of Mennonite settlers, a second one from Prussia followed.

On January 22, 1859 a supreme order regarding the settlement of Prussian Mennonites on crown land in the Samara *okrug* followed. At first about 100 Mennonite families from Prussia were allowed to settle. They settled under the same conditions as the first Prussian Mennonite settlement in the Samara region (in 1851). The settlers were required to pay at least 350 Prussian *taler* per family to the crown to guarantee their settlement. They were assigned 65 *desiatini* of land per family; they and their descendants were granted freedom from personal military service. However, after 20 years from the time of their arrival, they were obligated

*) From 1855 until 1862 the following villages were founded: Köppental, Hahnsau, Lindenau, Fresenheim and Hohendorf; in 1864: Lysanderhöh; in 1867: Orloff; in 1868-1873: Valuyevka, Ostenfeld and Medemtal. (*Kl.* 16-17).

to pay a regular contribution for recruitment, an amount which at that time was 300 silver *rubles*. The exclusive right of the South Russian Mennonites to make wine and to sell beverages among the settlers was not granted to these Mennonites. The privilege of freedom from payments and obligations was granted only for three years, counting from the day of their arrival at the place of settlement. These privileges did not apply to the duties of ordinary civic service. After the expiry of the privileged years the settlers had to conform to the same obligations and taxes as those for the government peasants, based on estimates of their income from the land. Finally, in case the settlers wished it, the Ministry of Commerce agreed to their request to import duty-free into Russia goods in the value of 100 silver *rubles* per family in addition to clothing and agricultural equipment, etc. In all other matters these Mennonites, like those of the first Samara settlement, came under the rules for foreign colonists and Mennonites as set forth in the first charter for settlements (P.C.S. supreme order, January 22, 1853, No. 34077a, announced by the Senate July 30, 1859).

The Mennonites of the second Samara settlement received a land area of 7,727 *desiatini* in the Samara *okrug*. From 1859 until 1873 they founded seven villages, forming a separate Mennonite *okrug (volost)* – Alexandertal (“Old Samara”) with the center of the *volost* in the village of Alexandertal. 

The conditions under which the Samara Mennonites were allowed to settle showed that in the 1850s the opinion of the Russian government regarding the Mennonite colonization had changed radically. The privileges that were granted to Mennonites and colonists of previous settlements were no longer acceptable. That is why the Samara Mennonites were not granted any special

*) In 1859 the village of Alexandertal was founded, in 1860: Neuhoffnung; in 1863: *Mariental*, Grottsfeld, Muravyevka; in 1867: Orloff, in 1870: Liebental and Krasnovka (Schönau) (number of farms: 19-20), Lindenau, Marienau (Krassperov, Russian Thought. 1883 Volume X, page 55).

privileges, except for short term advantages for repaying loans and freedom from personal military service; the land was given with the condition that after the expiry of the privileged years, all common taxes and obligations had to be met, and even including the recruitment requirement, though not in person but financially.

With the Samara settlement the settlement of foreign Mennonites on crown land in Russia ended. The great reforms of the 1860s, the freeing of the serfs, the introduction of land agencies, the equalization of classes, etc. did not leave room in government policies for foreign colonization. The invitation of Mennonites from abroad, giving them crown land and special privileges, intended to support their dispersion through Russia and creating a privileged agricultural society, contradicted the trends towards liberation at that time and was unfair in relation to the ordinary Russian population. This was the stance which the Russian government also took under the Emperor Alexander II.

On the other hand, all these reforms - the liberation of serfs, the introduction of land agencies, the unification of various peasant classes pertaining to administrative and judicial matters, the introduction of the judicial regulations of Emperor Alexander II - could not affect the already resident settlers, living in isolation in all respects, but did call for necessary reforms in organizing their mode of life. ¹⁰⁰ In 1871 the "Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in the South Russian Region" was abolished. The colonists were renamed: "settler-owners" and with regard to administrative and judicial matters were treated as "peasant-owners." The affairs of the settler-owners (formerly colonists), including local issues, were handled by the general district or provincial governments, (Order of May 31, 1871). Mennonite district

100) Sergei Scheluchin. German Colonization in South Russia. (Odessa, 1915). page 31.

and village organizations were abolished, and in their place *volost* and village organizations were formed in Mennonite settlements. Thereby the Mennonites lost (at least judicially) their special status and became equal with the peasants. Since this time, further Mennonite colonization in Russia was caused exclusively by dynamics within the Russia Mennonites without the participation of the Russian government.

Land Question in the Mennonite Settlements in the 1860s

Until the end of the 1860s the Russian Mennonites did not permit dividing their 65 *desiatini* allotments. After the death of the owner, the whole allotment was transferred entirely to one of his sons; other sons became tradesmen or leased land from the crown or Nogai neighbours. This was done to maintain the Mennonites farmsteads at the proper level.

With the natural increase of population in the Mennonites settlements a large contingent of landless proletarians emerged. Already in 1841 with 1,033 owners (each possessing 65 *desiatini*), 1,700 landless Mennonites made up two-thirds of the population of the Molochnaia villages. 101 Over time, the situation of the landless worsened. They did not have a plot of land, the cost of rent for land increased, trades were not successful. In addition, the landless could not participate in district and villages meetings, even though they paid taxes at the fixed rates.

Already in the 1840s Cornies tried to establish a special center for the trades in the village of Halbstadt for the landless, but his attempts were not successful. From the end of the 1850s the Mennonite community and landless

101) Prinz 125-127; Is. 27.

Mennonites started to besiege the government with petitions to have new land made available for the settlement of the landless. At this point the opinion of the government in matters of colonization changed. The privileges which the colonists, and especially the Mennonites, enjoyed in Russia, became unjust in view of the beginning emancipation of the Russian peasant masses. In addition, almost everywhere the Mennonites generally had larger land areas than their Russian peasant neighbours. In view of this the government was not willing to grant any request for additional allocations and advised the Mennonites to be satisfied with the privileges given them.

Having been rejected, the landless Mennonites turned to their own community, namely to Mennonite landowners, asking them for help. Instead of sympathy, the landless were initially met with cold indifference or outright hostility. Conflict and dissension ensued. Unsuccessful, the landless turned to the government with a petition that they be enfranchised into the village community in general and that the community be compelled to arrange for their involvement in obtaining land with communal funds or by sharing the profit of the communal agricultural enterprises with the whole community rather than only with the private proprietors.

These conditions led the government to give serious attention to the question of organizing the landless Mennonites. But the government intended to resolve this question without new sacrifices by the crown for the Mennonites.

With this consideration in mind, the following measures were decreed in June 1864: a) designate all available reserve and sheep-raising land in the Molochnaia Mennonite district for the settlement of landless Mennonites, and assign $32 \frac{1}{2}$ *desiatini* of land per family, and b) inform all colonist communities that free plots of crown land may be transferred to those the colonists who wished to settle on the basis of the general rules for peasants

as issued for colonists from the community re-settling in Eastern Siberia. ¹⁰²⁾

In 1864 permission was given to those Mennonites and colonists in the southern region, who wished to settle in the Amur and coastal region on the basis of common rules, and thereby be released from the status of colonist in a distinct community; settling as special pre-arranged groups, [and] agreeing to assume all liable taxes and obligations of such persons until the next population census and until their arrival in Eastern Siberia. Only after these re-settlers signed a prior statement of commitment that, upon the founding of villages, they, for themselves and for their descendants, would forever relinquish all privileges of colonists, and, if they did not move to Siberia, they would be obliged to accept living conditions equivalent to the general conditions [for Russian subjects] (Supreme Order 21 July 1864, submitted to the Siberian Committee). ¹⁰³⁾

The landless Mennonites did not want to go to Siberia under such conditions. As we will see below, their resettlement did not transpire in Siberia but in the Kuban region. This was undertaken by the Mennonite *Hüpfers* [= "Hoppers"], a group under the influence of a religious movement in the Molochnaia and Khortitsa Mennonite settlements.

By a supreme command on February 14, 1866, all residents, whether they owned a plot of land or not, were included in the civic organization of the Mennonite community. Additionally, by a ruling of the Ministry of Commerce based on the same decree of February 14, 1866, existing excess land consisting of 15,193 *desiatini* in the Molochnaia settlement was subdivided for 1,266 Mennonites, at 12 *desiatini* per family, providing each with a farmstead without fields. ¹⁰⁴⁾

Finally, with the permission of the government, dividing the 65 *desiatini*-sized Mennonite farms was allowed. ¹⁰⁵⁾

102) *Kl.* 187-188.

103) *Kl.* 187.

104) *Kl.* 187; *Kl.* 192; *Detailed information given to the author by the Halbstadt volost office.*

105) *W.* III, 163.

All these undertakings by the government did not satisfy the land hunger of the Mennonite settlements, but generally the Mennonites could not be convinced that the era when they were given generous land allotments, privileges and freedoms in Russia had definitely ended, and that from now on they had to depend only on themselves. Raising this question gave hope that the community itself would address the landless Mennonites issue. Having arrived at this conclusion, the Mennonites were required to find the material resources for improving the prospects of the landless. The main source for this effort turned out to be the rented land and sheep-raising areas within the jurisdiction of the Molochnaia and Khortitsa Mennonite colonies.

Spread of Mennonite Land Ownership in Russia

At the time of the founding of the Khortitsa and the Molochnaia settlements, the Mennonite community received special areas of land for raising of the best breeds of sheep ("sheep reserves"). In the Khortitsa region the sheep reserve covered 2,987 *desiatini* of good land.

In 1868 sheep-raising was discontinued, [and] the Khortitsa sheep reserve was rented out with government permission, and the income from it was used to buy land for the landless Mennonites and for the repayment of loans on this land. From 1869 to the present time the Khortitsa peasant class rents this land for growing grain. According to the Khortitsa *volost* management * for the period from 1869 until January 1, 1915 the total amount of rental income from this land was 1,085,580 *rubles*, 45 *kopeks* . This includes:

55,869 *rubles*, 01 *kopeks* received in 1912

46,051 *rubles*, 38 *kopeks* received in 1913

19,932 *rubles*, 84 *kopeks* received in 1914.

Of the total income received from this land, 915,069 *rubles*, 47 *kopeks* were used to buy land for

*) The information was given to the author by the Khortitsa *volost* office.

landless Mennonites, 152,186 *rubles* for non-repayable allowances to Mennonites resettling in Siberia on crown land, and 16,783 *rubles*, 89 *kopeks* for loans to the same Mennonites. By January 1, 1915 it amounted to 1,561 *rubles*, 09 *kopeks* per person.

The total amount of land purchased by the Khortitsa community for the landless Mennonite families is shown in the following table: **)

In 1868 purchased in the Ekaterinoslav region from the Countess Barbara Koskul: 7,153 *desiatini* at 35 *rubles*, 55 *kopeks* per *desiatini*. 146 landless families were settled on this land. Here they founded (in 1869-1870) 4 villages (Nikolaipol and others) now forming the Nikolaipol *volost*, Ekaterinoslav *uezd* [= county].

In 1871 purchased in Verchniedneprovsk *uezd* (Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*) from the Princess Sophie Repnin: 3,691 *desiatini* at 33 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 74 landless families were settled on this land. They founded (in 1872) two villages, Neu Khortitsa and Vodyanaya, Marianov *volost*, Verchniedneprovsk *uezd*.

In 1872 purchased in Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* from the widow of Captain Eugen Moros: 1,500 *desiatini* at 47 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 30 landless families were settled on this land. They founded (in 1872) the village Morosowo, which became part of the Nikolaipol *volost*, Ekaterinoslav *uezd*.

In 1873 purchased in Verchniedneprovsk from the lieutenant Stephen Schlachtin: 4,187 *desiatini* at 50 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 80 landless families were settled on this land. Here they founded (in 1874) two villages, Selenopole and Kamenopole, Veseloternovsk *volost*, Verchniedneprovsk *uezd*.

**) The information was given to the author by the Khortitsa *volost* office.

In 1888 purchased in the Bachmut *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, from Countess Katharine Ignatiev: 14,159 *desiatini*, 1,987 square *sazhens* [1 *sazhen* = 2.134 meters] at 65 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 244 landless families settled on this land. Here they founded (in 1889-90) 7 villages: Ekaterinovka, Romanovka, Alexevka, Leonidovka, Nicolaievka, Ignatevka in the Santurinovsk *volost*, and New York in the Shelesnyansk *volost*, Bachmut *uezd*. 13,035 *desiatini*, 667 square *sazhens* and 1,124 *desiatini* were designated to the settlers; 1320 square *sazhens* was left to the *volost* for renting.

In 1894 purchased in the Orenburg *uezd* from the Djev brothers: 24,668 *desiatini*, 2,040 square *sazhens* at 30 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

In 1897 purchased in the Orenburg *uezd* from the Baschkirs Bakaev and Sarebaev, 968 *desiatini* at 35 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 444 landless families were settled on these two areas. Here they founded (from 1894 to 1901) 14 villages (Khortitsa, Deyevka, and others, Kipchak *volost*, Orenburg *uezd*). The settlers were assigned 22,393 *desiatini*, 1,656 square *sazhens* and the rest of the 3,243 *desiatini*, 384 square *sazhens* were left for the *volost* for renting.

In 1909 purchased In the Balash *uezd*, Saratov *gubernia* from the legate Prince Leonid Vyazemski: 9,414 *desiatini* at 172 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 179 landless families were settled on this land. They founded (in 1910) 7 villages (Vladimirovka, Borispol, Vyazemskya and others, Arkadak *volost*, Balash *uezd*). The settlers were assigned 8,950 *desiatini*. Of this 359 *desiatini* remained with the *volost* for renting, and 1,050 *desiatini* is located close to the station of Arkadak on the Ryazan-Ural railroad.

In 1913 purchased in Usmansk *uezd*, Tambov *gubernia* from the Prince Vladimir Michael Volkonsky: 4546 *desiatini* at 340 *rubles* per *desiatini*. Due to the war this land was not occupied by settlers.

In total the Khortitsa *volost* purchased 70,227 *desiatini*, 1,627 square *sazhens* of land on which 1,197 landless families were settled. This land was purchased with the income the Khortitsa *volost* received as rent and also with money collected from private citizens, and partly from the landless persons settling on this land.

In addition to buying the land for the landless Mennonites with income of the Khortitsa *volost*, the Siberian Mennonite settlers also received non-repayable grants. According to the Khortitsa *volost* management:

in 1912 34,180 *rubles* were distributed,

in 1913 41,610 *rubles* were distributed,

in 1914 12,410 *rubles* were distributed.

In the Molochnaia region ^{*} the Mennonites received 120,000 *desiatini* of land at the time of settlement. Part of it was used for sheep raising and the Halbstadt clothing factory.

In 1865, according to an inspection by the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Colonists in the Southern Region, "the Molochnaia *okrug* had 15,193 *desiatini*, 517 square *sazhens* of unoccupied land and 5,948 *desiatini*, 344 square *sazhens* of surplus land considered non-arable. The unoccupied land (15,193 *desiatini*, 517 square *sazhens*) was divided among 1,266 landless Mennonites (the so-called "Anwohner") ^{**}. The surplus land of 5,948 *desiatini*, 344 square *sazhens* was handed over to the Molochnaia Mennonite colony, with the approval of the Ministry of Commerce, to use for rent.

In 1869 to address the issues of the "Anwohner" regarding land in the settlements and to alleviate their troubles, the Ministry of Commerce, with the approval of

^{*}) This and the following information was given to the author by the Halbstadt *volost* office.

^{**}) "Anwohner" - these are Mennonite having a farmstead without a field.

the Ministry of Finance, allowed the use of the salt tracts passing through the Molochnaia Mennonite colony, having a width of 150 to 300 *sazhens*. Land made available in this way with the permission of the Ministry of Commerce, amounting to 5,455 *desiatini*, 1,914 square *sazhens*, was turned over in 1870 to the Molochnaia Mennonite colony for permanent rental and added to other rented land of the same colony, consisting of formerly non-arable and surplus land. Both land areas amounted to a total of 11,405 *desiatini*, 375 square *sazhens*. At the present time, after a final review, in both cases 11,545 *desiatini*, 384 *sazhens* are counted as good land and 199 *desiatini*, 408 square *sazhens* as non-arable land.

Until 1871 these lands were under the management of the Molochnaia *okrug* office. With the division of the Molochnaia region into two *volosts*: Halbstandt and Gnadenfeld, the rental land came under the management of these two *volosts*. At this time, the Halbstadt *volost* office has 9,429.80 *desiatini* good land and 125.62 non-arable land, and the Gnadenfeld *volost* has 2,115.36 *desiatini* good land and 73.55 *desiatini* non-arable land.

According to the policy affirmed by the Ministry of Commerce in 1870, the income from the rent of this land was to be used to purchase land for landless Mennonites of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* and to repay loans on this land.

The total area of land purchased with this income of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* is shown in the following table:

In 1871 purchased in the Kherson *uezd* from the Prince Kotschebii: 20,978 *desiatini* of land at 23.5 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 484 landless families of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* were settled on this land named Sgradovka. Here they founded,

*) Information given to the author by the Halbstadt *volost* office.

(in 1872-82) 16 villages creating the Tiege-Orloff *volost*, Kherson *uezd*.

In 1884 purchased in the Bachmut *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* from the landowners Karpova and Kotlyarevskago: 12,000 *desiatini* at 50 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 303 landless families were settled on this land. They founded (in 1885) 10 villages (Memrik, Kotlyarevka and others) belonging to the Golitzensk *volost*, Bachmut *uezd*. Of the purchased land about 1,000 *desiatini* was rented out and retained for future landless families of the settlement.

In 1891 purchased in the Busulusk *uezd*, Samara *gubernia* from the landowners Krassikov and Pleshanov: 20,388 *desiatini* of land at 32 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 424 landless families were settled on this land. Here they founded here (in 1891) 12 villages (Pleshanovo, Bogomasovo and others) belonging to the Yumurantabynsk *volost*, Busulusk *uezd*. Of the purchased land 1,502 *desiatini* was retained to be rented out.

In 1893 purchased in the Orenburg *uezd* from the Dyev brothers: 11,582 *desiatini* of land at 34 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 227 landless families from the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* were settled on this land. Here they founded 8 villages (Aliesova, Karaguy, Stepanovka, and others), belonging to the Kipyakskoi *volost*. Of the purchased land 902 *desiatini* were retained to be rented out.

In 1900 purchased in Chasav-Yurtovskom *uezd*, Terskoi *gubernia*, from the Lvov brothers: 24,800 *desiatini* of land at 40 *rubles* per *desiatini*. 536 landless families were settled on this land. They founded (in 1901) 15 villages belonging to the Kisiyurtovsk *volost*. The land turned out to be of little value

for agricultural use. Because of this the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* let the settlers acquire it for 12 *rubles* per *desiatini*. Of the total land area 3,659 *desiatini* remains unoccupied by settlers and is considered public land of the Halbstandt and Gnadenfeld *volosts*.

In 1914 the villages forming the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* had the following loans payable for land purchases: at the Nishegorod-Samara land bank, a pledge for land purchased in the Orenburg *uezd* for 464,335 *rubles*, 18 *kopeks*, and with the Kharkov land bank 41,838 *rubles*, 92 *kopeks* remaining from the unoccupied land purchased in the Terskoi district.

The Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* have capital for the purchase of land for the landless Mennonites at their disposal. This capital is drawn from rent in both *volosts*. Of this capital the following was spent:

1. Non-repayable grants to 790 families of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* settling in Siberia on crown land at 400 *rubles* per family for a total of 316,000 *rubles*.
2. Credit loans to the same 790 families for establishing their households for a total of 383,245 *rubles*.
3. Credit loans for the settlers on the land bought in Busuluk *uezd*, Samara *gubernia*, for a total of 130,903 *rubles*, 40 *kopeks* .
4. Credit loans for settlers on the land bought in Orenburg *uezd* for a total of 85,659 *rubles*, 58 *kopeks* .

These credit loans are intended to be collected from the settlers. The amount of capital for the purchase of land for landless Mennonites of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* according to reports by the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts* for the years 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914 is shown by the following table.

[See Excel spreadsheets]

[See Excel spreadsheets]

The amount of capital for the purchase of land for landless Mennonites of the Halbstadt *volost*, as per report of the Halbstadt *volost* office for 1915 is shown in the following list:

Cash Balance in 1914: 182,893 *rubles*, 41 *kopeks*.

Cash Income in 1914: 192,778 *rubles*.

Included is rent income from the Halbstadt land: 56,563 *rubles*, 88 *kopeks*.

Total amount of cash for 1914: 312, 671 *rubles*, 41 *kopeks*.

In addition, the sum of 302,800 *rubles* from mortgage payments has accumulated in the Nishegorod-Samara land bank.

Total cash expended in 1914: 246,376 *rubles*, 35 *kopeks*.

Capital remaining of January 1, 1915: 66,295 *rubles*, 06 *kopeks* in cash; 302,800 *rubles* in notes.

From the amount spent in 1914 from the capital of the Halbstadt *volost* for the purchase of land for landless Mennonites the following should be mentioned:

Immediate payments:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| a. Nishegorod-Samara land bank | 39,937 <i>rubles</i> , 98 <i>kopeks</i> . |
| b. Kharkov land bank | 8,653 <i>rubles</i> , 65 <i>kopeks</i> . |

Short term loans given:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| a. In crown and district accounts | 39,218 <i>rubles</i> , 56 <i>kopeks</i> . |
| b. In temporary accounts | 60,000 <i>rubles</i> --- <i>kopeks</i> . |

Granted to Siberian Mennonite settlers:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| a. Grants at 400 rubles | 20,200 <i>rubles</i> --- <i>kopeks</i> . |
| b. Credit loans | 13,300 <i>rubles</i> --- <i>kopeks</i> . |

To eliminate their surplus of population, the Mennonites founded the so-called "lease villages" (villages on leased land). These villages were founded by the Khortitsa Mennonites:

*)

*) These facts and other information taken from Fr. I, 675-689. See also Epp. 143-149.

In 1860 in the Novopokrovsk *volost*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, the lease village, Egoropol (Gerhardstal) was founded. In 1910 it had 25 Mennonite families. They rented 1,000 *desiatini* of land.

In 1864 the Khortitsa Mennonites rented land belonging to the famous Grand Duke Michael Nikolaievich (in Verchnye-Rogatschisk *volost*, Melitopol *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*) in the amount of 11,413 ½ *desiatini*. In the years 1864-1868 they founded 6 villages here: Georgstal, Olgafeld (1864), Michaelsburg (1865), Rosenbach (1866), Alexandertal (1867), Sergyevka (1868). In 1910 there were 200 Mennonite families in these villages. They had rented 7,000 *desiatini* of land.

In 1870 in the Alekseevsk *volost*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, two lease villages developed: Starosavodskoye (Steinau) and Kislitshevatoye (Blumenfeld). In 1910 up to 100 families lived in both villages. They had rented 4,000 *desiatini* of land.

In the Saksagansk *volost*, Verenyednjepr *uezd* the lease village Alexandrovka was founded in which a total of 40 Mennonite families had rented 1,800 *desiatini* of land by 1910. The village was founded recently.

In addition, in 1904, Mennonite settlers from the Tiege-Orloff *volost*, Kherson *uezd*, founded two lease villages: Novo-Nikolaiyevka, and Volodyewka in the Kasatsk *volost*, Kherson *uezd*. 80 Mennonite families lived here. Both villages were built on land rented from Prince Trubetzky.

Many Mennonite villages were founded on land purchased by individual Mennonites or whole groups of Mennonites, without the participation of the *volost* community.

The following settlements were founded by Khortitsa Mennonites:

In 1865-1866 in the Ekaterinoslav *uezd*, 6 villages were founded, originating from the Nikolaital Mennonite *volost*. In 1910 120 Mennonite families were counted in them; they cultivated 6,137 *desiatini* of land purchased at 30 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

In 1870 in the Natalyevsk *volost*, Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, three villages were founded: Andreasfeld (Andreapol). In 1910 there were 12 Mennonite families on 1,000 *desiatini* of land), Neu Schönwiese (Dmitrovka), in 1910 there were 20 Mennonite families on 1,296 *desiatini* of land), Tiegenfeld (Takovlevo), in 1910 there were 20 Mennonite families on 1,600 *desiatini* of land.

In 1878 and 1883 in the Belensk *volost*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* the villages Shmizino (Neu Rosengart) and Kronsfield were founded. In 1910 50 Mennonite families could be counted in them. They cultivated 632 *desiatini* of land purchased at 176 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

After 1889 in the Alexandrovsk *volost*, Verchnyedneprosk *uezd*, two villages were founded: Miloradovka and Ekaterinovka. In 1910 there were 40 Mennonite families cultivating 2,100 *desiatini* of land purchased at 65 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

After 1892 in the Santurinovsk *volost*, Bachmut *uezd*, two villages were founded: Kondratyevka and Nikolaipol. In 1910 there were 80 Mennonite families who cultivated 5,100 *desiatini* of land purchased at 85 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

After 1890 in the Isyumsk *uezd*, Kharkov *gubernia*, three villages were founded: Grigorevka and Vassilyevka (in Barvenkov *volost*) and Petrovka (in the Prelestensk *volost*). In 1910 there were 90 Mennonite families who cultivated 5,317 *desiatini* of land purchased at 80 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

After 1909 near to the city of Novochoopersk, Varanov *gubernia*, the village of Zentralnaye was founded. In 1910 there were 30 Mennonite families cultivating 2,725 *desiatini* of land purchased at 190 *rubles* per *desiatini*.

Since 1909 in the Bobrovsk *uezd*, Varanov *gubernia*, the Mennonite village Anna was founded (in the Sadovsk *volost*). In 1910 there were 40 Mennonite families cultivating 5,945 *desiatini* of land purchased at 285 *rubles* per *desiatini*. The settlement of this village is not yet finished.

It is also necessary to mention the villages Miropol (Friedensfeld) in the Ekaterinoslav *uezd*, Wiesenfeld and Blumenhof in the Pavlogradsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, and a great number of small villages and estates, small and large, founded by the Mennonites of Khortitsa on land purchased (or rented) in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*.

In addition, in 1903 in the Natalinsk *volost*, Novousensk *uezd*, Samara *gubernia*, Mennonite settlers from the Memrik-Golitzensk *volost*, Bachmut *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, purchased 2,550 *desiatini* of land (at 80 *rubles* per *desiatini*) where they founded a few villages.

The following settlement was founded by the Molochnaia Mennonites:

From 1867-1868 until the present time in the Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, a number of Mennonite villages and estates were founded, forming the present Krasnopolsk Mennonite *volost*. The most important villages are: Krasnopol (Schönfeld), Blumenheim, Rosenhof, Blumenfeld, and others. In 1910 the total *volost* had 400 Mennonite families. They cultivated 70,000 *desiatini* of land.

In 1863 Mennonite landowners (from the Molochnaia region) appeared in the Caucasus. At the present time a group of Molochnaia Mennonite owners live

at the *stanitsa* [= Cossack village] of Prochladnoy, Tersk *gubernia*. Other groups of Mennonite owners (originally from the Molochnaia) live at various places in the Kubansk and Stavropol *gubernia*. These groups are under the jurisdiction of Russian *volosts*.

In the Orenburg, Samara and Ufa *gubernia*, Mennonites from the Molochnaia frequently own land in the tens of thousands of *desiatini* which are part of the respective Russian *volosts*.

Considerable areas of land in the Kharkov, Voronesh and Don *gubernia* belong to Mennonite landowners from the Molochnaia.

In 1894 Mennonite settlers from the Tiege-Orloff *volost*, Kherson *uezd*, founded two lease villages: Nikolaifeld and Grossfürstental in the Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Stavropol *gubernia*. Both villages are located on the land belonging to the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich. There are 80 Mennonite families living here. At the present time this land has been acquired for Mennonite ownership. Mennonites from the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts*, Taurida *gubernia*, participated in the purchase.

At the same time as Mennonite ownership spread, a Russian Mennonite resettlement occurred on crown land in the Crimea, the Caucasus and Turkestan.

At the beginning of the 1860s a Mennonite village was started on crown land in the Crimea. It was built by Molochnaia Mennonites. They settled on this land under the same conditions as Russian settlers. At the present time there are many Mennonite villages on the Crimea. The best known among them is the village Karassan. In 1863-1866 up to 150 families of Molochnaia (and Khortitsa) Mennonites, belonging to the new Mennonite sect (*Hüpfer*) settled in the Kuban region. They received 6,500 *desiatini* of crown land on the Selentschuks river.

In 1880 approximately 100 families from the Molochnaia and Samara Mennonites, living in hope of the eminent

second return of Christ ^{*}) settled on crown land in Turkestan (Aulie Ata region, South Darinsk *oblast*). In 1910 there were 5 villages here with 1,000 souls of both genders.

In recent years, many Mennonite families resettled on crown land in Siberia. Separate Mennonite villages and whole *volosts* appeared in the Tomsk, Tobolsk, Akmolinsk and Semipalatinsk *gubernia*. Most Mennonite villages were founded in the Barnaul *uezd*, Tomsk *gubernia* and in the Pavlodar *uezd*, Semipalatinsk *oblast*. In addition to this, there are individual Mennonite owners in Siberia who purchased land on their own.

Overview of the Present Agricultural-Economic Conditions of the Mennonites in Russia

At the present time the Mennonite population in Russia is concentrated mainly in the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav and Samara *gubernia*, in the Barnaul district, Tomsk *gubernia*, and in the Pavlodar *uezd*, Semipalatinsk *oblast*. Furthermore, there are Mennonite villages in the Kherson, Kharkov, Voronesh, Saratov, Ufa, Orenburg, Stavropol and Akmolinsk *gubernia* and the Kuban, Terek, Don and South Darinsk *oblasts*.

The total number of Mennonites in Russia as of January 1, 1914 reached 80,000 souls - both genders, with 41,000 children (up to 14 years of age) - both genders, which made up about 9,000 Mennonite families. With the rapid growth of Mennonite agriculture, one can, without overestimating, say that at the present time the amount of land under cultivation by the Mennonites is over one million *desiatini*.

On this basis, an average of over 100 *desiatini* of land is available for each Mennonite family.

*) This movement rose (in 1878-80) in some Mennonite circles in the Taurida and Samara *gubernia*, after the introduction of general military service in Russia, under the influence of the "Kleterian" sect brought to us from Germany.

The largest Mennonite land areas are in the following *gubernia*: Ekaterinoslav (336,777 *desiatini* for 24,875 souls - both genders), Taurida (214,235 *desiatini* for 21,827 souls - both genders) and Samara (73,319 *desiatini* for 5,139 souls - both genders). In total the amount of land in these three *gubernia* is 625,321 *desiatini* which is two thirds of the total land owned by Mennonites in Russia.

According to a report pertaining to Mennonite forestry service by its president, D. J. Klassen, for the year 1913, on January 1, 1914 the total value of all Mennonite property in Russia amounted to 276 million *rubles*. Thus the average sum of the value of the property for each Mennonite family amounted to 30,000 *rubles*, or for every adult Mennonite soul the sum of 6,000 *rubles*.

According to the report by Klassen the richest Mennonite communities and groups were the following:

In the Taurida *gubernia*

	Number of adults for 1914	Value of their property in 1,000 of rubles
Halbstadt <i>volost</i>	4,545	30,500*)
Gnadenfeld <i>volost</i>	4,004	21,620
Crimea various <i>volosts</i>	2,150	24,000
Berdyansk landowners – various <i>volosts</i>	199	15,575
Melitopol landowners – various <i>volosts</i>	429	22,871

In the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*

Khortitsa <i>volost</i>	5,168	29,127
Krasnopol'sk <i>volost</i>	959	27,484
Nikolaipol <i>volost</i>	1,035	15,417
Memrik <i>volost</i>	1,305	11,145
Mennonites in Schönwiese	656	9,981
Kharkov Mennonites (Isyumsk <i>uezd</i>)	1,429	13,250

*) for 1914: 31,200.

