

Growing up with Cities: The Mennonite Experience in Imperial Russia and the Early Soviet Union

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In Arnold Dyck's semi-autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, *Verloren in der Steppe* ("Lost in the Steppes"), the young Hans grows to maturity by gaining an increased understanding of the world around him.¹ His physical and intellectual development occurs in stages as he expands away from his immediate family and its house, yard and village into a non-Mennonite world. At one point in the novel, when Hans is about twelve, he moves well beyond the Mennonite sphere when he accompanies his father on a trip to the nearest city—Ekaterinoslav.² The important point about Hans' trip is that although the city lies beyond his immediate experience, it is still part of a world into which he will continue to grow. No dramatic contrast is drawn in Dyck's account between the countryside as a distinctly Mennonite world and the city as something peculiarly alien. Indeed Dyck himself, in order to expand his mind and develop his skills, would eventually move well beyond the world he was born into as he pursued art studies in Munich and St Petersburg.³

The issue to be addressed is therefore not just how a small minority of Mennonites in Russia came to live and work *in* cities, but how also, in a much broader sense, Mennonite communities and individuals developed relationships

with cities.⁴ Cities were an essential part of the historical development of the Mennonites in Russia and of the personal experience of many Mennonites growing up in the region, just as it was for young Hans. This development, however, did not occur in a vacuum. It occurred within the context of much wider developments in the various regions in which Mennonites settled. The first Mennonites located in a frontier region sparsely populated and generally lacking towns or cities. This pattern was often repeated as Mennonites later expanded their settlements away from southern Russia into other frontier areas of the Empire. The growth of rural Mennonite communities was closely intertwined with that of neighbouring urban centres, although the circumstances and forms of the inter-relationships grew more diverse and complex over time.

This article deals mostly with the Mennonite experience in southern Russia, known in Tsarist times as New Russia, and in the Soviet period as Soviet Ukraine. The emphasis will be on economic issues, as it is argued that these were the main driving force behind the growth of cities and the Mennonite world in this region. However, it will also consider changes in society and culture which were deeply influenced by urban trends filtered into the Mennonite community by a variety of routes as Mennonites grew up with cities.

Markets and Cities

Mennonites have often been associated with rurality both by themselves and by outsiders. The vision of a simple life, lived in small-scale communities in which land is cultivated for self-sustenance and where there is minimal contact with outsiders, has a long history which continues into the present. Such visions of a quiet rural Arcadia are contrasted with the life of towns and cities, where worldly pursuits associated with trade, profit, luxury goods and a life of hedonism are held up as examples of evil and the path to damnation. Such views could be supported through a reading of the Bible. In some Old Testament passages the inhabitants of cities appear singled out for God's wrathful judgement. By contrast a pastoral imagery of good shepherds caring for their flocks is mixed with positive references to nature and nurture symbolized by the sustaining power of agricultural produce: milk and honey, olives and grain. Such rural/urban dichotomies were undoubtedly mirrored in the experience of many of the heirs of Anabaptism. Mennonite leaders could rationalize their exile and exclusion from good land and urban commerce by the dictates of European rulers, with their own ideals of journeying towards salvation in separated communities built upon hard labour through the cultivation of the earth.

Historians of Anabaptism and later Mennonitism, however, have noted a certain irony in such views. Many of the founders of Anabaptism and their early followers were city folk, often educated, sometimes craftsmen and merchants. In the Reformation Anabaptists often found greater security under the jurisdiction of independent city governments than under rural feudal lords. Cities could also be

justified Biblically. Jerusalem was a holy, sacred place (Zion) where ultimately God would triumph, although a contrast could be drawn between the real and the ideal in terms of its existence as a place in history, theology and the age to come. In the New Testament the letters communicated to and from the early churches are mostly written from cities in Asia Minor where the first congregations formed. The early Anabaptists scrutinized these texts for examples as to how to live their new lives. As in the early church, many Mennonites flourished in the tolerant urban centres of the Netherlands and northern Germany. The ancestors of the Russian Mennonites were directly linked to such urban Mennonite communities through Danzig where, although most were excluded from the city itself, many prospered in its suburbs and hinterland. Outside Danzig Mennonites had similar relations with other towns in the region. By the end of the eighteenth century and just prior to their emigration to Russia, many Mennonites were no longer farmers but instead gained their livelihood through craft and proto-industrial work in the towns and countryside.

A popular view is that Mennonites were “invited” to Russia on account of their agricultural expertise and that they in turn were driven by a desire for land in order to recreate an agrarian society. A close examination of the sources, however, reveals a more complex picture that includes a presumption from the outset of the negotiations between Mennonites and Russian officials of a Mennonite relationship with urban areas. The agreement the Mennonite delegates to Russia, Höppner and Bartsch, negotiated with Prince Potemkin in 1787 concerning settlement near Berislav included two references to urban areas.⁵ The first (actually part of Point II of their agreement) was that the settlement site was to be located close to the town of Berislav and the main road leading from the Dnieper River across the Perekop into the Crimea. As David Rempel points out in his analysis of this document, the site the representatives selected, with its links to markets, mirrored as closely as possible the more profitable lands the Mennonites inhabited in the Vistula Delta close to Danzig and surrounding towns. Secondly, Point V recognized that not all the prospective immigrants would be farmers or wish to pursue agriculture. The representatives requested that Mennonites be permitted to establish “factories and shops” throughout New Russia and Crimea and to “engage in commerce, be members of trade associations and craft guilds” with the right to “freely dispose of their manufactures and other articles in cities, towns and villages” without payment of duties. The Russians agreed to both these requests, although officials noted that local urban regulations would have to followed. The government’s agreement is not surprising, as in the statements announcing its emigration policies it indicated that it wished to attract skilled tradesman in order to develop urban industry.⁶ Later plans included the establishment of colonies of foreign settlers within existing urban areas such as Poltava and Taganrog, a port city on the Sea of Azov, in order to develop a wool textile industry.⁷

The Mennonite hope that they could immediately re-establish a mixed economy consisting of agriculture, craft industry and trade was probably unrealistic. In the short term, certainly, it proved impossible with the first colonists forced to settle at Khortitsa and not on the promised Berislav land. The opportunities to exploit local

markets were considerably less in Khortitsa than at Berislav.⁸ While the location of the colony on the Dnieper River might seem an advantage, the nearby cataracts and shifting sandbanks in the lower reaches of the Dnieper prevented continuous navigation of the river and restricted its use to transport produce until well into the nineteenth century.⁹ The settlement of the Molochna colony in the early nineteenth century presented even greater difficulties for the development of Mennonite trade. The need for markets was recognized in 1802 by the authorities when they drew up plans for the new colony and some Mennonites and officials suggested a site in Kherson because of its closeness to towns and cities. However, the desire to establish an agricultural community and the larger land area available resulted in the selection of Molochna even though there were no markets close at hand.¹⁰

In the first few decades after settlement a lack of markets restricted not just Mennonite commerce, but also agricultural production and the establishment of extensive industries. In many ways the Mennonites became a more agricultural people than they had been in Prussia. Land was easy to obtain and self-sufficiency in food and many goods assured. In 1808 almost 40% of the immigrants to Molochna were not farmers, but many turned to farming and in later years such a life was viewed as the ideal one for religious as well as practical reasons. Tied to the land and confined within a web of kinship, the majority of Mennonites became more inward looking, a situation greatly assisted by Russian policies which enhanced their sense of a separate identity and restricted free movement through the use of passports. But Mennonites still needed to connect to urban areas to sell their produce and, importantly, to obtain supplies such as lumber and iron.

The reality was, however, that until well into the first half of the nineteenth century there were few markets in southern Russia. The steppe region had a sparse population, although following Russian conquest new markets developed around military outposts such as the fortress at Alexandrovsk opposite Khortitsa and at naval ports near the mouth of the Dnieper such as Kherson and the much older Rostov on Don. Once the region was pacified the government founded new cities for strategic and administrative purposes and new ports to encourage trade, especially on the Black Sea and Sea of Azov coasts. The most important of these was Odessa, founded in 1794, although it was too distant from the Mennonite settlements to play a direct role in their lives. Indirectly, however, it played a major role in the economic development of New Russia.¹¹

In the Crimea and in central Russia there were older more established markets dominated by local traders, although to reach such markets Mennonites had to travel long distances. In 1811 German visitors to the Crimea reported that among the numerous ethnic groups trading at Simferopol's large Friday market were a number of German colonists selling butter and vegetables.¹² It is highly likely that these included Mennonites from Molochna, as early accounts report that they sold produce in the Crimea. Johann Cornies in his younger years traded extensively with ports and cities in the region.¹³ Merchants in the colonies specialized in such trade by carting the colony wool clip and other goods across the steppe and in return purchasing supplies to sell in the colonies. Before 1840 these efforts took them to

the important fairs and bazaars at Kharkov, Poltava and Romny as well as even further into central Russia, even as far as Moscow.¹⁴ But such activities could be risky and Jews and Nogai Tatars murdered some Mennonites for their goods and money.¹⁵

Gradually, however, Russian control increased over New Russia and officials were eager to see the region prosper. Through special Russian agencies and their officials the foreign colonists, including Mennonites, were encouraged to improve their land and industry and produce a surplus for market. From the late 1830s this aid increased and Mennonites responded to the new opportunities by establishing closer ties with local cities where they could concentrate their trade. For Khortitsa the major centre was the provincial capital of Ekaterinoslav; for Molochna, it was the new port of Berdiansk.

Russian City/ Mennonite Colony

Although in 1776 the city of Ekaterinoslav was at first planned close to the Dnieper River, the original site proved unsuitable due to flooding and in 1784 the city was relocated on higher ground.¹⁶ This occurred just prior to the first settlement of Mennonites to the south at Khortitsa. Ekaterinoslav, named in honour of the Empress Catherine, was planned as a great city, the intended capital of Prince Potemkin's New Russian Empire. Potemkin's grandiose plans for the city included a broad, European style Prospect and a grand cathedral in the style of St Peter's in Rome, although only the former was ultimately built.¹⁷ Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the city retained a sense of grandness and although reduced to the capital of the province of Ekaterinoslav and not of New Russia, it remained a centre of government while becoming an important river port for trade up the Dnieper to Kiev and down river as far as the cataracts above Khortitsa. From an early period Mennonites witnessed the city's growth and at each stage of its history were involved in its growth.¹⁸ From 1800 to 1820, when it moved to Kishenev, Ekaterinoslav was the headquarters of the Guardianship Office (later Committee) which administered foreign colonists, including the Mennonites. However, the city retained a local office of the Committee until 1833, when Odessa became its headquarters. Mennonites on official business were regular visitors to the city and this continued even after the Guardianship Office moved, as Mennonites had to deal with provincial matters.

