“A Keen Eye for Their Own Interests”: Negotiating the 1870s Mennonite Migration to North America

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> “They appear to have a keen eye for their own interests, and should they finally decide on emigration (which I very much doubt) [they] will be governed in the selection of their future home by the advantages which may be offered to them.” —Lord Augustus Loftus, British ambassador to Russia, August 18, 1872[2]

Between 1873 and 1880, 17,075 Mennonites, one-third of the total Mennonite population in imperial Russia, left for North America. Of these emigrants, 10,135 would immigrate to the United States of America while 6,940 immigrated to Canada.[3] What caused these Mennonites to emigrate? Why did the majority stay? Why did a minority of emigrants choose Canada while the bulk of emigrants selected the United States? These decisions were not made in haste. Rather, they were the product of extensive deliberation and negotiation.

This article analyzes the negotiations behind the 1870s Mennonite migration to North America. Past scholarship has generally taken a state-centric approach to the question why some Mennonites chose Canada over the United States and vice versa.[4] Some authors also looked unflatteringly on those who chose to emigrate.[5] This article examines the interactions as a whole: as complex,

international, multilateral negotiations between the Russian Empire, the United States, the British Empire, including the new Dominion of Canada, and different groups of Mennonites. These negotiations were conducted between states seeking to advance their own agendas, and Mennonites seeking religious freedoms and/or economic opportunity.

Previous studies have overlooked the international aspect and interconnectedness of the negotiations. Understanding the migration requires each state and Mennonite group to be considered in tandem, rather than in isolation. No negotiation occurred in a vacuum. The inducements offered by one state were influenced by those offered by another, and by each state's own unique pressures. While Canada offered the most generous inducements, this was in the context of direct competition with the United States. The United States considered Canada's inducements while offering its own. For Russia, a last-minute compromise came only after Canada and the United States threatened to draw away some of its most industrious colonists.[6]

In the end, Mennonites managed to successfully leverage all three host states against each other to satisfy their varied interests. Despite, or perhaps because of, their own internal divisions, Mennonites showed adept negotiation skills. While Mennonites have often positioned themselves as "the quiet in the land," they actually demonstrated, as Lord Loftus observed, "a keen eye for their own interests" in a complex international negotiation.[7]

The Impetus for Negotiation: Russian Reforms, American Manifest Destiny, and Canadian Anxieties

Mennonites settled in the Vistula Delta beginning in the sixteenth century seeking greater religious tolerance. Gradually they acquired special rights, at first from local authorities and then from Polish kings, spelled out in a charter, or *Privilegium*. Following the first two partitions of Poland of 1772 and 1793, these Mennonites came under Prussian rule and faced increasing militarism and restrictions on land acquisition. Consequently, large numbers migrated to Russia, where they established closed colonies with an exemption from military service, pursuant to privileges granted in 1787 by Catherine the Great and in 1800 by Paul I.[8]

In the 1860s, Russia attempted to modernize through what became known as the Great Reforms. Feelings of nationalism and pan-Slavism led to a policy of "Russification." Military considerations were a factor after Russia's defeat in the 1853–1856 Crimean War,

as were the expanding borders of the German Empire after 1871. Despite a decline in international prestige and a need for economic modernization, the Russian Empire remained a world power.[9]

After the US Civil War ended in 1865, the United States resumed its efforts to settle the frontier and fulfill its "manifest destiny" across the continent, showing signs of being a nascent power. The western United States was relatively developed industrially and had a larger population base compared to the Canadian North-West.[10] Private railway companies could engage and seek out immigrants, and so it had already been the preeminent destination for migrants for several decades. Owing to its superior railway infrastructure, more temperate climate, and preferable land, its need to populate its frontier was less dire than Canada's.[11]

With colonial possessions around the world, the British Empire was the dominant global power in the 1870s. Four of these colonies in British North America had achieved a degree of self-government and confederated to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867. The Dominion was enlarged dramatically in 1870, when it acquired the vast territories of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Despite a legal claim to the new territory, in reality, Canadian sovereignty faced serious challenges. Canada's annexation had been preceded by a brief but significant resistance in 1869–1870 led by the Métis inhabitants of the Red River Colony. This resulted in the creation of the tiny province of Manitoba; the rest of the annexed lands became the North-West Territories. Indigenous inhabitants of the land paid little heed to Canada's claim, creating what Métis scholar Adam Gaudry labels a "fantasy of sovereignty."[12] Additionally, these newly acquired lands were the subject of interest for American annexation.[13] Meanwhile, from 1866 to 1871 there was a series of raids on Canadian territories by the Irish-American Fenian Brotherhood, with the last attempt being a failed incursion into Manitoba in 1871.[14] In light of these threats, the Dominion sought to transform its "paper jurisdiction" into actual authority over the territory.[15]