From this table we can see that the richest Mennonites were:

Category of Mennonites	Value of property per adult for 1913
Berdyansk landowners	78,000 rubles
Melitopol landowners	54,000 rubles
Krasnopol Mennonites	27,000 rubles
Mennonites in Schönwiese	15,000 rubles
Crimean Mennonites	12,000 rubles

Of course, the stated numbers do not indicate the total wealth of the Mennonite population in Russia. As everywhere else in the world in the Mennonite circles one can see a concentration of land ownership and a formation of various classes according to amount of property one has. Next to the well-to-do persons or even wealthy ones, one can meet poor people who lack their own land. The number of such people is especially large in the Mennonite settlements in the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav and Samara *gubernia*.

The overwhelming majority of Mennonites are active in agriculture. Each Mennonite settler lives on his allotment. The allotment is a plot of land measuring 65 *desiatini* which is the personal property of the owner. Since the end of the 1860s, the so-called half-owners [= *Halbwirtschaften*], cultivating land portions of 30-35 *desiatini*, and small farmers [= *Kleinwirte*] having 14-17 *desiatini* of land, have appeared in the Mennonite villages. Such owners were considered to be poor men. Some of them sold their allotment and moved to crown land in Siberia. Others emigrated to Canada.

A special Mennonite land ownership group in the Taurida and Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* is the considerable number of large landowners. *)

According to information for 1915 there were 45 such landowners in the Taurida *gubernia*, each cultivating more than 1,000 *desiatini* of land. Three of them each have

*) This information given by the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav and Samara *gubernia* offices in 1915 to the governors.

more than 10,000 *desiatini* of land: the largest Mennonite estate had 14,613 *desiatini*, one: 7,000 *desiatini*, one: 6,800 *desiatini*, one: 5,500 *desiatini*, four: from 4,000 to 4,500 *desiatini*, eleven: from 2,000 to 3,000 *desiatini*, eleven: from 1,500 to 1,800 *desiatini*, sixteen: from 1,000 to 1,400 *desiatini*.

There are 29 Mennonite estates comprising 500 to 1,000 *desiatini*, and 126 estates comprising 100 to 500 *desiatini* of land.

In the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, according to information for 1915, there are 21 Mennonite estates cultivating more than 1,000 *desiatini* of land. One of them (Bergman – a member of State *Duma* [= parliament]) owns 7,400 *desiatini*, nine: from 2,000 to 3,500 *desiatini*, eleven: from 1,000 to 2,000 *desiatini* of land. There are 40 estates comprising from 500 to 1,000 *desiatini* and 67 estates comprising from 100 to 500 *desiatini* of land.

In the Samara *gubernia* two Mennonite estates cultivated more than 3,000 *desiatini* of land, one: 1,500 *desiatini*, seven: 1,000 *desiatini* and forty-three: more than 100 *desiatini* of land.

The agriculture estates of the Mennonites were exemplary for the considerable number of horses and large cattle, the use of various agricultural machinery and tools updated to the latest technology in agriculture and were indicators of the economic well-being and state of prosperity existing in Mennonite settlements.

The following table shows the total number of live and stationary agricultural inventory for the year 1914 in the main Mennonite *volosts* in the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav, Samara and Kherson *gubernia*. The table presents a summary of “estimation lists” for the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld *volosts*, Taurida *gubernia*; Khortitsa, Nikolaipol and Nikolaital *volosts*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*; Maleshinsk and Alexandertal *volosts*, Samara *gubernia*; and Tiege-Orloff *volost*, Kherson *gubernia*. **)

**) These “estimation lists” were compiled every year by the Mennonite *volosts* and villages in Russia for an exact accounting and allocation of the Mennonite “barrack collection,” that is a collection for the maintenance of the Mennonite forestry service. (The units were supported by the Mennonites themselves.)

[See Excel spreadsheet]

From this table, it can be seen that for their agriculture the Mennonites used machines and tools which would seldom be found among the Russian peasants and would be a luxury these could hardly afford. This fact proves not only the high standard of Mennonite agricultural activity, but also the degree of wealth which Mennonites in general had reached. This wealth is indicated by the number of horses, cattle, plows, and wagons shown in the table for the Mennonite *volosts*. As we can see by the table, each Mennonite household had an average of 5 to 9 horses, 4 to 7 milk cows, 2 wagons, 2 to 3 plows and 2 to 7 harrows - quantities seldom found among our Russian peasants. Good horses and large cattle of the best breeds supplement the picture of the general achievement and well-being prevailing in the Mennonite villages.

In addition to the contingent of large landowners, there are a large number of large industrial factory and plant owners among the Mennonites. Of their number some are to be mentioned: "Partnership for the Production of Flour" of Hiebert and Company in Alexandrovsk, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, with an annual turnover of 3 million *rubles*; the Steam Mill of Johann Johann Tiessen in Ekaterinoslav (annual turnover of 1.5 million *rubles*); the Wholesale Flour operation of Henry and Peter Heese in Ekaterinoslav (annual turnover of 1.5 million *rubles*); the Steam Mill of Jacob Siemens in Nikopol, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* (annual turnover of 800,000 *rubles*); the Mill of Peter Unger in New York, Bachmut *uezd* (annual turnover of 700,000 *rubles*); Machine Construction Plant of Lepp and Wallmann in Khortitsa, Alexandrovsk and Pavlodar, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* (annual turnover of 1 million *rubles*); the same factories of A. Kopp in the city of Alexandrovsk, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* (annual turnover of 500,000 *rubles*) and many others.

The economic well-being of the Mennonites is in sharp contrast to the position of the surrounding Little Russian peasants (in South Russia) cultivating small areas of land who have to struggle to

subsist on a starvation basis. Huge land areas of the Mennonites and their century-old privileges (with regard to exemption from military service) together with the seclusion of the Mennonite people and their isolation from everything Russian leads to criticism by the surrounding Russian population and serves as a base for endless ill feeling by them toward the Mennonites.

II. Mennonite Schools and Charitable Institutions

Mennonite Schools ^{*)}

Right from the beginning one of the primary needs for the Russian Mennonites was the construction of schools.

At first the schools in Mennonite settlements were of a primitive character. The teaching took place in private houses. Any Mennonite settler from Prussia with education instructed Mennonite children in reading, writing, and the singing of religious songs in his residence. The instructions were given in Low German (*Plattdeutsch*). The rod was used quite often as a tool for pedagogical direction. The teacher himself, instructing children at his residence during school time, was occupied with his trade. He was sewing, cutting, ironing, etc. The Mennonite settlers went along with such methods of instructions because their interests inclined toward agriculture rather than toward science, and they “knew little about educational matters.” ¹⁾

Very soon in the village of Orloff a “Society of School Friends” emerged. It was formed by several persons and under the leadership of Johann Cornies, at that time still a young man. Cornies and other members of the society knew that to give proper instructions in school, it was necessary to have well trained teachers first, as the “teacher makes the school.” In 1820 the “Society of School Friends” opened a school in the village of Orloff for the training of teachers for elementary schools. The tasks of the institution

*) Fr. I, 569-653; Is. 273-295; Epp. 122-128; W. III, 149-1531, 205-206; *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, IV, 28-29.

1) Is. 273-275; Epp. 122-123; W. III, 149-150.

included giving their children a proper knowledge of the Russian language. The first teachers at this school were Mennonite settlers from Prussia where they had received their pedagogical training. From 1822 until 1829 it was Tobias Voth who taught at the Orloff school. Born in Brandenburg, he taught in German. After him Heinrich Heese, born in Prussia and resettled in Russia at the beginning of the 19th Century, was appointed. He received his pedagogical training in Prussia. Living in Russia, he very soon learned the Russian language fluently, and upon the wish of Cornies, taught Russian in the Orloff school. Heese taught from 1829 until 1842, and, after a break with Cornies, went to serve at the Khortitsa Mennonite central school which was started in 1842. After Heese it was [Martin] Riediger who taught at Orloff, also in the Russian language. In 1847 the Orloff school burned down, and it was not used for teaching until 1860. 2)

In 1860 a central school was started in Orloff, re-occupying the burned-down school, and it exists to the present time. In 1884 it converted to an institution with three classes. Since 1888 all subjects, except Bible study and German, are taught in the Russian language. 3)

In 1835, upon instruction by the Ekaterinoslav Guardians Office, a central school was opened in Halbstadt. Its purpose was to train Mennonite teachers for elementary schools, for *volost* and village secretaries, bookkeepers and other persons requiring the Russian language. In 1869 the institution had two classes, and in 1879 a pedagogy class was added for a 2-year course. In 1884 the general education track of the school was converted into a department with three classes. Since 1886 all subjects except Bible and German are taught in the Russian language. 4)

2) W. III, 149-152; Fr. I, 78-79; 569-585; Is. 275-276, 290-292.

3) Fr. I, 588-596, and 608.

4) Fr. I, 596-612.

In Khortitsa a central school was started in 1842. Its first teacher was Heinrich Heese, arriving from the village of Orloff (Molochnaia *okrug*). He taught in Khortitsa until 1846, but, due to a scheme by Cornies, he was dismissed from his duties; after this he moved to Kitchkas (Einlage) where he died in 1868.

The successor to Heese was Heinrich Franz. He taught in Khortitsa until 1858. Franz was born in Prussia and came to Russia in 1835. He received his teacher training in Prussia. Living in Russia he learned to speak Russian quickly and taught it in the Khortitsa school. In 1871 a special position for a teacher of the Russian language was established at the Khortitsa school. In 1890 a pedagogical course was started at the school. In 1892 the general education section of the school shifted to 4 one-year classes. In 1908 the pedagogical class was changed to a two-year course. Since the end of the 1880s all subjects, except Bible and German, are taught in Russian. ⁵⁾

In 1873 a central school was started in Gnadenfeld. In 1883 it became a three-year school. Since 1888 all subjects, except Bible and German, are taught in Russian. ⁶⁾

At the present time the aforementioned central schools of the Mennonites, in their composition and with the teaching of subjects in two languages, approximate the level of urban four-class schools under the regulations of 1872.

In 1895 in Orloff, Tiege-Sagradovka *volost*, Kherson *uezd*, a Mennonite central school was opened, modeled after the existing Mennonite central schools. After 1905 central schools were started in the following villages: 1. Nikolaipol, Ekaterinoslav *uezd*; 2. New York, Bachmut *uezd*; 3. Pretoria, Orenburg *uezd*;

5) Fr. I, 612-621, 577-587. /see 608, 609-612|. Epp. 127-128.

6) Fr. I, 621-622; see 608, 609-612.

4. Alexanderkrone, Halbstadt *volost*, Berdyansk *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*; 5. Karassan (Crimea); 6. Spat (Crimea); 7. Krasnopol, Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*; 8. Davlekanovo, Ufa *gubernia*. In addition, two-class schools were opened in the Mennonite villages Köppental and Alexandertal, Samara *gubernia*. 7)

Most recently Mennonite girls' schools were opened in Halbstadt and Khortitsa and as well as a commercial school at Halbstadt. 8)

At each of the aforementioned learning institutions, the curriculum is taught in Russian.

In almost every Mennonite village there is an elementary school. The total number of Mennonite elementary schools in villages and at estates in 1911 was 400; with a total of 500 Mennonite teachers (including 25 female teachers), and 15,000 Mennonite children of both genders. The proportion of the number of children attending school to the total number of Mennonites was 1 to 5. 9) In 1838 there were 45 elementary schools in the Mennonite settlements, attended by 1,992 Mennonite children - the proportion of their number to the number of Mennonites overall was 1 to 6. 10)

At the beginning all Mennonite educational institutions (central schools and elementary schools) in their settlements were under the supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At the local level they were under the supervision of the Novorossia Guardianship office and then the Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers in Russia. With the formation of the Ministry of Commerce (in 1837) the Mennonite schools together with the settlements came under the oversight of this Ministry. More locally the management of schools came from the Guardians Committee; their direct supervision

7) Fr. I, 622-625.

8) Fr. I, 625-628.

9) Fr. I, 638-640.

10) *Sh.M.G.I.*, 1842, IV, pages 28-29.

(at least formally) until 1843 was by the Mennonite ecclesial elders. ¹¹⁾

In 1843 the management of Mennonite schools was transferred to the Molochnaia and Khortitsa agricultural societies, respectively. ¹²⁾ In 1863 school matters in the Molochnaia area were removed from the Molochnaia Agricultural Society and transferred to the newly established (in 1869) Molochnaia Mennonite School Society. In the Khortitsa area the management of schools returned to the ecclesial elders; here there was also a temporary school society managing the school. ¹³⁾

With the abolition of the Guardians Committee in 1871, and with the transfer of supervision of the Mennonite settlements to the general *gubernia* [=provincial] and *uezd* [=district] governments, Mennonite schools remained under the supervision of local administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs until 1881. In 1881 the Mennonite schools came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Culture and since that time remain under the supervision of the local branch for the supervision of education. Since 1886-1888 all subjects except Bible and German are taught in Russian in the Mennonite schools (central and elementary). ¹⁴⁾

It must be mentioned that until the Mennonite schools came under the authority of the Ministry of National Culture, they remained under the actual supervision of the Mennonites as the government respected their prerogatives. ¹⁵⁾

According to a supreme decree on March 23, 1907, the position of the Ministry (No. 76, chapter 724, page 1080) was that teaching subjects in the German language, if taught as separate subjects, was allowed in German elementary schools established in the villages of former German colonists and supported by local means,

11) Epp. 126-127; Fr. I, 159, 640-641.

12) Fr. I, 159, 640-641.

13) Fr. I, 644, 647, 652-653; Epp. 126-127; Is. 276-290.

14) Fr. I, 640-643. ~~Epp. 126-127; Is. 276-290.~~

15) Epp. 126.

except for Russian language, history and geography. The Mennonites did not take this opportunity, even though they had the right to do so.

Mennonite Charitable Institutions

As charitable institutions of the Mennonites the following are to be mentioned:

1. Maria School for the Deaf in Tiege, Halbstadt *volost*, Taurida *gubernia*. The school was opened in 1885 and supported by the general Mennonite community. The school had facilities for 40 pupils. In 1910 there were four male teachers and one female teacher. Teaching is done in the German language.
2. Hospital and Nursing Homes in the villages of Muntau, Orloff and Waldheim, Molochnaia *okrug*.
3. Moria Deaconess Home of the "Society of Evangelical Merciful Sisters" in Halbstadt, founded in 1909.
4. Psychiatric Home "Bethania" in the village Kronsweide, Khortitsa *volost*.
5. Alms Homes [= seniors' homes] in Rückenau and Kurushan (Molochnaia *okrug*) and
6. Orphanage in Grossweide (Molochnaia *okrug*). 16)

16) Fr. I, 654-666.

III. Military Service Obligations of the Mennonites in Russia

On the History of the Topic

At the beginning of their settlement in Russia, the Mennonites were freed from the standard recruitment obligations (*P.C.S.* April 6, 1800, No. 19372). These freedoms were confirmed by a Charter from Emperor Paul I (*P.C.S.* September 6, 1800, No. 19546).

It must be stated that this freedom was granted not only to the Mennonites, but to all new settlers coming to Russia. This stance was not only expressed in the Manifesto of Empress Catharine II on July 22, 1763 (*P.C.S.* No. 11880) but also in the statements of subsequent governments.

According to a supreme confirmation on February 20, 1804, the rules for the admittance of foreign settlers (*P.C.S.* No. 21163), and colonists coming from Germany in particular, to live in Russia, rights and advantages were generally awarded to colonists settling until that time in the Novorossia region. Their rights included:

*) Fr. I, 483-524; Is. 295-330; Epp. 150-190; W. III, 186-193; Abr. Görz. *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Forstdienstes der Mennoniten in Russland* (brochure). Bolshoi Tokmak 1897 – Information about Mennonites in Russia (brochure). Berdyansk 1912 (pages 30-42).

Regarding matters of the Forestry Deputy – “Regarding the conscription of Mennonites, pertaining to the recruitment into military service for the cultural work in South Russia” No. 41, part I (1875), part II (1882). Regarding Matters of the Land Department of the Foreign Ministry (presently the Office of Military Obligations) for the clerical work of military recruitment: “About Mennonites” No. 23, part I (1874), part III & IV.

1. Freedom of religion,
2. Freedom from taxes and payments for the duration of 10 years,
3. Allotment of 60 *desiatini* of land per family,
4. Freedom from civic and military service,
5. Money allowance for food from the day of arrival at the border to the first harvest (at the place of settlement), and loans to purchase the first necessities,
6. Permission to establish factories and other shops, to trade, to form corporations and societies, and to sell their products all over the country.

By supreme decree on April 12, 1804 and a document from the Ministry of Interior (*P.C.S.* No. 21254) estate owners were allowed to settle foreign colonists on their land, and on the basis of the Manifesto of 1763 these were exempted from civic and military service.

As much of the land obtained by the landowners “was located in places not fit for cultivation” and in accord with the intention of spreading agriculture and industry in Russia, the supreme order of August 5, 1817, (*P.C.S.* No. 27032) permitted the landowners and estate owners to accept and invite foreign colonists for settling on available land, and on the basis of above mentioned law of April 12, 1804, these colonists were granted various rights and privileges including freedom from civic and military service.

The same freedom from military service was also granted to foreign colonists settling in Bessarabia (*P.C.S.* Rule of August 28, 1817, Ministerial Committee, No. 27029).

Finally, by a supreme order of December 29, 1819 (*P.C.S.* No. 28054) the Bulgarians and other lower Danube settlers who were allowed to settle in South Russia, were given all rights and privileges granted to foreign colonists in the *gubernia* of Novorossia and Bessarabia, including freedom from military service. ¹⁾

The fact that the government granted freedom from military service, not only to the Mennonites, but to all foreign settlers in South Russia, proves

1) *Kl.* 314-318.

that the freedom from military service for Mennonites was not understood by the government as being granted because of religious beliefs, but as a general privilege given at that time as an encouragement to settle to all foreign colonists in the Novorossia region.

With the change in the government's views regarding the foreign colonization (in 1850-1860) the settlement of Mennonites in Russia was restricted. By supreme orders on November 19, 1851 and on January 22, 1859 (*P.C.S.* – No. 25752a and 34077a) the Mennonites resettling from Prussia to the Samara *gubernia*, were granted only 20 years freedom from personal and financial recruitment obligations. At the end of these 20 years, they and their descendants were subject to military service, though not by actually serving in person but by paying a certain amount of recruitment tax.

With the introduction of general military obligation in Russia for all Russian subjects, the privileges regarding military obligations which were granted to colonists and Mennonites under the former recruitment regulations (chapter 13, and 11, issue 1862) were acknowledged and no corresponding sections in the new regulations were changed.

Upon hearing already in 1870 about the introduction of general military obligations in Russia, the Mennonites began to worry about this, as it was against their teachings and as they would be drawn into military service. To clarify the issue, they sent special delegations to Petersburg in 1871, 1872 and 1873. The delegations were informed that they would not be granted freedom from military service and that in consideration their beliefs, they would be allowed to serve in the medical corps of the army, namely tending the wounded and sick soldiers. The Mennonite delegates were not in agreement with this suggestion. Some of them declared that medical corps service would be acceptable to the *Mennonites only if it would be on a voluntary basis, and not have an obligatory character.* 2)

2) Is. 298-299; Epp. 159.

The information provided by the delegations and other reports from Petersburg convinced the Mennonites that their privileged position in Russia was nearing its end. This conviction was reinforced by other government regulations. In 1871 “the Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia” was abolished and the Mennonites, especially the peasant-owners were placed under the jurisdiction of general *gubernia* and *uezd* entities. In the Mennonite settlements the civic entities in place for the general peasant population were introduced. The German language in official documents and business correspondence was changed to Russian. In schools the obligatory teaching of Russian was required. The intended extent of the russification and equalization with the typical Russian peasant was not clear to the Mennonites. All these circumstances prompted the Mennonites to consider emigrating to America. The Mennonite [Cornelius] Jansen, German consul in Berdyansk, promoted emigration with special eagerness.

In 1873 a special Mennonite delegation went to America to look at land set aside for the settlement of Mennonites. In 1874 whole groups of Mennonites resettled from Russia to America. The emigration continued until 1880. In this time period, 15,000 Russian Mennonites left for America. Separate families, whole villages (Alexanderwohl in the Halbstadt *volost*) and even an entire *volost* emigrated. From the Mariupol *uezd* the whole Bergthal *volost* (the former Mariupol Mennonite *okrug*) emigrated. **3)**

It must be stated that many of these emigrants did not belong to the population which felt spiritually connected to Russia. Many of them, mainly those who strongly promoted emigration (Jansen, Suderman, Peters and others) were of the opinion that German and Mennonite were the same. They could speak very little Russian; did not know anything about the treasures in the Russia literature; of the history of Russia

3) W. III, 189-190; Fr. I, 498-501.

they knew very little, only what was taught them in German history books; about Russia they only heard that there are “Cossacks, priests, and Siberia.” It is clear that the emigration of such persons could not damage the Russian government. 4)

The supreme law of January 1, 1874 regarding general military obligations, freed the Mennonites from serving in the active army and from carrying arms (chapter 157), but obligated them to perform non-combatant duties in special departments of the army or navy or similar institutions. These rules did not apply to those Mennonites who joined the sect or came from abroad to settle in Russia after January 1, 1874.

This law did not satisfy the Mennonites. The Mennonites feared that they would become involved in military affairs. Under the influence of such fears, the emigration, which started in 1873, did not decrease but took even larger proportions.

To avert further Mennonite emigration, the Adjutant General Totleben, visited the Molochnaia and Khortitsa Mennonites with instructions and approval from the supreme authority in 1874. He informed them, in the name of his highness the Emperor, that they would not come into any contact with military matters whatsoever, and they would not be assigned to serve in the military but in other branches, and preferably in locations in the Novorossia region and in adjacent *gubernia*.

With regard to these promises, upon supreme approval on April 8, 1875 and the advice of the government representative, chapter 157 in the Regulations for Military Service was changed to the effect that Mennonites, being freed from bearing arms, were to serve as craftsmen, in fire brigades [= *commandos*] and in special mobile forestry brigades, on the basis of special regulations. However, this did not apply to those

4) Fr. I, 501.

Mennonites who joined the sect or came from abroad after January 1, 1874 to settle in the Empire (*P.C.S.* No. 54568).

But by far not all Mennonites appreciated such privileges. As reported by the Department of Internal Affairs of the Ekaterinoslav and Taurida *gubernia* (May 28, 1875), the Ekaterinoslav Mennonites were thankful for these privileges, but the Taurida Mennonites were “indifferent and did not cease their preparations for emigrating to America.” ⁵⁾

The strength of the objection of Mennonites against serving the prescribed term can be seen from the fact that in 1873 a number of Molochnaia Mennonites presented a petition to General Kaufman, Governor-General of Turkestan, to allow them to resettle in the Turkestan region, with exemption from personal military service even from the provisions legislated on April 8, 1875. The Samara and Molochnaia Mennonites who had already settled the Turkestan region presented the same petition to General Kaufman. Some of them, with the intent of being exempted from military service, asked for permission to settle in Buchara. All of these appeals by Mennonites were declined. ⁶⁾

By 1880 it was time to introduce the new arrangements for the state service to be performed by the Mennonites. In the meantime, at the end of the 1870s, the Mennonites had prepared a petition asking that the government assign them only to forestry service because such service was closest to the Mennonite way of life. This petition was supported by General Totleben, at that time the Governor General of Odessa. In June of 1880, the Ministry of Commerce sent the Senior Adviser Barka to the Mennonite settlement, commissioning him to make an agreement with the Mennonite regarding their forestry service. The Mennonites accepted the proposal made by Barka and committed themselves to build, at their own

5) Memoranda of Land Department regarding the Mennonites, part I.

6) Memoranda of Land Department regarding the Mennonites, part IV.

expense, barracks for Mennonite forestry brigades and also to maintain these s. 7)

Subsequently, with changes to the regulations of April 8, 1875 issued with supreme approval on May 25, 1882, January 19, 1883 and May 7, 1885, the position of the State Council was that Mennonites belonging to the sect and having entered the Empire prior to January 1, 1874, were exempt from bearing arms and could serve their term of obligatory military service in special forestry brigades, on government property on the basis of special rules stated in the Regulations for Forestry. This position was incorporated in the Regulations about Military Obligations of 1897, point 179 and point 219 in the version of 1915.

Mennonite Forestry Service (Organization and Present Condition)

The internal organization of Mennonite forestry brigades took shape according to regulations for those units (Forestry Regulations, Volume VIII, part I, edition 1905, affixed to part 23, Rules of Mennonite Forestry Brigades, Ministry Department of Land Tenure and Agriculture") *) and special rules **) , approved by the Ministry of Commerce, July 14, 1888. ***).

According to the "Regulation," the Mennonite forestry brigades were part of the department of Ministry of Land Management and Agriculture and were formed by Mennonites serving their obligatory term (Forestry Rules, § 23). The latter were renamed "obligatory workers" [henceforth translated as "servicemen"] (Forestry Rules, § 2). The assignment of these workers to the various brigades was conducted by the Forestry Department (Rules, § 3).

All brigades were assigned a crown forestry (Rules. par. 8) and each was placed entirely under the supervision

7) Information about Mennonites in Russia (brochure), Berdyansk 1912, page 41.

*) In the following text cited as "Regulation."

**) In the following text cited as "Rules."

***) Collection of Rules and Regulations concerning the Forestry Brigades of the Mennonites. Publication of the Forestry Department, S.P.B. 1888.

of the local forester (Regulation. page 9). He had the rights of a commander of the brigade: the overall management of the brigade, its formation, maintenance, and all work done by the brigade (Regulation. page 10, Rule: § 25-26, 29). The forester supervises the spiritual condition and political loyalty, i.e., the worthiness of the brigade (Rule: § 27) and records the penalties to the brigade (Rule: § 32). He also keeps track of the crown expenditures for the maintenance of the brigade (Rule: § 84, 85).

The forester was assisted by his helpers (Rule: § 9). For closer supervision of the servicemen and for the economic structure of the brigade, the forester appoints overseers from among the servicemen and one of the overseers is appointed as senior overseer (Rules: § 13). He and the other overseers, upon orders from the forester, attend to the internal order of the brigade, their work (Rules: § 15) and the fulfillment of their obligations (Rules: §§ 16, 19, 22); allow the servicemen a short leave of absence from the barracks (Rules: § 23) and cooperate with the forester in the supervision of the financial affairs and well-being of the brigade and the maintenance of the barracks (Rules: § 25). All brigades have the same uniform (Regulation page 11).

The Mennonite recruits are allowed to stay at home for the interim period after being drafted and must start their actual service on March 1 in the year after the draft (Regulation, page 2, Rules: § 1). For their period of service, the brigades are assigned to sites in the Ekaterinoslav, Taurida, and Kherson *gubernia*: for establishing new forests, for cultivation and forestry work and also for other crown work in the forest industry, including the erection and repair of buildings (Regulation, page 9, Rules: § 43). Work is done throughout the whole year, except Sundays and Holy Days (Rules: § 44). For each working day the servicemen receive a wage in the amount of 20 kopek per man (Regulation, page 12). The overseers receive the same pay (Rules: § 53). The start and finish time of a workday work, and an equal

number of working hours per day were defined in the regulations in the following manner:

(Rules: § 45).

	Forenoon Hours		Afternoon Hours		Number of hours per day
	Start	Finish	Start	Finish	
January	7:30	11:00	12:00	4:30	8
February	6:30	11:00	12:00	5:30	10
March	6:00	11:00	1:30	6:00	10 1/2
April	5:00	11:00	1:00	7:00	12
May	4:30	11:00	1:30	7:30	12 1/2
June	4:30	11:00	2:00	8:00	12 1/2
July	4:30	11:00	1:30	7:30	12 1/2
August	5:00	11:00	1:00	7:00	12
September	6:00	11:00	12:30	6:30	11
October	6:30	11:00	12:00	5:30	10
November	7:30	11:00	12:00	5:00	8 1/2
December	8:30	11:00	12:00	4:00	7

To prepare the food and to bake bread for the brigade, the forester designated the required number of persons from among the servicemen; they were freed from crown work and were not entitled to daily wages paid by the crown (Rules: § 30, 31).

The ultimate or highest supervision of the brigade is performed by the manager of the local Office of Land Management and Government Property (Regulation, page 10; Rules: § 34).

The government supervisors act directly or through forestry inspectors (Rules: § 34).

Government supervisors may discharge servicemen to the reserves (Regulation page 3), grant them winter vacations (Regulation, page 4), transfer them from one brigade to another (Regulation, pages 6 & 7). At the end of the year a brief report is given to the local Office of Land Tenure and Government Property about the annual condition and management of the brigade (Rules: § 85).

The expenditures of the brigade are covered by the crown and by contributions of the Mennonite community (Regulation, page 20).

The crown provided funds for the following expenses:

1. Daily wages for the servicemen,
2. Health care in local military hospitals for the servicemen,
3. Construction of shops and supply of tools and instruments for the servicemen,
4. Maintenance of living quarters for servicemen during forest planting (Rules: § 52).

The Mennonite community provided the following: construction and maintenance of the barracks, household equipment, clothing and food for the brigades, transportation of servicemen from their homes to the brigades (at the start of their service) and return (at the end of their service), and payment for the land made available to the brigades by the crown (Regulation, page 24). These expenses are covered by a special cash levy for the upkeep of Mennonite forestry brigades, collected in all Mennonite *volosts* and settlements in Russia (“Kasernen [= barracks] Tax”). The expenditure of the levies is managed by a special Commissioner of the Mennonite community for the maintenance of the forestry brigades (Rules: § 26).

An “*Oekonom*” [= business manager] is appointed to manage of the financial affairs of each brigade (Rules: § 11). He is supported by the Mennonite community. For all spiritual care, a Mennonite minister is assigned to each brigade (Rules: § 10). The duties of the business manager and the minister can be assigned to one person.

The responsibilities for disciplinary matters pertaining to the servicemen are spelled out in a law as follows. For minor misdemeanors, the servicemen are subject to monitoring, reprimand, mild or severe arrest as determined by the forester, as well as the local Office of Land Tenure and Government Property (Regulation, page 14). For violations of service obligations - if the punishment is subject to disciplinary penalization - the servicemen are subject to court procedures on the basis of the “Code of Conduct” (Regulation page 17 & 18). For insulting supervisors with words, actions or force, for disobedience, for desertion from service, for escape, for intentional absence (more than 6 days) or

for delinquency in the performance of service, for losing or damaging crown properties and implements, the servicemen are subject to penalties defined in the Military Regulations, reduced by two or three degrees according to the circumstances and replacing them with penalties according to the Code of Conduct. Thus, the warden, foresters and overseers are equivalent to a sergeant-major, a non-commissioned officer and a lance-corporal (Regulation, page 18).

There are eight Mennonite forestry brigades at the present time. They are located in the Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Taurida *gubernia*, and the Steppe Region.

The following brigades are located in the Kherson *gubernia*:

1. Razyn (Razin Forestry – 18 *versts* [NOTE: 1 *verst* = 1.067 kilometers] from the town of Voznesensk, Elizavetsgradsk *uezd*);
2. Vladimirov (Vladimirov Forestry, Kherson *okrug*, 15 *versts* from the station of Nicolo-Kozelsk-Ekaterin Railroad),
3. Zherebkova (Zherebkov Forestry, Ananevsk *uezd*, 4 *versts* from the Sherebkovka South-West Railroad,
4. Tschernotes -Black Forest (Black Forest Forestry, Alexandrysk *uezd*, 7 *versts* from the station Znamenka South Railroad.