In the first half-century after settlement the real importance of the city to Mennonites was as a market to sell produce and as a place in which to obtain essential supplies. This is clearly revealed in the diary entries for the years 1837 to 1843 of the Khortitsa farmer and minister David Epp (1781-1843) and in those for 1851 to 1880 of his son Jacob (1820-90), who lived in the Khortitsa daughter settlement in the Judenplan to the west of Khortitsa.¹⁹ Until his health began to fail, David Epp annually made between three and four trips to Ekaterinoslav and entertained numerous Mennonite and non-Mennonite visitors travelling to and

from the city.²⁰ Both David and Jacob Epp tried to attend the annual June fair in Ekaterinoslav, where along with other Mennonites they could sell produce such as butter, hams and preserves and make purchases. At other times they sold wheat to millers and merchants or made special purchases; Jacob, for instance, regularly bought window glass and lumber. David Epp could manage a return trip to Ekaterinoslav from Khortitsa in a day, though sometimes he would stop over on the way or stay on in the city. For Jacob the trip involved a longer wagon journey over poor roads. In 1837, accompanied by his daughter and son and as part of a convoy of colonist wagons, David Epp made a special journey to Ekaterinoslav to observe the city's ceremonial welcome to members of the Imperial household. Over thirty years later in 1863 Jacob was present at a similar welcome given to the heir to the throne.²¹ In the diary entries no mention is made of anything peculiar about these trips or of any disapproval of city life, except in 1842 when David Epp witnessed the annual Orthodox blessing of the waters in Ekaterinoslav and commented, "What superstition and vain action!"²²

What these and other Mennonite visitors encountered in Ekaterinoslav was a small provincial town elegantly laid out with a few well-built government and private buildings inhabited by a mixed ethnic population. While it was not a totally alien environment, it did present a very diverse community compared with the Mennonite colonies of the time. Ukrainian towns of this period, as one author has noted, "embodied the culture not of Ukrainians but of Russians, Poles, Jews, Germans, Greeks and Armenians."²³

The Molochna settlement, although located on richer soils than most of Khortitsa, lacked access to such developing towns or markets and possessed no natural transport routes such as that provided by the Dnieper. It was, however, situated not too distant from the Sea of Azov, which provided important maritime links to the Black Sea, the expanding port of Odessa and trading connections with Mediterranean and western European markets.

In 1835 a report on commerce in the region noted:

The most remarkable colonies [in New Russia] are those of the Germans, and more particularly the Menonists, on the banks of the river Molochena. The capital and industry of these people give considerable animation to the plains of this district. It is not questioned, that the want of proper outlets, has most materially retarded the commerce of this country. At present, it directs its produce towards Mariupol, Eupatoria, and Theodosia, but since the period, from 1822 to 1830, when the trade of these ports became entirely paralysed, the only speculation carried on, has been grain; and the Menonists have been compelled themselves to carry their wool to Moscow. Latterly, however, the attention of the Odessa [merchant] houses has been directed to this country, which requires only a little cultivation to triple its present produce.²⁴

While in 1835 wool production still dominated Molochna agriculture, trade in wheat

had started to stimulate extensive cultivation in grains. The same report noted that the Mennonites were the only producers in the area of a soft wheat much in demand at the ports of Mariupol and Theodosia, where up to 20,000 chetverti (114,000 bushels) was sold annually.²⁵ Another contemporary suggested that the annual grain trade amounted in total to 120-160,000 chetverti (684-912,000 bushels).²⁶

In 1827 the Governor General of New Russia, Count Voronzov, ordered a new port be established at a small village close to a river mouth with a spit which had been used for shelter by ships en-route to Taganrog.²⁷ This was Berdiansk. The primary purpose of the new port was to allow produce from the hinterland, especially that of the "German" colonists, to be exported. Berdiansk was given the status of a city in 1835 and the new harbour was completed the following year; the port became the district capital in 1842. Between 1849 and 1853 the port cleared 8.8% of the total tonnage of ships operating in the Black and Azov Seas while between 1840 and 1856 the city's population tripled to almost 10,000 people, not far behind that of the more established Ekaterinoslav (see Table 1).²⁸

Mennonite merchants established themselves in Berdiansk from a very early date and provided an essential link between the Molochna colony and what would soon become a prosperous urban community.²⁹ While some of the Mennonites who relocated to Berdiansk came from Molochna and even Khortitsa, a number came directly from Prussia bringing with them considerable experience of modern trading practices.³⁰ These new immigrants usually already possessed extensive kinship links with Mennonites in Molochna, particular with merchant families, and these were strengthened in later years through intermarriage. Also attracted to the new settlement were Mennonite millers who constructed tread mills, the first of a number of Mennonite industries established in or around the port.

The relationship between the Molochna and Berdiansk communities was complex. It appears that between the early 1840s and the 1860s, when reforms occurred in the administration of foreign colonists, the Mennonites in Berdiansk elected their own community head, who was a member of the Mennonite Molochna District administration based in Halbstadt (*Gebietsamt*). In a sense the Berdiansk community was treated as a village of the colony.³¹ Within Berdiansk Mennonites were part of the "German community" (*Niemetskaia sloboda*), as the port's urban communities were organized along ethnic grounds and each lived in a separate area.³² This followed a long established pattern of ethnic separation among the merchants who traded in the ports of the Black and Azov Seas and who were of Greek, Armenian and other backgrounds. The ports also contained foreign traders who sometimes acted as consuls to represent the interests of foreign merchants and the ship captains and crews of merchant vessels. The British were the dominant foreign shippers for most of the nineteenth century and Mennonites in Berdiansk established links with their representatives. In time the port gained, as did many Russian cities, a degree of self-government with a franchise based on property ownership that allowed Mennonites to serve on the city council.³³

The Mennonite community soon formed an active church congregation, at first linked to the Molochna Flemish congregation of Pordenau and later to the Groningen

Old Flemish congregation of Gnadenfeld. The link with Gnadenfeld reflected the educated Prussian background of some of the leading merchants and its first minister. By 1853 the Mennonite congregation consisted of 47 families and it was decided to construct a meetinghouse.³⁴ Its completion was delayed by the outbreak of the Crimean War and a British naval attack which forced most of the port's Mennonite inhabitants to flee. After the war most returned, the meetinghouse was built and in 1865 an independent congregation was formed with Leonhard Sudermann as Elder. The independent congregation lasted until the threat of the introduction of compulsory military conscription in the 1870s forced Sudermann's emigration to North America along with others from the port.³⁵ Berdiansk therefore was the first fully functioning Mennonite urban community with an urban congregation in Russia. However, Mennonites had been permanent residents of other Russian cities before Berdiansk's foundation.

In 1805 Heinrich Thiessen emigrated from Prussia to Russia and instead of joining his co-religionists in Khortitsa or going on to the new colony of Molochna decided to settle in Ekaterinoslav. A miller by trade, Thiessen established himself on the main Prospect of the city and constructed a treadmill to produce flour for the local population.³⁶ He also became a magnet for Mennonites, particularly relatives like the Epps, who visited him on business trips to the city. Thiessen was not the only Mennonite miller and merchant living in Ekaterinoslav before 1850, but unlike in Berdiansk there was no distinct Mennonite or German quarter in the city, no separate administration and no independent Mennonite congregation. Mennonites living in Ekaterinoslav at this time were a distant outpost of the Khortitsa colony, maintaining close links with kin there and being served by ministers from the Khortitsa congregation.

Prior to the 1860s Mennonite movement and settlement in New Russia was strictly controlled through the issuing of passports and by identities based on an official system of social estates. Mennonites resident as merchants in Ekaterinoslav, Berdiansk and other cities were required for identity and tax purposes to change their status from that of a State Peasant in a rural district to membership in a merchant guild in the particular city in which they operated. The official records of the colonists' Guardian's Committee contain copies of requests for changes in status from Berdiansk Mennonite merchants in the 1840s and also a request from a Mennonite who wished to join the merchant guild of the city of Orekhov, located to the east of Molochna.³⁷ No doubt a close search of the archives would reveal other instances of Mennonite individuals or even small groups living as merchants in other cities of New Russia before 1860, but none formed a distinct Mennonite community as in Berdiansk.

	1811	1825	1840	1856
Ekaterinoslav	8,583	8,412	8,476	13,031
Alexandrovsk	994	1,716	2,192	2,829
Berdiansk			3,435	9,702

Table 1: Population of major urban areas with Mennonite links, 1811-1856

Source: Thomas Stanley Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire during the nineteenth century*. Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago (Research Paper 163), 1975, 186, 191.

Railways and Industry

The Crimean War, which disrupted Berdiansk's commerce, had both short and long term consequences for all of Russia's peoples, including Mennonites. Russia's defeat in the war set in motion a series of government-sponsored reforms of institutions of the state and society which, combined with economic developments, were to transform the country. The Mennonites did not welcome many of the reforms, and the threat of being included in a proposed system of universal military conscription resulted in a mass migration of up to 15,000 people to Canada and the United States. The division of the Berdiansk community and the emigration of some of its leading figures to North America were mirrored elsewhere across the Mennonite world. But the economic prosperity that followed the reforms in the 1870s and early 1880s tempted many to remain in Russia. In Berdiansk the Mennonite community quickly recovered as trade revived.

Crucial to this prosperity was the building of railways in Russia, especially those in southern Russia after 1860.¹ Driven at first by strategic concerns, the railways soon became a major force in the economic development of southern Russia in two closely inter-related ways. First, the railways helped the grain produced in southern Russia, especially wheat, to reach markets both within Russia and abroad.² As production in the region shifted from wool to grain production, the spread of the railways had a major impact on the prosperity of large estates and foreign colonist cultivators as well as on individual entrepreneurs such as merchants and millers. Secondly, the extensive coal reserves of the Donets Basin and the iron ore deposits around Krivoi Rog were exploited on a larger scale by the building of new rail links between the 1860s and the 1880s.³ This in turn increased the local production of iron and steel, itself sustained by the demand for steel rails. As a consequence of the availability of cheaper iron and steel, engineering works and factories were established. Many of these produced agricultural machinery, as agriculture was being mechanized to meet the demand for grain in a region where labour was in short supply and expensive. On the larger estates, in the colonies of foreign settlers like the Mennonites and even in the more prosperous peasant villages, agriculture was transformed by new ploughs and particularly by the use of

harvesters and, later, threshers.⁴ In the twenty years between 1870 and 1890 the economy of southern Russia was transformed as older cities grew and new urban centres developed as the region was industrialized.⁵

The city of Ekaterinoslav lay at strategic point on the Dnieper River, almost equidistant between the major iron ore deposits and the coalfields. The Ekaterininskaya Railway, opened in 1884, finally linked Krivoi Rog with the coalfields of the Donets, crossing the Dnieper at Ekaterinoslav; the rapid industrialization of the city quickly followed. Throughout the 1890s the city grew in expanse and population (see Table 2) and new suburbs, factories and warehouses dwarfed the old provincial town centre. By 1904 a foreign visitor could only wonder at the city's appearance:

