

#69/HN#12

## **Orders for the Chortitza Colony from Governor of the Foreign Colonies - 1796**

From the Hildebrand Nachlass, item #12.

Translated by Edwin D. Hoeppner Spring 2003. Edited by Glenn Penner 7 Jul 2025

Editor's comments in square brackets. Italics by the editor.

*[These orders give Hoeppner and Bartsch some authority in the colony. At the same time, they take co-Ältester Epp to task and, in particular, criticize co-Ältester Johann Wiebe for illegally travelling to Prussia and using community funds to do so.]*

Copie

Translated from the Russian [into German] on 13 January 1796 by His Excellency Major General Joseph Horwat, Governor of the Ekaterinoslav Government and Knight of various Orders.

His Majesty of all the Russians

Order!

To the high well born Lord Ekonomie-director and Knight Theodor Korbi and to the high well born Lord Assessor and Commander of all the German Colonies in this Government Baron Johann von Brackel [Director of the Colonies 1793-97].

1) As has been known for a long time, that there are many people in the German Colony who do not want to apply themselves, to carry on their agriculture and tillage according to their duties and responsibilities, have built very poor houses and some are still living in their Semeljanki [ sod huts ], and in consequence thereof will not be in a position to pay their crown-debts, because they have let their building timber rot within and outside of the colony, have always wanted to move away and are not satisfied with the Russian Crown and all the good which they have received from it, do not want to be obedient, and without cause, filled with projects, have wandered around on the roads like bad people in order to consume the money of their brothers in this useless way, left house and farm without the owner, whereby their cattle were stolen in their absence; each one of them wanted to be the cleverest and overlord, as a result of which the colony has put itself in shame and disrepute in the Russian Empire.

2) Because three free years still remain, you Sir High-Well-Born and Commander of these people, must forbid all this most severely, you have complete authority to have them publicly punished before you in the Office according to your conscience and discretion.

Should such very bad people however have no religion and shame left, you Sir High-Well-Born are commanded, as responsible to High Authority, to have such disobedient subjects bound by the "Kommando" and sent off to the town provost here to public forced labour at the Fortress, for further improvement and for as long as you wish. In Russia we know no free people, all are subject to the law.

3) The village mayors, on pain of severe punishment, must report everything to the Commander and are responsible to account for all the evil in the village. Should this not occur and there old and bad customs not stop you are free to punish the mayors according to your discretion.

4) The community shall exhibit all submissions and obedience to the mayor, on pain of corporal punishment and obediently comply with his order without objection, because these orders have not been issued by them, but by the High Government; whoever opposes them shall be regarded as a rebel against Germans and Russia, and shall be punished according to our laws. Should the mayor not report this to you Sir High-Well-Born, he must be punished for that. These mayors can not be elected by the community without the approval of the Commander, for they must have good references from Germany about what kind of people they were, in order that they do not cause shame to the community, as has happened already, otherwise the evil would not have entered so deeply.

5) The mayors must be men who possess honour and honesty, and also, whenever possible, understand Russian well and know how to read and write, in order that they may be useful in office, who can lead the community by good example and explain the high commands to the people with clarity and respect. The mayors must have a yearly salary of 20 Rubel from the community, and be free of all other trades or business, because he will have much toil with the concerns of the village in order to keep these in good order. He must report everything to the Commander, for which, again, he will be held accountable by the government.