The following brigades are located in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*:

1. Veliko-Anadol – Large Anadol (Veliko Anadolsk Forestry, Mariupol *uezd*, 20 *versts* from the station Veliko Anadol, Ekaterinsk Railroad);
2. Azov (Azov Forestry, 10 *versts* from the city of Mariupol).

The Berdyansk Forestry brigade is located in the Taurida *gubernia*. (Staro- (Old-) and Novo- (New-) Berdyansk Forestry close to the town of Melitopol).

The Issyll-Kulsk Forestry brigade, located in the Steppe Region since 1913, is where the Mennonites from Siberia serve.

At the beginning of 1914 the following number of servicemen served at the various brigades as follows:

Name of the Brigade	Drafted	Drafted	Drafted	Total
	In 1913	in 1912	in 1911	
1. Veliki Anadol	52	43	79	174
2. Azov	26	29	75	130
3. Berdyansk-Total	115	135	95	345

Berdyansk in detail				
-Old Berdyansk	76	87	67	230
-New Berdyansk	39	48	28	115
4. Vladimirov	34	54	44	131
5. Razin	54	32	31	117
6. Zherebkova	46	28	21	95
7. Black Forest	45	60	63	168
8. Issyll-Kulsk	<u>44</u>	--	--	<u>44</u>
Total	416	381	407	1204

For the maintenance of all these brigades a total of 347,492 *rubles*, 73 *kopeks* were spent by the Mennonite community in 1913.

In the current war all Mennonite reservists and all soldiers in the militia were drafted into the active service, and a considerable number of them were assigned to the brigades of the Red Cross. Another number was assigned to road work in the Crimea and to forestry work in various parts of the country. In addition, some servicemen were left in the forestry service.

According to a report by the Mennonite Commissioner Klassen, by March 1, 1915 a total of 5,483 Mennonite servicemen were on duty. Of this number, 581 men served as volunteers in medical brigades, 1,594 as reservists and 918 in the active service, yielding a total of 3,093 servicemen in medical corps. For road work in the Crimea 261 reservists were assigned. For forestry work in European Russia and Siberia 1,331 reservist Mennonites were assigned.

In addition, there were about 650 men facing the draft in 1915 and about 80 men, soldiers of the militias drafted in the years 1900-1915. By October of 1915 there were a total of 9,000 Mennonite servicemen on duty.

For a typical description of service and work

produced in the brigades, the information about the condition in the Razyn, Vladimirov and Old Berdyansk forestry brigades, given below, is significant. **)

The Razyn brigade is located in the Razyn crown forestry. The forestry is located in a dry and good location on a 2,500 *desiatini* section of crown land.

The brigade is housed in a barrack. In addition to six rooms for the Mennonite servicemen, the following were also in the building: dining room (also used as a prayer room), kitchen, bakery, and rooms for cooks, bread bakers and the senior overseer of the brigade of servicemen. The rooms for the servicemen are dry, bright, with high windows and ceilings; 12 servicemen are lodged in each room. The hospital, pharmacy and library are housed in a separate building on the compound. With the brigade there are a horse shed (for 26 horses), a pig shed (for 40 pigs), a cow shed (for 18 cows), a blacksmith shop and a carpentry shop. All of the brigade's facilities are maintained in an exemplary condition.

The Vladimir crown forestry, where the Vladimir brigade is located, occupies more than 3,000 *desiatini* of land. More than 1,900 *desiatini* of it is forest. Two hundred *desiatini* of pastureland is assigned for the use of the brigade. The brigade is housed in a one-story brick building. In it there are 10 rooms for the servicemen, a room for the cooks, the bread-bakers and the senior overseer of the brigade, a dining room (also used as prayer room), bakery, kitchen, hospital, pharmacy, and library. The rooms for the servicemen are dry, bright and spacious; 11-12 servicemen are lodged in each room. With the brigade there are a blacksmith shop and a carpentry shop, a horse shed (for 19 horses), a cow shed (for 15 cows) and a pig shed (for 65 pigs).

The Berdyansk brigade is housed in barracks at two crown forestries: Old Berdyansk and New Berdyansk. **) At the Old Berdyansk brigade there are 916 *desiatini* of land, most of it being a forest. The Old Berdyansk brigade is housed in two one-story brick buildings. One of these – the older one – has

*) This information was obtained by the author on location.

***) The author inspected the building at Old Berdyansk.

three rooms for servicemen, each large enough for 14 to 20 men; located here is also the dining room (used also as a prayer room), the kitchen, the bakery, rooms for the cooks, bakers and senior overseer of the servicemen, office, and library. In the new building there are 6 rooms for the servicemen, and the hospital with a pharmacy. In the rooms of the new barrack 9 men are lodged per room. The old building is damp; the new barrack is dry, spacious with plenty of light and air.

At the brigade there are a horse shed (9 horses), a cow shed (14 cows) and a pig shed (58 pigs), a storeroom for crown properties, a carpentry shop and a blacksmith shop. The rooms for the servicemen are furnished with simple iron or wooden beds with straw mattresses and coarse cloth blankets, simple wooden stools, tables and clothes cabinets. The rooms are kept clean and in order by men on duty. They take turns cleaning the barracks.

Food is served four times a day. In the morning before leaving for work the servicemen receive bread and boiling water for tea (the sugar for the tea is their own). At 11-12 o'clock dinner is provided consisting of a hot dish with meat (3/4 pounds per person). Around 5 o'clock the servicemen have a snack with bread. In the evening supper is given, consisting of one dish (a meatless hot dish, potatoes, tea with bread, milk, etc.) The menu for dinner and supper is set annually at the Mennonite conference regarding the business of the forestry brigades. The bread is baked at the brigades and distributed freely without limits. The bread is of excellent quality, white but occasionally dark. On Sundays and holidays and for the morning tea, fresh butter is served.

The work in the forestry consists of sawing and planting trees, growing and transplanting them to permanent sites, cleaning existing plantations and forests, plowing the ground and burning old forests, specifically pruning branches and cutting trees. For each kind of work there is a daily norm, set by the local Ministry of Land

Management and Government Property. At the forestry brigades in the Kherson *gubernia* the following norms were prescribed:

For planting seedling trees with a spade the norm was 900 holes (seedling pits) or 900 seedlings per day for one man.

For sowing tree seeds, the norm was 800 seeding sites, or 800 seedings per day for one man.

For hand-cleaning plants (with soap) the norm was: 1 *desiatini* per day for 17 men.

For clearing with horses (with a cultivator) the norm was 2 *desiatini* per day for 2-3 men with 3-4 horses.

For digging holes for seedlings at the forestry: 1 spade, 2 special augers (Rosanov system) and 3 compacters are used. Of the total number of servicemen planting and sowing seedlings, approximately half dig holes, and the other half plant seedlings and tamp the sites.

At the Old Berdyansk brigade the author of this essay found the following work was performed by the Mennonite servicemen:

1. Total weeding of young tree seedlings. The cleaning is done with a chopper, the soil around the seedlings is weeded and lightly loosened. The norm for such work is one *desiatini* per day for 12-14 servicemen;
2. Hand weeding of plantation rows. The weeding is done with a hoe, though the soil around the seedlings is not weeded completely but at intervals between the rows. The daily norm is 1 *desiatini* per day for 8 men;
3. Weeding the soil between the rows with a horse of was done using a scraper and a cultivator. This form of weeding loosens the deeper soil and is applied to dry and hard ground. The norm for such work was 1 *desiatini* per day for one man with one horse.

In addition, the servicemen of the Old Berdyansk brigade also performed the following work: replanting of garden seedling at other sites, watering these, tying up young tree sprouts, and finally repairing roads and loosening the soil between rows. Almost all forestry work (planting and maintenance)

at the brigades is done from spring until late autumn. The work is performed every day except Sundays and Holy Days. In case of poor weather, the work is altered. In wintertime the entire forest is cleared by cutting old trees where there is such a forest. During very cold days the work is cancelled. The norm for cutting old trees, established at the Old Berdyansk brigade, is a cubic *sazhens* [1 *sazhen* = 2.134 meters] of piled brushwood per day for 6 men. For cleaning and thinning the forest 4 men are required for one cubic *sazhens* of piled brushwood.

It must be mentioned that, if there is no forest for cutting down as winter work, then work is very seldom or not done by any brigades in wintertime. As there is no work the servicemen are given (on the basis of Regulations, chapters 23) winter vacations annually from the beginning of December to the end of February or the beginning of March.

In addition to the prescribed work, the Mennonite servicemen work as blacksmiths, locksmiths, joiners and carpenters (repairing agricultural implements, shoeing horses, etc.) at their brigade. Servicemen doing such work are exempted from forestry duties. On Sundays and Holy Days the Mennonite servicemen participate in morning worship services conducted by the *Oekonom*-Minister, and during the remainder of the day they rest or play games outside in fresh air (they play ball, bowling, cricket, etc.).

During their free time on workdays, they are occupied with music, reading books and newspapers, etc. At each brigade there is a library, kept and stocked by the Mennonite community. The selection of books is based upon recommendations of the commissioner for the Mennonite forestry brigades. The teachers from Halbstadt cooperate with him.

The libraries at all brigades consist of German and Russian sections. The library at the Razyn brigade has 240 items; 38 of them have Russian titles. The rest

are German ones. The majority of the Russian books are basic textbooks of Russian grammar, arithmetic, geography, etc. There are also books by Pushkin, Griboyedov, Grigorevich and novels by Count A. Tolstoy – “Silver Prince.” The German section includes religious, historical, and fiction books. Even books by Dostoevsky and Lev Tolstoy are in German translation. Among other things the library at the Razyn brigade contains a volume dedicated to the history of Prussia and the Prussian royal dynasty, written with a Prussian military-national perspective. *)

In the library of the Vladimir brigade, of 150 books more than two-thirds were German, about one-third were Russian. Among the Russian books, the following authors can be found: Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Turgenev and Korolenko. The German ones include religious, scientific, historical, and fictional books. Among the German books is a volume about the history of the Prussian Hohenzollern dynasty, written in a German national perspective. **)

The library at the Old Berdyansk forestry brigade contains 36 Russian books (24 titles) and more than 180 German books. In the Russian section there are books by Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Kolzov and Mamin-Sibiriyak.

*) Such as:

Oskar Schwebel. *Vom Eisenhütte bis zum Kaiserkrone. Kurbranderburgischen Preussische Geschichte (von 1675 bis zum Jahre 1881). In 3 Bänden* (Minden in Westpfalen, 1884).

Rogge Bernhard. *Kaiser Wilhelm der Siegreiche. Sein Leben und seine Thäten für das Volk und die Jugend dargestellt mit 126 Abbildungen.* (Bielefeldt und Leipzig 1889)

**) Such as: *Deutsche Kaiserbilder 3. Abteilung.* (Stuttgart, 1866).

Oscar Höcker. *Preussens Heer - Preussens Her! Militär- und Kulturgeschichtliche Bilder aus drei Jahrhunderten. Der reiferen Deutschen Jugend gewidmet.* (Leipzig 1892).

It must be mentioned that since the start of the war, the German section of the Vladimir library has been removed, by order from the local forester.

The German section contains books of religious, historical, scientific, and fictional content. German books include works by Goethe, Schiller, Hauptmann, Suderman. There are also German translations of worthy writings by Leo Tolstoy, Sienkevich, Shakespeare, Dickens. Among the German books there is the well-known underground book by Kennan about the Russian penitentiaries. In addition, there is also the world history by Grube in the German language, ending with the unification of Germany.

The composition and nature of the libraries at the brigades shows that the Mennonite youth serving in the brigades is mainly raised in a German mindset.

It must be mentioned, that in the present situation the work of the Mennonite servicemen in the brigades is actually performed under the constant observation of the forester and his assistants. The forester and his assistants are not able to spend all their time with the servicemen in their barracks or at work. In addition to the management of the brigades, the forester and his assistants are overloaded with work regarding the forestry and in the office. In addition, the work of the Mennonite servicemen, even within the same forestry, is performed at various stations, separated by several *versts* from each other. Therefore, the only way to have overseers for the work is to appoint them from the ranks of the Mennonite servicemen themselves. It is clear, without doubt, that in the inner life at the brigades, the German language was mainly used, and Russian was only used officially.

Teaching the servicemen military order and military vocabulary is done by forestry wardens (from the lower ranks). Due to the lack of free time for the wardens, the instruction is only done in snatches and superficially.

[NOTE: Footnote 8 missing in text.]

General Remarks about the Nature of the Obligatory Service of Mennonites in the Forestry Brigades

When comparing the obligatory service in the Mennonite brigades with the general military service in Russia, it must be concluded that it was easier and provided more freedom.

First of all, the obligatory service of the Mennonites did not require a sacrifice such as shedding one's blood for the Czar and the Fatherland.

The Mennonite service was shorter. The Mennonite servicemen did not start their service on the day of their call to service but on March 1 of the following year (Forestry Rules, chapter 23, point 2). During their service they received a two-month vacation every year.

The working conditions under which the Mennonite servicemen serve can be considered similar to those in an educational institution, rather than those under which a soldier serves. Mennonite servicemen eat better fare than Russia soldiers, live under excellent health conditions, and the work is not only physically healthy, but also beneficial to them. For their work they receive a daily wage of 20 *kopeks*.

The service of the Mennonite servicemen was not regulated by Military Rules and was not under military law. For misdemeanors and offences, the Mennonite servicemen came before a civil court, and only for serious offences (insulting government officials, etc.) were they sentenced according to military rules, although at 2 or 3 lesser degrees of punishment.

At the present time the military privileges of the Mennonites in Russia are a survival from the past. Mennonites living in Holland and Germany have performed personal military service for a long time but do not thereby forfeit their membership in the Mennonite community.

In Holland the Mennonites have performed military service since the time of Napoleon I (in 1810). ⁹⁾ The Mennonites of the Rhine

9) W. III, 53.

province (in Germany) have been drafted into military service since 1803. ¹⁰⁾

With the introduction in Prussia of general military service obligations (Law of November 9, 1867) the Mennonites in the West Prussian provinces were required to perform military service. But by a cabinet ruling of the Prussian King Wilhelm (March 3, 1868) service in the army with weapons was changed to service in medical, construction and transportation brigades. ¹¹⁾

It must be mentioned that generally the rejection of military service was a requisite doctrine for the Mennonites. In 1848, at one of the meetings of the Frankfurt parliament, one of the Mennonite deputies called the exemption of the Mennonites from military service a “survival from the past,” not in line with the spirit and requirements of a modern government. ¹²⁾ In the 1860s one of the well-known Mennonite ministers in Prussia – Mannhardt - “proved that war and military service is not at all against the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.” In Mannhardt’s opinion the rejection of military service by the Mennonites in the 16th Century was only a sign of their objection to the revolution of the “Münsterite Anabaptists” with whom they were identified at that time. To show that they had nothing in common with revolutionary Anabaptists, the Mennonites simply rejected all military service and all bearing of arms. At the present time things have changed radically and, according to Mannhardt, the acceptance of the principle of never bearing arms in all cases would not conform to a moral Christian worldview.

10) W. III, 99. – M. Fast, (*Meine Reise nach Russland und zurück*. Scottdale, Penn. 1909) indicates (page 37) that during his stay in Hamburg, he visited the home of a local Mennonite, and got to know his son – a Mennonite officer in the Prussian army. Fast, a Mennonite, emigrated from Russia (1873-1874) to America.

11) W. III, 105. Hege Chr. *Kurze Geschichte der Mennoniten*. (Frankfurt M. 1909) page 82.

12) W. III, 100.

The Old Testament states: "Do not kill." Christ deepens this commandment, forbidding anger, revenge, hate, but he placed limits on the commandment "do not kill." "Those who take the sword (against law and order) will be killed by the sword," that is, must die. In Mannhardt's opinion, the necessity of self-defense is mandated by these words of Christ. For, if it is not right to hate, to attack others and to kill them, it is also not necessary to let others kill you (for revenge or robbery). On the contrary, it is necessary to protect one's own life, even with weapons. What applies to the life of an individual person, also applies to the life of a whole nation. 13)

After the declaration of war with Germany, firearms (hunting guns, rifles and pistols, etc.) were confiscated from the Mennonites in the Taurida, Ekaterinoslav and Kherson *gubernia* by orders of the local governors. *)

In the Orlov *volost*, populated only by Mennonites, a total of 100 handguns and 16 pistols were collected. This is a considerable amount when we consider that there are 417 Mennonite households in the Orlov *volost*.

In the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, weapons were confiscated in the Ekaterinoslav, Bachmut, Verchniednieprovsk, Alexandrovsk and Pavlograd *uezd*, firearms were taken from 792 Mennonite households, including a considerable number of hunting guns and rifles - a total of 347 pistols were confiscated. A whole collection of firearms was taken from many Mennonites. Many Mennonites had weapons lacking proper registration.

In the Taurida *gubernia*, in two Mennonite *volosts*, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld, weapons were confiscated from 1,040 Mennonite households, among these a large number of hunting weapons and rifles,

13) W. III, 102-104. Brons A. *Ursprung, Entwicklung und Schicksale der Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten*. (Norden 1884), page 329.

*) Information about this was obtained on location.

and a total of 303 pistols were confiscated. This is a large number if we take into account that there was a total of 2,447 Mennonite households in both *volosts*. In Halbstadt there is a weapons store, belonging to a local Mennonite, Schroeder.

There are only a few Mennonites in the Melitopol *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*. Here weapons were confiscated from 65 Mennonite households; the number of confiscated weapons was 38 pistols.

The fact that the Mennonites have pistols, proves that, if necessary, they were ready to protect their life with weapons in hand, not even refraining from the shedding of blood.

For a long time, the Mennonites rejected service in governmental and civic positions. According to an old Mennonite belief, a Mennonite entering government service becomes an agent of the government, which might at any time issue a death sentence. The Russian Mennonites at the beginning of the 19th Century, still shied away from entering government service.

Over a long period of time such attitudes lost influence. In Germany, Holland, and North America the Mennonites not seldomly occupy the highest government positions. Among the Russian Mennonites one can meet persons engaged in the Russian government service. Such an evolution among the Mennonites gives hope that in the matter of military service, in the face of reasonable arguments, their views will undergo the same evolution which occurred among Mennonites in other countries.

In recent times, the possibility of military service is beginning to influence the opinion and conscience of the Russian Mennonites. In the present war some young Mennonites have joined the active army as volunteers, and some of them have fallen with valor on the battle fields.

IV. The Internal Story of the Mennonite Sect in Russia

The Internal Life of the Mennonite Community in Russia until the Middle of the 19th Century *****

The first Mennonite emigrants from Prussia belonged to two groups of Mennonites: the Flemish and the Frisians. The majority of the settlers belonged to the Flemish group.

At their arrival in the Khortitsa region (1788-1789) the Flemish and the Frisians formed two separate congregations. The Frisians settling in Kronsweide formed the Frisian Kronsweide congregation. In 1797 it was increased by two more villages: Schönwiese and Krongarten. They were settled by Frisians in the second emigration from Prussia. The Flemish formed the Khortitsa congregation, which consisted of all the other Mennonite villages of the Khortitsa region. **1)**

The inner church life in both congregations was unsatisfactory at the beginning. There were no ministers nor elders in the first transport of settlers. There was no one to conduct baptisms, marriages or funerals. Upon the arrival of the Khortitsa Mennonites (Flemish) at their place of settlement they elected a few ministers, who then were approved in writing from Prussia (by the Mennonite elders there). Soon thereafter (1790) the Khortitsa community elected an elder from among their ministers:

*****) Fr. I, 70-163; Epp. 83-108; Is. 91-172

1) Epp., loco cit.

Bernhard Penner, who also was affirmed by a letter from Prussia. He conducted the first Mennonite baptismal service in Khortitsa and started to build a church, but he died shortly afterwards. After his death controversy and disunity emerged among the Khortitsa Mennonites. The community turned for help from Prussia and in April 1794 the Flemish elder, Cornelius Regehr, who was accompanied by the minister Cornelius Warkentin, arrived in Khortitsa from Heubuden (West Prussia). Regehr tried hard to reestablish peace in the Khortitsa community, but he soon died (June 1794). Before he died, he ordained Cornelius Warkentin as elder, who continued to bring peace within the Khortitsa congregation.

Warkentin ordained the local Mennonites Johann Wiebe as elder and David Epp as co-elder. Warkentin was active not only in the Khortitsa (Flemish) congregation, but also in the Kronsweider (Frisian) congregation. He baptized, married people and ordained ministers in both communities. But he was not successful in uniting the Flemish and the Frisians into one congregation.

After Warkentin returned to Prussia, the differences re-surfaced in the Khortitsa and Kronsweide congregations. The Khortitsa congregation split into two groups. At the head of one group were the ministers of the congregation, and at the head of the other group, were the two former deputies, Höppner and Bartsch. The first group accused Höppner and Bartsch of misappropriation of crown money supplied by the government for the settlement of Mennonites. Höppner called these accusations slanderous. But Höppner's enemies asserted the previous accusations against him. Found guilty, Höppner was placed into jail and lost his property. Later on, the accusations against him proved to be without basis, and he was forgiven and his rights restored. The descendants of the first Russian Mennonites appreciated his services for the colonization of Mennonites in Russia.

In the Kronsweide congregation disagreements also developed. For a long time, members of this congregation could not

agree on the election of an elder suitable for them. Only in 1826 could the minister Peter Hildebrand be elected as elder, receiving approval from the Frisian elder Frank Goerz (of the Rudnerweide congregation). During Hildebrand's time in Kronsweide all internal unrest ceased. ²⁾

With the settling of Mennonites in the Mariupol district in (1835-1852) an independent Bergthal congregation of the Flemish group was founded there. It existed until their emigration to America in 1874. ³⁾

The Molochnaia Mennonites who settled from 1804 until 1818 belonged to the Flemish group. The first Mennonite villages in the Molochnaia, founded in 1805, formed the Orloff-Petershagen congregation. In the same year this congregation elected the minister Jacob Enns (from Tiegenhagen) as elder who received affirmation from the Khortitsa (Flemish) elder Johann Wiebe. The Emperor Alexander I donated 6,000 *rubles* for the building of churches in the Molochnaia. The congregation built a church in Orloff in 1809 and one in Petershagen in 1810. ⁴⁾

Very soon a difference of opinions arose in the Molochnaia community. As has been stated above, the government transferred the administration of lower judicial functions for foreign settlers in Russia to the hands of an administration elected by the settlers. Such an arrangement was a grave violation of belief for some Mennonites. Pietistic "zealots" could not accept that some of their "brothers," having been invested with power in worldly governments, could rule over their own brothers as ruling in a "peaceful manner" involved applying means which the Holy Scripture does not know. The Scripture recommends admonishing the lost and the separation of sinners from the congregation; but it does not endorse arrests, nor corporal punishment. A disagreement over these opinions arose in the Molochnaia (Orloff and Petershagen) congregation.

2) Epp. 83-108; W. II, 134-137; Fr. I, 73.

3) Fr. I, 167.

4) Is. 91.

The first elder of this congregation had already had an argument with the first Molochnaia district head, Klaas Wiens, about the authority of the elected administration of colony. Somewhat later two Mennonite ministers, Klaas Reimer and Cornelius Janzen, living in the village of Petershagen, announced that the governing entity of the colony was “against the Holy Scripture” and demanded that Mennonites act in a way which would preclude having worldly power which would interfere in their community life. In 1812-1819 the followers of Reimer and Janzen separated from the Molochnaia congregation and formed the so-called “Small” Molochnaia congregation [= *Kleine Gemeinde*]. Klaas Reimer became its leader. This congregation did not receive government recognition for a long time. Only in 1843, at the time of Cornies, was it granted the same rights as all other Mennonite congregations in Russia. 5)

The distinct peculiarity of the “*Kleine Gemeinde*” was its negative stand toward all that was acceptable within the limits of Mennonitism. The “innovative” teachings of Reimer gave impetus to the notions of the coming of the “Antichrist” and the rise of apostasy. From its members the “*Kleine Gemeinde*” demanded simplicity in clothing, eating and living. The attempts of the elders of the Molochnaia congregation to reunite the “*Kleine Gemeinde*” members with their former congregation were not successful. In the 1840s-1850s some members of the “*Kleine Gemeinde*” started to declare religious exclusivity and the vision of Christ’s return. These religious excitements happened during a time of grave carnal failings in the 1860s and led to a decay in the “*Kleine Gemeinde*.” In the 1870s a part of the “*Kleine Gemeinde*” (in the Crimea) joined the “Mennonite Brethren.” In this way the Crimean Mennonite Brethren congregation was formed. In the years 1874-1875 the whole group emigrated to America. 6)

In 1818 Jacob Enns, the elder of the large Molochnaia (Orloff-Petershagen) congregation, died.

5) Is. 91-92; Fr. I, 74-75, 75-76.

6) Fr. I, 74-76 (§ 35, 36, 36(2)).

Before his death elder Enns ordained Jacob Fast as elder of his congregation (in 1817). In 1819 Mennonites of the Frisian group came from Prussia and founded the village Rudnerweide in the Molochnaia settlement and with it a congregation. The head of this congregation was the elder Franz Görtz, who settled in Russia together with the congregation. By this time all differences between the Flemish and Frisians had diminished except for ceremonial details; the Orloff-Petershagen (Flemish) and the Rudnerweide (Frisian) congregations formed a close union between them and the leadership of its elders Jacob Fast and Franz Görtz. ⁷⁾ In 1820 Jacob Fast died; in his place Bernhard Fast (from Halbstadt) was elected, and ordained by the Rudnerweide (Frisian) elder Franz Görtz. In the same year, 1820, a Mennonite group of the Old Flemish branch from Prussia arrived in the Molochnaia, who founded the village and congregation of "Alexanderwohl." The leader of this group was elder Peter Wedel, who had come from Prussia with the group. In this way three large Mennonite congregations were founded in the Molochnaia settlement (not counting the "*Kleine Gemeinde*"). These three congregations had good and close relations among themselves. ⁸⁾

About this time a Bible Society was formed in Petersburg. The news of this society reached the Molochnaia Mennonites. Many of them considered supporting the distribution of the Holy Scripture in Russia to be a necessity. Soon a branch of the Bible Society was organized in the Molochnaia settlement, approved in December 1821 by Petersburg. Three elders of the Molochnaia Mennonites participated actively in its work: Fast, Görtz and Wedel. The Orloff-Petershagen congregation objected to the opening of the branch. Many of its members objected to the titles of roles in the branch such as "president," "secretary", etc.

7) Fr. I, 76-77 (§ 37); Is. 93.

8) Is. 92-94.

These designations sounded too “militaristic” to them. The members of Fast’s congregation believed that persons associating with representatives of other confessions under the coordination of “Presidents” and “Secretaries” of a society would be forced to “wear a sword.” Accusations were made against Bernhard Fast, one of the active organizers of the branch. He was maligned for the fact that he was not ordained by a Flemish elder as required, but by a Frisian elder (from Rudnerweide). Furthermore, Fast permitted a foreign non-Mennonite missionary to participate in Holy Communion, and openly served in the Orloff Mennonite school. These actions of which Fast was accused led to a split in the Orloff-Petershagen congregation. Three-quarters of the congregation separated from Fast and elected their own elder – Jacob Warkentin, who was ordained by the Khortitsa (Flemish) elder Jacob Dyck. ⁹⁾ The separation took place in 1822-1824. Warkentin’s congregation declared themselves to be the “pure Flemish congregation.” Its center was the village of Lichtenau. The congregation was called “Lichtenau-Petershagen” or the “large” [= *Grosse*] congregation.

In the 1840s the congregation survived a number of inner conflicts, caused by clashes between its ministers and leading progressive Mennonites (Cornies and others) and the highest officials of the settlement. This even led to the removal of two elders from the settlement: Warkentin and later, Wiens. In 1842 the congregation was divided in three separate groups (Lichtenau, Pordenau and Margenau-Schönsee). ¹⁰⁾

The remaining part of the Orloff congregation under the leadership of Fast, though quite small in number, turned out to be progressive in its development. It continued to work closely with the Molochnaia congregations of Frisians (Rudnerweide) and of Old Flemish (Alexanderwohl). In the 1840s some members of the Orloff congregation (Cornies and others), taking advantage of their closeness to government

9) Is. 93-95, 102-107, 109-110; Fr. I, 76-77.

10) Fr. I, 76-77; Is. 115-116.

personalities, played an important role in the life of Molochnaia Mennonites. These circumstances were the reasons why the Orloff congregation gradually separated from the Rudnerweide and Alexanderwhol congregations and “leaned more to the “large” or Lichtenauer congregation. The latter was for a long time the carrier of the old Mennonite faith. Its external life was characterized by their fear of education and in the inner life by a clear uncompromising religious direction. ¹¹⁾

In 1835-1840 a new group of Mennonites arrived in the Molochnaia from Prussia. Here they founded the village and congregation of Gnadenfeld. The Gnadenfeld congregation held to the old Flemish directions. In the 1840s at its head, in the role of an elder, stood Wilhelm Lange (1835-1841), who arrived together with the congregation from Prussia, and his successor, Friedrich Wilhelm Lange. In 1849 Friedrich Lange left his post. Both Langes were prominent leaders of the Russian Mennonites in the 1840s.

Under the leadership of Wilhelm and Friedrich Lange, the congregation developed special activities right from the start. Mission rallies, frequent prayer meetings (in various homes) with a “missionary character” were introduced in the congregation. The Gnadenfeld congregation was joined by all of the more lively and progressive members from other congregations. The Gnadenfeld congregation entered into close contact with the Herrnhutter [= Moravian Brethren] and separatists living in the Berdyansk region, Taurida *gubernia*. Together with them it participated (in the 1850s) in practical Christian activity, manifest in the conducting of mission rallies and operating a school in Gnadenfeld. Under the influence of the Herrnhutter, the Gnadenfeld congregation nurtured a number of gifted members. It must also be mentioned that there was one special trait in the Gnadenfeld congregation at Wilhelm Lange’s time.

11) Fr. I, 76-78.

The congregation performed baptisms at a very young age (12 years) - such a baptism was not an adult baptism but a child baptism.

In the 1850s the Gnadenfeld congregation became a breeding ground for a religious movement which spread to all Russian Mennonites and resulted in the formation of two new sects: "The Mennonite Brethren congregation" (New Mennonitism) and the "Friends of Jerusalem." ¹²⁾

In the middle of the 19th Century the Molochnaia settlement consisted of 7 Mennonite congregations: 1) the "Large" or Lichtenau congregation ("pure Flemish" consisting (in 1842) of three separate groups: Lichtenau, Pordenau, and Margenau-Schönsee), and 2) the Alexanderwohl, 3) Gnadenfeld and 4) Waldheim congregations (all three of the old Flemish branch), and 5) the Orloff-Halbstadt (Bernhard Fast) congregation, 6) the Rudnerweide (Frisian) congregation, and 7) the "*Kleine Gemeinde*" with its elder in Neukirch. ¹³⁾

The Khortitsa settlement consisted of the Khortitsa congregation (Flemish branch) and the small Kronsweide congregation (Frisian branch). Also connected to the Khortitsa settlement was the Bergthal (Mariupol) congregation with its elders.

At the head of each of these congregations stood a special elder.