Canada consolidated control over the territory sequentially: first by signing treaties with First Nations to cede the land, beginning in 1871; second, by promising a transcontinental railway, also in 1871; third, by passing the Dominion Lands Act in 1872 to allow for homestead grants; and fourth, by creating the North-West Mounted Police in 1873.[16] The subsequent task of attracting permanent settlers was "not to be left to private business or accident."[17] The Canadian government needed "a sizeable group of capable and permanent

settlers"[18] who could exist on the Prairies and fully incorporate the territory into Canada.

In the 1870s, Canada was in dire need of new immigrants just as Russian Mennonites, facing the loss of their privileges during Russia's Great Reforms, started to look outward once more. A new Russian law dated June 4, 1871 (Old Style [OS]) introduced compulsory, universal military service for men beginning in 1874. Further, educational reforms meant that administration of schools would pass to state authorities, with instruction in Russian.[19] The reforms provided the impetus for Mennonites to consider emigrating elsewhere. Landlessness was also a likely contributing factor, as 60 percent of Mennonite families in the 1860s did not own agricultural land.[20]

Negotiations Begin: The Deputations of 1871

In January 1871, prior to its official announcement, rumours of compulsory military service reached the Russian Mennonite population owing to a letter from P. D. von Kotzebue, the governor general of New Russia-Bessarabia. In February and March, the two major Mennonite colonies, Chortitza and Molotschna, sent a deputation of six representatives. The deputation travelled to St. Petersburg hoping to speak to the tsar but was unsuccessful, instead speaking with Kotzebue, several senators, and the body drafting the law, the Commission on Terms of Service. Only two deputies could converse in Russian. For Russian authorities, this underscored the importance of Russification. Count Heyden informed the deputies that they could serve in medical corps instead of combat units. Deputy Leonhard Sudermann stated that Mennonites could not serve in a medical corps under military administration.[21]

While in St. Petersburg, the deputation managed a small success. They made a sympathetic friend in Theodor Hans, a pastor of the Moravian Brethren. He would act as "an effective intermediary" between Mennonites and Russian officials over the following years.[22] Following this visit, in September of 1871 a deputation travelled to Crimea, seeking a personal audience with the tsar at his summer resort. Though this second deputation left petitions for the tsar and tsarina, they did not obtain an audience.[23] At this juncture, Mennonites had few options and opinion was divided. To stay in Russia would mean to compromise their religious beliefs. Emigration was one solution, but that would carry its own set of risks and costs.

Negotiations Expand: Looking Outward to North America, 1872

Support for emigration began to grow with the leadership of Cornelius Jansen, a Prussian-born Mennonite who had recently arrived in the Russian Empire. Jansen served as Prussian consul in Berdyansk, and had contact with Prussian Mennonites who had emigrated to North America. In January 1872, following deliberation with Jansen and minister Dietrich Gaeddert, Leonhard Sudermann sent a petition to British consul James Zohrab seeking information on immigration to Canada. Sudermann raised the question of sending a delegation to negotiate terms of settlement, and inquired about military exemption and a purchase (or grant) of land. After a conference in Molotschna, a second petition was sent to Zohrab echoing the requests of the earlier petition.[24] A letter, referencing the pending petition to Zohrab, was also sent to American consul Timothy Smith with the same requests.[25] Jansen had already held cursory talks with Smith the previous year when the compulsory service law was first published.[26]

Despite these overtures to Britain and the United States, Mennonites had not abandoned hope of a negotiated solution in the Russian Empire. While awaiting responses from Britain and the United States, a deputation from Molotschna travelled to St. Petersburg in February 1872. This deputation was told the only option was to appeal to the Imperial Council in the fall. In March, Theodor Hans communicated to Mennonites the recommendation made by the Commission on Terms of Service, which was to allow Mennonites to serve in in hospitals and workshops away from the front lines, with an exemption from carrying weapons. Hans noted these terms were more generous than those afforded to Mennonites in the German Empire. Further petitions and deputations seeking additional compromises from the tsar and Russian authorities continued to be sent throughout 1872 (and into 1873).[27] Thus, by early 1872, Russian Mennonites were exploring three options simultaneously: remain in Russia, emigrate to Canada, or emigrate to the United States.