Ekaterinoslav produces a very different impression to that of most other Russian towns, even including the industrial centres. As a rule industrialism appears rather incongruous in Russia; the workmen are still to a considerable extent half peasants, and even those who are really permanent artisans have still a somewhat rustic aspect. Amidst the Oriental surroundings, the general air of carelessness, and the apparently temporary nature of all the buildings, modern factories seem out of place. But at Ekaterinoslav one feels oneself at once in a really go-ahead industrial city.... [F]or many years it was nothing more than a third-rate provincial town, enlivened by occasional fairs and cattle markets. But since coal was discovered in the Donietz valley and iron in the Krivoi Rog district the town has risen rapidly in population, which has now reached 160,000, and has had quite a remarkable economic development. As the train crosses the fine bridge across the Dniepr rows upon rows of tall chimneys rise up, belching forth columns of smoke, black, red, brown, and grey, along both banks of the river, and the quays are heaped up for a great distance with piles of iron goods, which are being shipped on to barges and steamers. A continual rumbling and whirring sound of machinery fills one's ears, a heavy pall hangs over the town, and the atmosphere is thick with coal smuts. Throughout the city are mountains of coal, and stacks of iron rails piled high in courtyards and other open spaces, and processions of carts laden with metalware are constantly clattering along the streets. There is no beauty and no picturesqueness in Ekaterinoslav, but there is an air of genuine activity and business which is very unusual in the Tzar's dominions.⁶

The Mennonites living in Ekaterinoslav were quick to take advantage of the new economic opportunities after 1860. The Thiessen family milling business prospered and larger mills were built powered by imported English steam engines and later further improved by new engines and milling equipment from Germany and Hungary. The Thiessens intermarried with the highly educated Heese family, who shared in their business ventures. By the end of the nineteenth century the

Thiessens were one of the wealthiest families among the Russian Mennonites. Other Mennonites built flourmills in Ekaterinoslav, including the Heeses, and expanded to growing cities such as Kherson. Many Mennonites from the colonies were tempted to seek their fortunes by building mills along the railway lines and at rail junctions across southern Russia. A few succeeded, but in the years of "mill fever" between 1890 and 1910 more failed than succeeded, bankrupting their families and their reputations.⁷

The industrialization of Ekaterinoslav, built around steel production and engineering, also attracted a new type of Mennonite entrepreneur. Most notable among these was Johann Esau, who possessed specialized engineering qualifications acquired through the granting of a special government educational stipend in 1869. After working in various areas of Russia as an engineer, he married into one of the milling families of Ekaterinoslav and settled in the city in 1890. Using his technical skills he founded a number of business enterprises, including a steel mill and later a brick works. Eventually Esau became a leading figure in Ekaterinoslav society and twice was elected mayor (1904-1912).⁸

While Ekaterinoslav rapidly benefited from the industrialization of southern Russia, Berdiansk's development was stalled by a lack of rail links and the increasing difficulty of large ships navigating its shallow harbour.⁹ Plans to build railways to the port were discussed as early as the 1860s but Berdiansk missed out during the early boom periods of rail building in the 1870s and the 1880s. The city, however, continued to grow, as did its Mennonite community. As yields of grain increased in its agricultural hinterland, trade improved; mills, some Mennonite-owned, were constructed to process some of the grain. The increased cultivation of grain and the mechanization of agriculture created a strong demand for agricultural machines, especially harvesters. Many were imported through the port but eventually local manufacturers competed with the foreign imports, including those produced in the Mennonite factory of the Matthias family (founded 1884) and the English factory of J. E. Greaves (founded 1883).¹⁰ The trade in grain and the demand for processing and for machinery were affected by sudden shifts in harvest returns caused by the uncertain climate and by insect attacks. Trade and business were also influenced by periods of agricultural depression.¹¹ At last, in 1897, a branch line from Chaplino linked Berdiansk to the rail network of southern Russia, but in the meantime better-connected ports and cities had stolen some of its trade.¹²

A number of Mennonite entrepreneurs established factories, service centres and trading branches in other cities across southern Russia: e.g., in Taganrog, Melitopol, Mariupol, Rostov on Don, Millerovo and elsewhere. As Mennonites expanded their agricultural settlements into areas beyond southern Russia, similar establishments were founded in cities adjacent to the new settlements in the Caucasus, the Urals and, after 1900, in Siberia. Within the mature southern Russian settlements, however, industrialization and commerce began to develop an internal urbanization of the Mennonite community.

Mennonite Internal Urbanization

Some of the Mennonite artisans and craftsmen who first emigrated to Russia either did not take up farming or supplemented their incomes by producing goods for Mennonites and the surrounding population. The more skilled craftsmen such as cabinetmakers made furniture for the local nobility while others produced goods for the peasants and other foreign colonists. In Prussia the Mennonites had been active in the proto-industrial processes associated with cloth production and among the early immigrants were many skilled spinners, weavers and tailors. Sometime before 1820 a factory making cloth from local wool was built in Halbstadt and production continued until the early 1850s. Its fate is unclear, but by this period the entire wool industry was threatened by cheap Australian wool and the development of a Russian cotton industry. For a brief period silk production flourished with a spinning factory in Halbstadt, but this industry also failed due to Asian competition.

Fortunately for the Mennonites, the end of large-scale wool and silk production was countered by a rapid increase in demand for wheat. The expansion of grain cultivation and the widespread adoption of agricultural machinery created a new local engineering industry in both Molochna and Khortitsa.¹³ In Molochna the shift can clearly be seen in the statistics for skilled craftsmen: in 1846 there were 214 weavers and 466 blacksmiths in the colony, and by 1855 there were only 18 weavers but 680 blacksmiths.¹⁴ During the late 1830s the Molochna reformer Johann Cornies had encouraged the emigration to Russia of experienced Mennonite artisans and had founded a new settlement, Neu Halbstadt, where their skills could be concentrated.¹⁵ However, Cornies could not have envisaged the kind of rapid industrial development that occurred in the colony over the next half century. Old crafts such as blacksmithing and carpentry played a crucial role in the development of agricultural machine production, beginning with the Mennonite wagon famed over a large area of southern Russia. The skills were then applied to the production of mowers and threshing machines. In 1880 the firm of Franz and Schroeder was founded on the site of the old silk spinning factory in Neu Halbstadt. During the same period flour mills and associated agricultural processing factories were constructed in the area. Large-scale factories powered by coal and coke replaced the small workshops of artisans and tall smoke stacks rose over the villages.

In 1893 the British Acting Consul in the port of Berdiansk reported on the "rapid advance" in industrial production in the port's hinterland and noted of the Mennonite Molochna colony:

In Halbstadt, one of the largest of the numerous German colonies in this district, we find a starch factory of importance fitted with the best of modern machinery and appliances. Although it is not possible to ascertain the output, it is said to be considerable, and the quality of the product according to all accounts leaving nothing to be desired, it finds a ready market. In the same colony we find a rice mill, two foundries and engineering works, two breweries, a tannery, a brick and tile works, and a wagon works.

Besides some 8 to 10 factories of importance, the whole of this district is studded with small engineering works engaged chiefly in the manufacture of agricultural machines and implements, most of them having their own foundries. These have all sprung up within the last 8 to 10 years, and this branch of industry is advancing with rapid strides.¹⁶

In fact, small workshops and factories were scattered across Molochna, but by 1900 two industrial areas stood apart: Halbstadt and Waldheim. In both towns there were concentrations of factories and service industries, with Halbstadt, as a centre of administration and educational institutions, predominating. In a sense both had become mini-urban centres within their local regions although Halbstadt, adjacent to the German settlement of Prischib and close the growing Russian town of Bolshoi Tokmak (Gross Tokmak), had the potential to become part of a much larger urban conglomerate. As with Berdiansk, the one thing that restricted further growth of the Molochna towns was an absence of rail links. After 1900 local Mennonite entrepreneurs lobbied for a local branch line to be built, but this was only completed shortly before World War One and did little to develop the region before the economy was disrupted by war and revolution.¹⁷

In the early years of settlement, developments in Khortitsa followed a path similar to that in Molochna. However, due to the colony's better location in the agricultural and industrial heartland of Ekaterinoslav and close to the Dnieper, Khortitsa's internal urbanization eventually exceeded that of Molochna. The village of Khortitsa, also the administrative centre of the colony, witnessed the first development of the engineering industries which, with milling, were to dominate the industrial development of the area. This development is associated primarily with the name of Peter Lepp, a clockmaker, who about 1850 began to build primitive harvesters. Eventually his initiative would develop into the massive firm of Lepp and Wallmann, which built a range of agricultural machines, steam engines and even at one period steam-powered boats to carry produce down the Dnieper.¹⁸ Other businesses developed as Lepp's apprentices and other entrepreneurs founded their own factories: e.g., A. J. Koop (1864/1874) and C. Hildebrand (later the firm of Hildebrand and Pries) (1878). In nearby Rosental, Jakob G. Rempel established a factory in 1870. Closer to the Dnieper and upstream of the cataracts, the village of Einlage had long been a centre for trade in lumber shipped by river from central and northern Russia to the largely treeless steppe. Here a number of factories were founded: the wagon and engineering works of Abraham Unger (1861), and the farm machinery factories of A. J. Koop (1879) and J.D. Koslowski (1882). As iron, steel and coal became more available in the 1870s and early 1880s, small workshops were transformed into factories and wind- and tread mills replaced by steam-powered monsters. This created an internal industrial urbanism in the very heart of the Mennonite colony. Increasingly, however, such developments became concentrated in the Mennonite settlement of Schönwiese.

Schönwiese, founded in 1797, was part of the Khortitsa colony but located on the left bank of the Dnieper, below the cataracts. Its position was favourable to

trade, as it was situated close to the growing city of Alexandrovsk with access to the down stream river traffic carrying wheat on barges to ports on the Black Sea.¹⁹ In Schönwiese a number of Mennonite windmills were constructed before 1850 in order to process wheat into flour. In 1880 Hermann Niebuhr, a member of an established milling family in Khortitsa, opened a steam-powered mill close to the Lozovaya-Sebastopol railway, constructed in 1873, which passed through Alexandrovsk.²⁰ His business received a further boost in 1884 when the Ekaterininskaya Railway Company opened a direct line into Schönwiese, thus linking it to the coal and iron fields of southern Russia.²¹ The industrialists on the other side of the Dnieper in Khortitsa were quick to exploit this new opportunity and soon constructed factories to the south of Schönwiese village. Lepp and Wallman arrived in 1885, A. J. Koop in 1887, C. Hildebrand in 1890, while during the same period the Niebuhrs opened new mills in Schönwiese and in Alexandrovsk.²² By 1900 most production of agricultural machinery and flour milling had shifted to Schönwiese and large factories, mills and related businesses dominated village. In nearby Alexandrovsk other factories and mills were founded and the Mennonite industrial area of Schönwiese and the Russian city steadily grew together. Eventually, in 1916, the city officials of Alexandrovsk incorporated Schönwiese into its urban boundaries.