Until the middle of the 19th Century in the Khortitsa as well as in the Molochnaia district the spiritual leader related to the Guardians Committee and the *okrug* regulations for the consideration and decision-making on various questions regarding the religious conditions of the Mennonites. The Mennonite school in the settlements also stood under the supervision of the elders (at least formally). These circumstances required the elders and ministers to have conferences or meetings to discuss questions

12) Fr. I, 79-84, 86-90.

13) Fr. I, 166-167.

14) Fr. I, 167

of faith and church practice together. Such conferences were called “Church Conventions.” Each Mennonite *okrug* held its own convention. The opinions of the conventions were considered to have governmental authority. With the passage of time, the elders occupied a dominant position in the Mennonite communities. At congregational meetings their suggestions were accepted without objections. ¹⁵⁾ Gradually this position accorded to the elders led them to believe that in the Molochnaia *okrug* they could exercise the same central power with regard to faith and church practice as that of the *okrug* with regard to political matters. With this attitude, the convention of the Molochnaia elders on April 7, 1851, with a large majority of votes, ruled that in future, for all future controversial questions in matters of faith and church practice in the *okrug*, final discussions were to be resolved at church conventions. This decision, fomented by the initiative and with the approval of the *okrug* management, was brought before the Guardians Committee for consideration which in turn recognized the fact accomplished. Nevertheless, neither the local government nor the convention itself decided to make this situation public by reporting it to the Mennonite community for a ruling. They probably recognized the impossibility of justifying the establishment of a central church power which destroyed the autonomy of the local Mennonite congregations as articulated in Menno Simons’ teachings.

The resolution of the convention created a deep dissatisfaction among the Mennonites and was one of the reasons the “Friends of Jerusalem” sect was formed. ¹⁶⁾

15) Is. 122; W. III, 170-171.

16) Klaus (“Our Colonies,” page 175) confirms that on April 7, 1851 a Molochnaia church convention was formed. But conventions were held before 1851. Already in 1827, the Ekaterinoslav Guardianship Office wrote to the Molochnaia church convention (December 9, 1827) (Fr. I, 305). Until 1851 the Molochnaia convention only had consultative importance.

History of the Mennonite Brethren Church ^{*}).
Pastor Wüst and the Pietist Movement in South Russia.
Origin of the *Hüpfer* Sect

In the 1850s a religious movement emerged among the South-Russian Mennonites which resulted in the formation of the New Mennonite or Mennonite Brethren congregation (New Mennonitism – Baptist with a Mennonite basis). At first this movement was more of a pietistic character. Its emergence was instigated by pastor Eduard Wüst who, because of his activities, was sometimes called the “second reformer after Menno” by the New Mennonites. ¹⁷⁾

Pastor Eduard Wüst was born in 1818 in Württemberg. After graduating from a course of studies in the theological faculty of University of Tübingen he received a pastorate in his homeland. Here he became a Pietist and was therefore dismissed from his duties. ¹⁸⁾ In 1845 upon invitation by the South Russian Separatists, Wüst took the position of pastor in the village of Neuhoftnung in the Berdyansk *uezd*, Taurida *gubernia*. ¹⁹⁾

At that time the Separatists, who had resettled between 1818-1822 from Württemberg to the Taurida *gubernia*, were called extreme Pietists. Already in Württemberg they had rejected communion with the Lutheran Church and had therefore received the label *Separatists*. ²⁰⁾

The beginning of Wüst’s activity in South Russia coincided with a deep crisis in the life of the Württemberg Pietism. Already at the beginning of the 19th Century the Württemberg Pietists were waiting for the imminent return of Christ. Dissatisfied with the sinful life of the surrounding society, they tried to build a community on earth in which “the sinful conditions of life would not be present.” In the opinion of the Pietists, this community,

^{*}) Fr. I, 164-482; Is. 174-207; W. III, 174-184.

17) Fr. I, 174 (§ 76b).

18) Prinz 74-76. Kr. 5-33.

19) Prinz 81-82; Kr. 34-41; Fr. I, 168-169.

20) Kr. 35-36.

was to serve as a light to the whole world. It would meet and glorify the coming Christ. But building such a community in the conditions prevailing in western Europe at that time proved to be impossible. Therefore, the Pietists advocated emigrating to other countries, mainly to South Russia. As is well-known, at the beginning of the 19th Century, many Pietists from Württemberg and other places in South Germany resettled in the Novorossia area.

In the meantime, the revolutionary movement in Western Europe (starting in the 1830s) shook many foundations of belief and church. At the Tübingen University the famous Strauss (author of "Life of Jesus Christ") launched a sharp critique of the New Testament and of the personality of the divine founder of Christianity himself.

Believers and religiously oriented persons looked for comfort in Pietism. The previously ecstatic Pietism took up the task, replacing mystical Pietism with an individualistic Pietism of personal feelings. The main representative of this movement was the famous minister, Ludwig Hofacker.

The new Pietists did not seek to resettle in strange territories. They did not worry about the external organization of the new community in which "God's truth dwelled on earth." They sought an inner individual "renewal" of the human heart. They demanded an "awakening" from sin and a "turning" to Christ. In their understanding of religion, the outward social tasks were subordinate to the "inner edification" of men's souls - it is "concealed in the quietness of the human heart." Thus, instead of organizing a new community and resettling in a distant country, the Pietists declared a "inner mission," consisting of an "awakening," a "conversion and a "rebirth" of individuals. ²¹⁾

Wüst was overtaken by this movement and upon becoming the pastor in the village of Neuhoffnung, he began to act

21) Prinz 79, 80, 81, 99-103.

in the spirit of Hofacker. Already his first “inaugural sermon” stirred the hearts of his listeners and drew broad attention to himself. Not only did the people in Neuhoffnung talk about him, but also those in the neighbouring villages of Lutherans and Mennonites. 22)

Wüst was a persuasive preacher. According to the reports of others, his sermons “struck with the force of lightening” touching even “hearts of stone.” Already in the first three months, Wüst started a “blaze of conversions” in his congregation.

The main topic of Wüst’s preaching was the personal salvation of men. This salvation was not effected by the works or good deeds of the person himself but is granted by God through the faith in Christ. Salvation is completed on Calvary. Man should recognize his sinfulness, turn to Christ and believe in the salvation offered. “Believe that you are saved, and you are saved already.” Salvation is a gift of God’s free grace, granted to men in their act of “rebirth” while “converting to Christ.” 23)

Under the influence of Wüst’s sermons, which depicted a gloomy picture of future torments, his listeners grieved over their sins and confessed; this was followed by bringing their inner condition into order and happiness, combined with feeling trust in God. In some, this feeling of happiness was so strong that it seemed to them that an inner unseen voice said: “Your sins are forgiven, you are holy.” 24)

Such “converted” persons united into brotherly groups, which, thanks to Wüst’s activities, multiplied and grew in their strength. 25)

The movement initiated by Wüst in the village of Neuhoffnung also spread to other German settlements in the Taurida and Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*. Wüst’s fame “resounded” in these villages. “Wüst” circles with a clear pietistic spirit emerged among the Lutherans and the Molochnaia Mennonites.

22) Prinz 81-84; Kr. 42-45; Fr. I, 168-169, 173-181.

23) Prinz 84; Kr. 60.

24) Prinz 84-85; Kr. 60.

25) Prinz 85.

Wüst was a welcome guest in these circles. 26)

Mission festivals, organized annually by Wüst, served as means of close fellowship for the “Wüst people.” The first such festival was conducted in 1846 in the village of Neuhoffnung. With each year these festivals “grew.” Neuhoffnung was overwhelmed with guests. Not only Separatists came to these festivals, but Lutherans and Mennonites as well, and quite often from far away. 27) The meetings were held in the church and the houses of Neuhoffnung. “Each house resounded with songs.” Together with Wüst, Lutheran pastors, Mennonite ministers and even lay people preached. 28)

Wüst and his followers went to all German villages in South Russia and visited their “converts.” 29)

Not only did he preach, but Wüst also introduced “Bible meetings,” “agape suppers,” “brotherhood conferences,” etc. At Bible meetings the listeners learned God’s Word. Agape suppers served the purpose of overcoming differences of opinion among the “Wüst people.” Brotherhood conferences, attended by Wüst’s followers, served to discuss current issues and the needs of Wüst’s brotherhood. All these meetings attracted not only followers of Wüst in Neuhoffnung, but also from neighbouring Separatist, Lutheran and Mennonite villages. These meetings greatly enhanced the religious awakening and helped to spread Pietism through the German settlements in South Russia. 30)

Finally, Wüst distributed popular Pietistic literature in his circles, mainly bulletins of the Rhine and Basel missions, and also works by Ludwig Hofacker, whose activities Wüst imitated. 31)

26) Prinz 86; Kr. 42-75, 75-84.

27) *Br.* 76-77; Prinz 96-87; Kr. 75-84.

28) Prinz 87-88.

29) Prinz 87-88.

30) Prinz 89; Kr. 75-84; L. II, 309.

31) Prinz 90; Kr. 55.

The Pietist movement started by Wüst also penetrated the Molochnaia Mennonite villages. ³²⁾ At the outset, Wüst's "inaugural" sermon in the village of Neuhoffnung was attended by the Mennonite minister Abraham Matties (from Rudnerweide) belonging to the Gnadenfeld congregation. ³³⁾ At that time the Gnadenfeld congregation, led by its progressive elder Lange, was more "alive" than any other congregation in the Molochnaia settlement. Wüst formed a close relationship with this congregation. ³⁴⁾ When a mission festival was held in Gnadenfeld in 1846, Wüst was invited to attend and to preach at the festival. ³⁵⁾ Friedrich Lange, elder of Gnadenfeld congregation, ordained Wüst in 1847. ³⁶⁾ Prayer meetings in the spirit of Pietism were started at the home of Abraham Matties (in the village of Rudnerweide). ³⁷⁾ In the Gnadenfeld congregation Wüst received such great admiration that small children were brought to him for dedication. ³⁸⁾

Under Wüst's influence, a spiritual awakening emerged in the Gnadenfeld congregation after 1846, which in the 1850's seized it and other villages of the Molochnaia Mennonites. Here and in other German settlements in South Russia "Wüst circles" with a Pietistic flavor were formed. ³³⁾ Active followers of Wüst, in addition to Abraham Matties, were Johann Claassen (from Liebenau), Jacob Reimer (from Gnadenfeld), Abram Cornelsen (school teacher in Elisabeththal), Heinrich Hübert (from Liebenau), Wilhelm Bartel (living in Berdyansk) and Jacob Bekker (from Rudnerweide). All of them became founders and prominent leaders of the Mennonite Brethren congregation. In addition to these, among

32) See Fr. I, 169 (§ 75); Is. 197 (Dobb.[?]); Kr. 79-80.

33) Kr. 77.

34) Fr. I, 81-82, 83-84, 86-87, 171 note; Kr. 78.

35) Kr. 77.

36) Fr. I, 171 note.

37) Kr. 77.

38) Kr. 80; Is. 197 (Dobb.[?]).

39) Fr. I, 86-87.

Wüst's followers were also the ministers Wilhelm Lange (in Gnadenfeld) and Nikolai Schmidt (in Steinbach), Abr. Wiebe, Dietrich Dyck and other persons. In 1862 and 1863 these individuals, under the leadership of Lange, joined the sect of "Friends of Jerusalem" or "Temple Friends," brought to us from South Germany. ⁴⁰⁾

Wüsts's activities caused displeasure among the Lutheran pastors in the South Russian colonies. Upon a complaint by them to the Ministry of Interior and Commerce in 1857, the Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia restricted Wüst to preaching and conducting worship services within his parish. ⁴¹⁾ Now leaderless, the Wüst groups in other German villages were left on their own. Very soon, in one of the Mariupol villages, founded by settlers from Prussia, a certain Koppes, a former elementary school teacher in one of the villages of the Mariupol district, rose in prominence among the local "Wüst people." This person was a bold and resolute minister, but a man of unruly character. Taking up Wüst's teaching about the "free gift of grace," Koppes adapted it to his own style. Already before separating from Wüst (in 1858), Koppes and his followers rebuked Wüst because he had acceded to the government's demand that he preach only in his parish. Soon they started to allege that he accorded too much importance to internal church ordinances – baptism, confirmation, and communion. Instead, the followers of Koppes claimed "evangelical freedom" for themselves and tried to practice it in their conduct. ⁴²⁾

Wüst's teaching about "joyfulness" upon being saved received extreme emphasis in Koppes' group. "We are saved by grace through faith in Christ, without our merit or effort" and are "overwhelmed by a joyful salvation." The followers of Koppes expressed this joyfulness at their meetings

40) Kr. 79-80. Fr. I, 86-87.

41) Prinz 112-116; Kr. 87-88, 95.

42) Kr. 88-104; Prinz 106-107; Fr. I, 183.

in vocal, wild and indecent forms. They sang spiritual songs in a fast-rushing tempo, rejoiced, danced, jumped according to the example of King David, clapped their hands, interrupted the service and the minister, cried out “Gloria,” “Victory,” “Hallelujah.” For such displays the followers of Koppes were soon called by mocking names such as “Jolly,” “Joyful,” or “*Hüpfer*” (from the German word “hüpfen” [= hopping]). They called themselves “True Christians” or “Sheep of Grace.” 43)

The *Hüpfer* movement appeared not only in Wüst’s parish but also in Wüst circles in Lutheran and Mennonite villages. Wüst himself resolutely opposed the *Hüpfer* but was not successful. In spring 1858 he organized a brotherhood conference in Rosenfeld (Berdyansk *uezd*) which was attended by Separatists, followers of Koppes, and Mennonites. The main topic at the conference was the new *Hüpfer* movement. Koppes and his supporters alleged that Wüst had “changed,” forsaking the “previous” Pietistic orientation which had existed before his arrival in the South Russian villages. They rebuked Wüst, declaring that for him religion served as a dead form, based on the impression that he allowed unworthy persons to participate in sacraments. Wüst tried to come to agreement with his opponents, but Koppes and his supporters did not want to hear about reconciliation. They called Wüst and his group “stubborn Pharisees, false hypocrites, a dead church” and demanded broad “evangelical freedom” in life. Wüst declared that “for him the new direction was an overripe plum, it is good from the outside but is dirty when touched.” During the heated debates, Koppes and his followers left the conference. Thus, a split occurred in the “Wüst Brotherhood.” Grieved by all that had happened, Wüst soon died (in 1869). 44)

After the split with Wüst the *Hüpfer* organized

43) Prinz 107-110; Kr. 88-91; Fr. I, 183, 170-171.

44) Prinz 106-111; Kr 88-104; Fr. I, 183-186.

as a separate religious congregation which many “Wüst people” in Lutheran and Mennonite villages joined. In the village of Neuhoffnung the *Hüpfer* started frequent prayer meetings and studied the Bible to find a basis for their beliefs. The Bible was considered by them to be the sole rule for their beliefs and life. Anything that was not in it, was rejected. On this basis, godfathers at baptisms were rejected. Some of the *Hüpfer* found the baptism of children to be unnecessary, as children are already promised the heavenly kingdom.

Soon the new movement turned into pure nonsense. Koppes and his followers (actually only a few) distorted the original Biblical teaching about “free grace.” In the newborn Christian, they said, there are two persons: a carnal one (the old Adam) and a spiritual one (the new Adam). While the “new Adam” is immersed in a spiritual paradise, the “old Adam” follows his carnal inclination. As we have died to sin in Christ, we cannot be held responsible for that which the “old Adam” does in us. Apostle Paul says, “I serve God’s law in my mind, but the flesh serves the law of sin” (Romans 7:25). King David sinned in the flesh but remained a prophet of God. On this basis, under the pretext of “freedom in Christ,” extreme unruly orgies began in Koppes’ congregation. But it must be said that only a few of Koppes’ followers took part in such actions. Other *Hüpfer* expressed an explicit rejection of such small groups. 45)

***Hüpfer* Movement in the Molochnaia Mennonite Villages**

The *Hüpfer* movement started by Koppes also influenced Wüst circles among Mennonites. Many members of these circles followed Koppes. The leading role among the Mennonite *Hüpfer* was held by

45) Prinz 106-111.

Wilhelm Bartel, a personal friend of Koppes. ⁴⁶⁾ A special group of Mennonite *Hüpfer* emerged. This group was joined by many well-known followers of Wüst among the Mennonites: Johann Claassen, Jacob Reimer, Abraham Cornelsen, Heinrich Hübert, Benjamin Bekker, Isaak Koop and others. Johann Claassen and Jacob Reimer were personal friends of Wüst. ⁴⁷⁾ Later they strongly opposed the extremes of the *Hüpfer* movement and the noisy exuberance at their meetings. Their actions sustained the healthy elements among the *Hüpfer*, and helped, as we will see, to change the *Hüpfer* movement into the quiet rational New Mennonites sect. To the honor of the Mennonite *Hüpfer* must be said that the disgraceful behaviour of Koppes appeared only occasionally among them.

The new movement expressed a strong protest against the churchly formality within the surrounding Mennonite community. It declared itself intolerant toward the old Mennonite community, calling it a “fallen...spiritually dead church.”

It must be mentioned that the “Wüst” Mennonite groups, despite their negative stand toward the Mennonite church life, did not separate from it openly and completely. While preaching “confession,” “conversion,” and “rebirth” Mennonite followers of Wüst did not separate from the Mennonite majority to form an independent sect. They demanded personal “renewal” in the Pietistic spirit. Not being content with the typical worship services in Mennonite churches, they conducted prayer meetings at other places; but they stayed within the Mennonite community and showed a high degree of tolerance toward Mennonitism.

After the separation from Wüst, many former Mennonite “Wüst people,” now under the influence of Koppes, were extremely hostile to the existing Mennonite community. Its inner life

46) Fr. I, 183.

47) Fr. I, 183-184, 169-171.

justified such an attitude of rejection. As is known, the Russian Mennonites had strayed far away from the ideal of their founder, Menno Simons. He wanted to establish a “community of saints” on earth, a “community of God’s children,” being baptized upon their faith and a living a life which proved that they are “children of God.” To maintain the spiritual life on a high level, Menno demanded a strict church discipline and excommunication from the congregation. But already for a long time before coming to Russia, under the influence of the surrounding Lutherans and the Lutheran ceremony of confirmation, the Mennonites started to practice adult baptism very similarly to the Lutheran confirmation of adults (at 18-20 years of age) by studying of basic beliefs of Mennonite doctrine. As “rebirth” and “awakening” was not valued, baptism took on a formal, purely ceremonial character. The inner life of the Mennonite community was characterized by the absence of religious enthusiasm and by adherence to formal moral codes. Well-known sinners were admitted to communion. Nothing was heard about private religious gatherings, only gatherings on Sundays in churches.

The new movement, according to declarations by its leaders, tried to “renew the Mennonite church life,” to restore the former clear teachings of Menno Simons and the strict church discipline, which was lacking in the life of the Mennonite community, as means for cleansing its character and improving the community.

Under the influence of Koppes, the Mennonite *Hüpfers* went into extremes. While regarding his sect as a community of reborn and perfect saints, they saw only a stream of evil in the larger community. They considered all old Mennonite congregations to be “spiritually dark,” “fallen churches,” serving only the devil; they called their meetings gathering of sinners, drunkards, hedonists, etc. ⁴⁸⁾ Not hiding their disdain of the “old” Mennonitism

48) See *Br.* 29.

the *Hüpfer* denigrated them at every opportunity. This led not only to a deep split between the “new” and “old” Mennonites, but also caused an ongoing conflict between the two groups.

The split occurred in 1859, shortly after Wüst’s death. Based on their disdain of the “Mennonite church,” the *Hüpfer* demanded first of all that the elder of the Gnadenfeld congregation (to which most of the *Hüpfer* Mennonites belonged) allow special communion services for themselves, separate from other Mennonites and more frequently, not only twice a year as prescribed in the “old” Mennonite practice. The elder rejected the demand of the *Hüpfer*, regarding it as an innovation which would harm Mennonite unity, and therefore out of order. 49)

Then the *Hüpfer* began to hold communion in private homes, separate from the “old” Mennonites. Based on the words of Paul in I Corinthians 5:11: “But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a man.” The *Hüpfer* admitted only “believers,” that is persons of like mind, to their communion. 50) The first such communion service was held in fall of 1859 in the home of Cornelius Wiens in the village of Elisabethal. Only *Hüpfer* were present. In the absence of an elder or minister, the bread breaking was performed by one of the lay brothers, Abram Cornelsen. 51) To justify their actions, the *Hüpfer* declared that in the old Mennonite congregations everyone was admitted to the communion without qualification, including notorious sinners.

Such illegal actions by the *Hüpfer* caused

49) Br. 78, 97-100.

50) Br. 29 (See 84 *od*).

51) Fr. I, 186-189.

52) Fr. I, 187 (§ 82|2|)

a great agitation among the “old” Mennonites. 53) The “old” Mennonites gathered in each of their congregations, and each congregation warned all members who joined the new congregation, forbidding them under the threat of punishment to conduct communion in this way. 54)

Threats and prohibitions did not prevent such actions, but only accelerated the separation between the “old” Mennonites and the *Hüpfer*. Regarding the “old” Mennonitism as a “disintegrating” and “dead church”, and not wanting any connection with it, the *Hüpfer* decided to separate from it and form a special congregation.

**Separation of the *Hüpfer* from the “Old” Mennonite Congregation.
Formation of an Independent New Mennonite (*Hüpfer*) Congregation
in the Molochnaia *Okrug*.
Struggle between the “Old” and “New” Mennonites**

On January 6, 1860 the *Hüpfer*, 18 men (heads of households) belonging to the Gnadenfeld and other congregations, gathered in the village of Elisabethal and at a meeting here resolved to separate into an independent congregation. In the secession declaration of January 6, 1860, sent to all elders of the Molochnaia *okrug*, the *Hüpfer* declared that they separated from the “existing disintegrating church” (namely the Mennonite congregations) because of its extreme religious failure and its (Satanic) falsehood, and inconsistent life according to Scripture. “Thanks to God and by our conscience,” the *Hüpfer* wrote, “we cannot continue in our former way of life; for the openly godless life cries out to God in heaven; that is why we repudiate the decadent church, and by the same right whereby others separated, we, on the basis of Menno Simon’s teaching and confession of faith, want to form a separate congregation in which life corresponds to the confession of faith.” In accordance with Scripture teaching and rules by Menno Simons, the *Hüpfer* demanded “baptism

53) Fr. I, 188.

54) Br. 98.

upon faith” only for “repented and reborn” persons, demanded the barring of non-believers and sinners from communion, and the application of the strict ban to these persons, in the spirit of Menno. 55)

This declaration was signed by all *Hüpfers* gathered on January 6, including such prominent men of the sect as Abraham Cornelsen, Johann Claassen, Heinrich Hübert and Isaak Koop. Later (January 18, 1861) Jacob Reimer and 9 other members of the Gnadenfeld congregation joined the declaration. Thus the first New Mennonite (*Hüpfers*) congregation at the Molochnaia began. “The Secession Declaration” of January 6, 1860 was their first founding act. 56)

The Molochnaia church convention replied to the declaration of the *Hüpfers* on January 18, 1860 with the excommunication of all members of the new congregation. All were handed over to the Molochnaia *okrug* office, as “persons separated from the Mennonite community.” The convention also ruled that “the formation of a new congregation is not to be permitted.” 57)

From this moment on, an intense struggle ensued between the new congregation and the Mennonites of the old branch, continuing for a number of years. The Mennonite elders and the Molochnaia village authorities did not acknowledge the new congregation, attempted to expel its members from the Mennonite community and demanded punitive measures against the *Hüpfers*. To justify their existence, the *Hüpfers* constantly and persistently claimed that they were not leaving Mennonitism and not forming a new sect; that they were and would remain a “renewal of Mennonitism.” But instead, their negative opinion of the “old” or “church” Mennonites, only reinforced the hostility of the “old” Mennonites to the *Hüpfers*.

Upon receiving notice of the condemnation along with the excommunication of *Hüpfers* from the church convention,

55) *Br.* 79-80; *Is.* 174-176; *Fr. I.*, 189-194; *Kl.* 179.

56) *Is.* 174-176; *Fr. I.*, 189-196.

57) *Kl.* 179; *Is.* 176-177, 199-200; *Fr. I.*, 192 (298-299, § 159, k. 1); *Br.* 58. 65.

the Molochnaia *okrug* office demanded an explanation from the leaders of the new sect. Upon request Abraham Cornelsen, Johann Claassen and Isaak Koop replied on January 23, 1860, announcing that they would willingly remain, each one in his former congregation, if the spiritual teachers and regular members would lead a life in accordance with the Scriptures. As this was not the case, they, as Mennonites, had decided to form an independent congregation. 58)

In view of such a response by the *Hüpfers*, the Molochnaia *okrug* office decided to take severe measures against them. On January 27, 1860, the office sent a circular letter with the following contents to all village councils in the Molochnaia *okrug*:

“Because some members of the Molochnaia congregations had the impudence to hold the Lord’s Supper in a private meeting in the village of Elisabethal, and, ignoring the admonition already issued them, do not forsake their erroneous views, but, in the contrary, reject in writing their congregations with the aim of forming their own congregation and hold private gatherings, the *okrug* office rules on the basis of article 362 of the penal code (edition 1857), according to which founders and members of secret societies, even if they do not have harmful aims, are prohibited by special governmental regulations and instructions and are subject to imprisonment from six months to one year; and members of such societies, if they knew of the prohibition, are subject to arrest for seven days to three weeks. The village authorities are requested to undertake watchful observation, and also to warn other persons in the villages not to have private meetings of any religious character in homes. The village authorities are to attend to a reduction of such activities, and to turn over to the *okrug* office, under personal oversight and without delay, for further attention, violators of this prohibition and those homeowners who allow meetings in their homes,

58) Fr. I, 193.

even if they do not belong to the new brotherhood.” 59)

Such a prohibition did not scare the *Hüpfer*. They not only continued to gather, but on February 8, 1860 conducted another communion service in a private home. In view of this, the *okrug* office referred the leaders and agents of the *Hüpfer*, Abraham Cornelsen, Johann Claassen and Isaak Koop to the local inspector of the settlement for his ruling. 60)

On February 10, 1860, upon the request of the inspector, A. Cornelsen, J. Claassen and I. Koop indicated that “they would not separate from the Mennonite congregation, and would not perform any religious ordinances among them in general, and would not perform anything forbidden by the church elders, until explicit permission was obtained from the supreme government.” 61)

On the February 10, the colonial inspector ordered the Molochnaia *okrug* office to confirm that the promise was kept. But, despite their promise, Isaak Koop, Johann Claassen and Abraham Cornelsen continued to attend the *Hüpfer* meetings. 62)

On the February 15, the inspector requested a list of Mennonites forming the new congregation from the Molochnaia district office. On March 1 he requested all Mennonite village authorities and elders to give him their opinions as to “what steps would have to be taken to dissolve the congregation of *Hüpfer*, and whether they would acknowledge the necessity of treating the founders of this congregation as disrupters of the general order and peace, on the basis of point 1395, chapter 5, volume XV of Penal Code, namely by taking some corrective

59) Is. 177-178; Fr. I, 199-300; Kl. 194-195.

60) Br. 57.

61) Fr. I, 195; Is. 203; Br. 57.

62) Br. 57.

63) Br. 84-85.

measures and punishment, and revoking their status as colonists, if the community is in favour of it.”⁶⁴⁾

The Molochnaia elders were not unanimous in their opinions on this question. The majority of the elders (5 out of 7) issued (on March 11, 1860) the following statement “about the direction of these people who have gone astray” (*Hüpfers*).

1. “They understand, explain and practice the Holy Scripture in a one-sided way, maintaining that only their understanding and practice of various texts of Scripture is the right one, as a result of this they pay no attention to any instructions.
2. They do not respect established church customs, regarding them as a human statutes and say that in this respect one has to obey God more than man, as they have started to celebrate Holy Communion in private homes; and
3. They consider themselves to be the only true Christians, and the whole Mennonite brotherhood is declared to have fallen into complete decay and blindness and service to the devil.”

“Based on these trends” among the *Hüpfers* Mennonites, and also “considering their separation from the Mennonite brotherhood,” the elders concluded that “a peaceful co-existence with the *Hüpfers* as a separate congregation could not be contemplated.” If the *Hüpfers* would be recognized as a separate congregation, then “one could expect scandal and disorder to increase, as it cannot be hoped that they, being left on their own, will remain at their current state but, on the contrary, they will increase in their fanaticism.” Regarding the *Hüpfers* as traitors and foreseeing the impossibility of a brotherly union between them and the other Mennonites, the elders feared future “scandal and discord” in the communal life, and in addition “their tireless propaganda” under the “pretense of true Christian piety, they might pervert many good Mennonites.”

Based on these considerations, the majority of the spiritual

64) *Br.* 57-58. Is. 178.

elders were not willing to recognize the *Hüpfer* as a separate independent Mennonite congregation.

However, regarding future measures against the *Hüpfer* and their punishment by the official government, the spiritual leaders did not presume to make any suggestions; much less, as they, the elders, had already described the *Hüpfer* to the *okrug* office (January 8, 1860) as persons barely belonging to the Mennonite brotherhood. “We only allow ourselves to ask that mild rather than severe measures be taken to convince these deluded persons to confess their guilt, as much as they deserve such.” ⁶⁵⁾

The opinion of the elder of the Orloff congregation, Johann Harder, was the complete opposite. Already during the time of Cornies, the Orloff congregation showed itself as very progressive in their outlook and very tolerant in religious matters. The elder Harder tried to form personal relations with the *Hüpfer*, getting to know their congregation life and their meetings. The representatives of the new congregation, Heinrich Hübner, Johann Claassen, Jacob Reimer, Wilhelm Bartel, Abram Cornelson, Jacob and Benjamin Bekker and Isaak Koop presented Harder with a written explanation (March 19, 1860) in which they declared, that they “stand exclusively on the grounds of the accepted Mennonite faith,” that they are not separating from Mennonitism and are not intending to form a new sect; that they only reject the “fallen churches” (that is the existing Mennonite congregations). “If their leaders would act according to God’s Word, then they would now gladly participate in these congregations.” ⁶⁶⁾

Based on personal observations and discussions with the *Hüpfer*, Johann Harder informed the Molochnaia *okrug* office (March 29, 1860) that “the intentions of these people (*Hüpfer*) are expressed in the desire to form a separate congregation on the same basis and confession as all other Mennonite congregations

65) Is. 179-180; Fr. I, 195-197; Kl. 194; Br. 58.

66) Is. 180-182; Fr. I, 197-199.

and in keeping with the freedom of religion granted us by the supreme authority to live their faith in the midst of the other congregations, because they hope to establish a better congregational order. If they remain true to this goal, they will not cause any damaging consequences for the overall Mennonite community.” The means for dissuading these people from forming a separate congregation would be, in Harder’s opinion, for “all Mennonites, with firm determination, to start living according to God’s Word, to reestablish congregational order and to improve the whole community. However, if someone deserves punishment, then God’s church, following the teaching of the Scripture, has to ban such persons and not have fellowship with them until they repent.” 67)

Harder’s argument did not succeed. 68) The opinion of the majority of the elders, who were joined by the Molochnaia community overseers (in the response of March 25, 1860), prevailed. “With regard to destroying the sect of *Hüpfer*,” the latter wanted to treat the founders, and some of the dissatisfied members of the sect, as disrupters of the general unity and order, but the elders did not consider expelling them from the status of colonists to be necessary, as “corrective measures might lead them to recognize the wrongness of their activities and to return to the true way.” 69)

All these responses came to the Guardians Committee for Foreign Settlers. At the same time the local village overseer, in his response to the sect of *Hüpfer*, proposed “its destruction by applying police methods, and treating the main founders as disturbers of social order and freedom.” According to responses by the overseers, the sect of *Hüpfer* was regarded with greatly divergent opinions in the congregations as well as among members within Mennonite families. 70)

At that time the sect of *Hüpfer* was exposed to severe

67) Is. 183-184; Fr. I, 200; Kl. 193-194.