Consul Zohrab sent the two petitions he received to British foreign secretary Earl Granville, along with a covering letter. Noting the Mennonites' proficiency in agriculture and overall industriousness, Zohrab wrote that their departure would "be a serious loss" to Russia. Further, Zohrab had "no hesitation . . . in saying that these Germans would prove a valuable acquisition to any country they may select for their future home." He stated that "their first choice falls on British soil" and they would "do so with regret if they have to leave for any country other than Canada," but, if necessary, "they

will seek refuge in the United States to which their attention has been already directed."[28]

The petition to American consul Smith reached diplomat Eugene Schuyler who replied in the absence of Secretary of State Hamilton Fish. Echoing Zohrab, Schuyler noted to his superiors that the Mennonites were "good agriculturalists" who had "great success on steppes that were formerly perfectly bare" and described the Mennonites as "intelligent, industrious and persevering, and very clean, orderly, moral, temperate and economical." He concluded by stating, "I do not think it would be possible to find in Europe any better emigrant than these Mennonites, and should the whole colony go to the United States they would rapidly develop into good and useful citizens."[29]

Schulyer's response was condensed by Smith before being sent to the Mennonites. Smith simply wrote: "Compulsory Military Service does not exist in the U.S." He advised that American homestead laws granted 165 acres of land to every settler who declared his intention of becoming a citizen and additional land could be purchased from the government or railway companies. With respect to sending a deputation, Smith wrote that "it would do no harm and might be productive of great advantage to send a small deputation to America to see what could be done and to select a site for colony."[30]

The Canadian response, in the form of a Privy Council report dated April 26, 1872, gave assurances that the Militia Act exempted any Mennonite "from Military Service when balloted in time of peace or war, upon such conditions and such regulations as the Governor-in-Council may, from time to time, prescribe." Pursuant to the Dominion Lands Act, the report advised that there would be a free grant of 160 acres of land in Manitoba for anyone at least twenty-one years of age on the condition of settlement, and free grants or easy purchases of land were available in other provinces. Further, the report offered that "settlers may obtain contiguous lots of land, so as to enable them to form their own communities." This was because the Dominion Lands Act allowed the secretary of state to set aside or reserve land. However, the report stated that it was not government policy "to grant aid to any settlers in Canada." The report also invited, at Canada's expense, one or two persons to survey "lands for settlement and the terms on which they could obtain them."[31]

Of foremost importance to the Mennonites was the military exemption. In this connection, neither the American nor Canadian responses allayed the Mennonites' concerns. American consul Smith's brief response was "regarded as rather waiving the question" because "the Mennonites say that though compulsory service does not

exist now, it is not stated that it cannot be easily made to exist in a time of war."[32] Similarly, the Canadian response, quoting the Militia Act, prompted Jansen to write directly to the governor general to ask under which "conditions" and "regulations" compulsory service might be prescribed. Only after further assurances from another Privy Council report, and by Canadian immigration agent William Hespeler, was Jansen satisfied of the soundness of the exemption.[33]

In the summer of 1872, not wishing to wait for an official delegation, four Mennonite men from wealthy families undertook their own tour of the western United States. Three men returned to Russia with favourable reports. The fourth, Bernhard Warkentin, toured Manitoba with Ontario Swiss Mennonite farmer and businessman Jacob Y. Shantz, at the request of the Canadian government, before returning to the United States, where he remained.[34]

A complicating factor was that Russian law prohibited the promotion of emigration. The Americans realized this immediately, and perhaps this was the reasoning behind Consul Smith's brief response to the Mennonites' petition, and the subsequent involvement of private railroad agents. As private citizens, rather than government officials, there was no risk they would face diplomatic sanction. The British Foreign Office likewise recognized this potential obstacle as early as April 1872.

Canada, though subordinate to Britain in foreign affairs, was desperate to attract settlers to Manitoba. Whether reckless or simply oblivious of Russia's law, the Canadian government dispatched immigration agent William Hespeler to the Mennonite colonies in July 1872. Correspondence reveals much tension and discord between Canadian agents and British diplomats. Unable to obtain a passport from the British embassy in Vienna, Hespeler wrote to Canada's agriculture minister, J. H. Pope complaining that "the Embassy here treats me with the same indifference as was my mission to further the interests of the Duchy of Luxemburg . . . and my private opinion is—the sooner we are an Independent Canada the better."[35]

After arriving at the Mennonite colonies in July, Hespeler immediately "attracted the unfavourable attention of the Russian authorities."[36] In an August 28, 1872, dispatch, Hespeler further complained about Consul Zohrab to Pope, for Zohrab had advised Hespeler to leave Russia to avoid arrest.[37] In response, John Lowe, secretary of the Department of Agriculture, instructed Hespeler to "bear in mind" the "possibility of Mr. Zohrab acting in the interest of the United States" and that Hespeler was "expected to exert [him]self to the utmost to secure to Canada the [Mennonite] emigration."[38] Lowe and Pope's suspicions were sorely misplaced. Consul Zohrab had been one of the earliest and most enthusiastic

supporters of attracting Mennonites to Canada. The only basis for this outlandish allegation was that overtures were being made to attract Mennonites to the United States—which had originated from the Mennonites themselves. Thus, the Mennonites' strategy of simultaneously engaging both Canada and the United States was, by September 1872, already paying dividends.