In spite of the new factories in Schönwiese the old factories in Khortitsa continued to produce machines, but like Halbstadt their growth was severely restricted until a new rail link was constructed in 1904. This was the Second Ekaterininskaya Railway that connected Khortitsa with the main network and crossed the Dnieper by a new bridge near Einlage. The railway also boosted other industrial areas in the Khortitsa colony such as those in Osterwick, for example.²³ Elsewhere in Russia, where Mennonites had established daughter colonies close to rich mineral resources and railways, a similar pattern of internal urbanization was reproduced as they established agricultural engineering works and mills. This was especially true of New York in the Ignatiev settlement founded in 1888 to the east of Khortitsa. Here, by the first decade of the twentieth century, large mills and an immense, modern agricultural machinery factory owned by the company of J. G. Niebuhr, had created an urban-industrial centre quite different from the surrounding agricultural villages of the colony.²⁴ Further away, and founded much later, was the settlement of Ufa situated at the gateway to the Urals and Siberia where a similar pattern began to emerge.²⁵ The settlements in Siberia looked to recreating the same type of complex, not just agricultural settlements but also concentrated industrial and service centres, owned and run by Mennonites. When the Russian Prime Minister Stolypin, on a visit to Siberia in 1910, met the Mennonite district mayor of the settlement of Barnaul and asked if there was anything the settlers wanted, the mayor answered, "Yes, a small request—a railway."²⁶ By then every Mennonite knew that a railway meant not only better access to markets for agricultural produce, but also the ability to establish local industries. As well as moving to and living in cities, the Mennonites were also creating their own cities from within.

	1870	1885	1897	1910
Ekaterinoslav	24,167	46,876	112,839	211,908
Alexandrovsk	4,507	6,707	18,849	38,225
Berdiansk	12,223	20,861	26,496	34,214

Table 2: Population of major urban areas with Mennonite links, 1870-1910

Source: Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire* 186, 191.

Rural Society/City Culture

Russian society in the nineteenth century was overwhelmingly rural in nature; cities, especially industrial cities, were islands in a vast sea of countryside inhabited overwhelmingly by agrarian peasants. However, as the century progressed and industrial centres developed, old cities grew in size and new cities emerged, populated mainly by peasants from the countryside seeking work in the new factories.¹ By the start of the twentieth century the number of workers born in cities began to increase but they were still overshadowed by peasants migrating from the countryside.² The majority of the industrial workers in Mennonite factories and mills were Russian or Little Russian (Ukrainian) peasants with Mennonites holding the top and middle management positions, aided by Russian or foreign technical experts. Industrialists, such as the owners of Lepp and Wallmann, built barracks for their workers and even churches, sometimes in the heart of Mennonite settlements. But in such situations the labourers, like most other non-Mennonites who served the Mennonite communities, remained outsiders in terms of both land and property ownership and especially in the minds of the Mennonite inhabitants.

In terms of occupation and self-referenced identity, Mennonites were also a rural people. The vast majority worked on the land or in closely related activities and only a very small number actually resided in the Mennonite towns that were undergoing internal industrialization or in non-Mennonite cities. Even in the centres of internal urbanization life, their environment could be seen in two quite different ways. Standing on the borders of Rosental and Khortitsa a Mennonite could look one way and see a rural farming village; turn around and the chimneys of Lepp and Wallman's factories revealed an industrial world. The same was true of Molochna. In one direction lay New Halbstadt with its factories, stores, schools of higher learning and buildings built by wealthy Mennonites; turn around and Old Halbstadt still bore all the features of an established farming village. The reality, however, was that even the farmers lived between two worlds: growing grain for an external market, producing goods for local sale and remaining self-sufficient for much of their own staple food needs. But they were also heavily dependent on the goods of the industrial world which were largely produced in urban areas either in Russia or abroad: farm machinery and tools, clothing and processed food such as coffee and sugar. Mennonites had long since abandoned making cloth for their own needs and

their increasing prosperity permitted a degree of indulgence in the growing consumer market. As an account of Khortitsa noted in 1907, "...in many yards stand large American self-binders [mowers] and at August harvest time no farm is without a threshing machine"; while "on Sundays and holidays every farmer's daughter is dressed in the latest Paris fashion."³

There was also less need for Mennonite farmers to go to the cities when the products of the cities came to them via the railroads to the shops of local merchants, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, as well as being hawked from door to door by travelling salesmen. And there was less reason to haul one's produce to distant markets when grain was purchased by Jewish and Mennonite dealers and other produce could be sold to local Mennonite merchants and storekeepers. The improved communications systems therefore enhanced the quality of rural life while the growth of cities, so clearly different in environment, size and society from their own Mennonite villages, strengthened the feeling of living in a rural community far away from urban areas. Thus, life-style, along with religious belief and the intensity of social ties through kinship, combined with a sense of ethnic difference in a multi-cultural empire to strengthen the Mennonite sense of separation from their neighbours. However, beneath this cozy exterior their lives were being increasingly drawn into Russia's emerging industrial society. By 1900 Mennonite society had ceased to be agrarian; instead, hidden beneath a false consciousness of rural distinctiveness and a homogeneous community, Mennonites were an industrial society with social inequality defined by wealth, education and occupation.⁴

By 1900 Mennonites who lived in cities or in the internally urbanizing Mennonite communities also lived in a false consciousness, but one increasingly difficult to maintain. They continued their kinship and religious links with their predominantly rural Mennonite mother colonies, although as their numbers grew and their wealth increased they tended to marry among themselves or with wealthy Mennonite estate owners, many of whom were also industrialists, and to establish their own communities and even congregations.⁵ In city and countryside these wealthy Mennonites had close social interactions with non-Mennonites and their cultural interests expanded with increased education. Their interaction with the cultural life of urban centres included an increased taste for non-religious music, art and theatre, and other cultural activities not available to most rural dwellers.

In 1898 a German Mennonite, H. van der Smissen, visited the southern Russian Mennonite settlements and reported on the congregation in Ekaterinoslav. He noted there were between 40 and 50 members in the city congregation, affiliated with Khortitsa but with their own minister, the redoubtable David H. Epp, who also served as a schoolteacher. Van der Smissen was eager to assure his Mennonite readers in Germany that, contrary perhaps to expectations, Mennonites could live and flourish in an urban environment without loss of their established faith or customs.⁶ However, just three years earlier the Khortitsa minister Johann J. Epp had complained in his diary that the funeral of the widow of Heinrich Heese in Ekaterinoslav had "incorporated some of the Russian traditions, using candles in broad daylight and burning incense even though the body had not deteriorated

yet.” He linked this criticism with what he considered another deviation from Mennonite customary ways by a Mennonite with urban connections. This concerned a wedding at the Rosental home of Jacob Lepp, also known as “Odessa Lepp” because he had lived in the great port and owned several houses in that city. The wedding apparently had lasted for three days with lavish entertainments that included musicians hired from Alexandrovsk.⁷ Epp’s protestations were to no avail. The celebrations in Schönwiese in 1912 to mark the silver-wedding anniversary of the wealthy miller, banker and industrialist Jacob H. Niebuhr, which took place at the same time as the wedding of his daughter, included an orchestra and other festivities which on the second day involved workers from Niebuhr’s businesses.⁸

Although van der Smissen expressed confidence that the Ekaterinoslav congregation would remain loyal to the use of German in its services, the children of the industrialist Johann Esau grew up speaking Russian at home. While their parents continued to speak Low German to each other, the children learned their High German from the local minister and teacher David H. Epp.⁹ The impact of living in the rapidly changing cities of late Imperial Russia was undoubtedly most profound on the children of those Mennonites born and raised in urban situations. While their parents, like their peasant workers, maintained close connections with their rural homelands, their children grew up in an urban society and within an urban culture where they attended the theatre, music recitals and the opera.¹⁰ Glimpses of life in Berdiansk in the years up to 1914, where a larger and more integrated Mennonite community than that in Ekaterinoslav existed, hint of similar changes.¹¹ The children were mainly raised in wealthy homes with maids and servants, had Russian friends and attended higher educational establishments, including after 1906 a private Realschule founded by the noted Mennonite educator A. A. Neufeld.¹² They formed youth groups where games, singing and even dancing were regular occurrences and, as in Ekaterinoslav, attended theatres and other cultural events. All these activities were essential in order that they gain the knowledge, graces and skills necessary to enter the emergent Russian middle class among whom their parents conducted their business.

Although such experiences of urban society and city culture were far removed from those of most village Mennonites, some features of urban life began to reach into the colonies. This was especially true in those areas of internal urbanization where richer Mennonites lived and the main schools and other community institutions were located. Here, in the years before 1914, Mennonite industrialists and estate owners began to build urban-style houses quite different from the single story farm-barn structures found in most villages. At the same time, new institutional buildings such as schools, banks, hospitals and even meeting houses began to take on the appearance of urban structures, carefully designed by architects to present a sense of prosperity and culture not entirely consistent with a picture of simple folk living in a rural environment.¹³

The main route by which the culture of the city was transferred to non-urban Mennonite settlements, however, came through the activities of schoolteachers, both Mennonite and non-Mennonite, particularly those employed in Mennonite

higher educational institutions.¹⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century Mennonites requiring even a teacher's certificate needed to pass exams usually sat in their local city. For instance, prospective teachers from Khortitsa would often stay with Mennonites in Ekaterinoslav before sitting their examinations. Those going on to higher education went either to Realschulen or Gymnasia in local cities after finishing at Mennonite high schools. In Ekaterinoslav, Arnold Dyck's Hans is fascinated by the young men in their military-style school uniforms. His father tells him that even Mennonite boys attend such schools, and that not all come from rich families but that some are village children like "the Funks-boy from Neuenburg", who did well at high school and receive community support¹⁵ After 1900 a few Mennonites, some from rich families others on community stipends, spent long periods pursuing higher education in technical colleges and universities in urban centres such as Ekaterinoslav, Berdiansk, Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa and, increasingly further afield, in Moscow, St Petersburg and abroad in Germany and Switzerland. These constituted the small core of a Mennonite intelligentsia whose ranks were growing in size and influence by 1914.¹⁶ The intention was that upon graduating these educated people would return to the colonies, bringing their skills to help further the educational and economic development of their communities. This of course also meant they brought back into the heart of their communities aspects of modern, urban culture, especially those who became teachers and would instill its knowledge, values and tastes in the minds of a future generation.

One sign of this was in the way pupils were exposed to literature, German and Russian, through libraries in schools, reading circles and the production of plays.¹⁷ Most Russian provincial towns had local theatres, some also had opera houses, and Russian plays and operas as well as foreign productions were extremely popular with the urban elite. In 1902 the Khortitsa High School celebrated a "Gogolfest" in honour of the Russian author and playwright Gogol.¹⁸ It is unclear if this included just the reading or the staging of Gogol's plays, but in future years the staging of plays by pupils became a regular occurrence in schools, although not without creating controversy.