68) Br. 80 ff.

69) Br. 58-59.

70) Br. 59.

persecution in the Molochnaia villages. Meetings of the *Hüpfer* were prohibited; *Hüpfer* were punished, arrested. In accord with church excommunication as practiced by Mennonites, which prohibited any dealings with the excommunicated, the *Hüpfer* found themselves in a difficult position economically as well as socially. In addition, due to their renunciation by the “old” Mennonite congregations, the local colonist government not seldomly treated the “New Mennonite” as persons who had lost their Mennonite rights and restricted them from buying, selling, or renting land, etc. As a result of all this many *Hüpfer* experienced economic decline and ruin. Such restrictions continued for many years. 71

These restrictions did not result in the desired effect - not only did they made the *Hüpfer* more fanatical, but also more determined. They did not contemplate a reunification with the “church” (old) Mennonites. On May 30, 1860 at a meeting in the house of Jacob Reimer (in Gnadenfeld) the *Hüpfer* elected their own minister. Twenty-eight brethren participated in the election. Elected as ministers were Heinrich Hübert (from Liebenau) and Jacob Bekker (from Rudnerweide). Hübert assumed the leading role in the *Hüpfer* congregation with the responsibilities of an elder. Hübert and Bekker, on behalf of the congregation, informed all elders of the Molochnaia *okrug* of their election in a letter (July 2, 1860). Later (in 1868) Hübert was ordained as elder of the Molochnaia New Mennonite congregation. The dedication took place in the village of Neukirch in the home of Cornelius Neufeld and was performed on behalf of the whole congregation under the leadership of one of the New Mennonite brethren, Johann Fast (from Rückenau). Hübert did not remain an elder for a long time, he soon turned his obligations over to Abr. Schellenberg, whom he ordained as elder. 72

With the election of elders and ministers, the *Hüpfer* congregations received a solid internal structure

71) *Kl.* 195; *Fr.* I, 202-205, 299-300.

72) *Fr.* I, 201-202, 294-295; *Br.* 84-85, 102.

which gave them durability and stability for the future. The constant persecution to which the “*Hüpfers*” were subjected in the Molochnaia settlement forced them to turn to the government to ask for protection. Already in March 1860 the representative of the Molochnaia *Hüpfers*, Johann Claassen, went to Petersburg to solicit protection from restrictions; but at this time his attempts were unsuccessful. ⁷³⁾ In November 1860 Claassen, with the authorization of the Molochnaia *Hüpfers*, again went to Petersburg where he stayed until the middle of 1862. ⁷⁴⁾ This time his trip was successful.

In Claassen’s absence the conflict between the “Old” and “New” Mennonites in the Molochnaia villages continued.

In November 1860 the Guardians Committee, already informed about the new sect, demanded a list of the leaders, disseminators, and members of the sect from the Molochnaia *okrug* office with its instructions for measures and methods to stop its spread.”

⁷⁵⁾

Fearing that the matters of the sect would be presented one-sidedly to the Guardians Committee and not in the interest of the sect, its leaders, Heinrich Hübert, Wilhelm Bartel, Jacob Reimer, and other persons turned to the Guardians Committee on December 27, 1860 with a presentation explaining the reasons why they had separated from the “old” Mennonite congregation, and asked the Committee for protection from persecution. With regard to the reasons of separation, the *Hüpfers*, as was their habit, referred to the deterioration of religious life and church discipline in the Mennonite congregations. “We did not create a new sect,” the leaders of the *Hüpfers* wrote, “instead we are true Mennonites.”

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The presentation of the *Hüpfers* was not successful. The Guardian Committee sided with the opinion of the “old” Mennonite

73) Fr. I, 200, 293-294.

74) Fr. I, 203, 206-207, 216; Kl. 180.

75) Br. 97-100.

76) Br. 97-100; Fr. I, 203-205.

elders, who were not only hostile to the new brethren but also did not recognize them as Mennonites. In a presentation to the Guardian Committee (July 10, 1861) five of the seven Molochnaia elders stated clearly that they could not recognize Claassen and those of like mind as Mennonites, as they had separated themselves from the Mennonite community, calling themselves the only true believers, labelling the communion held among the old congregations a “service of the devil,” and they had rebaptized all who joined them, even though they had been baptized in the old congregation according to the Mennonite custom. At their meetings the *Hüpfer* allowed noise, exuberance, dancing and jumping. In view of this, the elders asked the Guardian Committee to take measures to suppress the harmful influence of the new brethren. 77)

In 1860 and 1862 the Guardian Committee received assessments of the new sect from the Molochnaia elders and village elders, and came to the conclusion that, “according to the opinion of all reasonable Mennonites in their *okrug* “the only way” to stop all of the unthinkable and reprehensible fanaticism of the sectarians, the influencing of other Mennonites and causing social and family disharmony and disorder” in the future would be the “total exclusion from the status of colonist of the main sectarians, that is, the three families of the sect: Claassen, Cornelsen and Koop and of the two ministers of the sect – Hübert and Bekker.” A presentation with this position to the Ministry of Commerce (July 19, 1862) and the Guardian Committee requested instructions for measures to be taken against the *Hüpfer*, stating that in their opinion they recommended the exclusion from the status of colonist and the banishment of the five afore-mentioned persons. 78) As we will see below, the Ministry of Commerce took a completely different position with regard to the new sect.

The constant restrictions on the *Hüpfer* motivated Claassen, who remained in Petersburg until the end of May in 1862, to take

77) Fr. I, 207-208.

78) Br. 59.

decisive defensive measures. Foreseeing that as minority the new congregation would have a difficult struggle with the surrounding old Mennonite majority, Claassen, with the approval of his congregation, began to obtain permission for the *Hüpfer* to resettle in the Caucasus (in the Kuban region). In addition, in May of 1862, he submitted an application to the supreme authority in which he described the unfavorable situation in which the *Hüpfer* of the Molochnaia villages found themselves. 79)

In this memorandum Claassen asserted the “right of each Mennonite to leave a community which does not in accord with his convictions and to unite with others or even to form a new one.” Claassen explained the evolution of his congregation in the following way. In recent years Mennonites who were anxious to save their souls had started to read the Scriptures. The reading of the Scriptures revealed to them the extreme moral-religious decay of contemporary Mennonitism: truly evangelistic feeling was rare, church life was degraded to pure formalities, church discipline had fallen so far that persons with obviously flawed lives were tolerated. Finding conditions which did not conform to the Scriptures and to the teachings of Menno Simons, the new Mennonite brethren, founded on January 8, 1860, decided to organize an independent congregation which had the purpose of establishing a truly evangelical character and the original moral purity in the church and social life of the Mennonites. The majority of the elders regarded the new congregation as a direct insult and blow to their personal authority. They had decided to oppose by all means the acceptance the independence of the new congregation. Firstly, they excommunicated the members of the new congregation and handed them over to the village authorities. Church excommunication and police prosecutions placed the *Hüpfer* in a difficult situation - many of them were economically destroyed. The *Hüpfer* turned to the Guardian Committee for help, but its response had not satisfied their petition. This fact

79) Is. 190-181; Fr. I, 209-210, 216, 297-302.

prompted the “new brethren” to ask for protection and help from the Emperor. ⁸⁰⁾

Following this petition by Claassen (and other *Hüpfer*) the Ministry of Government Domains regarded the sect of *Hüpfer* as an inner discord within Mennonitism which was not a matter for the government. The Ministry ruled that the church excommunication did not cause restrictions in their civil rights nor the prosecution of the *Hüpfer* by the police. ⁸¹⁾ But, as we will see, the recognition of the new sect encountered difficulties.

Such a resolution of the issue did not stop the religious split in the Molochnaia villages. To get rid of the Hüpfer, the Molochnaia okrug office decided to exclude them from the status of colonist. In the meantime At the conference of the Molochnaia elders, on October 11, 1862, convened by the order of the Molochnaia okrug authorities, the question of whether to recognize the new congregation or to ban the members from the status of colonist was placed before the elders. The elders shied away from resolving this question on the grounds that it could not be solved without consultation with the congregations. ⁸²⁾ As shown in later evidence, the elders did not put this question before their congregations for resolution for a long time. The majority of church members were not in favor of revoking the Hüpfer’s status as colonists and even protested openly against such actions. This explains the fact that until 1864 the old Mennonite elders did not inform the Molochnaia okrug office of the opinion of their congregations regarding the new sect. And only one elder (from Orloff), Johann Harder, together with his congregation, set no obstacles to accepting the new congregation. In a reply to the Molochnaia okrug authority (on November 2, 1862) Harder declared that the new congregation adhered to the shared Mennonite confession of faith as published by the Rudnerweide congregation. ⁸³⁾

In the meantime, the religious struggle in the Molochnaia settlement continued. Claassen (having returned from Petersburg)

80) *Kl.* 192-193.

81) *Kl.* 195.

82) *Fr. I*, 213 (§ 108 a); *Is* 191-192.

83) *Fr. I*, 212-213; *Is* 191-192.

and his cohorts openly conducted meetings, held baptismal services and married couples. To terminate all this activity, the Molochnaia *okrug* authorities, on December 7, 1863 addressed the village mayors with an order with the following contents:

“Because baptisms and marriages are being performed among the “joyous” brethren (*Hüpfer*) before the sect is recognized by the government and the church convention, the *okrug* authority orders the village mayors not to recognize these marriages, and not to count persons living in such unlawful unions as being in families, but rather to count such persons as a members of the family into which they were born, and the children born out of wedlock are to be registered under the mother’s name.” ⁸⁴⁾

This ruling of the Molochnaia authority forced the *Hüpfer* to turn to the Ministry of Government Domains with a new complaint (December 30, 1863). In their complaint the *Hüpfer* protested strongly against the “marriage” circular of the Molochnaia *okrug* authority.

“We are not forming a new sect, but we are true Mennonites. As such, we should be enjoying all rights and advantage granted in the statement of Emperor Paul I to the Mennonites and their descendants. We do not need the recognition of the Mennonite church convention, as the Mennonitism does not have a consistorial structure. In contrast to the other Mennonites, we admit to the communion only those who were baptized upon faith, by immersion in water. Marriage is performed by us according to Scripture. Our congregation is based on God’s Word and the teachings of Menno. We believe and declare that we are Mennonites, who are entitled to all rights and privileges of the Mennonites. On the other hand, the *okrug* office and the church convention, who are in a blind rage and wish to harm us, cover their judgments and directives of with a false show of good intentions.

84) Fr. I, 217, pages 340-341.

At the conference on October 11, 1862, the head of the Molochnaia authority placed the choice before the elders: exclude us from the status of colonist or recognize our congregation. Upon returning to their congregations, the elders instigated against our members, but almost all of them, with a few exceptions, spoke up against our exclusion from the status of colonist. After this we would have expected the recognition of our congregation's independence, but this did not happen."

Instead, the Molochnaia authorities, according to information provided by the *Hüpfer*, hindered their resettlement in the Caucasus. In view of such constraints, the *Hüpfer* asked for permission to move to the Kuban region, along with the granting of all Mennonite rights and privileges. ⁸⁵⁾

Following the complaints by the *Hüpfer*, at the beginning of 1864, the Molochnaia elders (five of seven) placed before their congregations the matter of whether to recognize the new congregation or to excommunicate all of its members from the Mennonite brotherhood. The congregations rejected the acceptance of the new congregation but did not give their approval to the excommunication of their members. ⁸⁶⁾

But the direct consequence of the complaints by the *Hüpfer* was that the Ministry of Government Domains abolished all restrictions for the *Hüpfer* imposed by the "marriage" circular of the Molochnaia authority. ⁸⁷⁾

It was much harder for the government to decide on the question of recognizing the independence of the new congregation, as it was necessary to resolve the question: which one of the two Mennonite groups should be considered a sect, excluded from the "true" Mennonitism. ⁸⁸⁾ Resolving this obviously doctrinal question was impossible for the government. Therefore, the government followed the course presented in the petition of the *Hüpfer*. They allowed 100 of their families to resettle in the Kuban area, on

85) Fr. I, 216-217, 340-343.

86) Fr. I, 213.

87) Fr. I, 218.

88) *Kl.* 195.

land assigned by the Governor of the Caucasus. The permission was given in the name of the Molochnaia Mennonite Heinrich Hübert and his cohorts. This formulation by the Ministry of Government Domains recognized the sect of *Hüpfer* as a genuine Mennonite religious movement. The resettlement of the “New Mennonites” took place from 1862-1866 [corrected in handwriting to 1864-1864]. 89)

In the meantime, the complaints and petitions of the *Hüpfer* received by the supreme ruler and the Ministry of Government Domains in 1862, led to correspondence between this Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs expressed tolerance and was opposed to the persecution of the *Hüpfer*. In its reply of July 11, 1865, No. 1567 (regarding the sect of ‘new brethren’ related to *Hüpfer*) the Ministry of Internal Affairs insisted on the application of the regulations issued in the supreme order in 1845 regarding the spread of Separatists among the Bessarabian Lutheran colonists. Upon the request in 1843 of the Lutheran clergy for “measures by the civil government to liquidate the separatist sect,” the government took the following stance: “as long as sectarians fulfil their civil obligations without fail, they are to be left without any persecution; and the Lutheran clergy cannot take any civil measures, but only influence their flock by their teachings with love and devotion.” 90)

The opinion of the Ministry of Internal Affairs favoring tolerance towards the *Hüpfer* grew and in their next order addressed to the Ministry of Government Domains (July 31, 1867, No. 1198, regarding the sect of *Hüpfer*) the Ministry of Internal Affairs wrote that “taking special strict measures or persecution might lead to exciting the fanaticism of the sectarians and to the further

89) Fr. I, 218, 34, 344, 345-347; *Kl.* 180-195.

90) Reply – Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Government Domains, July 11, 1865, No. 1567 in Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs: “Sect of new Brothers and Sisters,” part 1.

spreading of their teachings.” 91) In agreement with these views of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Government Domains, issued an instruction on August 20, 1867, No. 1225 to the Guardian Committee for Foreign Settlers in South Russia. 92) Since this point in time the New Mennonite sect, or as it calls itself the “Mennonite Brethren Congregation,” has received all rights to exist.

Internal History of the Molochnaia *Hüpfer* Congregation until 1865

At first the Molochnaia New Mennonite congregation had a *Hüpfer* disposition. Considering themselves saved and already holy, the Mennonite *Hüpfer* “rejoiced” and expressed exuberance at their meetings. They expressed their joy in wild, unrestrained ways. According to information from participants of the meetings and from outside observers, “an incredible noise” was made at the meetings of the *Hüpfer*. They sang songs with a high spirit, danced, clapped their hands, stomped with their feet, interrupted the prayers and sermons calling out: “Glory,” “Alleluia” and kissed everyone without restraint. The *Hüpfer* described such wild happiness as “joy inspired by the Holy Spirit” and “blessed by God.” They justified this exuberance with the example of King David, who “danced before the temple” and also with the word from the Scripture: “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4) and “Clap your hands all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy” (Psalm 47:1). The *Hüpfer* called themselves “children of heaven,” “free” (that is, from sin) and “strong.” The other Mennonites called them “merry,” “jumpers,” and “*Hüpfer*.” 93)

The *Hüpfer* movement was born in the Mennonite circles of Wüst followers, but did not flourish after their split with

91) Reply of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Government Domains, July 31, 1867, No. 1198 in matters of the Deputy for Religious Affairs: *Hüpfer*, part II.

92) Memorandum of Deputy for Religious Affairs: “The Sect of New Brethren and Sisters,” part I, l. 41.

93) Fr. I, 320 (p), 221-236, 347-360, see 170-171.

Wüst. The main representative and leader of the Mennonite *Hüpfers* was Wilhelm Bartel, a personal friend of Koppes. This man was a gifted but uneducated minister. Nevertheless, in 1854 as a follower of Wüst, he together with Koppes, promoted the attitude of “joyous salvation.” Afterwards he left the *Hüpfers* and identified with the “Friends of Jerusalem.” 94)

Bartel was joined by many well-known followers of Wüst among the Mennonites: Johann Claassen, Jacob Reimer, Heinrich Hübner, Benjamin Bekker, Isaak Koop and others. Together with Bartel they split from Wüst and in 1860 founded an independent congregation of *Hüpfers*.

The extreme expressions of happiness manifested at the meetings of the *Hüpfers* elicited condemnation among the old Mennonite circles. Since the middle of 1861 protests against “undisciplined happiness” also started to come also from Molochnaia *Hüpfers* congregations. The first from among the Molochnaia *Hüpfers* to protest was Jacob Reimer. 95)

Jacob Reimer was an earnest follower of Wüst, who then joined Koppes. In Reimer’s home (in Gnadenfeld) rowdy meetings with jumping and dancing occurred 96) In June 1861 the Khortitsa-Einlage New Mennonites - Abram Unger, Epp and Loewen - arrived in the Molochnaia. They were persons influenced by the ideas of the German Baptists. They had heard about the Molochnaia “Believers” (*Hüpfers*) and wanted to attend their meetings. While participating in the meetings of the *Hüpfers*, they found the dancing, exuberance and kissing awkward. Soon thereafter Unger expressed a strong protest against the “undisciplined happiness” of the *Hüpfers*.

Jacob Reimer, reading selections from the writings of the German Baptists, came under the influence of Unger and became his close friend. 97)

94) Fr. I, 222-224.

95) Fr. I, 225 (s), see 232-233.

96) Fr. I, 224-225 (b), see 232-233, 183 (§ 77).

97) Fr. I, 225 (c), 225-226 (e), 232-233 (§ 119).

Under Unger's influence, several other Molochnaia *Hüpfer* joined Reimer. Thus a small circle was formed from which the Mennonite Brethren Congregation emerged in the Molochnaia villages. Reimer and his followers protested sharply against dancing and jumping at the prayer meetings of the *Hüpfer*. They admonished the *Hüpfer* to conduct themselves respectfully and earnestly, as "true happiness in God is not expressed in dancing and jumping which serves only to gratify and not to edify." Unger supported Reimer and his group with writings and admonitions. ⁹⁸⁾

At first the Reimer group had no influence among the *Hüpfer*. Claassen, the most influential person among the *Hüpfer*, was in Petersburg for a long time. But he also tolerated the "exuberant happiness" of the *Hüpfer* and thereby drew criticism from Reimer upon himself. ⁹⁹⁾ In 1862-1864 part of the diminishing *Hüpfer* group, together with Claassen, left for the Kuban. ¹⁰⁰⁾ The minister Hübert, siding with Reimer, became ill and could not lead the *Hüpfer* congregation. ¹⁰¹⁾ Bartel left this congregation.

Under these conditions, in 1862 the leading role among the Molochnaia *Hüpfer* passed into the hands of two energetic ministers: Benjamin Bekker and Bernhard Penner (Hübert's assistant). They were supported by Isaak Koop. ¹⁰²⁾ Gerhard Wieler, a former elementary school teacher from the village of Liebenau (Molochnaia district), collaborated with them. ¹⁰³⁾ Benjamin Bekker declared himself to be the "Apostle of the *Hüpfer*. (Gerhard Wieler declared himself to be the "Apostle" in the Einlage congregation of *Hüpfer*.) ¹⁰⁴⁾ With great energy, Bekker, Penner and other persons started to cultivate wild and indecent expressions of happiness in their congregation.

98) Fr. I, 225-226, 229 (h), 348-349, 361 (c).

99) See Fr. I, 227-229, 347-348 (b).

100) Fr. I, 347 (§ 180).

101) Fr. I, 224 (b), 232-233, 347 (§ 180).

102) Fr. I, 347-348 (§§ 119, 120), 232-233.

103) Fr. I, 348.

104) Fr. I, 233-234.

They did not encounter any opposition and ruled the *Hüpfers* congregation in a despotic manner. All who did not share their opinion and attitudes were expelled from the congregation, “subjected to sanction.” Anyone who was quiet at the meetings, did not take part in dancing and in “loud happiness,” or who expressed agreement with Reimer, drew “excommunication” upon himself. Excommunications were conducted by Bekker and often by Penner. ¹⁰⁵ Reimer became an ardent opponent of Bekker and his supporters. ¹⁰⁶ Reimer’s performance was of such an extreme nature that even the moderate Claassen found Reimer “somewhat strange.” In 1864 Bekker and his supporters expelled Reimer from the congregation and then even sent a letter to Claassen threatening excommunication. ¹⁰⁷

An intense power struggle among the *Hüpfers* ensued in the winter of 1864-1865. In the Khortitsa region the *Hüpfers* burned spiritual Mennonite books. In the Molochnaia *Hüpfers* congregation the minister Heinrich Hübner was released from his role as a minister because of his sympathy with Reimer. ¹⁰⁸ Eventually, the despotism of Bekker and Penner became a burden for their supporters as well. ¹⁰⁹

In 1865 the Reimer group was joined by a number of old Mennonites who were open toward the New Mennonite sect. Among them were Daniel Fast, Jacob Jantz and Abraham Schellenberg, future elders of the New Mennonites. This group was also joined by Claassen and others. In June 1865 the supporters of Reimer and Hübner conducted a meeting in Gnadenfeld, under the leadership of Claassen, at which the wild expression of the *Hüpfers* (dancing, jumping and noise, etc. at meetings) were strongly condemned and deemed “unworthy before God.” Hübner was reinstated in his duties, the excommunication of Reimer was deemed to be ineffective. The position taken by the conference (“June Reforms”) was

105) Fr. I, 232-233, 347-353.

106) Fr. I, 232-233, 349, 351.

107) Fr. I, 348-349, 232-233 (§ 119, 120).

108) Fr. I, 348.

109) Fr. I, 233-234, see 357 (§188a).

very significant in the life of the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*. The followers of Bekker and Penner, dissatisfied with their despotic actions, switched to the Reimer group. Bekker and Penner remained isolated. Jumping and dancing at the meetings ceased. “*Hüpferism*,” as an enthusiastic phenomenon, died. It was replaced in the Molochnaia villages by the Mennonite Brethren congregation with a Baptist inclination in life and faith. ¹¹⁰⁾ From this time on the village of Rückenau became the centre of New Mennonitism in the Molochnaia. ¹¹¹⁾

Molochnaia Mennonite-*Hüpfer* and Baptists

At first the *Hüpfer* movement did not have a Baptist character. The distinct character of the Baptists consists, as is known, of baptism upon faith performed by the immersion of those “who came to believe,” “converted” and confessed a living faith in Christ as their personal Savior. Without these conditions, according to the teaching of Baptists, baptism has no power and is not a baptism. On these grounds the Baptists reject infant baptism and reject all “infant baptisms” and also all adults without a living faith and without “conversion.”

The Molochnaia *Hüpfer* did not adopt such an understanding of baptism. The first “rebaptisms” in their congregation took place a few months after the founding of their congregation. On September 23, 1860 two members of the congregation – Jacob Bekker and Heinrich Bartel – previously baptized in the old Mennonite mode, were “rebaptized” by immersion in the Kuruschan river (a tributary to the Molochnaia river). Both baptized each other together. Rebaptism was performed during the night, in the early morning. On October 9, 1860 Abram Dyck and Bernhard Penner were rebaptized. On October 14 Isaak Koop was rebaptized. By the spring of 1861 the practice of “rebaptizing” was in full swing. In May

110) Fr. I, 234-235, 236-237, 353, 357-360, 362-365, 367-368.

111) W. III, 183.

1861 Heinrich Hübner (minister of the congregation) and Jacob Reimer were rebaptized. On one day in May 1861 more than 30 Mennonite *Hüpfers* were baptized, only three of them were baptized for the first time. By October of 1861 most of their members had been “rebaptized.” On October 8, 1861 Wilhelm Bartel was “rebaptized.” In November of that year the first Khortitsa Mennonite, Gerhard Wieler, was rebaptized in Berdyansk. In July 1862 Johann Claassen, upon returning from Petersburg, was rebaptized. ¹¹²⁾ It must be mentioned that “rebaptism” was not obligatory when joining the [Molochnaia] *Hüpfers* congregation at this time. It was important in the Einlage *Hüpfers* congregation which was under the influence of German Baptists right from its beginning. In 1861-1862 the Einlage congregation did not allow Benjamin Bekker, member of the Molochnaia *Hüpfers* congregation, to take part in communion as he was not yet “rebaptized.” ¹¹³⁾

At the end of 1863, baptism upon faith by immersion also became obligatory among the Molochnaia *Hüpfers*. The old Mennonite method of baptism by pouring according to the traditional Mennonite teachings was considered “unbiblical” and improper, because “repentance and a change of heart did not precede it.” On these grounds the *Hüpfers* rebaptized all old Mennonites without exception when they joined the sect.

Just how the *Hüpfers* got the idea of “baptism upon faith” by immersion is not clear. It is most likely that on this point they were influenced by the Baptists. ¹¹⁴⁾

Already in 1837, one of the well-known members of the new congregation, Jakob Reimer, read the biography of Anna Judson, which mentions the Baptist

112) Fr. I, 240-241.

113) Fr. I, 240-241, 242-244, 246-247.

114) Fr. I, 245 (d).

teaching on baptism. *) In 1835 he was already aware of the existence of Baptists in Germany who were conducting baptism upon confession of faith. Around 1860, Reimer (and other Molochnaia *Hüpfer*) read missionary reports and tracts of the German Baptists (Missionsblätter der Getauften Christen) in which the teaching of the Baptist about baptism was explained. Since that time the question of “Biblical baptism” (that is, baptism upon faith by immersion) was discussed intensely among the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*. 115)

Finally, one of the activists of the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*, Johann Claassen, while in Petersburg (in 1860-1862) lived for some time with a Baptist Prussian citizen, the tailor Christoph Plonus (on Kirpitch Prospekt), where such Baptist meetings were held. 116)

About the same time, in the Molochnaia villages reports were received that in Poland some Mennonites were baptized by the Baptist minister Alf, and had remained Mennonites. In 1860, at Christmas time, Jacob Bekker and Jakob Reimer, wrote to Alf about the question of baptism. The correspondence led to a full agreement regarding baptism between the Baptists and the *Hüpfer*, though it was not practiced in the same manner among the *Hüpfer* sect. One group of the *Hüpfer* baptized by immersion by bending backwards (as for burial), others baptized by kneeling and then immersing face first. The Baptist practice of baptism by immersion was thereupon generally adopted among the *Hüpfer*. 117)

Nevertheless, rebaptism at the time of joining the sect was not yet obligatory among the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*. On September 29, 1863 one of the *Hüpfer*, Regehr, who was not yet baptized in the *Hüpfer* mode, participated in the communion of the *Hüpfer* congregation in the village of Rudnerweide. In the meantime, in the Molochnaia the

*) Anna Judson spread Baptist faith in India and Indochina at the beginning of the 19th Century. (Armitage, A History of the Baptists. New York, 1893, pages 434-438).

115) Fr. I, 241-242, 242-244, 244-245; L II, 310.

116) Fr. I, 297 (§ 158 d), 306 (§ 161 a), 313-314 (§ 165, e, h).

117) Fr. I, 241-242, 244-245.

ministers of the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*, Benjamin and Jakob Bekker and Gerhard Wieler, under the influence of the Einlage *Hüpfer*, already adhered to strict Baptist teachings on baptism.

118)

The installation of the first elder of the Molochnaia *Hüpfer*, Heinrich Hübert, was also of a “non-Baptist” nature. He was ordained to his role in his congregation of *Hüpfer*, though not by elders (“presbyters”) of the neighbouring congregations, as required by Baptist practice. Afterwards Hübert ordained Abram Schellenberg to the role of elder. As can be seen below, in the Khortitsa-Einglage *Hüpfer* congregation, founded in 1862, the first elder, Abram Unger, was ordained in 1869 by the presbyter of the German Baptists, I. G. Oncken. Thus Unger received only a Baptist ordination. In 1875 Abram Schellenberg and Unger ordained Jacob Jantz (from the village Friedensfeld). With Jantz two ordination streams were united: the New Mennonite one originating from Hübert, and the Baptist one coming via Oncken. In 1882 Jantz ordained elder Aron Lepp as elder in the Einlage congregation. All subsequent ordinations in the Mennonite Brethren church ensued from Schellenberg, Jantz and Lepp.

119)

***Hüpfer* Movement in the German Villages in the Volga Region**

From the Molochnaia the sect of *Hüpfer* spread in 1859 to the German Lutheran parishes in the Saratov and Samara *gubernia*. The first ones to spread the sect here were the Mennonite *Hüpfer*, Heinrich Bartel and Benjamin Bekker, and the colporteur of the Bible Society, Forchhammer. Here they conducted separate meetings, spread their teachings and gathered a small group of followers (without the knowledge of the pastor). The movement they started was called the sect of “New Brethren and Sisters.”

118) Fr. I, 246-247; L II, 310.

119) Fr. I, 202 note 1.

Circulating in the parishes on the Volga, Bartel and Bekker declared of themselves that “they were sent by Jesus Christ himself and intended to establish a visible community of saints on earth. True believers cannot stay in the corrupted Lutheran church, cannot personally commune with spiritually dead Lutherans. Whoever was like them, the *Hüpfers*, namely righteous and sinless, cannot be deprived of grace. Christians, though baptized, are not better than pagans, until they have received a spiritual baptism.”

Bartel, Bekker and Forchhammer were soon expelled from the Volga parishes. Their followers, trying to separate from the Lutheran church, continued to conduct meetings at which they practiced the sacrament without participation of the pastors. “Jumping and dancing” “to honor God’s will” occurred at the meetings. The new “brethren” did not recognize the Lutheran pastors and did not turn to them for religious rites.

The congregation of New Brethren grew quickly. Bartel, Benjamin and Jacob Bekker and Forchhammer supported them (in 1861) through correspondence. In these letters they criticized the Lutheran churches, urged the brethren not to commune with this church. “The Lutheran pastors were compared to the Devil, the martyrdom of the brethren was praised.” Soon supporters of this sect appeared in many Lutheran parishes on the Volga. Many informed the pastors of their exit from the Lutheran church.

The new movement did not have a Baptist character. According to a report of the Evangelical-Lutheran General Consistory to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (March 18, 1865, No. 363) Baptist teachings on the rejection of infant baptism and the rebaptizing of adults were seldomly found among the “New Brethren;” generally the “brethren” requested a “spiritual baptism.” 120

The Ministry of Government Domains, concerned about this movement, requested the opinion of the Ministry of Internal

120) Memorandum of Deputy in Religious Affairs: “Sect of New Brethren and Sisters.” Part 1, dispatches of the Evangelical Lutheran General Consistory to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, March 18, 23 and April 21, 1865 No. 363, 387, 476.

Affairs. The latter, as we know, spoke for tolerance and against persecution of sectarians. Agreeing with this opinion, the Ministry of Government Domains passed the issue on to the Saratov office for Foreign Settlers.