In reality, Consul Zohrab's cool response to Hespeler was a result of previous orders from his superiors in the Foreign Office. On consecutive days in August, Zohrab had sent two dispatches to Foreign Secretary Granville. Zohrab spoke positively of Hespeler's efforts, reporting that Hespeler "had been very well received in the Colonies." Zohrab also suggested that he be appointed in charge of managing and directing the Mennonite emigration. As such, Zohrab felt it "advisable for [him] to proceed to Canada as soon as possible" and opined that a "very extensive . . . general departure" of Mennonites was "more probable."[39]

It was only once Zohrab's views reached his superiors that restraint was advised. On August 18, 1872, Lord Loftus, British ambassador to Russia, wrote a lengthy correspondence to Granville which included Zohrab's dispatches. Unlike Zohrab, Loftus was dubious that the Mennonites would emigrate en masse to Canada. Owing to "private information," Loftus was "inclined to believe" that the Russian government would "grant such a relaxation of the future Military law of service" that would satisfy the Mennonites' religious views, "and that consequently their intended emigration will be abandoned." Loftus also observed that

> the leaders of the German Mennonites are on the one hand endeavouring to exercise a pressure on the Imperial [Russian] Government by a threat of Emigration in order to obtain the fulfilment of their wishes whilst, on the other hand, they are simultaneously in communication with the Governments of Canada and of the United States with a view in case of failure with the Imperial Government to secure the best conditions for their future emigration.[40]

Under these circumstances, Loftus believed that the Canadian government and Consul Zohrab should "maintain an entirely passive attitude" until the Mennonites announced their intention to emigrate and received permission to do so from the Russian government. Having already informed the Mennonites of the terms of Canadian emigration, Consul Zohrab was to "abstain from making any further advances" to the Mennonites, for "they appear to have a keen eye for their own interests, and should they finally decide on emigration (which I very much doubt) [they] will be governed in the selection of their future home by the advantages which may be

offered to them."[41] Thus, British diplomatic concerns, which demanded restraint and passivity for fear of Russian sanction, were directly at odds with Canada's aim of attracting settlers in the face of American competition.[42]

Furthermore, officials in the Colonial Office wanted Canada to be able to raise its own militia and defend itself from the prevailing threat of invasion from the United States. In this connection, Undersecretary of State for the Colonies Robert Herbert was "not unconcerned" over the Mennonites' repeated inquiries over Canada's military exemption. Herbert doubted the wisdom in settling "men who refuse to defend themselves" in Manitoba, "where there is every prospect of fighting."[43] Thus, the Canadian immigration policy of wooing Mennonites from Russia to settle in Manitoba ran contrary to both British foreign and colonial policy.

Whatever his sources, Loftus's private information proved reliable. On October 23, 1872 (OS), less than three months after Loftus's dispatch, the Commission on Terms of Service considered a report drafted by Governor General Kotzebue. Kotzebue noted Mennonites had offers to settle in North America, but discreet communications hinted Mennonites were amenable to a compromise with Russia and would consider non-combatant, administrative roles such as working in hospitals or prisons if it meant not having to emigrate.[44] Apparently, Mennonites in Russia were engaging in subtle negotiations of their own. Kotzebue asserted:

> Valuing their present homeland, the Mennonites would like, having dropped any thought of moving to America in spite of offers received, to submit to the demands of the government in the introduction of general military service as long as the demands do not exceed the bounds of their religious convictions. They are afraid from their side to present any kind of written statement on this matter, fearing that in the eyes of posterity it would assume the form of a document witnessing to their voluntary recognition of the principle of military service. They are prepared to make any sacrifice in order to atone for any privileges granted by the state.[45]

Kotzebue further recommended a twelve-year deferment be granted to the Mennonites to allow them to become accustomed to the idea of service, and, once in service, that Mennonites be concentrated in a small number of locations so that their spiritual needs could be met. Kotzebue's recommendations were later endorsed by the Imperial Council.[46]