In 1910 the editor of the Mennonite-Brethren-leaning newspaper the *Friedensstimme* re-published a foreign-sourced article condemning the theatre as un-Christian. This resulted in a long and protracted debate among Mennonites on the value of theatre, especially with regard to education in relation to Christian values. The debates spilled over from the *Friedensstimme* into the *Botschafter*, the newspaper of the larger conference grouping known as the Kirchliche, and eventually included the German language paper *Odessaer Zeitung*. The debate began with an open letter, signed by thirteen Mennonite students studying in St Petersburg, which expressed strong support for the value of theatre; it also condemned the editor of the *Friedensstimme*, Abraham Kroeker, for his narrow views.¹⁹ The resulting discussion involved a number of the leading teachers and religious leaders in Khortitsa, Molochna and elsewhere, as well as Mennonites studying in Germany.²⁰ The educated elite, especially among the Kirchliche, overwhelmingly supported the idea of theatre in schools, although the issue was

discussed at the Conference of the Kirchliche Mennonites in 1912.²¹ The issue may well also have encouraged the teacher-preacher Jacob H. Janzen to pen the first of his comic Low German plays, which was staged by his pupils in the Ohrloff/Tiege Girls' School in Molochna.²²

Although the arguments for and against theatre in schools were couched in religious language, the dispute highlighted the social and cultural tensions created by the rapid transformation of Mennonite society associated with industrialization. This included a clash of generations as highly educated young men and women challenged the authority, values and beliefs of the older more conservative male establishment where power was defined by age and gender, not education or qualifications.²³ The challenge by the young men from St Petersburg revealed just one aspect of this tension, as well as the influence of urban culture on the future leaders of the Mennonite world. City culture would predominate over rural customs. In 1914, two years after the debate over the theatre, an older Mennonite couple, Abraham and Maria Harder, continued to complain about the staging of plays by Mennonites, but noted that one of those involved had left teaching to become an actor in Odessa!²⁴

By 1914, along with the urban industrial transformation of the Mennonite colonies, the culture of the city was increasingly internalized within the Mennonite world, but there were other concerns as well. Among these was an increasing interest and involvement in political affairs beyond local village and colony government. As has been noted, a number of wealthy Mennonites in urban areas served as judges, alderman and even mayors of their cities. Johann Esau of Ekaterinoslav proved so successful at introducing improvements to Ekaterinoslav as mayor, that he was invited by the councils of three other cities to stand as their mayor.²⁵ While it was not until the revolution of 1905 forced the Tsar to grant a form of representational government to the peoples of Russia, the cities had long enjoyed a degree of political autonomy even if the franchise was restricted to wealthy property owners. Some cities pioneered liberal politics and those involved in the governance of urban centres soon became active in national politics after 1905.²⁶ In the Mennonite world it was the wealthy landowners who gained support, mainly because of their conservative views, although other Mennonites, particularly the more liberal intelligentsia, did not always share the political interests of wealthy landowners and colony industrialists.²⁷ Mennonites living in the cities tended to favour liberal opinion reform more than most colony farmers, who were also conservatives in politics.²⁸

The increased politicization of Russian society also revealed negative features of industrialization and urbanization from which the Mennonites could not escape. The poverty of rural peasants, caused in part by a lack of land following the abolition of serfdom in 1861, forced many into the urban areas in search of work. The violence of the countryside was transferred to the city, where it mixed with new concerns over wages and conditions and workers' rights. Given the appalling situation in many factories and urban slums, urban workers were easy prey for social activists with ideas of revolution and a new society, ideas which in turn filtered back into the countryside.

When Arnold Dyck writes of young Hans' visit to Ekaterinoslav he fails to mention that the city was a massive industrial conglomerate with an unruly and dangerous population. Hans visits the shops on the Prospect, wondering at a painting in a window and smiling at a young nobleman's daughter.²⁹ But this is a depiction of the old provincial city of the Mennonite imagination, a place of cobbled streets, grand houses and pleasant parks where a humble farmer could drive his wagon into town for a little day's trading. It is not the industrial city reported by contemporary visitors such as Villari, a place of coal dust, belching chimneys, muddy side streets and filthy barracks where workers were trapped in poverty and squalor.³⁰ It is not the city that between 1898 and 1906 was second only to St Petersburg for convictions for murder and serious assault and ranked first in a survey of cities for convictions for rape, having twice as many as Moscow.³¹ It is not the city that after 1880 experienced some of the worst pogroms of any southern Russian city against its large Jewish population.³² It is not the city where industrial unrest contributed to the transfer of the Mennonite newspaper the *Botschafter* to the relative safety of the larger Mennonite community in Berdiansk, more securely located in its own suburb.³³

Close to the Mennonite colonies, a strike of workers and revolutionary agitation in 1905 led to scenes of violence in Alexandrovsk and Schönwiese itself. The revolt around the rail yards in Schönwiese was put down with police and Cossacks, but it was an ominous sign of the increasing instability of Russian society and the bankruptcy of its political leadership.³⁴ Violence spread to the countryside with increasing incidents of robbery and murder, particularly on isolated Mennonite estates but also in the Mennonite industrial centres. In August 1906 an elderly member of the Niebuhr family was robbed and so badly beaten in Khortitsa that he died of his injuries. The minister Johann J. Epp, reporting the sad event in his diary noted, "This is further evidence that the revolution has spread to our villages."³⁵ Older Mennonites saw the influence of agitators in the cities as the source of much of the trouble. In April 1912, Abraham and Maria Harder wrote to relatives in America: "Things are coming to a head here. The growing need and poverty in the city gives Socialism more and more material, and the spirit of revolt among the poor is growing."³⁶

Peasant Countryside/ Socialist Cities

The Harders' fears were to prove correct, in part. The disturbances that led to the overthrow of the Tsar and began the revolutions of 1917 broke out first in the capital, St Petersburg. But the specific cause of the disturbances concerned food in the context of growing shortages due to Russia's prolonged involvement in World War One. The workers in the industrial factories of the capital, greatly increased due to demands for armaments, faced starvation as peasants withheld produce due to low prices and clumsy government attempts at seizure; city and countryside were pitted against each other.

When the revolution began there were more Mennonites living in, or associated with, cities than ever before in their history. By 1917 thousands of young Mennonites were serving in the medical services, some based in Moscow, St Petersburg, Ekaterinoslav, Odessa and other cities across the Empire. For many the war was a brutal and disturbing experience not just because of having to deal with the wounded, the mutilated and the dead, but also because they were exposed for long periods to urban life away from their village communities and the control of elders.³⁷ When the revolution reached the cities where Mennonites served, such as Moscow and Ekaterinoslav, a number formed themselves into soviets, discussed radical ideas and sent petitions back to the colonies indicating that in the promised new social and political order they wanted reform of the Mennonite world as well.

A new social and political order, however, did not come about by peaceful means, via Mennonite conferences and the election of a democratic Russian parliament. The new order was forced upon Mennonites by the Bolshevik victors of a prolonged and bitter civil war which destroyed life and property, compromised Mennonite principles and devastated their economic base. This devastation was most apparent in the cities. Wealthy Mennonites were robbed, intimidated and murdered by bandits; their business were seized by the Bolsheviks and nationalized. By then most had fled the cities for the countryside, back to the colonies where those estate owners who had survived the seizure of their property by land-hungry peasants joined them. The Mennonite abandonment of cities mirrored a similar pattern across much of Russia. With the breakdown of law and order and the seizure of the rail system to wage war, people in the city faced starvation.³⁸ Masses of peasant workers returned to their villages in search of food and security. The Bolshevik seizure of power and ultimately their victory in the Civil War forced many urban bourgeois to seek safety and a new life in foreign exile. Similarly, in the Mennonite world many of the factory and mill owners, as well as teacher-preachers excluded from classrooms and who had fostered urban culture among Mennonites, emigrated during the 1920s.

At the heart of Soviet plans for a new order was a modernizing, industrial system which favoured the worker over the peasant, the factory over the farm, the city over the countryside. But following their victory the Bolsheviks were faced with a dilemma.³⁹ They needed the support of the peasantry in order to rebuild a country shattered by years of conflict, as only the peasants could produce enough food to supply the needs of the industrial cities the Soviets hoped to rebuild or found anew in their drive to produce a new proletariat state. To achieve this the leadership had to compromise their ideology with practical realities. The New Economic Policy initiated in 1921 allowed a degree of private enterprise so that the peasants could keep their land and market much of their produce. But the cities with their industrial complexes were central to the state that owned and controlled these essential forces of production. The compromise with the peasants and a private market system lasted until shortly after Lenin's death in 1924. Then, as Stalin gained control of the Party and state, a new direction was charted. By the late 1920s the forced industrialization of farming began as agricultural production was collectivized. The

model of the city factory invaded the countryside.

Many Mennonite farmers flourished under the New Economic Policy as they rebuilt agricultural production back to pre-War levels. But as collectivization began their reward was to be condemned as kulaks—rich farmers—and most were sent into exile. Between the late 1920s and the early 1930s all Mennonite land was reorganized into large collectives with Mennonite “workers.” The situation was somewhat different in the areas where prior to the Revolution Mennonites had established factories within their settlements and achieved a degree of internal urbanization. The old factories in Schönwiese, Khortitsa and elsewhere had already been nationalized, numbered and later renamed with appropriate socialist titles. A few former owners of mills and factories continued to run the plants, but now as employees of the state. More significantly, a younger generation of Mennonites trained in engineering before the war became leading technocrats and industrial managers in the Soviet drive to industrialize. Less interested in ideology than in the opportunity to develop new machinery, these men played an important role in the further modernization of farm machinery, developing new tractors and combine-harvesters.⁴⁰ The population surrounding these plants grew and some Mennonites became factory workers, members of the proletariat. The process of internal industrial urbanization increased in Khortitsa but in Molochna, where some factories continued to operate, the concerns received little new investment. Centralized planning and a tendency to construct massive industrial projects meant that sites closer to raw materials were favoured. Molochna slipped further into an agricultural backwater. Schönwiese, however, merged further into Alexandrovsk, now a major industrial city, while across the Dnieper Khortitsa became part of the region’s industrial complex.

The region around Khortitsa became central to the Soviet state’s first ambitious plan to modernize industry and society through the harnessing of electricity. Between 1927 and 1932 an immense hydroelectric dam known as Dniprostroy (Dneprostoi in Russian), was built across the Dnieper.⁴¹ The construction of the dam brought hundreds of thousands of workers to the region and large numbers of Mennonites worked on the project. The dam’s waters eventually drowned Einlage, one of the areas of pre-revolutionary Mennonite internal industrialization, but as the power came on stream new factories were under construction in and around Alexandrovsk (now renamed Zaporozhye). The impact of the dam’s construction on neighbouring Mennonite settlements was dramatic and is recorded in contemporary letters sent to relatives in Canada and published in the Mennonite press. A vivid letter of 1930 described Khortitsa township’s transformation:

In the last five years Khortitsa has changed considerably. Its entire character as a quiet German village has been lost and it has become a large industrial town in which a majority of the population are recently settled outsiders [literally “foreigners”, i.e., non-Mennonites]. The *Petrovskaya Uliza* (formerly the Old Way [*Alte Reihe*]) has been paved. Cars and trucks rattle along this road without interruption. On the neighbouring street that

leads to Einlage, where the *Denkmal* stood, the road has been raised so high that one can only see through the window of the second storey of the old K. Thiessen house. The course of our Khortitsa Stream has been moved. A bridge has been built where the former Factory School stood and the Khortitsa Stream no longer passes along the former mill-run. The bridge between K. Thiessen's and the *Denkmal* has also been demolished and the stream bed re-routed.⁴²

The village of Einlage (Kitchkas) was drowned by the rising waters of the dam and all signs of one of the oldest industrial and trade areas in Khortitsa were removed. In Schönwiese a Mennonite community continued to function but increasing numbers of Mennonites lived in Zaporozhye where new workers' accommodations were built.⁴³