In the second half of the 1860s the sect of “new brethren” lost the *Hüpfer* peculiarity and split up. Part of the sect, under the leadership of the colonist Wilhelm Weber (in the Kameschinsky *uezd*, Saratov *gubernia*), organized itself as an explicitly Baptist congregation which rejected infant baptism. The other part formed a Separatist congregation. Many sectarians returned to Lutheranism. 121)

Pietist Movement in the Khortitsa Mennonite Villages

The Pietist movement in the Khortitsa Mennonite villages began in 1852-1853. It appeared first in the village of Kronsweide. This movement was fostered by the sermons of Ludwig Hofacker, which, as was stated before, were imitated by Wüst. The sermons of Hofacker served as one of the means of the pietistic “awakening” in the German villages in southern Russia at that time. They were also read at Wüst’s meetings with the Molochnaia Mennonites. 122)

In 1851-1853 a Mennonite in the village of Kronsweide came across Hofacker’s sermons. Now “believing” and “converted,” he started to preach his conversion here. Soon groups of pietistic Mennonites started to form in the village of Kronsweide. Their number very quickly reached fifty. 123)

In 1854 the pietistic movement began in the village of Einlage in the Khortitsa district. The movement was helped along by Hofacker’s sermons. The “converted” in Einlage formed

121) Memorandum of Deputy in Religious Affairs: “Sect of new brethren and sisters,” part I. Dispatch from Saratov, November 22, 1875, # 5224, list 124-125.

122) Fr. I, 240 (c), see Memorandum 123.

123) Fr. I, 237-239.

close relations with the “brothers” in Kronsweide and, together with them, conducted meetings not only during the day, but also at night. Claiming to be “true Christians, made righteous in their faith in Christ,” on January 25, 1855 fifteen of the Einlage brothers declared in writing their departure from the Mennonite church and their desire not to have anything in common with them.

The separation did not last long. Strict measures taken by the elders and village authorities forced the “separatists” to return to the bosom of the Mennonite community. After this the separatists were quiet for several years and, even though they tried to conduct secret meetings, no one interfered with them. ¹²⁴⁾

In the meantime, the pietistic movement grew. In 1857-1858, under the influence of Hofacker’s sermons, Aron Lepp of Einlage, the [Mennonite] supervisor in the Jewish villages Kamyanka, and Istutschist in the *gubernia* of Kherson, was converted. ¹²⁵⁾

Heinrich Neufeld, Cornelius Unger, and Abraham Unger had important roles among the Einlage “brethren” converted in 1854-1855. One of them, Heinrich Neufeld, was strongly influenced by Wüst. ¹²⁶⁾ In 1859-1860 these “converts” started to conduct prayer and mission meetings in the spirit of pietism in the village of Einlage. These meeting grew rapidly, and their scope increased. ¹²⁷⁾

The new group was influenced by the ideas of the German Baptists. In 1859-1860 Heinrich Neufeld, Abraham Unger and Cornelius Unger read the Missionblätter der Gemeinde der Getauften Christen, published by the Baptists in Hamburg. The question of baptism, as discussed in these bulletins, caught the attention of Abraham Unger (Heinrich Neufeld was not interested in this question). Unger started a lively correspondence with the head of German Baptists, Oncken, about the question of baptism and became

124) *E. A. – M.* No. 4, pages 6-8, No. 14, pages 25; *E. A. – I.*, pages 130-132: see *Br. 77*.

125) *Fr. I*, 240 (e); see *E. A. – M.*, No. 30, page 45.

126) *Br. 77*.

127) *Fr. I*, 239-240; *E. A. – I.*, page 131.

his ardent follower. Already in 1861 Unger asked Oncken to send a number of German “brothers” (Baptists) in the guise of craftsmen to Russia, in order to organize the New Mennonite congregation in Einlage. Oncken wanted to do this but could not. ¹²⁸⁾

Until June 1861 there was no regular connection between the Molochnaia and the Einlage “New Mennonites.” In June 1861 Neufeld, Unger and Epp, having heard about the meetings of the Molochnaia “Newborn,” went to the Molochnaia settlement. Here they participated in the meetings of the *Hüpfers* and witnessed the performance of baptism among them. They found the baptism of the *Hüpfers* “proper and in accordance with the Scripture,” but Unger did not like the dancing and exuberance. ¹²⁹⁾ The Molochnaia ministers of the *Hüpfers*, Gerhard Wieler and Benjamin Bekker, then pressed for an amalgamation of the Molochnaia and Einlage “brethren.” Unger did not yet protest the “wild happiness” of the *Hüpfers* meetings.” ¹³⁰⁾ But then, under his influence, opposition grew within the Molochnaia congregation against such “happiness.” The main representative of the opposition was, as stated, Jakob Reimer. In October 1861 the Einlage congregation invited Benjamin Bekker. At this time some of the Einlage brethren expressed the wish to join the Molochnaia *Hüpfers* congregation. ¹³¹⁾ At the end of 1861 Gerhard Wieler arrived in Einlage, expelled from the village of Liebenau (Molochnaia district), and Unger hosted him in his house. ¹³²⁾

In the spring of 1862 Unger, Neufeld and one more “brother” travelled to the Molochnaia colony. On March 4, 1861 they were baptized by Wieler in Liebenau in the Tokmak river. ¹³³⁾ On the following Sundays, March 11 and 18, 1862,

128) Fr. I, 239-240, 245 (§ 132 a, b); L II, 311-312; Onck. 78; See *E. A. - M.*, No. 16, page 30. In a report in 1862 Unger set forth clear Baptists’ views on questions of baptism and communion.

129) Fr. I, 225 (§ 115 c), 245-246 (§ 132 c); *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, pages 8-9.

130) Fr. I, 245-246 (§ 132 c).

131) Fr. I, 245 (a.)

132) Fr. I, 245 (b).

133) Fr. I, 245-246; *E. A. - M.*, pages 27-29.

Neufeld and Unger conducted the first baptisms in the Einlage congregation. ¹³⁴⁾ The baptisms took place by immersion in the Dnieper river. At the time of baptism, some of the “brothers” standing on the shore, “rejoiced with noise and shouting.” ¹³⁵⁾ Further baptisms were conducted in succession in the Einlage congregation. On April 22, 1862 Aron Lepp from Einlage was baptized together with other Mennonites in the Molochnaia villages. ¹³⁶⁾

Einlage New Mennonite Congregation

On March 11, 1862 a New Mennonite congregation was formed in the village of Einlage. Its leaders were Abraham Unger and Cornelius Neufeld. Right from the start, the Einlage congregation held a strict view regarding the question of baptism and communion. Baptism upon faith by immersion became obligatory; without such a baptism no one was admitted to the congregation as a member and permitted to participate in communion. In this way the Einlage congregation had some similarities with the Baptists. This is explained by the fact that their leader, Unger, was a follower of Oncken, the leader of the German Baptists. ¹³⁷⁾

After the end of 1861 the Einlage congregation came under the complete influence of Gerhard Wieler.

Wieler came from the village of Burwalde, Khortitsa district, was educated at the Khortitsa Central School and spoke an excellent Russian, which was seldom the case among Mennonites at that time. In 1852-1854 Wieler served in the office of the Guardian Committee in Odessa and then went to work in the office of the Molochnaia *okrug* authority. In 1858 he became a teacher in the elementary school in Liebenau. Here he joined the sect of *Hüpfer*, and

134) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 11; Fr. I, 246 (§ 132c).

135) Fr. I, 245-246 (c); *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 11.

136) Fr. I, 246 (d).

137) Fr. I, 245 (§ 133).

was released from his duties as teacher in October 1861 for propagating it. As he was born in the Khortitsa district he was sent to the place of his birth in 1861. Unger sheltered him in his home and introduced him to his congregation. From the Khortitsa colony Wieler travelled to the Molochnaia colony and conducted baptisms there. Wieler held strong views about the question of baptism, most likely due to the influence of Unger. ¹³⁸⁾

Residing in the Khortitsa villages Wieler immediately “organized a wild *Hüpfer* movement here and began to cultivate a wild happiness.” ¹³⁹⁾ “According to witnesses, there was no order” at the meetings of the Khortitsa Einlage New Mennonites. The participants “sang, jumped, rejoiced, kissed each other without restraint, and made a great noise.” This wild happiness they called “happiness and emotion in the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁴⁰⁾ Furthermore, Wieler ordered that all religious books owned by the sectarians to be burned, “so that they (sectarians), as children of God, do not have to discuss them, but would only praise and thank God.” Thus books were burned, among them books by Arndt, sermons by Hofacker and others. ¹⁴¹⁾ Wieler himself spent all of his energy spreading the new teachings; he sent missionaries to the villages, went from Mennonite house to Mennonite house, conducted prayer meetings, led them, corresponded with officials and institutions, submitted petitions for the sectarians to the government and institutions. Wieler’s influence in the Einlage congregation was very strong. Wieler was joined by Cornelius Neufeld and other well-known leaders of the congregation. The members of the congregations submitted unconditionally to Wieler’s regime. Under his influence “the interest in the new teaching was so strong, that they stopped attending to their economic affairs

138) *E. A. – I.*, page 133, 136-139; *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, pages 9, 12-13; See Fr. I, 246 (§ 13d).

139) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 9; Sr No. 14, page 25; Fr. I, 280 (§ 147).

140) Fr. I, 279-280; *E. A. - M.*, No. 3, page 5.

141) Fr. I, 279 (§ 145); *E. A. - M.*, No. 3, pages 4-5, No. 4, page 9.

and started to become noticeably poor.” The number of the sect’s followers grew quickly.

142)

The sectarians were critical toward Old Mennonitism. They claimed themselves to be the “Reborn,” the “Holy,” and the “True Believers.” Their arrogance and blindness went so far that they renounced the Old Mennonite church as being “Babylon.” They expressed total disdain toward the Mennonite worship services, did not recognize the Mennonite baptisms and rebaptized everyone who joined their sect. They called the Mennonite churches “taverns” where, in their opinion, “they served the devil.” They rejected Mennonite ministers. Only those who came to their sect and were rebaptized became “children of God.” 143)

Wieler also spread this sect among the Orthodox. Already in 1862, he tried to lure Russian tradesmen, workers in Unger’s shop (in the village of Einlage), into it. In 1862 he was accused of converting two of Unger’s workers – the peasants Lukashev and Orischkov. 144) In 1863 he converted the Orthodox Andrej Pedasenko from Kharkov and the peasant, Matvei Serbulenko, whom he rebaptized into his sect. 145)

Wieler acted dictatorially and his activities aroused dissent in the New Mennonite congregation. Unger was among Wieler’s opponents. He protested against the “wild” and “undisciplined” happiness at the meetings of the Khortitsa *Hüpfers*. But Wieler’s influence was strong and Unger was left isolated. Then Unger renounced his role as minister to which he had been elected already in 1861-1862. Using this as a pretext, Wieler and his supporters excommunicated Unger and declared: “whoever is with Unger cannot be

142) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 13; *E.A. - I.*, pages 133, 136-139.

143) *E. A. - M.*, No. 1, page 2, No. 3, pages 4-5, No. 4, page 9, No. 16, pages 30-31; *Br.* 32.

144) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 15; *E. A. - I.*, pages 233-234.

145) *E. A. - M.*, No. 7, page 21, Nos. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, pages 40-43, No. 38-39, page 50; *E. A. - I.*, page 234.

a brother.” After this Wieler’s activities became even more a dictatorial in character. Wieler proclaimed himself as an “Apostle.” All those who did not agree with him were excommunicated. Wieler even excommunicated his own father and his brother, Johann Wieler, who later played a prominent role later in the fate of the South-Russian Baptists. The matter came to a head when at one of the meetings Gerhard Wieler argued with Benjamin Bekker (“Apostle” of the Molochnaia *Hüpfers*) about the question “which one of them is the elder.” The argument ended with Bekker and Wieler condemning each other. The number of those excommunicated increased. They all joined Unger’s group which then grew quickly. 146)

In the meantime, Wieler was brought before a court for proselytizing among the Orthodox. From May 1865 onward he was kept in jail. 147) Some of his followers (including Cornelius Neufeld) emigrated to the Kuban. 148) Taking advantage of Wieler’s absence, Unger was able to win almost all of his followers to his side. In June 1865 the *Hüpfers* movement was denounced in the Molochnaia villages, and all *Hüpfers* there joined the “New Mennonite” group of Hübert, Claassen, and Reimer. Thereafter, Johann Claassen visited the Einlage congregation and, based on the “June Reforms,” united the groups of Wieler and Unger. Dancing and exuberance at prayer meetings were recognized as wrong and were discontinued. Gerhard Wieler, released from jail, abandoned his isolation and returned to the Old Mennonite congregation. Afterwards he went to America where he joined the Mennonite sect “United Brethren in Christ.” In this way the *Hüpfers* movement in the Khortitsa and Molochnaia settlements was extinguished. 149)

146) Fr. I, 279-280, 360-361, 361, 362.

147) E. A. - M., No. 32, page 46; Fr. I, 280 (§ 147).

148) Fr. I, 292.

149) Fr. I, 236-237, 280 (§ 147), 280-281, 368.

Struggle between the Old and New Mennonites in the Khortitsa Villages.

Einlage New Mennonites and Baptists

Due to the negative attitude toward the Old or "Church" Mennonitism, the *Hüpfer* movement in the Khortitsa villages, aroused opposition among the "Old" Mennonites right from the start. "All their behaviour (of the *Hüpfer*) is in reality blasphemy" reported the Khortitsa *okrug* office to the Guardian Committee (July 18, 1862, No. 1547). "In their attempts to proselytize, they call the Mennonite churches houses of indulgence and claim that the Mennonite ministers lead the listeners to hell with their preaching. They reject Mennonite rites, and, in particular, they rebaptize everyone who joins their sect." 150) The fast growth of the *Hüpfer* movement in the Khortitsa *okrug* threatened the existence of the "Old" Mennonitism.

This all led to a bitter struggle between the old and new Mennonites. In this respect, the entire story which we observed in the Molochnaia villages was repeated in the Khortitsa *okrug*. The elders and the village authorities tried to convince the sectarians of their errors; these attempts were not successful. The agitation increased and the movement grew. Severe measures were taken against the *Hüpfer*. On February 28, 1862 the sectarians were forbidden from conducting prayer meetings in their houses and from going house to house of the colonists with the aim to proselytizing into the sect. The village authorities were instructed to watch that no one would be on the street without good reason after 10 o'clock. In general, the Mennonites tried to isolate the sectarians and avoid contact with them in their daily life. The Guardian Committee, by endorsing these measures, was confident that they, together with

150) *E. A. - M.*, No. 3. page 5.

police actions, would sober the lost ones and bring them back into the lap of “old Mennonitism.” 151)

Ignoring the prohibitions, the sectarians continued to hold noisy prayer meetings; on the streets they criticized the religious life of the Mennonites and blamed the elders. The village authorities subjected the sectarians to arrests and other restrictions, threatened them with the expulsion from the Mennonite community, but the sectarians persisted in their “delusions” and continued to propagate their teachings. They said that “only by way of suffering might the pious reach God’s kingdom, and that they are just such pious people, and cannot reject their faith, as they have to obey God rather than men.” 152)

Seeing that restrictions made the sectarians that much more persistent, the association of the sixteen villages of the Khortitsa *okrug* initiated peaceful negotiations in which they demanded the removal of the main leaders of the sect from the colony: Gerhard Wieler, Heinrich Neufeld, Abraham Unger, Peter Berg, Johann Loewen and Johann Isaak, already excommunicated from the “Church” Mennonites. The village authorities hoped that after the removal of these persons the remaining sectarians would repent. 153)

The peace negotiations were reported to the Guardian Committee which forwarded the report to the Ministry of Government Domain. Despite the fact that the Guardian Committee was on the side of the “old” Mennonites their appeal against the *Hüpfers* was unsuccessful.

As a matter of fact, the Khortitsa *Hüpfers*, persecuted in the villages, sent Gerhard Wieler as a petitioner to Petersburg in 1862. His presence there coincided with the presence of Johann Claassen. Following Claassen’s example, Wieler directed his petition to the supreme authority wherein he complained about extreme restrictions of the *Hüpfers* in

151) *E. A. - M.*, No. 3, page 4, No. 1, p 1-2; *E.A. - I* pages 137-138.

152) *E. A. - M.*, No. 3, pages 4-5; *E.A. - I* pages 137-138; *Br.* 60.

153) *E. A. - M.*, No. 3, pages 5-6; *Br.* 60.

154) *Fr. I*, 273-376; *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 6.

matters of faith. According to Wieler's explanation, "thanks to reading the Holy Scripture many members of the Khortitsa and Kronsweide Mennonite congregations, attained a better life and behaviour. These persons, wholly convinced about the religious decline of their Mennonite brothers, started to lead a life according to God's Word and the teachings of Menno Simons. For this they were subject to various repressions." In the name of those of like mind, Wieler asked for protection against restrictions and for freedom in conducting their worship services. 155)

Wieler's petition was submitted at almost the same time as one from Claassen. Both defined their group as true genuine Mennonites. Influenced by the petitions of Claassen and Wieler, the government regarded the *Hüpfer* sect as an internal strife among the Mennonites, and not a matter for the government. Accordingly, the government issued instructions that church excommunication did not affect or limit civil rights and forbade police measures against the *Hüpfer*.

It must be mentioned that *Hüpfer* in Khortitsa-Einlage as well as in Molochnaia, repeatedly declared that they were not sectarians, but true Mennonites, wanting to establish the original pure teachings of Menno Simons which had been distorted among Mennonites.

156)

Beginning in 1865 the New Mennonite congregation in Einlage acquired a definite Baptist character. Their main leader, Unger, was, as stated earlier, a follower of Oncken. Representatives of the German Baptists took an active part in shaping the Einlage congregation, all of them South-Russian New Mennonites. In 1865 Unger, in a special letter, asked Oncken to help to bring order in the Einlage New Mennonite congregation. In the spring of 1866, August Liebig (a friend of Oncken) and the minister of the congregation in Dobrush, arrived in Einlage. He preached at the meeting of the Einlage

155) *E. A. - M.*, No. 19, pages 35-36.

156) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 14, No. 15, page 25, No. 16, pages 31, 32-33.

New Mennonites and chaired conferences conducted by the New Mennonite congregation. He set down the initial organization of the congregation in the Baptist spirit. But he was not able to complete the organization; he was soon arrested and expelled. 157)

In the summer of 1868 the Einlage congregation invited the Baptist deacon from Prussia, Carl Benzin. On July 10 and 14, 1868 he led consultative meetings in the congregation. At the meeting on July 10 several provisions regarding the inner structure of the congregation were passed. Among others, it was resolved to elect elders, ministers, and deacons of the congregation. Acceptance into the congregation and excommunication from it were to be performed with the consent of the elders and the congregation. On July 14, 1862 elections for elders, ministers, and deacons for the congregation were held. Abram Unger was elected as elder.

Oncken, interested in the growth of the Russian Baptists, visited Russia in 1869. In October 1869 he was in the village of Einlage. Here he “affirmed” (ordained) Abram Unger to the role of elder of the Einlage congregation. In addition, he “affirmed” (ordained) Cornelius Unger and Benjamin Nickel to the role of “deacons” for the congregation.

Oncken remained in Einlage for 10 days. The Molochnaia New Mennonite congregation wanted to see him too and waited for him, but he was forced to leave the country.

157) Fr. I, 290-292.

158) Fr. I, 380-382.

159) Fr. I, 382, 383, 384-385; Pr. 36-38; L. II, 313; Onck. 78. This was Oncken’s second visit to Russia. He visited Russia for the first time in October of 1864. He was in Petersburg and held meetings in the house of the Prussian Baptist citizen, Christoph Plonus (Kirpitschny Prospekt, home of Voronina). In Petersburg Oncken submitted a petition to the Emperor requesting the granting of freedom of religion for the Baptists in Russia. (see “Baptists in the Empire” part I. Consideration of the St. Peterburg military governor general in the name of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, November 17, 1864, No. 2572 and March 17, 1865, No. 440, 497 & 560). Already at this visit [continued on page 153]

While in Einlage, Oncken visited the neighbouring estate of Tschernoglas, where there were some Baptists among the German Lutherans at that time. 160)

Final Organization of the New Mennonite Congregation in the Baptist Spirit

In 1871, upon a suggestion by the minister Aron Lepp, the Einlage congregation again invited the Baptist minister, August Liebig. He lived and worked in the Einlage congregation for one year, after which he returned to Dobrush. Under the influence of Liebig, the Einlage, Molochnaia and Kuban New Mennonite congregations united in the "Union of New Mennonite Brotherhood" in 1872. On May 14-16, 1872 in the village of Andreasfeld, *gubernia* of Ekaterinoslav, where Liebig resided, the first conference of Mennonite Brethren congregations took place upon his suggestion. At the conference, itinerant preachers for the New Mennonite congregations were assigned, Bible courses given for preparation of ministers, etc. 161)

In this way, under the leadership of Liebig, the Mennonite Brethren congregations in Russia received a Baptist polity

while in Russia, Oncken found Russia to be a satisfactory and promising soil for the growth of the Baptist movement (Dalton H., Stundismus in Russland, Gütersloh, 1896, page 27). 160) Unger's New Mennonite group was joined by some former Lutherans, who were led astray and rebaptized (1861-1862) into his sect. They had formed a genuinely Baptist group in contact with Unger's New Mennonite group. From among the number of those "led astray" we must highlight the confusion of the baker Krause, who stayed with Unger in the village of Einlage, where he turned to the Baptists in 1862. (*E. A. - M.*, No. 10, pages 22-23). In April 1864 Krause preached and spread Baptist ideas in Libau (information by Kurlyandsk, Governor of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, August 14, No. 6199. See Memorandum of Deputy for Religious Affairs: *Hüpfers* part 2). Through Krause the Khortitsa-Einlage New Mennonites came into contact with the Baptists in the Baltic region and in West Prussia in 1863-1864. (see memorandum from Procurator D. S.S. Brun, November 17, 1864, Deputy for Religious Affairs: *Hüpfers* part I, l. d. 159).

161) Fr. I, 385-385, 394-395.

and organization and acceptance of Baptist methods in practical and missionary activities. Henceforth the Mennonite Brethren Church was in close contact with the South Russian Baptists, accepted baptism from Baptist ministers, baptized for the Baptists and participated in communion services with them.

In 1865 the Molochnaia New Mennonite congregation also took a definite Baptist path. Unger, "a presbyter" of the Einlage congregation, visited Molochnaia New Mennonites and served at their meetings. Baptism upon faith by immersion also became obligatory in the Molochnaia congregation. They began to admit only persons "baptized upon faith" to communion. August Liebig, active in the Einlage congregation in 1871-1872, often as an itinerant preacher, visited the Molochnaia New Mennonites and helped to unite them into one "Union" with the Einlage congregation. 162)

In 1873-1876 the New Mennonites received their first "Confession of Faith" from the Baptists. It was a literal repetition of the confession of faith of the German Baptists, adopted at their general Conference in Hamburg (in 1849) and published by Oncken ("Glaubensbekenntnis und Verfassung der Gemeinden getaufter Christen gewöhnlich Baptisten genannt). The Confession of Faith of the New Mennonites was published by Unger in 1876 under the heading "Glaubensbekenntnis der gläubig getauften und vereinigten Mennonitenbrüder Gemeinde im Südlichen Russland." The only differences between the confession of faith of the Baptists and that of the New Mennonites were on the following points: rejection of military service and oath-taking, and the teaching of foot washing. These points are not mentioned in the Baptist confession of faith.

The Confession of Faith of the New Mennonites stated the following about the Baptists:

162) Fr. I, 385-386, 386-390, 390-392, 394-395, 396.

163) Fr. I, 396-398.

“We consider the Baptist Church to be “alive,” that is, a community of true children of God, who are reborn from above and have received the Holy Spirit; the differences between their and our faith do not keep us from having sincere fellowship with them. We can take communion with them, and sometimes we have their teachers among us to resolve problems in the congregation because they a) profess the same faith with us with the exception of the aforementioned points, b) baptize only those born from above by immersion in water according to God’s Word; c) excommunicate (from the congregation) misbehaving members for an indefinite period until they truly change and repent; d) are identical in all their church arrangements to our congregation. All other Mennonites, on the other hand, represent a spiritually dead church which tolerates drunkards and godless persons within it, contrary to the Scriptures” (I. Corinthians 5:4). 164)

In 1876 Unger resigned his duties as elder and, in his place, Abram Lepp was elected. Unger died in 1880. 165)

Due to their negative attitude toward the old or church Mennonitism, the New Mennonites elicited sharp opposition from the side of the Old Mennonites right from the beginning. After the Khortitsa New Mennonites entrusted the organization of their congregation and the ordination of elders to the “presbyter” of the German Baptists, Oncken, the Old Mennonites often identified the New Mennonites with the Baptists and tried to separate them from Mennonite community. In 1879 the Baptist sect was accepted in the Empire as a tolerated sect. When gathering information about the number of Baptists in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, the Khortitsa *volost* authorities included the New Mennonites in the list of Baptists. In response to an inquiry from the Ekaterinoslav governor,

164) “Verschiedenheiten zwischen den vereinigten Mennoniten-Brudergemeinden und den Baptistengemeinden” in the supplement (“*Bemerkungen*”) to the New Mennonite Confession of Faith by Unger.

165) Fr. I, 395-396, 401-404.

The Department for Religious Affairs (March 6, 1880, No. 936) stated that New Mennonites were not Baptists but rather Mennonites, and there would be no reason for re-defining them as Baptists despite their wish. Furthermore, the department explained that the differences of opinion on religious matters between the New Mennonites and others (that is the Old Mennonites) are of no significance because according to point 903 Sw. Law, volume II, part I *Ust. In. Isp.* (page 1104, 1896) the Mennonites resolve their religious issues according to their polity and customs. 166) Regarding the New Mennonites as a special variety of the Mennonite sect was also the view expressed by the governor in recent times.

In 1901 the New Mennonite congregations in Russia introduced a new confession of faith, replacing the purely Baptist confession presented by Unger. The spirit and character of the former confession of faith was retained in the new one.

It should also be stated that during the time of the emigration of Mennonites to America in 1873-1880, a considerable number of New Mennonite went along together with the Old Mennonites.

Role of the New Mennonitism in the Emergence of the South-Russian Baptists (*Stundists*)

Together with the German Baptists the New Mennonitism played an important role in the emergence of the South-Russian Baptists, known under the name "*Stundists*," "*Stundism*," or "*Stundobaptists*."

"*Stundism*" emerged in the 1860s. "*Stundism*" appeared in South Russia due to the influence and agitation of German Baptist and New Mennonite missionaries. The participation of Russians in "*Stundism*" occurs in the years 1860-1861.

In January 1862 the Taurida governor informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the formation of a sect of dissenters (*Roskolniks*) in the village of Ostrikovka

166) Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs: "Mennonites, Management Arrangements," part I, l. d. 326.

(neighbouring the village of Liebenau, Berdyansk *uezd*). Its main propagator was the teacher in the village of Liebenau – Gerhard Wieler. Knowing Russian well, Wieler read and explained the New Doctrine to the peasants in Ostrikovka. He was able to attract some of them to his sect. Among those “led astray” was a well-known peasant Demyan Vaseltzkii and his close followers, the peasants Fedor Vaseltzkii, Timofej Akimenko, Alexander Otsheretko, and Ivan Tshernyavski. All these persons attended the prayer meetings of the New Mennonites in the village of Liebenau. Meetings were also held in the house of Demyan Vaseltzkii, (in Ostrikovka), attended by 20-35 peasants from Ostrikovka. Quite often Wieler visited these meetings. Demyan Vaseltzkii, as an educated man, read the New Doctrine to the gathered people, and after Wieler had left Liebenau, he became the leader of the Ostrikovka sectarians. Along with Vaseltzkii, his supporters went to the neighbouring Russian villages, especially to Otsheretovatovka and Skelevalovka, and spread their sect there. According to the information from the Taurida governor some of his followers went so far as throwing their icons out of their homes, ceasing attendance of church services and participation in Orthodox customs. In 1861 the sectarians underwent a judicial investigation. During the questioning Vaseltzkii and his followers declared that they were not sectarians, but Orthodox; that they gathered only to read the Scripture and did not assume that this might be suspicious dissidence. All of them gave promises not to gather. After this the sectarians were left at peace. ¹⁾

Wieler was helped by the New Mennonites, Johann Claassen and Jacob Reimer, in spreading the sect. They distributed

1) Memorandum of Deputy of Religious Affairs for 1862: by report of the leader of the Taurida *gubernia* about the peasants Demyan & Fedor Vaseltzkii, Timofej Akimenko, and others spreading a new sect in Ostrikovka (No. 15/136, February 14, 1862, completed August 13, 1862). See report of the Taurida governor to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, January 31 & June 16, 1862, No. 21 & 122 and Novorossia Governor General, June 15, 1862, No. 594.

New Testaments in the Russian language to the peasants in Ostrikovka. ²⁾ Even with its negative attitude toward the Orthodox, the sect founded in Ostrikovka was not a Baptist sect. It only prepared the ground for Baptists. Afterwards, as the New Mennonitism became a Baptist church, the Ostrikovka sectarians also became Baptists.

Already in 1863, the Ostrikovka peasant woman, Efrosina Morosov, who was a servant for the New Mennonite Heinrich Hübert, left the Orthodox church and was “rebaptized” by one of the New Mennonite ministers in Liebenau. This transition was supported by the Liebenau congregation of New Mennonites led by Heinrich Hübert and Benjamin Bekker. ³⁾

In 1862 the New Mennonites of the Khortitsa district, Heinrich Neufeld, Abraham Unger, Gerhard Wieler (relocated to Khortitsa), and Peter Berg (won over by Wieler) were arrested after an investigation for spreading the sect and luring Orthodox believers into it. The matter was looked at in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* court. The proselytization of Orthodox was not confirmed. Neufeld and Unger admitted to the investigation that they rebaptized all who accepted their teaching. With regard to Wieler, it was established that he “corrupted the thinking” of the (Orthodox) Russian workers who were serving as carriage makers for Abram Unger in Einlage. In addition to this he tried to lure two Russian workers who were serving Unger into his sect. The court decided to put Wieler, Neufeld and Unger under strict surveillance. ⁴⁾

Observing the favorable outcome of the investigation, Wieler started to act more boldly in 1863.

In October 1863 in the Dnieper river Wieler baptized the peasant boy, Matweew Serbulenko,

2) Br. 33-36 (in Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs, “Hüpfers,” part I).

3) In Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs “Hüpfers,” part 2. Consideration of the Governor General of Novorossia and Bessarabia, September 2, 1865, No. 461.

4) Br. 32-33; E. A. - M., No. 4, page 15, No. 7, page 21.

(from the state peasants of the village Volosska, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*) lured by him. Serbulenko worked for the New Mennonite, Willms. 5)

On April 21, 1864 in the village of Einlage, Wieler baptized the 22 year-old, Andrei Pedasenko from Kharkov, who was working for the master shoemaker, Weiss, in Alexandrovsk (Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*). Regarding his split with the Orthodox, Pedasenko declared to the local police and clergy that he joined the “teachings of evangelical Christians.” Arrested under investigation, Wieler was imprisoned in 1865. His case was reviewed by the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* court. The decision of the court was to place Wieler together with Weiss and Willms under surveillance for “encouraging Pedasenko and Serbulenko to part with the Orthodox.” All the accused were entrusted to the “supervision of their community.” 6)

Unger and other New Mennonites also tried to lure people away from the Orthodox church. As a result, Russians “lured away” by Wieler and Unger formed a small group of Russian Baptists who maintained contact with the Einlage congregation of New Mennonites. 7)

In June 1865 the New Mennonite Peter Froese in the village of Kronsweide, Khortitsa *okrug*, was arrested upon investigation into the matter of the “departure from the Orthodox (to the Baptist) of Jakob Saran, living in the village Kumescheva, Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, and for his blasphemy against the Orthodox church.” 8)

In May 1864 Wieler’s sect appeared in the villages of Old and New Danzig, Kherson *uezd*, among the local Lutheran colonists. Inhabitants of these villages quite often came to Abraham Wieler in Einlage who conducted short teaching sessions here. Some of them came into close contact with the New Mennonites and experienced

5) *Br.* 34-35; *E. A. - M.*, No. 23, page 40, No. 39, page 50.