6) All orphans-and-widows-moneys from the beginning of the colony shall be given over to the Office in Chortitz with an account on 1 April of this year, together with the percentage, as also the ferry at Kichkas [Einlage], rents, fisheries, inns, smithies, and other income sources of the colony, shall be paid to the mayors. These funds can not be drawn on without [the consent of] the Commander and will be deposited and held in the Office, for which purpose the Commander must select several good men with the approval of the community. The secretary of the whole colony must also receive his salary therefrom, and whatever is needed in the Chancellery of the Office must be purchased with this fund, the remaining money loaned out again at 5% to dependable people who can provide good security. The Commander must ensure that only such people can borrow it when a loan is requested and, when the loan due date is fulfilled, that the needy can use the money, for which the trustees and orphan' guardians must be responsible. Should these trustees and guardians become aware that these people [borrowers], who have such funds in their possession and do not exhibit good judgement in using this money, are spendthrift and do not apply them usefully, they must report this to the Office immediately and the borrower's property must be seized, in order that the orphans do not suffer a loss. The mayor of the village must also account for this, as well as for the poor farmers who do not till and sow, the mayor must be the father of the village, and must make a written report to the Office immediately, in order that they can get out of debt and the good ones, do not have to pay the Crown debt for the poor ones, as the High Crown has understood and recognized for a Mennonite Brotherhood and Society, as laid down and signed in the All-Highest Manifest.

7) Should the community not obey the mayor nor want to respect him he is free, as in all countries, to *whip them*, as is customary. The mayor must diligently read this law out to the community, for the future good fortune depends on this.

8) On the Island of Chortitz, where the woods have already been nearly all cut down and sold, the Delegate and Alderman Jacob Hoeppner shall be the Supervisor and Mayor, and be accountable to the Office for everything that happens on the island; no one shall cut timber without his permission, he must be responsible for the entire island. The honourable Alderman and delegate Johann Bartsch has the same office and responsibility and duty in Rosenthal, where, in and on the heights several hundred pear and apple trees have been uselessly cut down *to the shame of the Mennonite society*, where so many Russians had their living from these trees. Both of these two honourable Delegates receive no wages as mayors of the villages, but instead are allotted 120 desj. of land each according to the All-Highest Manifest.

9) All accounts must be submitted by 1 May of this year by your High-Well-Born and both Delegates Hoeppner and Bartsch to the [Russian text]. These accounts can be prepared without you by both men with the colony and submitted to your High-Well-Born in the Office in the presence of the orphans' supervisors and guardians and which must be recorded in the running line account book [Schnurbuch], since an account throughout all years must be made.

10) That the needy and blind who are no longer able to work and otherwise would have no support must also be helped according to discretion from the above-mentioned sums. This is according to the custom in all true Christian and lawful subjects in all Crown villages in accordance with the law.

11) The church in Chortitz shall be built immediately on pain of corporal punishment, for which the Mennonite minister David Epp and the deposed minister Johann Wiebe and the Chortitz mayor Jacob Braun had signed by their own hand in the Office at Chortitz, as it was in the interrogation of Johann Wiebe, because he travelled to Germany [Prussia] on a Jewish pass without the knowledge of the authorities and uselessly spent the money of the colony through deceitful speech [Anrede]. These Mennonite ministers shall no longer mix their services in any police matters, or will be punished by being deposed, but rather shall only conduct their worship services and good management, because they must lead the community by a good example and must ensure that the schools are in a good state and for the construction of the schools money must be taken from the sums for which Johann Wiebe has signed in the Office. Should Johann Wiebe not submit, in writing, the names of those people who persuaded him to go on his unlawful journey, he must pay these sums himself.

12) The Crown church in Chortitz shall be built immediately, and the wood provided, for which the Mennonite ministers and the mayor of Chortitz must be responsible. This gift from the High Crown, although it has already been scorned, which had so far not happened in any country. Your High-Well-Born has the authority to punish these ministers and mayors according to your discretion because they permitted this to happen.

13) No colonist may travel outside of the Gubernia [Ekaterinoslav Province] without a passport, or else they will be regarded as highwaymen.

14) No mayor may harbour a stranger without a passport for one hour, under heavy punishment. Because the Commander has widely-scattered duties, it must be reported to the secretary at Einlage, who has a Kommando and instructions from the High Government,

Each mayor must have these 14 Points with him at all times, as well as each minister of the community and they shall be read out loud and clear in the church once each month, in order that everyone knows, without excuse, what he has to do. The mayor of each village, on receiving a receipt for it with the date countersigned, and these receipts must be delivered to the office.