These accommodations were not quite what Soviet planners had envisaged. In 1930 a new futuristic, socialist city was planned for Zaporozhye and building began. However, a senior British trade union leader who visited the city in 1935 and who was particularly interested in the housing and social conditions of workers, recorded the reality of living in Zaporozhye and the surrounding area. While he found that some people were housed in new, roughly built apartment blocks, others were forced to live in rudimentary barracks, while entire families survived in "filthy shacks." He described the inside of one "wretched, miserable hovel" as being "like one of the Cruikshank sketches of the thieves' den in *Oliver Twist*". He considered these "hovels" "[i]nfinately worse" than any he had encountered in "the slums of London, Edinburgh and Dublin."⁴⁴

Of course, in late Imperial times the city had contained poor workers' housing, but never on the scale of the 1930s. And the poverty of life in the Soviet city extended further than just housing. The British visitor found few goods for sale in the shops and many public buildings built in the late 1920s and early 1930s were poorly constructed and finished. Few of the roads were sealed and dust in the summer and mud in the winter made movement in the city difficult. However, many people preferred to live in cities rather than in the countryside and certainly life in Ukraine during the early 1930s was often easier in the cities at a time when famine stalked the countryside. However, Mennonites assigned to collective farms found it increasingly difficult to migrate to the cities, and passport restrictions (or a lack of passports among rural workers) made it impossible for many. Younger Mennonites with the right class background, or those who could disguise their social origins, gained access to higher education in cities and trained as engineers, doctors or other specialists, training which often took them on to employment in urban areas. Thus cities became places of refuge and of social and political advancement, but only at the expense of losing links with the Mennonite community.

	1920	1923	1926	1939
Dnipropetrovsk/ Ekaterinoslav	163,000	129,400	239,900	500,700
Zaporozhye/ Alexandrovsk	49,700	43,900	55,700	289,200
Berdiansk	37,000	22,000	26,400	51,700

Table 3: Population of major urban areas with Mennonite links, 1920-1939

Sources: 1910: Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire*, 186, 191; 1920-1939: Steven L. Guthier, "Ukrainian cities during the revolution and the inter-war era." In Ivan L. Rudnytsky ed., *Rethinking Ukrainian history*. Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1981, 175; the 1939 figures have not been adjusted in the light of recent research on the false census of the late 1930s but are still indicative of the rapid urban growth of the 1930s.

Conclusion

My argument is that, in spite of living predominantly rural lives, Mennonites in Russia historically developed in conjunction with cities, and that urban industrial culture increasingly influenced each successive generation as it grew up. This can perhaps be verified by considering the patterns of urban/rural relations of those who emigrated after 1874 to North America and their descendants.

The few Mennonites of the first emigration to North America who had experience of living in cities in Russia, like Cornelius Jansen the merchant from Berdiansk, moved quickly into towns and re-established businesses. However, most of the Mennonites who emigrated to North America in the ten years after 1874 came from rural backgrounds and relocated as congregational communities in rural districts, re-founding an agricultural-based economy. But all these Mennonites required contact with external markets to sell their goods and purchase supplies. As Roy Loewen has pointed out, the most economically astute group, the *Kleine Gemeinde*, carefully selected good rural sites with easy access to the principal market in Winnipeg.¹ They also established trading centres in their own communities which in time, just as in Russia, grew into important commercial and eventually industrial centres with an increasing degree of internal urbanization. Steinbach has become the largest Mennonite city on the Canadian prairies. Elsewhere in Manitoba the coming of the railways also helped develop Mennonite towns and industries, although never on the same scale as in Russia due to the more agricultural basis of Western Canada's economy. The later emigration of Mennonites from Russia between the 1890s and 1914 involved people with a more urban mindset, and many settled in Mennonite towns such as Winkler or in non-Mennonite towns close to rural Mennonite settlements.² One highly urban educated and radicalized Mennonite immigrant, Jacob Penner, settled in Winnipeg.³

The emigration of the *Russländer* in the 1920s revealed the consequences of the increased Mennonite association with urban, industrialized life and culture in Russia before 1914. After emigration there was a steady drift towards urban areas and away from the countryside, a move led especially by those who in Russia had had the greatest experience of city life: the industrialists, estate owners and many of the educated teachers. In Winnipeg, First Mennonite Church (aptly named originally after Schönwiese) formed the first large urban congregational community in Canada and was “*Russländer*” to its core.¹ Those who remained in the countryside made sure, as well as they could manage, that their children were educated in the cultural skills required to succeed in Canada’s industrial society, and most of their children and nearly all of their grandchildren today live in cities.

And what of the post-Second World War immigrants? One could argue that post-War conditions in many ways obligated most of them to seek economic opportunities in urban areas. But one would also have to consider that as many of them were raised in a Soviet environment that favoured the city over the countryside, they were also influenced by the power of their socialization, even if Communist ideology had little direct impact on their thinking. Whatever the reasons, the majority became urban dwellers.

If the seeds of Russian Mennonite relations with cities were sown even before the first emigrants from Prussia settled in Russia, they flourished in a Russian environment where Mennonites began the transition from an agrarian to an industrial society; and in Canada the descendants of the Russian Mennonites have largely become an urban people.

Notes

¹ Arnold Dyck, *Verloren in der Steppe* (Dritter Teil). Steinbach: Selbstverlag, 1946. Chapter 4; reprinted in Arnold Dyck, *Collected Works*. Volume 1. Steinbach: Doerksen, 259-86.

² Al Reimer, “Arnold Dyck and Steinbach 1923-1947”. *Preservings: Magazine Journal of the Hanover Historical Society*, 13 (1998), 89-93.

³ George K. Epp provided a sketch of how Mennonites lived in cities before the Russian Revolution in his “Urban Mennonites in Russia.” In: John Friesen ed., *Mennonites in Russia: 1788-1988. Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lorenz*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989. 239-59.

⁴ A copy of this agreement given by the Russian Consul in Danzig to Prussian Mennonites in 1788 was published in David H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten. Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben*. Rosenthal bei Chortitz. Odessa: A. Schultze, 1889. ; David G. Rempel provides a detailed analysis and discussion of the agreement using material from the Moscow archives, “The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: a sketch of its founding and endurance, 1789-1914.” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*(from now on *MQR*), 47. 1973. 282-86.

⁵ Roger P. Bartlett, *Human capital: the settlement of foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Chapter 5.

⁶ Roger P. Bartlett, “Die Einwanderung von Ausländern und die staatlichen Urbanisierungspläne in Russland im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert.” In Ingeborg Fleishhauer and

Hugo H. Jedig eds. *Die Deutschen in der UdSSR in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1990. 45-61.

⁷ David G. Rempel. "From Danzig to Russia: the first Mennonite migration," *Mennonite Life*, 24, 1969, 8-28; Rempel. "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia."

⁸ Robert E. Jones. "The Dnieper trade route in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: a note." *The International History Review*, 11, 1989, 303-12.

⁹ Central State Historical Archives, St Petersburg, Fond 383, opis 29, dielo. 183, 26; the Kherson site was noted for its closeness to the cities of Kherson, Odessa, Nikolayev and Elizavetgrad; based on a summary of the microfilmed files by Andrey Ivanov kindly supplied to me by Paul Toews.

¹⁰ On Odessa see Patricia Herlihy *Odessa: a history 1794-1914*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1985 and Lewis Siegelbaum "The Odessa Grain Trade: A Case Study in Urban Growth and Development in Tsarist Russia," *Journal of European Economic History*, 9, 113-151.

¹¹ Moritz von Engelhardt and Friedrich Parrot. *Reise in die Krym und den Kaukasus*. Berlin, 1815, v. I, 58-60.

¹² David H. Epp, *Johann Cornies*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1995, 7-8.

¹³ Peter M. Friesen. *The Mennonite brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*. Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978, 880; on these markets and bazaars and their place in the economic and urban development of southern Russia see Thomas Stanley Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire during the nineteenth century*. Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago (Research Paper 163), 1975, 55.

¹⁴ Franz Isaac. *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben*. Halbstadt: H. J. Braun, 1908, 12-13.

¹⁵ Some areas of the original site was in fact settled by Mennonites and became the settlement of Kronsgarten, an isolated village area from Khortitsa with a mainly Frisian congregation.

¹⁶ For a recent assessment of the city and its place in the imperial dreams of Catherine and Potemkin, see Andreas Schönle, "Garden of Empire: Catherine's appropriation of the Crimea." *Slavic Review*, 60(1), 2001, 9-10.

¹⁷ There is no comprehensive study of the Mennonites in Ekaterinoslav although Peter Heese wrote an account probably for the Echo Verlag historical series which was never published. The manuscript, with additional comments by someone unknown, is in the Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas (Small Archives II.659). The account deals only briefly with the early history and more extensively with the events of the First World War, the Russian Revolution and Civil War which the author experienced at first hand. Another vivid account of the city life is in Anna Sudermann's memoirs of her time living as student in the city before 1914 along with her relatives in her unpublished "Lebenserinnerungen 1893 -1970." Manuscript in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (from now on MHCA), Winnipeg, Vol. 3370.

¹⁸ *The diaries of David Epp 1837 - 1843*, (translated and edited by John B. Toews). Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2000; *A Mennonite in Russia: the diaries of Jacob D. Epp 1851-1880*, (translated and edited by Harvey L. Dyck). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

¹⁹ David Epp also visited the annual wool market at Kharkov and received Mennonites coming and going to and from other cities including Odessa, Mariupol and Nikopol; Jacob Epp also visited Nikopol as it was nearer to his settlement.

²⁰ *The diaries of David Epp*, 44; *A Mennonite in Russia*, 184-85.

²¹ *The diaries of David Epp*, 169.

²² David Saunders, "Russia's Ukrainian policy (1847-1905): a demographic approach." *European History Quarterly*, 25, 1995, 194.

²³ Julius de Hagemeister. *Report on the commerce of the ports of Russia, Moldavia and Wallachia made to the Russian government in 1835* ... London: Effingham Wilson, 1836. 43-44.

²⁴ Hagemeister. *Report on the commerce*, 105; he also reports that the colonists also sold butter in Mariupol and the fine hides of cattle although the latter trade may have been boosted by the droughts of 1833 in which many livestock died. Hagemeister. *Report on the commerce*, 152, 157-58.

²⁵ Alfred Reumont. *Geographische-statistische Nachrichten von den russischen Häfen am Schwarzen Meer*. Stuttgart, 1836. 29; A geographical, statistical and commercial account of the Russian ports of the Black Sea, the Sea of Asoph and the Danube; also an official report of the European commerce of Russia in 1835 (from the German). London: A. Schloss, 1837. 34.

²⁶ Hagemeister. *Report on the commerce*, 45-46; Erik Amburger, "Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung russischer Seehäfen." In K. Zernack (ed.), *Beiträge zur Stadt und Regionalgeschichte Ost- und Nordeuropas*. Wiesbaden, 1971. 197.

²⁷ M. L. de Tegoborski. *Commentaries on the productive forces of Russia*. London: Longmans, 1855. Volume 2. 452.