6) *Br.* 35; *E. A. - M.*, Nos. 24, 25, 26, 27, pages 40-43, No. 39, page 50.

7) *E. A. - M.*, No. 4, page 15, L. II, 315.

8) *E. A. - M.*, No. 31, pages 45-46.

“spiritual awakening” through them. The new “converts” did not cut their ties with the Lutheran church but formed a group of people gathering for private prayer meetings (*Stunden*). This group used the books of Spurgeon, the well-known English Baptist. Reading his books, the members of this group learned that he did not baptize children. “They started to discuss questions regarding baptism.”

In the meantime, in the winter of 1863 two leaders of the New Mennonites *Hüpfer*, Gerhard Wieler and Bekker, arrived in the villages New and Old Danzig. They held meetings and preached. The result of their preaching was that about twenty souls in the village of New Danzig “became convicted of the urgency of baptism upon faith.” They were baptized in the Ingut river on May 10, 1864 by Wieler and Bekker, who visited the Old and New Danzig villages again. In their turn those “converted” by Wieler and Bekker started to spread the sect among the surrounding Lutheran and Orthodox population. ⁹⁾ All of these “converts” remained in such close contact with the New Mennonites of Einlage that the government treated them as New Mennonites, as sectarian *Hüpfer*. ¹⁰⁾

As always and everywhere, the sectarianism created disorder in the life of the inhabitants of New Danzig. Discord and hostilities began in families and spread through the community. The verdict of the New Danzig community, issued on June 14, 1864, was that Wieler’s sect was deemed to be harmful to family and community life. The community petitioned for the removal of the sectarians from the village. Other villages joined them in their attempts and in 1864-1865 upon the government’s instructions the main leaders and propagators of the sect among the colonists in Old and New Danzig, were sent abroad.

9) Pr. 11-12; L. II. 312; Fr. I, 281; Br. 35-36. See report from the Novorossia Governor General to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, September 2, 1865, No. 461 (in Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs: “*Hüpfer*” part 2).

10) In Memoranda of Deputy for Religious Affairs, “*Hüpfer*” part 2. Report of the Bessarabian Governor General to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, July 7, 1865, No. 328.

They resettled in Dobrush, where a Baptist congregation was formed in 1864-1865 and whose leader, August Liebig, became a friend and follower of Oncken. ¹¹⁾

About this time Wieler's sect appeared in the Swedish villages of Schlangendorf and Mühlhansendorf and in the Jewish village of Dobroi, Kherson *gubernia*. The propagators of the sect were the New Mennonites Gerhard Wieler, Neufeld, Unger, Claassen, Bekker and others. Their preaching was so open and evangelistic that the people of the villages had to turn to the Guardian Committee with a request to remove these ministers and their followers from the villages. Also among the ministers was the manager of the Jewish villages Islutschist and Kamyanka, the New Mennonite Aron Lepp, who was then removed from his duties in 1865. ¹²⁾

Despite their *Hüpfer* delusion, Gerhard Wieler and Bekker held to definite Baptist views regarding questions of baptism and communion. ¹³⁾ As a result, the sect formed by them in the villages of Old and New Danzig had a Baptist character right from the beginning. ¹⁴⁾ This also explains the fact that the sectarians resettling in Dobrush organized a Baptist congregation there. ¹⁵⁾

Despite the expulsion of the main sectarians from the villages of Old and New Danzig, the sect spread by them did not expire. The sectarians remaining in these villages continued to propagate the sect. They had lively and close contact with the Einlage congregation and its leaders (Unger and Lepp) and visited their meetings. ¹⁶⁾ Upon Unger's suggestion, they contacted Oncken in Hamburg for clarification of perplexing questions. In addition,

11) L. II, 312-313; *E. A. - M.*, No. 29, pages 43-45; *E.A. - I.*, pages 141-144; see Pr. 17.

12) *E. A. - M.*, Nos. 29-30, pages 43-45; *E.A. - I.*, pages 140-141.

13) See *E. A. - M.*, No. 16, pages 31-32.

14) Pr. 124.

15) See Pr. 11-12, 17, 34-35; L. II, 312-313.

16) Pr. 13, 31.

they continued to have contact with Liebig's Baptist congregation in Dobrush. 17)

In due time the leaders of the Einlage congregation visited those "rebaptized" in Old and New Danzig, participated in their meetings, preached and held communion. In 1859 [sic - rather 1869] the Old and New Danzig villages were visited by Abraham Unger and Johann Wieler, a brother of Gerhard Wieler and who later played an important role in the development of the South-Russian Baptists. On July 11, 1869 Unger baptized (rebaptized) thirty colonists in the village of Old Danzig. The baptism took place in the Sugakel river. Among those baptized was the Russian peasant Efim Zimbal, from the village of Karlovka, *Ananeevsk uezd*, *Kherson gubernia*. He attended the meeting of the local German Baptists and here he became a Baptist. Afterwards Zimbal "rebaptized" the peasant, Ivan Riaboschanka, lured to the Baptists by the German Baptist Martin Hübner. Riaboschanka "rebaptized" Michael Ratuschnii, a peasant from the village of Ossnova, Odessa district *uezd*. Riaboschanka and Ratuschnii were, as is known, the main propagators of the Baptist movement within the Russian Orthodox population in South Russia. 18)

Oncken, interested in the growth of Russian Baptists, visited the Baptist congregations in South Russia in 1869. He visited, as has been stated, the Einlage New Mennonite congregation. In addition, he visited the "believing brothers" in the villages of Old and New Danzig. Here he preached his teachings and baptized some colonists. Here he founded the first Baptist congregation in South Russia. 19) Oncken ordained Johann Prizkau, who had studied in Hamburg for some time, as "presbyter" for the Old Danzig Baptist congregation and for the New Danzig congregation, he ordained

17) Pr. 31-35.

18) Pr. 13-14; *E. A. - M.*, No. 58, pages 71-72, No. 63, pages 74-75; *E.A. - I.*, pages 244-245; *Echoes of Service* 1913, VIII, 291-292. Ref. Pavlov in the journal *Baptist*, 1908, No. 11, page 36.

19) *E. A. - M.*, No. 61, page 73, No. 62, page 74; Pr. 36-38; Onck. 78-84; L. II. 313.

the Baptist, Johann Kessler. ²⁰⁾ It should be mentioned that Baptist historians describe the villages of Old and New Danzig as the location of beginning of Baptist congregations in 1864. ²¹⁾

After 1870 the New Mennonite minister Johann Wieler actively advanced the Baptist movement in South Russia. ²²⁾ In 1871-1872 he, in cooperation with German Baptist missionaries, worked among the Russian Orthodox population in the Odessa *uezd*. Here he visited the village Rohrbach, conducted meetings, preached and served communion. Here Russian peasants from villages Ossnova, Ignalevka and others flocked to him. Wieler lured them from the Orthodox. Some of his listeners had already been baptized in the Baptist sect. Among them was also Michael Ratuschnii, a peasant from Ossnova.

Wieler's activities were successful. He not only strengthened the existing Baptist sect in the Odessa *uezd*, but also, with the help of other missionaries, recruited many Russian peasants. ²³⁾

It should be mentioned that the village of Rohrbach and the surrounding Russian population represented a favorable soil for the development of the Baptism movement. Here the Reformed pastor, Johann Bonekemper, sent to Russia by the Basel Pietist mission, had worked since 1823. ²⁴⁾ Under the influence of Bonekemper, the pietistic movement emerged in the village of Rohrbach and other neighboring villages already in 1846. ²⁵⁾ The followers of this movement, not satisfied

20) Pr. 34-35; *E. A. - M.*, No. 61, 62, pages 73-74; Fr. I, 281.

21) Pr. 36-38, 124.

22) *E.A. - I.* (pp. 234-236) confusing in this case Johann Wieler with Gerhard Wieler (*E. A. - M.*, No. 121, 122, pages 134-137). The latter had already returned to the Old Mennonites at the end of the 1860s and would have been spreading the Baptist beliefs in 1871-1872.

23) *E.A. - I.*, 234-236; *E. A. - M.*, No. 121, pages 134-136, No. 122, pages 136-137.

24) *Echoes of Service* 1913, VII, 267. Dalton H. *Evangelische Strömungen in der russischen Kirche der Gegenwart* (Heilbronn 1881), page 9.

24) Dalton H. *Stundismus in Russland* (Gütersloh), page 8.

with the existing church services, started special spiritual and prayer meetings, calling them “*Stunden*” (*Andachtsstunden, Bibelstunden, Gebetsstunden, Missionsstunden*). Therefore the participants were called “*Stundists*,” “*Stunden brethren*.”

Among the “converted” Pietists were also the Russian “brothers” Onischtschenko and Ratuschnii. They went to the village of Rohrbach for farm work, participated in the “*Stunden*” (meetings) and were led astray. ²⁶⁾ Onischtschenko came to the *Stunden* (Pietist) in 1858, Ratuschnii a bit later. “But at this time, they were not yet Baptists and did not separate from the Orthodox church.” Bonekemper himself did not reject child baptism and did not rebaptize his “converts.” Only at the end of the 1860s, under the influence of the propaganda of the German Baptist missionaries and New Mennonites, did the “Russian *Stundists*” (Ratuschnii, Onischtschenko and others) become Baptists, were “rebaptized” and separated from the Orthodox church. ²⁷⁾

The first Russians “converted” to Baptism were in constant spiritual contact with the German Baptists and New Mennonites, accepted their ministers and participated with them in common worship services. Organized as independent congregations, the South Russian Baptists in the 1880s participated together with German Baptists and New Mennonites at common delegate conferences or conferences of congregational representatives.

At the conference on May 21 & 22, 1882, in the village of Rückenau, Taurida *gubernia*, South Russia, the participants included Baptists (nineteen men), German Baptists (a few men),

26) Dalton H. Stundismus in Russland (Gütersloh 1896), page 10.

27) Echoes of Service 1913, VII, 267; L. II, 309, 314; Dalton H. Stundismus in Russland, page

28. In missionary literature it states that the founder of the “*Stundists*” was Karl Bonekemper (son of Johann Bonekemper) working in the village of Rohrbach in 1867. This is not true. Karl Bonekemper only continued what his father had started and like the latter was not a Baptist. See Dalton H. Evangelische Strömungen in die Russische Kirche der Gegenwart. pages 9, 10.

~~28) Pr. 13.~~

and delegates from the four New Mennonite congregations existing at that time: Molochnaia, Einlage, Friedensfeld and Kuban (over fifty men). The conference in Rückenau discussed and resolved questions regarding spiritual-religious needs of the South-Russian Baptists, German Baptists in South Russia and New Mennonites. The participants at the conference consisted of “Russian brethren” and “German brethren.” Both groups were regarded as members belonging to the same spiritual community, united by the same religious interests. As can be seen by the minutes of the South-Russian Baptist and New Mennonite conference they had a common missions committee and a common mission treasury at that time. ²⁹⁾

In 1884 the New Mennonite minister, Johann Wieler, was invited to a conference of Russian Baptists in Novovasilevka, Taurida *gubernia*. The conference was also attended by delegates of the Molochnaia New Mennonite congregation. At the conference a Union of Russian Baptists was formed and Wieler was elected as its chairman. Wieler remained chairman of the Union until 1886 when he moved to Romania to escape exile. ³⁰⁾ In the meantime, Wieler translated the Baptist Confession of Faith by Oncken for the “Russian brethren.” This Russian translation was referred to as the “*Stundist* Confession of Faith of the School Type” for a long time. In 1906 the Russian translation was published in Rostov on the Don, under the title “Confession of Faith of the Russian Evangelical Christian Baptists.”

The modern “hierarchy” of the Russian Baptists traces its the beginning from Oncken. In Russia Oncken ordained Abraham Unger (New Mennonite) and W.G. Pavlov. In 1872 Unger ordained Johann Wieler (New Mennonite). In 1886 Wieler ordained F. Balchin (“present presbyter” in the Astrachan congregation of Baptists in the Taurida *gubernia*). Pavlov ordained V. V. Ivanov (president of the Bakinsk

29) See minutes of the Baptist Conference in Rückenau, May 20, 1882; *E. A. - M.*, pages 557-569.

30) V. V. Pavlov “Baptists” 1908, No. 11, page 37.

congregation). Ivanov ordained D.I. Masaev (former president of Union of Russian Baptists). All current Russian Baptist “presbyters” have received their ordination from Pavlov, Masaev or Balichin. 31)

Close relations between the New Mennonites and Baptists also developed from the fact that the New Mennonite congregations also invited Baptist itinerant preachers (F. B. Badecker from England and others) who conducted meetings with them at which they also preached. Many New Mennonite ministers were educated at the Hamburg Baptist seminary. Baptist spiritual hymnals (*Glaubensstimme* and others) were used by the New Mennonites at their worship services. 32)

Regarding the Baptists as a community of the “Reborn” and “Children of God,” the New Mennonites had prayers meetings with the Baptists right from the beginning, accepted baptism from them and performed baptisms among them, and participated in communion with them. However, close relations between the New Mennonites and the Russian Baptists had no definitive quality in the period from the 1890s to 1905 due to the conditions of the time.

Evangelical Mennonitism *)

About 10 years ago, a new religious trend developed among the Russian Mennonites - the “Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood,” or “Alliance Mennonitism.” It represented an insignificant group with little influence which did not have a proper confession of faith and whose organization was incomplete. Alliance Mennonitism arose as a protest against a general decline in morale, starting to appear even among the New Mennonite sect, and as a counterbalance to the arid (purely Baptist) rigorism of the New Mennonites on the question of baptism.

31) See “Our Presbyters” in the journal *Baptist* 1907, Nos. 1, 2, 4 & 5.

32) W. III, 183.

*) See Fr. I, 722-727.

The Evangelical Mennonites tried to unite all the “inwardly reborn” or “converted” regardless of which group of Christians they belonged to. The Evangelical (Alliance) Mennonites baptize by immersion but do not rebaptize those that join them from the Old Mennonites, unless they desire it themselves. In this, they are different from the New Mennonites. Contrary to the “Old” and “New” Mennonites they do not deny the value of child baptism; Lutheran, Reformed and others “baptized as children” are admitted into their congregation without rebaptism, if they conduct themselves as “inwardly reborn,” and as “children of God.” The membership of the evangelical Mennonites is no more than 600 members.

V. Confession of Faith, Worship Service and Polity of the Mennonite Sects in Russia.

Confession of Faith of the Russian Mennonites

The confessions of faith of all branches of Mennonites have an extremely rationalistic character. The Mennonites reject Holy Tradition, church sacraments and hierarchy, fasting, monasticism and all ecclesial ceremonial order, honoring the Holy Mother of God, naming saints, honoring the cross, icons and relics, praying for dead persons, and baptizing children. The affirmations in the confession of faith of the Old Mennonites are consistent with the general Protestant teachings about the Holy Scripture as the only source of revelation, and of faith as the only means for salvation. The distinct feature of Mennonitism, together with a number of rationalistic sects, is the rejection of swearing and military service.

The Mennonite sect does not have a common standard confession of faith. The Russian, German, Dutch and American Mennonites are not united with a confession of faith which is the same for all. Some of these groups do not have *an obligatory* confession of faith at all. *

The Confession of Faith of the Russian Old Mennonites is presented in the booklet: "*Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Russlands*" (Halbstadt 1902). The booklet was prepared by a committee of Russian Old Mennonites and adopted by the elders of the Old Mennonites in 1896. The booklet is the official confession of faith of the Russian Old Mennonites.

*) Schiele and Zscharnack, Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Tübingen 1913)

Volume B, IV. Article: Mennoniten, page 274.

The confession of faith of the New Mennonites is stated in "*Glaubensbekenntnis der vereinigten christlichen Taufgesinnten Mennonitischen Brüdergemeinde in Russland*" (Halbstadt 1902). This confession of faith was composed in 1900 and accepted by all New Mennonite congregations in Russia. Its authors used the general Mennonite Confession of Faith, but the confession of faith of the New Mennonites was nevertheless infused with a Baptist spirit.

The Evangelical Mennonites used the confession of faith of the New Mennonites but understand it in the spirit of their own purpose.

All Mennonite groups reject swearing and military service.

Worship Services of the Mennonites

The worship of all Mennonite groups is conducted in meetings. The prayer meetings of the "Old," "New," and "Evangelical" Mennonites consist of prayer, singing spiritual songs, reading of God's Word and preaching. Like the Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Adventists, the Mennonites do not accept the codex of obligatory prayer and the meetings of these groups have the character of lively improvisation. The Old Mennonites take hymns for singing from the "*Gesangbuch*" and "*Kirchliche Choräle*." In addition, they use the psalms of David. The New Mennonites adopt their songs from "*Glaubensstimme*," "*Heimatklänge*," and "*Frohe Botschaft*." Sometimes they sing from "*Zionslieder*" distributed by the German Baptists in Russia. The collection "*Glaubensstimme*" has a definite Baptist character and is one of the publications of the German Baptists. Lately the song collections of the New Mennonites are also starting to be used in the worship services of Old Mennonites.

Among the ceremonies of the Mennonites are baptism by water of adults, "bread-breaking" and foot washing.

The Old Mennonites have their baptism services in their churches, preferably at Pentecost.

It is done by pouring on the heads of persons who have reached the age of 18-20 years after learning the basic rules in the Old Mennonite catechism. The examination of the rules of faith is done one week before baptism during a Sunday morning prayer meeting of the Old Mennonites.

Communion is held twice a year by the Old Mennonites: on the first Sunday after Trinity Sunday and after the first Sunday of October.

The practice of communion and baptism in the Old Mennonite congregations is not the same. In the Flemish congregations (all Molochnaia congregations except the Rudnerweide congregation; the Khortitsa and the Samara congregations, and others) the baptismal candidate is sprinkled with water three times directly from the vessel; in the Frisian congregations (Rudnerweide in the Molochnaia *okrug*, and Kronsweide in the Khortitsa *okrug*) the baptizer sprinkles the water from the vessel by hand. At the communion service of the Flemish they remain in their seats while the elder comes to each one and hands them a piece of bread. Among the Frisians, the elder remains standing and breaks the bread; the participants walk up to him and receive a piece of bread.

The New Mennonites, like Baptists and Evangelical Christians, baptize by immersion in a river or lake. The baptism of persons who consciously believe in Christ as their personal Savior and proclaim their faith in a meeting takes place at any time. The New Mennonites do not recognize the value of Old Mennonite baptism and rebaptize Old Mennonites when they join their sect (Old Mennonites do not rebaptize New Mennonites). The New Mennonites conduct their communion like the Baptists - on the first Sunday of every month. Like the Baptists, the New Mennonites admit to the communion only persons who have been baptized by the proper baptism of faith.

The Evangelical Mennonites (Alliance) baptize by immersion, but persons coming from the Old Mennonites are only rebaptized when the person wishes it. In contrast to the other Mennonites, the Evangelical Mennonites do not reject the efficacy of child baptism;

Lutherans, Reformed, and others are accepted, as has been said, without rebaptizing if they conduct themselves as “reborn children of God.” Accordingly, the Evangelical Mennonites admit to the communion all “inwardly reborn,” no matter what religious group they belong to.

Polity of the Mennonite Sects in Russia (Congregations, Ministers, Conferences)

Regarding the church polity and organization of the Mennonite sect, it must be stated that the legislation in force underscores the principle of total non-intervention [by the government] in the spiritual matters of the Mennonites. According to point 104 *Ust. In. Isp.* the Mennonites resolve matters of faith according to their church polity without hindrance. Point 1105 *Ust. In. Isp.* stipulates that the spiritual teachers of the Mennonites settle their misunderstandings by the rules of their confession of faith, and do not interfere in worldly and other social matters at all. (Holy Law, Volume II, Part I, edition 1896).

The polities of the Old Mennonite and New Mennonite congregations have no important differences. At the head of each congregation is an elder, *Ältester* (in the congregations of the Evangelical Mennonites – a “presbyter”). He preaches the Word of God, baptizes, serves at communion, and ordains (“affirms”) ministers and deacons, chairs general membership meetings, leads them, attends to religious well-being and church discipline. Elders are elected by the congregations and are ordained (affirmed) by laying on of hands by the elders of their congregations. Each congregation has only one elder. There may be more than one “presbyter” in an Evangelical Mennonite congregation.

The ministers (“church teachers” for the Old Mennonite, “spiritual teachers” for the New Mennonites) share all church work of the elder and preach

at prayer meetings. The Old Mennonite preachers perform all religious ceremonies (weddings, funerals and others) except baptisms, communions and ordinations of preachers and deacons and, in the absence of an elder and with his special permission and that of the congregation, chair congregational meetings. In extreme cases they may baptize and serve at communion (but not ordain preachers), but each time with special authorization by an elder and the congregation. In 1898, by ruling of the general conference of the "old" Mennonites, the church teachers were allowed, in principle, to perform all church rites (except ordination/dedication) but on each occasion upon the express desire of the congregation.

With the New Mennonites (and Evangelical Mennonites) all church rites (including ordination of preachers) can be performed by the elders ("presbyter" for the Evangelical Mennonites) as well as by the preachers. In the New Mennonite congregations, the elder is only the most important preacher, who leads at congregational meetings. All other preachers are considered to be "co-elders" - "*Mitältesten*." Ordinations and the chairing of congregational meetings are performed only with the permission of an elder and after a decision of the congregation.

The preachers are elected by the congregation. Their number is not limited. In the congregations of the Evangelical Mennonites, the duties of a preacher may even be assigned to persons not belonging to the Evangelical Mennonite congregation and not even baptized by them (Reformed, Lutheran and others).

With the Old Mennonites, in Flemish practice, hands are not only laid upon preachers, but they also solemnly accept the conferral of duties through a prayer by the elder. The Gnadenfeld and Alexanderwohl congregations (*Molochnaia okrug*), following Old Flemish practice, lay hands not only upon preachers, but also upon their wives together with them. The Frisian congregations do not distinguish between a spiritual elder and preachers. The New Mennonites not only lay hands on elders, but also on preachers and even on deacons.

The deacons help the preachers at baptismal services and communion. They are to tend for the sick and poor members of the congregation and manage donations for welfare. In such matters they report to the membership meeting. With the New Mennonites, the deacons also hold worship services, and in extreme cases, preach and, by special permission, perform church rites (except ordination). With the Evangelical Mennonites the deacons perform church rites (except ordination) - if they become preachers. *)

In special cases (in times of persecution and the total absence of preachers) in the New Mennonite congregations, a regular member can perform church rites. **)

The majority of Mennonite preachers have no biblical education. Only a few have received such an education abroad. The preferred Bible school for the Old Mennonites is the Mission school at Barmen (Germany), the Missionary Preacher school in St. Chrischona (Switzerland), the theology faculty at the University of Basel, and the Bible School at Basel (Switzerland). Lately young Mennonites like to attend Bethel College in Newton (Kansas, U.S.A.).

New Mennonites receive preparation in the Baptist seminary in Hamburg, and also in the Alliance Bible School in Berlin. ***)

A distinct peculiarity of Russian Mennonitism is its autonomy for congregations. Each Mennonite congregation is independent in its internal matters and rules itself through its membership meetings. A general meeting is called as necessary by the elder (or his deputy) and consists of all members of age, with the exception of those who have been

*) Fr. I, 44-45.

**) ibid

***) Fr. I, 33.

excommunicated. The general meeting reviews and decides about the finances, housekeeping and welfare matters of the congregation; cares for the attendance to religious needs; accepts and excommunicates members; elects elders, preachers and deacons; and may remove them from their position in case they fail to maintain a pure stance in faith and morals. (An elder of the Old Mennonites can only be removed with the consent of the elders of other congregations). The general membership meeting can make decisions on questions related to the confession of faith and church practice; it elects delegates to Mennonite consultative conferences, accepts or rejects resolutions of these conferences. All congregational matters are resolved by an absolute majority vote.

Until 1883 the church conventions at the *okrug* level were the highest authority in spiritual matters for the Old Mennonites and since 1883 it has been the All-Russian delegate conferences.

Church conventions existed since the beginning of colonization in Russia. They were conferences of spiritual elders and preachers of one or more Old Mennonite *okrug*s. At first these conferences had a consultive significance. In 1851 the Molochnaia Mennonite convention declared itself to be the central administrative body in spiritual matters of the Old Mennonites in the Molochnaia *okrug*. This resolution created strong opposition among the Mennonites, ending with the formation of a special Mennonite sect, "The Friends of Jerusalem," or "Friends of Temple."

After 1883 the convention was replaced by the All-Russian Delegate Congress, or Conference of Old Mennonites. *)

The conference has a consultative role. It convenes once per year and consists of a gathering of elders, preachers, and delegates from all Old Mennonite congregations in Russia. Elders are ex-officio members of the conference.

The conference decides matters and questions concerning the

*) W. III, 203-204.

spiritual, religious, economic, domestic, educational and other needs of the Russian Old Mennonites. The conferences appoint itinerant preachers, set their salaries, appoint a chairman and a secretary for the conference for every three years, create an “executive committee” of the conference, audit financial reports on whether they satisfy the religious needs of the Old Mennonite congregations. The conference executive committee prepares the agenda for the conference and collaborates in carrying out conference decisions.

As there are non-religious issues which affect the interests of the Russian Mennonites, regardless which group they belong to, since 1910 delegates from the New Mennonite and Evangelical Mennonite congregations are invited to the conference of the Old Mennonites. But they do not participate in resolving the spiritual-religious questions of the Old Mennonites. Thus the Old Mennonite congresses or conferences are conferences for the general concerns of all Russian Mennonites regarding issues of a non-religious character.

A higher ruling entity in spiritual matters for the New Mennonites is the all-Russian consultative congress, or “United Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Congregations.” The conference exists since 1872. It convenes every year and is a conference of elders, preachers and delegates of the New Mennonite congregations. The conference decides matters and questions concerning the religious needs of the New Mennonites in Russia. The conference appoints itinerant preachers, assigns the regions for his activities; and preachers report about their spiritual activities to the conference. The conference audits all financial reports of all New Mennonite accounts (common accounts, education account, account for the mission among heathens in India). The conference unites the New Mennonite congregations regarding practical activities (preparation of preachers, missions, welfare, etc.) and sets common rules to which all spiritual-religious life of all New Mennonite congregations in Russia conforms.

The conference chooses a “chairman of the New Mennonite brotherhood” and his deputy for reporting to the conference. The chairman and his deputy form the executive committee of the conference. They look after the implementation of conference decisions, carry out its instructions, are responsible to the conference and prepare the agenda for the conference program.

Evangelical Mennonites, due to their small size, do not have congresses or conferences.

The resolutions of Mennonite conferences have only consultative status. Their power and importance depend entirely on their acceptance or non-acceptance by the local Mennonite congregations. But as the participants of the conferences were well informed about the wishes and conditions of their congregations, and as the conferences usually act according to the religious needs of the Mennonites, so in practice the conference resolutions have a major, almost obligatory, significance.

At the present time, the most important of all Mennonites groups is the Old or Church Mennonitism. It includes more than three-fifths (60%) of the total number of Russian Mennonites and has thirty-five congregations in Russia. New Mennonites, in seven congregations, make up less than two-fifths of the total number of Mennonites. Evangelical Mennonites have no more than 600 followers. They have three small groups: in the villages of Lichtenfeld, Taurida *gubernia*; in the village of Altonau, Kherson *uezd*; and in Busuluk *uezd*, Samara *gubernia*.

Publishing Activities of the Russian Mennonites *)

Generally, the publishing activities of the Old Mennonites are quite small. The voice of the Old Mennonite group (unofficially) is the newspaper *Botschafter*, founded in 1905. At first it was published in Ekaterinoslav, but recently it is published

*) Fr. I, 669-674.

in the city of Berdyansk. Its editor is the minister, D. G. Epp.

The periodical for the New Mennonites is the journal *Friedensstimme*, founded in 1903. Until 1905 it was published abroad; since 1905 [it has been published] in Halbstadt, Taurida *gubernia*. The journal is published by the New Mennonite publishing house, "Raduga" (in Halbstadt) under the editorship of the preacher A. Kröker.

Within Mennonite publishing, the New Mennonite book publishing house of "Raduga" deserves special mention. It publishes thousands of popular books and brochures in Russian and German, dispersing Baptist ideas and principles and Evangelical Christianity widely among the Mennonite and Russian Orthodox masses. The book publishing house has a branch in Petrograd, which is managed by the well-known minister of the Evangelical Christians in Russia, I.S. Prochanov.

Mission of the Russian Mennonites among the Heathens in India. *)

"Old" and "New" Mennonites conduct missionary activity among the heathens in India.

In 1849 a "Mission Society of the Mennonites for the Spreading of the Gospel in the Dutch Indies" was formed in Holland. In 1854 the society received the first contribution of 300 *taler* from the Gnadenfeld Mennonite congregation (Taurida *gubernia*). At the present time the society is based in Amsterdam. In 1910 it received contributions totaling 80,000 *marks*; included in this sum were 10,000 *marks* from the Dutch Mennonites, 15,000 *marks* from Germany, and 55,000 *marks* from the Russian Old Mennonites.

The first missionary of the society was a Dutch Mennonite, Peter Janz, who started missionary activities on the island of Java in 1851.

*) Fr. I, 548-568. Pauls, Heinrichs Pred. Die Missionstätigkeit der Mennoniten (brochure, Halbstadt, 1913) pages 5-12 (quoted from *Missionsstimme*).

In 1882-1883 the first mission station of the Dutch Mennonites was opened on the island of Java. Later two more mission stations were established there.

In 1871 the Mission Society of the Dutch Mennonites started similar activities on the island of Sumatra. Here the first missionary was the Russian Mennonite, Dirks. He founded the first mission station on the island of Sumatra.

In 1912 there were nine Mennonite mission stations on the islands of Java and Sumatra, one missionary doctor, one economist, and two “missionary sisters,” thirty-six native missionaries (twenty-seven of them apprentices), twelve schools with 1,000 pupils (300 of them girls). The total number of baptized natives reached 2,500 souls. Eight of the nine missionaries were Russian Old Mennonites. ¹⁾

The mission of the New Mennonites ²⁾ in British India was started in 1890 in Nalgonda (south of Madras). The main missionary station is located in Nalgonda. In 1900 a mission station was opened in Sooriapet; in 1902 in Jangaon. Both stations are not far from Nalgonda. In 1912 the New Mennonite mission in India had three missionaries, one sister, and 131 native missionary workers, among them were 32 teachers, 8 “Bible women” (sisters of charity and service), 78 preachers and deacons. The total number of baptized natives reached 4,000 souls. The number of students in missionary schools stands at 387. A paper of the mission field is the monthly leaflet *Erntefeld*, published since 1900 in Halbstadt. ³⁾

The Russian New Mennonite mission in India is affiliated to the American Baptist Missionary Union. It is supported by donations from the Russian New Mennonites and the American Baptist Missionary Union. According to

1) Fr. I, 548-559; *Missionstimme* 5-9.

2) Fr. I, 560-568; *Missionstimme* 9-12.

3) Fr. I, 560-568; *Missionstimme* 9-10.

the financial report to the conference of Russian New Mennonites in 1910, the New Mennonite “account for missions among the heathens in India” stood at 5,934 *rubles*, 51 *kopeks* for 1909; during 1909 the Russian New Mennonites donated 15,351 *rubles*, 88 *kopeks* for a total of 21,286 *rubles*, 39 *kopeks*. Of this sum, 14,312 *rubles*, 36 *kopeks* were spent during 1909.

According to a financial report by the American Baptist Mission Union for 1909 ⁴⁾ the Union gave 10,084.94 dollars in 1908 for the support of the New Mennonite mission in India. Of this the mission in Nalgonda received 5,788.65 dollars, the mission in Sooriapet 2,953.14 dollars and the mission in Jangaon 2,307.15 dollars. ⁵⁾

4) Ninety-fifth Annual Report of the American Baptist Missionary Union 1909, pages 188-196 (in Annual Report of the Northern Baptist Convention 1909).

5) *ibid*, pages 150, 176-176.

VI. Character and Internal Condition of Russian Mennonitism

It is necessary to state the following about the Mennonite character as a current religious movement.

The Old Mennonitism, due to its indolence shows almost no vital activity. In the four centuries of its existence, it has lost all of its first distinctive characteristics: the visionary idea of themselves as a community of saints, religious piety, intolerance of other faiths, and its efforts at proselytizing. At the present time Old Mennonitism does not represent a sect in a religiously active stage of movement, but rather a church hardened in set forms and rites and peacefully getting along with other Christian confessions. Evangelical Mennonitism is rather small in number and does not play an important role among the Mennonites.

Of all Mennonite groups only New Mennonitism currently presents more vital activity. It is well organized, has a good number of well-educated preachers who have received special preparation at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary, and acts with energy and success. They have a special book publishing house in Halbstadt (Taurida *gubernia*), "Raduga," which publishes thousands of inexpensive books and brochures in the Russian and German languages, distributing the ideas and principles of New Mennonitism (Baptist faith) among the large masses of Mennonites and Orthodox. It is obvious, that in recent years

the New Mennonite movement has had great success among the Mennonites in Russia.

The spiritual-religious alienation of the New Mennonites from the Old Mennonites continues to the present time. Even today the New Mennonites do not allow Old Mennonites to participate in communion and other normal spiritual services. Even today they rebaptize Old Mennonites when they join the New Mennonites (Old Mennonites do not rebaptize New Mennonites). The motives of this separation are caused, on one side, by ritual differences between both Mennonite groups (mainly in the method of baptizing) and, on the other hand, stricter moral demands in the New Mennonite congregations. "We do not want to take part in communion with drunkards, godless and unrepentant persons," members of New Mennonite congregations often say, meaning in this case, Old Mennonites. These gaps are especially noticeable in the Khortitsa Mennonite district.

However, a decline in religious initiative and proper morals is becoming evident also among the New Mennonites. Alongside persons with high ideals of evangelical piety, there are some New Mennonites who do not reject the consumption of strong alcoholic beverages (but keep it secret from the elders) and who do not see much difference between Old and New Mennonites, except in outer ceremonies. One of the New Mennonite preachers, Herman Neufeld, in a sermon given on May 16, 1910 (at the conference of New Mennonites in the village of Tiege, Kherson *gubernia*) denounced, among others, those "Mennonite brethren" who "do not rely on the Almighty God, but when going to bed, place a loaded revolver beside them."

Regarding the Baptists as a community of "reborn ones," the New Mennonites have prayer fellowship with the Baptists, recognize their baptism and participate in communion with them. With the proclamation of religious freedom in Russia,

the New Mennonites began to seek a union with the Baptists and Evangelical Christians on the basis of practical religious activities. The advocates of these efforts are mostly persons who have received education in the Baptist Seminary in Hamburg. The close relations of the New Mennonites with the Evangelical Christians and Baptists is manifested in the following concrete forms.

Representatives of the New Mennonites participated in the conferences of other "evangelical" sects. At the conference of Evangelical Christians held in Petersburg in September 1909 the New Mennonite preacher, G. Braun also spoke. At the all-Russian Baptist Conference held in the same year - 1909 - in Rostov on the Don, P. M. Friesen from the "Mennonite Brethren" (a preacher from Sevastopol) participated.

In 1906 in Halbstadt, Taurida *gubernia*, a book publishing enterprise, "Raduga," was formed by six members: G. Braun, Peter Perk, Jacob Kröker, David Isaak, Isaak Regehr and Ivan Prochanov. With the exception of Prochanov (an evangelical Christian living in Petrograd), the members of this enterprise are "New Mennonites." The book publishing house "Raduga" has already published many thousand cheap religious books and brochures in the Russian and German languages. The Russian publications of "Raduga" are inspired by a sectarian (Evangelical Christian and Baptist) understanding of salvation. "Salvation is already completed at Golgatha. Christ saved all people, including all of us. I believe that you are saved, and you have the voice of the Spirit, that you are saved; other than this nothing else is required for salvation."

In 1906, at the initiative of F. Kröker and W. Neufeld, a church was built in the village of Halbstadt, Taurida *gubernia*, an "Alliance House" (eventually closed) - "*Allianz-Haus*" or "*Konferenz Haus*" – to preach to "all believers" (sectarians). Not only were worship services of the New Mennonites held in this house, but also those of Russian Baptists.

Short term Bible courses are conducted for the preparation of preachers for the Russian Baptist congregations; similar courses are also held for the New Mennonites.

At the Bible courses of the New Mennonites, held in 1909 in Halbstadt, not only did New Mennonite ministers (Braun, Kröker, Friesen) preach/lecture, but Baptists also: Regentrop (from Lodz), Rosenberg (from Odessa, a Jew, who became a Baptist) and Grab (from England).

Some New Mennonite brothers, preachers from Gnadenfeld, have spoken at Baptist conferences. Balichin, Diatschkov and Reimer (New Mennonite) preached at meetings in the city of Berdyansk on July 2 & 3, 1907. ¶) At meetings held from October 25 until November 6, 1908, in the villages of Timoschevka, Astrachanka, Novovossilevka and Novospask (Berdyansk *uezd*) the Mennonite Brethren J. W. Reimer, P. W. Unruh, A. A. Reimer, I. E. Isaak and others preached in addition to the local “presbyter” and the organizer of the meetings, Balchinin himself. “The brethren J. Reimer and P. Unruh” wrote Balchinin, “are especially capable and useful for Bible meetings and if some will be held, I suggest inviting them.” **)

Some ministers of the New Mennonites received their education at the Baptist seminary in Hamburg. These ministers are G. J. Braun, Kröker, P. J. Braun. Among the eighteen Russian students studying at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary in 1913, were the New Mennonites Penner (trained with support of the New Mennonite conference), Warkentin and Braun.

While striving to unite with the Baptists and Evangelical Christians on the basis of practical activities, the New Mennonites considered their “work” among the Russian Orthodox population as their own undertaking. Information about this from the village of Barvenkovo, Kharkov *gubernia*, is provided in No. 30

*) Baptist 1907, No. 3, page 14.

**) Baptist 1907, No. 2, page 16.

of the New Mennonite paper, "*Friedensstimme*" for the year 1910: "Already in this year we have had a special blessing, as in Bavenkovo many turned to the Lord. God's Spirit works among the Russians in Barvenkovo, rather slowly in our opinion. At the home of one brother, Goluba, the Russian brethren have their own meetings on Sundays. What joy it will be, when we will be able to build a nice church for the Russian brethren in Barvenkovo. In this year eleven brethren were assigned to work among the Russian people. Brother M. I. Diatschkov worked for three months in Moscow and Petersburg with great blessings. In Petersburg, Brother Fetler labours almost day and night..."

Parallel to this, a trend among the New Mennonites can be observed: trying to eliminate the internal antagonism between the Old and New Mennonites. In this respect a noteworthy article by the minister, G. Braun ("*Mennoniten oder Baptisten*") printed in No. 35 of the paper "*Friedensstimme*" for 1910 states: "We cannot deny," Braun writes, "that the differences between the various Mennonite groups in Russia makes itself felt. We regret that, but it is there. Where did it come from? The reasons for it can be found on both sides, but both sides could work together to remove this unnatural situation as soon as both of them truly and selflessly give the other what belongs to both of them. When fifty years ago the "Mennonite Brethren Congregation" was bold enough to call the so-called "church" Mennonites "a spiritually dead church," then at the present time it has to have within itself the noble courage and inner love for the truth, to be aware that there are, thanks to God, also true living Christians in the Church Mennonite congregations and that they, with their baptism by pouring from older days, remain within Christianity. If the Mennonite Brethren congregation could formerly judge, then now they have to show that they can also love. This is a way to victory." "Together we are strong but one against the other we die" and "the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace." (Psalm 37:11).

Attitudes of the Russian Mennonites to Germanism

After the start of war with Germany, the opinion was expressed in the Russian Mennonite circles that the Mennonites living in Russia are not Germans, but Dutch.

As stated earlier, almost all Russian Mennonites came to us from Prussia. The Mennonites in Prussia were not only settlers from Holland, but also from Upper (Southern) Germany and the German Rhineland.

In the Prussian Mennonite congregations of South German origin, the German language was used right from the beginning. The Dutch language was used in the congregations of Dutch origin (with the exception of Danzig) up to 1750. In the Danzig congregation the Dutch language was still used in 1778 at a baptismal service. *)

Therefore, only some of the Mennonite settlers in Russia from Prussia were persons of Dutch origin. But these also were so Germanized from the beginning of their settlement in Russia (1788-1789) that they lost their Dutch language. Thus, all Mennonites living in Russia are Germans.

For a long time, the Russian Mennonites maintained close relations with the Mennonites in Prussia. "Mennonitism in Russia," writes the well-known Mennonite professor, Wedel, author of a four-volume "Mennonite History" (in German), "represents a continuation of Prussian Mennonitism, and like the latter, even now carries within itself some traits of a Dutch character. In church relations, Russian Mennonitism was for a long time dependent on the Prussian congregations; it received clergy and instructions from there, as well as educated teachers (school teachers and preachers)." **)

Despite being in Russia for more than a century, the Mennonites remained Germans. In their daily life

*) W. III, 80.

**) W. III, 206.

the Mennonites use the German language, speaking it in their families, in home life, in dealings among themselves, and at village meetings. Worship services are held in the German language and religion is taught at school in German. The German language is taught in Mennonite institutions as the mother tongue of the students. The German language is the basic language of all Mennonite writing – spiritual and secular.

Due to the predominance of the German language among the Mennonites, one can meet persons (mostly women) who do not speak Russian at all.

The culture of the Mennonite population and its lifestyle has a definite German character.

Before the war with Germany, the Russian Mennonites were in lively contact with Germany.

The information about foreign correspondence for 1911, 1912, 1913, and 1914 from the Halbstadt and Khortitsa mail-telegram office could provide actual proof of this.

A) At the Halbstadt mail-telegram office (*Berdyansk uezd, Taurida gubernia*)

Regular letters, postcards, and printed matter abroad:

Year	Outgoing	Incoming
1911	29,968	36,700
1912	32,600	40,152
1913	26,963	53,236
1914	19,792	45,520

Registered dispatches:

Year	Outgoing	Incoming
1911	1,164	1,313
1912	1,323	1,869
1913	3,127	2,811
1914	4,153	2,718

Parcels received:

1911	2,339
1912	2,320
1913	3,132
1914	2,791

There are a total of 1,310 Mennonite households in the Halbstadt *volost*, and many of them use the office closest to their place of residence for mail-telegram purposes.

B) At the Gnadenfeld mail-telegram office (Taurida *gubernia*, Berdyansk *uezd*)

	Regular letters, postcards and printed matter		Registered dispatches	
	Outgoing	Incoming	Outgoing	Incoming
1911	1,542	5,462	118	195
1912	4,530	5,700	1,096	1,313
1913	6,454	5,584	229	1,198
1914	4,152	3,592	189	4,068

Parcels (without fixed prices) received: in 1911 – 479, in 1912 – 412, in 1913 – 678, in 1914 – 597.

There are a total of 1,137 Mennonite households in the Gnadenfeld *volost*. Many of them do not use the Gnadenfeld office for their mail or telegram requirements, but offices close to their place of residence.

C) At the Khortitsa mail-telegram office (Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*):

	Regular letters, postcards and printed matter abroad		Registered dispatches	
	Outgoing	Incoming	Outgoing	Incoming
1911	5,280	17,259	186	388
1912	5,294	11,428	130	441
1913	12,564	13,561	183	452
1914	6,342	6,902	180	521

Parcels (without fixed prices) received: in 1911 – 434, in 1912 – 483, in 1913 – 532, in 1914 – 174.

There are 1,171 Mennonite households in the Khortitsa *volost* not counting Kitschkas (where there is a mail-telegram department).

D) At the Nikolaipol mail-telegram office (Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*):

	Regular letters, postcards and printed matter abroad		Parcels without fixed prices
	Outgoing	Incoming	Received
1911	1212	690	272
1912	708	2346	234
1913	1770	2929	297
1914	2628	1800	144

There are 173 Mennonite households in the Nikolaipol *volost*.

As confirmed by the managers of the mail-telegram offices more than 90% of the correspondence abroad went to Germany. The rest of the correspondence went to German settlements in America. The usual language used in foreign correspondence of the Mennonites was exclusively German.

The inclination of Mennonites to side with Germans is also displayed by the following facts:

The libraries of the Mennonite forestry brigades, in which young Mennonites served the obligatory term, consisted of 5/6 books in German. Books that depict the military history of Prussia and the Prussian royal dynasty are included in this number.

In the Mennonite settlements in the Taurida and Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, many persons coming from Germany with German citizenship found shelter. Obviously in Germany they considered the Mennonites to be "theirs."

In the present war some (only very few) of the Mennonites in the Ekaterinoslav *gubernia* openly showed their pleasure in Germany's war victory. *)

*) Proof of these persons is in the office of the Ekaterinoslav governor.

In September 1913, a landowner in the Alexandrovsk *uezd*, Ekaterinoslav *gubernia*, the Mennonite Siemens, brought an airplane of the "Pigeon" ("Taube") type with him from Germany and also hired a pilot and a mechanic, German citizens, from Germany. As the governor of Ekaterinoslav did not allow him to fly over the territory of the *gubernia* before the registration of the plane and the pilot, Siemens returned the machine to Germany.

Of course, all such appearances do not have a general character but are characteristic of the Mennonites amidst which some Mennonites want to consider themselves "Dutch."

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Appendices

1. Petitions of the Mennonites *)

Responses

<u>Requests</u>	<u>Permitted</u>
1. That they be permitted to exercise their faith according to their church practice and customs, without restriction.	Re: 1 st Permitted.
2.	Re: 2 nd
A. For each family 65 <i>desiatini</i> of land opposite the city of Berislav, by the Konkii Wod river, along the Perekop road will be assigned, not including unsuitable land in the 65 <i>desiatini</i> .	Re: letter A Land will be assigned.
B. The island of Tawan opposite Berislav with all the waters flowing around it and the surrounding islands for which there is no plan or authority – these are needed for making hay.	Re: letter B Some of these islands might be assigned but as a bridge across the Dnieper and many public works are to be built, most of the land must remain with the Crown.
C. Full freedom to fish in the Dnieper and Konkii rivers up to the widening of its shores, and the prohibition against others fishing within the limits of this privilege.	Re: letter C Rights to fishing in the waters surrounding their land will be granted on the basis of the law.

<p>D. As there are no forests on the aforementioned land, and as they need such for heating purposes, they ask that half of the 1,500 <i>desiatini</i> of the still unassigned forest be given for their use.</p>	<p>Re: letter D Some, but not a large area, for the needed use will be possible.</p>
<p>3. To be exempt from taxes for 10 years.</p>	<p>Re: 3rd Granted.</p>
<p>4. That after the expiry of the 10 years of privilege, it be confirmed that each family pays 15 <i>kopeks</i> semi-annually forever into the future, and indefinite exemption from transporting military supplies and billeting and labour for the crown.</p>	<p>Re: 4th This condition is confirmed, and once the 10 years are passed the crown will receive 15 <i>kopeks per desiatini</i> for all the land controlled by the Mennonites, and also the exemption from labour and transportation for the crown, with an exception for the transit of occasional military units and the repair and maintenance of bridges on their land.</p>
<p>5. That any one of them to whom it seems good be allowed to establish in the cities and villages of the Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) <i>gubernia</i> or the Taurida <i>gubernia</i>, in addition to agriculture, factories or other trades needed by them, to conduct these as businesses and to join guilds, and that all manufacturers and craftsmen be allowed to sell their products without hindrance in the cities as well as villages.</p>	<p>Re: 5th This will be permitted in accordance with state laws.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">6.</p> <p>That according to the supreme decree printed and announced on July 22, 1763, a subsidy of five hundred <i>rubles</i> be advanced to every needy Mennonite family for the establishment of their household, so that upon their arrival in Riga they begin to receive 100 <i>rubles</i> in each month, which amount they, according to the supreme decree, are obligated to repay, without interest, to the Crown after the passing of the 10 years of privilege within the following three years.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 6th</p> <p>Granted.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7.</p> <p>That the assertion of their unbreakable loyalty be accepted from them and their descendants on the basis of their confession of faith.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 7th</p> <p>This shall occur according to their practice.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">8.</p> <p>That they and their descendants will be freed from all military service for all time, because the principles of their religion severely prohibit them from entering military service.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 8th</p> <p>They will be freed from coercion into military service.</p>

<p>9.</p> <p>That after their arrival from Danzig every family be supplied with all materials needed for the building of a proper house in German style as well as oak lumber for two mills and six good millstones in addition to other materials needed for two good mills, so that upon their arrival they can, with several Crown laborers, construct everything themselves.</p>	<p>Re: 9th</p> <p>One hundred beams, four fathoms in length, for every family, and the needed number of beams for two mills and six millstones shall be given to them.</p>
<p>10.</p> <p>That every family which wants to emigrate to Russia be provided with money for their sustenance on the journey, as well as for the journey itself.</p>	<p>Re: 10th</p> <p>The journey and their sustenance on the journey will be paid.</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>That all families arriving at the Russian border be given wagons and horses up to Berislav, and that every person be paid out 25 <i>kopeks</i> from the day of their arrival at the border until the conclusion of the journey.</p>	<p>Re: 11th</p> <p>Wagons and horses will be provided, no more than needed; But regarding money, every person, male and female, who is older than 15 will receive 25 <i>kopeks</i>, but those under this age 12 <i>kopeks</i>.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">12.</p> <p>That they, by special mercy, be freed from the repayment of the moneys as well as for the materials for the construction of their houses provided them under points 10 and 11; that they also do not need to repay these after passing of the 10 years of privilege, because the Crown will receive a not insignificant benefit from the Mennonites, bringing good manufacturers and craftsmen with them, and will thereby through diligence in agriculture and other advantageous arrangements compensate for all costs expended for them in a short period.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 12th</p> <p>This depends on the supreme grace of his imperial majesty. 1)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">13.</p> <p>That, until their houses are built, the empty quarantine buildings on the far side of the Kanskiia Wod river be remodeled and proper tents be provided for their construction workers [and] several residential houses in the city of Berislav be assigned for the remaining Mennonites.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 13th</p> <p>They shall receive residences and tents, but only for a period of time, which they are obliged to give back; furthermore, lodging will be assigned for them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">14.</p> <p>That all Mennonites be given 10 <i>kopeks</i> per person from the day of their arrival in Berislav until the first harvest, under the condition that these amounts will be repaid within the three years following the ten years of privilege, albeit without interest.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 14th</p> <p>Approved.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">15.</p> <p>That orders be dispatched to Berislav and Taurida so that wood cutting be prohibited on the land assigned to them and that already in this year absolutely no livestock be allowed on the plots requested by them, so that they might have sufficient grass for their own livestock.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 15th</p> <p>These orders will be issued.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">16.</p> <p>If perhaps after them, many Mennonite families might decide to emigrate to Russia, that these will enjoy the same rights and advantages and be permitted to settle in the wonderful and bountiful regions which astounded them, namely the deputies, specifically in Old Crimea, Feodosia, Baktschi-Sarai and other locations, which they themselves request and where the lands are not yet given away, with the condition that they are not bound to provide any guarantee for the monies which are expended for them, which they can attend to among themselves.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 16th</p> <p>If deputies are sent by them, then negotiations can be conducted with them, similarly as with these.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">17.</p> <p>That it be mercifully decided to send Herr von Trappe, who motivated them and persuaded them to emigrate to Russia, and to whom all their circumstances are very well known, and who is also in the position to obviate with appropriate instructions all obstacles which could encounter them in Danzig because of their release and can surely attend to their needs and, when they will have arrived in Taurida, that he be appointed as their director and supervisor, so that he can guide them correctly in their arrangements and might care for their rest and security.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 17th</p> <p>He will be assigned to this</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">18.</p> <p>That after their arrival a skilled surveyor knowledgeable in German be assigned to them, who can not only divide and measure their entire property but can also divide and measure everyone's own plot among them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 18th</p> <p>Will be given them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">19.</p> <p>As the great distance of Taurida from their fatherland prevents them from taking along various seeds needed for sowing, that various grains be given to them, which they are obligated to give back in due time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 19th</p> <p>Will be given them.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">20.</p> <p>Finally, they request that upon their arrival in Berislav stringent orders be issued to attend for them and their possessions until they have settled, so that they will not be harassed, robbed or raided.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Re: 20th</p> <p>Orders on this will be issued.</p>

*) Ps. 299-304.

1) The travel expenses for the Mennonites were forgiven retroactively.

2. *P.C.S.T.* XXVVI, No. 19546, September 6, (1800)

Supreme Privilege for the Mennonites. *Confirming their promised freedom in conducting their religion according to their established church customs.*

[NOTE: The translation of this document is from a separate published source – yet to be identified.]

As by the benevolent grace of God, Paul I, ruler of all Russians...etc. (Be it declared that): Regarding the original charter of our most gracious *Privilegium*, upon the petition received from the Mennonites settled in the Novorossia *gubernia*, according to the testimony of their inspectors, and, because of their outstanding industry and their commendable way of life which serves as a model for other nearby colonists and thereby deserves our particular attention, we have hereby not only affirmed the previously granted rights and privileges, but also, to encourage them even more in their diligence and concern for agriculture, graciously stand ready to bestow upon them additional rights:

1. We reaffirm to them and their descendants the religious freedom promised them by virtue of which they may adhere to their doctrines of faith and perform their religious practices without hindrance. We also most graciously grant them if occasion should require them to testify in court, their spoken 'yes' or 'no' instead of an oath shall be considered legal.
2. Concerning the 65 *desiatini* of arable land designated for each family, we guarantee to them and their descendants the right of incontestable and perpetual possession restricted, however, to the extent that no one, no matter what the pretext, shall relinquish, sell, or legally transfer even the smallest part thereof to any foreigner without the express permission of the constituted authorities.
3. To those Mennonites already settled in Russia as well as to those who, in the future, may desire to settle

permanently within our domain, we grant the right to establish factories or pursue other useful occupations not only in their own districts but also in the cities of the country. They may also join or form guilds and corporations, and may freely sell their products subject, however, to the respective laws of the land.

4. In accordance with their property rights we permit the Mennonites the enjoyment and benefits of all the incidental rights and products of their land such as the right to fish, to brew beer and distill liquor to supply their own needs and for retail sale in a limited way on their own landed property.

5. We forbid all outsiders to construct beer and liquor taverns in Mennonite districts or to lease facilities for the purpose of selling liquor or the operation of taverns without the consent of the Mennonites.

6. We affirm our most gracious guarantee that none of the Mennonites already settled as well as those who may in the future choose to settle in our domain, nor their children, nor their descendants, shall at any time be forced to serve in war or civil service, unless they volunteer.

7. We absolve all villages and residences in the Mennonite settlements of every kind of military quartering obligations (except when detachments should pass through, in which case the procedure shall be according to the established method of quartering). The same shall apply to their horses and wagons and to the government employees. But, in turn, the Mennonites are obligated to maintain the bridges, overpasses, and roads and to keep them in good repair in their entire districts.

8. We most graciously grant to all Mennonites and their descendants the full liberty to use and bestow their well-earned possessions as each finds proper (which does not include, however, the lands bestowed by the government). But if someone desires to leave the country and take his wealth with him, he is obligated to pay the government a royalty equal to three years rent on capital acquired in Russia after he has paid all debts in full. For this payment, he, as well as the village officials, shall be duty and conscience bound. The same procedure shall apply to the settlement of the estates of the deceased whose heirs and relatives reside in foreign countries. The estates shall be executed according to their customary practice regarding the rights of succession. In relation to this,

we authorize the village parishes with the right to appoint guardians for minors who become owners of the estates of deceased, according to the customs brought with them.

9. We confirm most graciously the ten-year exemption from taxes already granted and extend it also to all Mennonites who may settle in the Novorossia *gubernia* in the future. However, because after investigation their situation reveals that a state of need has arisen because of poor crops and epidemics among the livestock, and because the settlement in the Khortitsa district is overpopulated, it has been decided to move a number of Khortitsa Colony families to other areas. In view of the need and poverty, we most graciously approve that an extension of another five-year exemption from taxes be made after the expiration of the first ten years of exemption to those who remain at their present place of residence. For the families that are to be moved, we designate another ten free years, but require that each family in possession of 65 *desiatini* land pay 15 *kopeks per desiatini* annually after the expiration of the ten-year period and be exempt from payment of all other taxes to the government. At the expiration of the years of exemption, the funds advanced by the government shall be repaid in ten equal installments; the families who are to be moved shall make repayment in twenty years.

10. In conclusion, in their our imperial letter, we grant to the Mennonites and most graciously guarantee these rights and privileges, and we therefore order all our civil and military administrators as well as our court authorities not to disturb the peaceful and quiet sojourn of the aforesaid Mennonites and their posterity which was granted to them through our most generous charter, but rather in all cases and at all times to give them full aid, counsel, and protection.

Misprints, Corrections and Additions

[NOTE: These corrections of numbers and spelling have been entered in the main text of this translation without special notation. The additional comments and corrected statements have been entered in the main text of this translation in italics.]

Page 4, 7th line from top, printed 1772, should read 1782.

Page 10, bottom of page, 17 – printed: Kl. 44; should be Kl. 44-45, footnote 18 – printed Kl. 45-46; should be Kl. 44-46.

Page 12, In footnote under asterisk W. IV, 120-141 should read W. III, 120-141, etc.

Page 14, Lines 3, 4, 5, 6 from the top. “Nine years later... recruiting obligations.” This statement belongs to Klaus (page 115) followed by Pissarewskij (pages 293-294.) Actually, such instructions were issued not in 1797 but in 1801 (Mnst. pages 146-154; LXXXIV – LXXXVII). In 1787 Fredrick Wilhelm II, the Prussian King, ordered that Mennonites could not enlarge their land holdings and purchase new homesteads without special permission. According to the order by Fredrick Wilhelm II, in 1789 the selling of non-Mennonite property to Mennonites was allowed only in such cases when a reservist family remained on part of the sold land, or if by way of such transaction, the non-Mennonite escaped financial destruction. This ruling affected the Mennonites in West and East Prussia and Prussian Latvia (Mnst. pages 137-143, LXXVII-LXXXIII).

Page 17, In the text, footnote entry 43 to be transferred from line 20 to 24 from the top after the word: “*semmins*.” In the footnotes at the bottom of the page, the following quotes are to be added to footnote 40: *Sh. M.W.D.* 1850 April, page 30; *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 66. To footnote 42 add: *Epp. 77*, to footnote 43 add: *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 67; to footnote 44: printed *Hi. 99*, should be *Hi. 69*.

Page 18, In the text, line 18 from the top instead of “*urssk*” it should read “*russskich*” (Russian). The footnote entry 49 to be transferred from line 22 to line 24 from the top after the words: “both of these.” In the footnote 49 to be added *Hi. 69*, to footnote 48 – *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854, VIII, 69-67; *Ps.* 337 – should read *Sh.M.G.I.* 1854 VIII, 66-67, *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842 IV, 4; *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850 April 30; *Ps.* 337; *Epp.* 80.

Page 19, The footnote 54 should read: Keller Conrad, Die Deutschen Kolonien in Südrussland, Volume I (Odessa 1905), page 44.

Page 24, To footnote 58, add: *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, April, 42-43.

Page 25, Change in footnote 59 – *J.M.G.I.* 1854 IX, 1-2 to *J.M.G.I.* 1854 1-2.

Page 28. In footnotes 61, 66, 67, 68, 69 to read *J.M.G.I.* 1854 X; same for page 29, footnote 71; page 30, footnote 74; page 32, footnote 78 and page 37, footnote 86.

Page 31, Footnote 75 to read *Sh.M.G.I.* 1852, IV, 32, *Sh.M.W.D.* 1850, 37-39 instead of *Sh.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 34; *J.M.W.D.* April 37.

Page 38, Footnote 89 – printed – *J.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 20-26 should read *J.M.G.I.* 1842 IV, 10-26.

Page 40, Footnote 91 to be added: Fr. I, 155-161.

Page 42, 5th line from the top – add: “at the outset.”

Page 43, 2nd line from the bottom: Medemtal instead of Medental.

Page 44, 4th line from the bottom to read Mariental.

Page 45, Footnote 100 instead of “Colonization” – “colonization.”

Page 48, Footnote 104 to be added: *Kl.* 192. detailed information given to the author by the Halbstadt *volost* authority.

Page 70, Footnote to be added under asterisk: *J.M.G.I.* 1842, IV, 28-29.

Page 71, Footnote – 2. Instead of 220-292 to read 290-292.

Page 73, Footnote 10, printed *J.M.G.I.* 1842 IV, page 28, to read *J.M.G.I.* 1842 IV, pages 28-29.

Page 74, Footnote 13, to be added: Epp. 126-127; Is. 276-290; footnote 14 – to read only Fr. I, 640-643.

Page 78, Two last lines at the bottom should read: the “*Mennonites only if it would be on a voluntary basis, and not have an obligatory character.*”

Page 98, Footnote – asterisk* - instead of Epp. 84-108, it should read: Epp. 83-108.

Page 104, Footnote should read Fr. I, 76, 78.

Page 105, Line 14 from top printed Nordeman, should read Pordenau.

Page 106, Footnote 16, 3rd line from the bottom, printed December 7, 1827 – should read December 9, 1827.

Page 115, Footnote 47, printed Fr. I, 183, should read: Fr. I, 183-184, 169-171.

Page 129, 11th line from the top – it is printed: “In the meantime, ...” etc., should read: “Such a resolution of the issue did not stop the religious split in the Molochnaia villages. To get rid of the *Hüpfers*, the Molochnaia *okrug* office decided to exclude them from the status of colonist. At the conference of the Molochnaia elders, ...”

Page 133, Footnote 93, add see 170-171.

Page 134, Footnote 95, add see 232-233, footnote 96, add 183 (§77).

Page 135. Footnote entry 104 transferred one line lower after the words “in the Einlage congregations of the *Hüpfers*,” to footnote 102 add 232-233.

Page 136, Footnote 109, add see 357 (§ 188a).

Page 143, Footnote 125 – is printed Fr. I, 240, should read Fr. I, 240 (e).

Page 145, Footnote 134 is printed Fr. I, 246 (132c), should read Fr. I, 246 (§ 132 c).

Page 160, Printed in 3rd line from the bottom: in the years 1865-65, should read in 1864-65; footnote 9 eliminate number 17.

Page 161, Footnote 15. Printed Pr. 11-12, 17 – add 34-35, footnote 16, add 31.

Page 164, Eliminate footnote entry 28. In footnote 27 (2nd line from the bottom), it should read page 9, 10 instead of 10.

Page 168, In the 20th line from the top it is printed: “do not have a confession of faith” – should read: “do not have an obligatory confession of faith.”

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Mennonite Sect in Russia.

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