²⁸ A history of the early Berdiansk community by Leonhard Sudermann has been translated by John B. Toews as "Building a Mennonite church in Berdyansk." *Mennonite Life*, 53(2), 1997. 16-23 from Sudermann's manuscript "Wie und auf welche weise eine Mennonitengemeinde in der Seestadt Berdjansk in Sued Russland gegruendet wurde." Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas Ms 65, folder 30. A later account by H. Ediger, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben: Erlebtes und Gesammeltes*. Kahrlsruhe-Rüppurr: Selbstverlag, 1927. contains errors with regard to the early period but is useful for later history.

²⁹ On the connections between these merchants and their links with Molochna colonists see my account in "The closed and the open: social and religious change amongst the Mennonites in Russia, 1789-1889." DPhil thesis Oxford University 1978.

³⁰ Odessa Regional State Archives, Guardianship Committee Papers, Fund 6 op. 92 (10004) 1847; a later request to establish their own District Office was rejected. (12090). 1849-51; such representation may have been at Johann Cornies' initiative through his role as head of the Agricultural Union, see the comments of Sudermann in "Building a Mennonite church in Berdyansk.." 18. In 1864 the *Odessaer Zeitung* (from now on *OZ*) reported that the Berdiansk Mennonite "mayor" (Schulz) had been robbed (*OZ*, 79, 13 July 1864. 614).

³¹ A report in 1863 gave the population of Berdiansk as around 10,000 of whom 20% were Germans, 20% Jews, Greeks and others and the remaining mainly Russians or Little Russians. *OZ*, 141, 6 December, 1130-31.

³² Isebrandt Friesen (1814-1883) served a councillor and judge in the city. *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, 1913.

³³ See the request for funds to help build a meetinghouse in the city quoted in K. Mezynski. "Z wedrowek Menonitow pomorskich Gmina w Berdiansku nad morzem Azowskim." *Rocznik Gdanski*, 28, 1969, 254-56.

³⁴ The best documented account of these events from the point of view of the Berdiansk Mennonites is that of Cornelius Jansen, a Prussian Mennonite merchant resident in the city since 1851 who was forced to leave because of his active support of the idea of emigration to North America, see Gustav E. Reimer and G. R. Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar: Cornelius Jansen and the great Mennonite migration, 1874*. Newton: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956.

³⁵ See David H. Epp, "Aus der Kinderheitsgeschichte der deutschen Industrie in der Kolonien Südrusslands: Kulturgeschichtliche Skizzen aus der alter Zeit" originally published in the Mennonite newspaper *Der Botschafter* in Russia between 1911 and 1912 and reprinted in Canada in *Der Bote* in 1938-1940. The first part was translated and published by Jacob P. Penner as *Sketches from the pioneer years of the industry in the settlements of South Russia*. Leamington: Jacob P. Penner, 1972; a later section which includes the account of the rise of the Mennonite

milling industry and Thiessen's role in these developments was translated and edited by John B. Toews as "The emergence of German industry in the south Russian colonies." *MQR*, 55(4), 1981, 289-371.

³⁶ Odessa Regional State Archives. Guardianship Committee Papers. Fund 6 op. 2 (11536) Johann Neufeld of Conteniusfeld to the 3rd Guild of Orekhov, 1848; the city contained a small Mennonite population which by the 1880s had 40 Mennonite families served by their own minister and a school, see H. van der Smissen, "Entwicklung und jetziger Stand der deutschen Mennonitenkolonien in Südrussland." *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*, 8, 1898, 178; a Mennonite later become mayor of the city. Epp, "Urban Mennonites in Russia," 246-47.

³⁷ J. N. Westwood, *A history of Russian railways*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964; Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire*, 80-85.

³⁸ Colin White. "The impact of Russian railway construction on the market for grain in the 1860s and 1870s." In Leslie Symons and Colin White eds. *Russian transport: an historical and geographic survey*. London: G. Bell, 1975, 1-45.

³⁹ A. M. Solovyova, "The railway system in the mining area of southern Russia in the late nineteenth century." *Journal of Transport History*, 5(1), 1984, 66-81.

⁴⁰ R. Munting. "Mechanisation and dualism in Russian agriculture." *Journal of European Economic History*, 8(3), 1979, 743-760.

⁴¹ Roger L. Thiede. "Industry and urbanization in New Russia." In Michael F. Hamm ed., *The city in Russian history*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976, 125-38; Patricia Herlihy. "Ukrainian cities in the nineteenth century." In Ivan L. Rudnytsky ed., *Rethinking Ukrainian history*. Edmonton: The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1981, 135-55.

⁴² Luigi Villari, *Russia under the great shadow*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905, 102-03.

⁴³ Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia." *MQR*, 48, 1974, 65-66; cf. Benjamin Redekop IV and Cal Redekop, "The Naumenko mill fever." *Mennonite Life*, 49(2), 1994, 11-14.

⁴⁴ "Erinnerungen von Iwan Jakowlewitsch Esau." *Der Bote*, 37-39 (15-29 September 1970); an original 1932 typescript of this is in the MHCA, Winnipeg. Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization Papers. Vol. 1167: 24; a version was translated as Appendix 1; "My life" by Johan Esau." in Elizabeth Moot O'Hern, "Profiles of pioneer women scientists: Katherine Esau." *The Botanical Review*, 62(3), 1996, 261-66; see also Epp, "Urban Mennonites in Russia."

⁴⁵ Detailed reports on the trade and prosperity of Berdiansk can be gathered from the annual reports of the British consul in the port after the 1860s many of which were published as papers of the British Parliament. A number of these contain references to the Mennonite colonies.

⁴⁶ A member of the Greaves family, Amy E. Greaves, later married into the Mennonite community, see David P. Sudermann, "Sound and silence: the autobiographical writings of Amy Sudermann Enss" *Mennonite Life*, 1997, 16.

⁴⁷ See Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist economy 1850-1917*. London: Batsford, 1986, Chapter 4.

⁴⁸ On the port's later development and the planning of the rail links see the article in *OZ*, 262, 22 November/4 December 1895, 2; on everyday life in the city during the post Crimean War see the account of the Bahnmann family who emigrated to the USA in the 1890s in Katharina (Wiens) Bahnmann Dyck Regier, *Our heritage: remembrances of my life in Russia 1866-1895*. Forth Worth, Texas, c. 1997.

⁴⁹ For a survey of these along with other non-Mennonite concerns, see Arnold Bonwetsch, *Der Handel mit landwirtschaftlichen Maschinen und Geräten in Russland vor dem Kriege...*. Berlin, 1921, Appendix 1; Dietmar Neutatz, "Pflüge und Dreschmaschinen für die Steppe. Verzeichnis der Landmaschinen-, Wagen- und Motorenfabriken in den Gouvernements Bessarabien, Cherson, Ekaterinoslaw, Taurien und Dongebiet vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg." *Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur der Rußlanddeutschen*, 4, 1994, 5-88.

⁵⁰ *Unterhaltungsblatt für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Russland*, 7, 1846, 60; 4, 1857, 31.

⁵¹ James Urry, *None but saints: the transformation of Mennonite life in Russia 1789-1889*. Winnipeg: Hyperion, 1989, 139-41

⁵² United Kingdom, Foreign Affairs. *Report for the Year 1893 on the Trade etc. of Taganrog*. London: Her Majesty's Printer (No.1375), 1894, 25-26.

⁵³ The rail branch connected Federovka, Halbstadt, Tokmak and Zarenkonstantinovka, linking the colony on to the more major routes allowing the easier delivery of coal and the export of machinery and agricultural produce, see "Das Eisenbahn Projekt Federowka - Gross Tokmak." *OZ*, 116-17 (22 May/4 June -23 May/5 June 1910); Peter Hecht, "Die Molotschna-Eisenbahn." *OZ*, 181 (11/24 August 1910); reports in *Kroekers Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1913, 136, 1914, 130.

⁵⁴ Epp, *Sketches from the pioneer years of the industry in the settlements of South Russia* : Epp, "The emergence of German industry," 339; Natasha V. Ostasheva, "Die Dynastie Lepp und ihr Unternehmen." *Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur der Russlanddeutschen*, 8, 1998, 25-34.

⁵⁵ Epp, "The emergence of German industry," 327.

⁵⁶ Epp, "The emergence of German industry," 337

⁵⁷ On the importance of this railway Company to the industrial development of southern Russia see Solovyova, "The railway system in the mining area of southern Russia," 72-74; the.

⁵⁸ Epp, "The emergence of German industry," 337, 339-40, 348.

⁵⁹ On the building of this link and the struggle between the colony farmers and the industrialists see David H. Epp, "Der Kampf um die 11 Katherinenbahn. Ein harmlose Eisenbahngeschichte." *Botschafter*, 20-37 (9/22 March- 11/24 May 1912).

⁶⁰ "Die Kolonie New-York und Umgegend." *Neuer Haus- und Landwirtschafts Kalender für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Russland*, 1912, 128-40; J. J. Niebuhr, "Jakob G. Niebuhr Fabriken." *Mennonite Life*, 1955, 25-30; Oscar H. Hamm, *Memoirs of Ignatyev in the light of historical change*. Saskatoon: Ruth F. Hamm, 1984.

⁶¹ *Ufa: the Mennonite settlements (colonies) 1894-1938*. Steinbach: Derksen, 1977.

⁶² Reported in Abraham Schmidt, "Von einem Ansiedler in Siberien." *OZ*, 239, (21 October/ 3 November 1910), 3;

⁶³ See the essays in Michael F. Hamm, ed., *The city in late Imperial Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

⁶⁴ Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian empire* , 111-13, 116-121.

⁶⁵ "Das Chortitza Wolostgebiet." *Neuer Haus- und Landwirtschafts Kalender für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Russland*, 1907, 104.

⁶⁶ James Urry, "Prolegomena to the study of Russian Mennonite society 1880-1914." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (from now on *JMS*), 8, 1990, 52-75.

⁶⁷ On the connections between wealthy Mennonite industrialists, millers and estate owners see James Urry, "Through the eye of a needle: wealth and the Mennonite experience in Imperial Russia." *JMS*, 3, 1985, 7-35; Al Reimer, "Peasant aristocracy: the Mennonite *Gutsbesitzertum* in Russia." *JMS*, 8, 1990, 76-88.

⁶⁸ H. van der Smissen, "Eine mennonitische Stadtgemeinde in Russland." *Mennonitische Blätter*, 12, (1 December 1898), 89-90, reprinted in *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 20(2) (11 January 1899).

⁶⁹ *The diary of Johann Johann Epp 1852-1919*. Winnipeg: Privately Printed, 2000, 45; Lepp was a member of the industrialist family and Mrs Heese connected with the milling/ merchant elite in Ekaterinoslav. In 1912 when

⁷⁰ Katherina Böttcher, "Jakob H. Niebuhr - ein Pioneer des Mühlenbaus. Erinnerungen aus

dem alten Russland." *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, 1978, 38: a printed copy of the extensive musical programme is in the 1912 diary of Abram Dyck in MHC, Winnipeg, Vol. 3717; Dyck was Niebuhr's business associate and his diaries contain a detailed account of Mennonite life in Alexandrovsk/Schönwiese between the 1890s and 1919.

⁷¹ From the recollections of Katherine Esau in Elizabeth Moot O'Hern. "Elizabeth Moot O'Hern, "Profiles of pioneer women scientists: Katherine Esau." *The Botanical Review*, 62(3), 1996, 215; see similar accounts of language shift in Anna Sudermann's memoirs of staying with the Esau's relatives in Ekaterinoslav while attending the ladies' gymnasia. Sudermann, "Lebenserinnerungen," 88.

⁷² Sudermann, "Lebenserinnerungen," 24.

⁷³ H. Görz, "Berdjansk." *Mennonitische Warte*, 6, 1938, 364-68; H. Görz, "Berdjansk." *Bote*, 27 November 1940, 6-7; Katharina Ediger, *Under His Wings: events in the lives of Elder Alexander Ediger and his family*. Kitchener: Bachmann Communications, 1994, 35-37.

⁷⁴ A. A. Neufeld was head of the Khortitsa High School from 1890 to 1905 and had a marked influence on the school's development; it is significant that the school was established in Berdjansk, not Ekaterinoslav, see letter of A. Neufeld in *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 10 January 1910, 6 and Heinrich Görz, "A. A. Neufeld, der unvergessliche Lehrer und Erzieher." *Bote*, 34, 29 August 1961, 4-5.

⁷⁵ Rudy P. Friesen (with Sergey Shmakin), *Into the past: buildings of the Mennonite Commonwealth*. Winnipeg: Raduga Press, 1996: on Mennonite institution building and its links with wealthy landowners, industrialists and city dwellers see James Urry, "The cost of community: the funding and economic management of the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth before 1914." *JMS*, 10, 1992, 22-55.

⁷⁶ On the development of education see Adolf Ens, "Mennonite education in Russia." In John Friesen ed., *Mennonites in Russia: essays in honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*. Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989, 75-97.

⁷⁷ Dyck, *Verloren in der Steppe* (Dritter Teil), 79-81; *Collected Works*, 1, 278-79.

⁷⁸ Nikolai Klassen, "Mennonite intelligentsia in Russia." *ML*, 24, 1969, 51-60; Harry Loewen, "Intellectual developments among the Mennonites of Russia: 1880-1917." *JMS*, 8, 1990, 89-107.

⁷⁹ For example just in 1910: P. Wiens, "Literaturabend [in the Halbstadt Commerce School]." *OZ*, 113(19 May/1 June), 3; E., "Literaturabend in der Kommerzschule Halbstadt." *Botschafter*, 37 (14/27 May), 2, "Eine Stimme aus dem Volke {on a literary evening in Chortitza}." *Botschafter*, 12 (12/25 February), 3; J. Dueck, "Literaturabend [in Einlage]." *Botschafter*, 24 (26 March/ 8 April), 2 and the dispute over plays below.

⁸⁰ *OZ*, 64(17/30 March 1902), 3-4; the nickname of one of the teachers at the High School, Heinrich H. Epp, was Chichikov, the central character of Gogol's comic novel *Dead Souls*.

⁸¹ "Offener Brief an die Schriftleitung der 'Friedensstimme'", *OZ*, 77 (4/17 April 1910), 3; *Botschafter*, 28 (9/22 April), 4; the thirteen students, some of the 30 Mennonites studying in St Petersburg at the time, included the cream of the emergent pre-war intelligentsia, a number of whom would later become creative authors: Hermann Penner, Abram Wiebe, Eugen Neufeld, Nikolai Ediger, Gerhard Rempel, Peter Klaassen, Hermann Ediger, Gerhard Derksen, Abram Schierling, Peter Sawatzky, Heinrich Block, Gerhard Sawatzky and Theodor Block. For a description of student life at this time in St Petersburg see Sudermann, "Lebenserinnerungen," 127-28.

⁸² In terms of the latter see the reply to Kroeker signed by this group (with their qualifications as they presented them) C. Bergmann, phil., H. Buettner, med., J. Wiens, rer.merc., O. Wagner, agr., P. Dueck, med., Th. Ediger, hist., N. Claassen, med. Leipzig-Halle, 8 May 1908. *Botschafter*, 34 (4/17 May 1910), 4.

⁸³ "Konferenz in Schoensee." *Botschafter*, 70 (7/20 September 1912), 3; item 5 for discussion concerned with "Dramatische Vorstellungen auf Abenden vor der Hochzeit, wie auch

auf Weihnachts-Literaturabenden." See also —r. "Dramatische Vorstellungen auf Abenden vor der Hochzeit und auf Literaturabenden." *Botschafter*, 70 (10/23 September), 3; st.. "Die Kunst, das Theater und lernende Jugend." *Botschafter*, 72 (14/27 September), 3; 73 (17/30 September), 3-4.

⁸⁴ Jacob H. Janzen, *De Bildung: lustiger Einakter von einem, der's gesehen hat*. Blumenort : A. Fast, (n.d., c. 1912); Janzen studied at Kharkov, Melitopol and in Germany, see Henry Paetkau. "Jacob H. Janzen: 'a minister of rare magnitude'." *Mennonogespräch: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario*, 6(1), 1988, 1-4.

⁸⁵ This clash of generations, apparent before 1914, would come to a head in the debates on the future of Mennonite society following the 1917 revolutions, Al Reimer, "Sanitätsdienst und Selbstschutz: Russian Mennonite non-resistance in World War I and its aftermath." *JMS*, 11, 1993, 140-43; 148n24.

⁸⁶ *The Harder Family Review*, 6 (April 1989), 11.

⁸⁷ According to Esau's own account the cities were Baku, Simferopol and Kharkov, all cities where the local governments were attempting massive reforms of their physical infrastructure and political organization, see Michael F. Hamm, "Khar'kov's progressive дума, 1910-1914: a study in Russian municipal reform." *Slavic Review*, 40, 1980, 17-36.

⁸⁸ On such issues see William Gleason, "The All-Russian Unions of Towns and the politics of urban reform in Tsarist Russia." *Russian Review*, 35, 1976, 290-302; Hamm, "Khar'kov's progressive дума" and Brower, Daniel, "Urban Revolution in the late Russian Empire." In Michael F Hamm, ed., *The City in late Imperial Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, 319-54.

⁸⁹ For provisional analysis of Mennonite political involvement see Leonard Friesen, "Mennonites in Russia and the revolution of 1905: experiences, perceptions and responses." *MQR*, 42, 1988, 42-55; Terry Martin, *The Mennonites and the Russian state Duma, 1905-1914*. Seattle: The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, 1996 (The Donald W. Treadgold Papers in Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Paper No. 4); James Urry, "Mennonite peoplehood and politics: Russia - Soviet Union - Canada (1880-1980)" *forthcoming*, Chapter 1 . On the broader context of Russian politics and the involvement of the Russian-Germans see Erich Franz Sommer, *Die Einigungsbestrebungen der Deutschen in Vorkriegs-Russland (1905-1914)*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1940.

⁹⁰ Sudermann, "Lebenserinnerungen," 92-93.

⁹¹ Dyck, *Verloren in der Steppe* (Dritter Teil), 71-75; *Collected Works*, 1, 271-77.

⁹² Villari, *Russia under the great shadow*, 104-11.

⁹³ Charters Wynn, *Workers, strikes and pogroms. The Donbas-Dnepr bend in late Imperial Russia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 89-90.

⁹⁴ John D. Klier and S. Lambroza eds, *Pogroms: anti-Jewish violence in modern Russian history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁹⁵ "Botschafter," *Mennonite Encyclopaedia*, 1, 396.

⁹⁶ Epp, "The emergence of German industry," 360-62.

⁹⁷ *The diary of Johann Johann Epp*, 134.

⁹⁸ Letter of April 11, 1912 in *The Harder Family Review*, 6 (April 1989), 10.

⁹⁹ Reimer, "Sanitätsdienst und Selbstschutz ;" David G. Rempel always insisted that this experience had a profound effect on an entire generation of Mennonites.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel R. Brower, "'The city in danger': the Civil War and the Russian urban population." In Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg and Ronald Grigor Suny eds, *Party, state, and society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in social history*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, 58-80; Diane P. Koenker, "Urbanization and deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War." In Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg and Ronald Grigor Suny eds, *Party,*

state, and society in the Russian Civil War: Explorations in social history. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, 81-104.

¹⁰¹ Lewis H. Siegelbaum *Soviet state and society between revolutions, 1918-1929*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

¹⁰² Moshe Lewin, *Russian peasants and Soviet power: a study of collectivization* (transl. I. Nove). Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968; Lewis H. Siegelbaum *Soviet state and society between revolutions, 1918-1929*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

¹⁰³ Two of the leading figures were Peter I. Dyck and Gerhard C. Hamm Chief Engineer and Deputy Chief Engineer of the "Communar" factory in Schönwiese who were arrested and executed in the purges of the late 1930s. Their daughter's, Hilda Epp and Margaret Bergmann, have collected a great deal of information on their life and work assisted by Mark Shevelov and others.

¹⁰⁴ Anne Rassweiler, *The generation of power: the history of Dneprostoi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

¹⁰⁵ "Nachrichten aus Chortitz." *Der Bote*, 7(28), (9 July 1930), 3-4; the *Denkmal* was the Memorial to the centennial of the settlement of Khortitsa raised in 1889. For other descriptions of the immense changes in the area see also other accounts in *Der Bote* from the following year, 8(20) (20 May 1931), 5 and "Aus dem Rosental bei Chortitz." 8(50) (16 December 1931), 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Der Bote*, 6(13), (28 March 1929), 4 on Schönwiese quoting from the newspaper "Krasnoye Zaparoshye:" on Alexandrovsk "Die Industrialisierung der Ukraine." *Der Bote*, 9(15) (13 April 1932), 5.

¹⁰⁷ Sir Walter Citrine, *I search for truth in Russia*. London: George Routledge, 1936, 212, 213; To the great embarrassment of Soviet officials, Citrine insisted on examining housing right across the city and his account is full of details of conditions, rents, prices etc.

¹⁰⁸ Royden K. Loewen, *Family, church and market: a Mennonite community in the old and the new worlds, 1850-1930*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Jacob E. Peters, "The forgotten immigrants: the coming of the 'late' Kanadier, 1881-1914." *JMS*, 18, 2000, 129-45; in fact some of these people were known in Manitoba as "Russländer", a term later applied/adopted by the 1920s immigrants. As such they might be considered also as "early Russländer." see James Urry, "Of borders and boundaries: reflections on Mennonite unity and separation in the modern world." *MQR*, 73(3), 1999, 519.

¹¹⁰ Victor G. Doerksen, "A letter from Winnipeg in 1907 [by] Jacob Penner." *JMS*, 15, 1997, 191-96.

¹¹¹ I am well aware that Schönwiese was named after the Russian congregation of its first elder, Johann P. Klassen, but an unconscious link to the industrial centre in the choice of name is not entirely impossible; after all, Schönwiese was the largest Mennonite urban, industrial centre in Russia with a German name!