In November and December, the matter between Canada and Britain reached a head. Lord Loftus wrote to Earl Granville stating his opinion that it was "imprudent" for the Canadian government to

have sent Hespeler to Russia to induce Mennonite emigration.[47] The Foreign Office wrote to the Colonial Office with the following warning:

> Lord Augustus Loftus appears to think that the Canadian government have been going rather too far in their endeavour to induce these Mennonites to immigrate to Canada . . . and he seems to think that Mr. Hespeler is likely to get himself into trouble and Her Majesty's government also if he again returns to Bessarabia with the object of inducing these people to leave.[48]

In turn, Lord Kimberley, the colonial secretary, wrote to the Canadian government on December 7, 1872, warning that "to avoid complications with Russia, Canadian Govt. should take no further steps with respect to Mennonite emigration till informed that matter can be safely proceeded with."[49] On December 10, Lowe rescinded his directive to Hespeler and recalled him to Canada immediately.[50]

Negotiations Culminate: North American Enticements and Russian Compromises, 1873–74

Mennonites continued engaging contacts in both the United States and Canada while still negotiating with Russia. In Minnesota, a letter by David Goerz of Molotschna, published January 26, 1873, in the *Saint Paul Daily Press*, asserted Mennonites were not emigrating for material needs but to "enjoy more liberty of conscience," for which they had "received more positive assurances on this point from Canada than your government." Still, Goerz gave assurances "that your beautiful State finds many and warm admirers among us. I may even be justified in stating that it would be preferred, if it would offer the same inducements as Canada." Goerz's letter had been forwarded to the press by Bernhard Warkentin, who privately observed to Goerz, "Neither does it harm to tell these gentlemen what proposals the English Government is making to us, perhaps the United States will yet compete with Canada"—though Warkentin knew this was unlikely because the US Congress needed to approve any proposal.[51] The Minnesota legislature responded with a unanimous motion, inviting Mennonites to settle and endeavouring "to secure them the largest religious and political privileges allowed."[52]

In Russia, Shantz's account of Manitoba was widely distributed among Mennonites. Shantz drew attention to the promised bloc grants of land which would enable Mennonites to maintain their language and customs.[53] Meanwhile, Theodor Hans also passed along advice from Count Heyden that it would now be an opportune time

to petition the Imperial Council. He encouraged Mennonites to present a united front and send a "collective petition which expresses the opinion of the total Mennonite Community." This united front failed to materialize when Mennonites from the Bergthal colony refused to sign a petition at an all-Mennonite conference in Alexanderwohl, instead opting to send their own. Then, on March 6, 1873 (OS), a deputation met with the president of the Imperial Council, Grand Duke Nikolaevich, and rejected the prospect of serving in hospitals or work camps because those roles still fell under military administration.[54]

Russia's position was shifting from quiet confidence to increasing concern. The two sides were at an impasse. For Mennonites, this resulted in growing support for emigration. For Russian authorities, it prompted a reaction. An edict issued by the Imperial Council on March 10 (OS), expelled Cornelius Jansen and Wilhelm Loewens from Russia for distributing pamphlets that promoted emigration.[55] In April, the Ministry of the Interior made an official complaint and Russia's foreign minister, Prince Gorchakov, issued Lord Loftus a warning over Zohrab's links to Hespeler and the efforts to induce emigration.[56]

Hespeler remained confident of Canada's domestic prospects and incognizant of Britain's diplomatic problems. In a letter to Pope dated March 1, he wrote that the assurances granted by Canada meant that Mennonites were now "disposed to give Canada a preference over the neighbouring States." Hespeler had "no doubt but what an immense emigration would flow to this Country [Canada]" and his Mennonite contacts advised him that "a general emigration is on foot." Lowe replied that eight townships had been reserved for their exclusive settlement.[57] In a further letter of April 26, Hespeler advised Pope that Mennonites expected to receive "a written Document direct from the Government" confirming a military service exemption, freedom of religion including in schools, reservation of townships, homestead privileges, the right to affirm affidavits instead of swearing them, and financial assistance in immigration.[58] Lowe affirmed all these points in a letter dated May 3.[59]

From April to August 1873, eleven delegates toured North America to view prospective areas of settlement and negotiate terms of immigration. Nine delegates represented Mennonite communities from West Prussia, Volhynia, Molotschna (Berdyansk and Alexanderwohl), the Kleine Gemeinde from Borozenko, and the Bergthal colony. The Hutterian Brethren also sent two delegates. The delegates toured land across the United States including Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Dakota Territory, and the Canadian province of Manitoba.[60]

Although seven delegates rejected the Canadian land and made an early return to the United States, the four Bergthal and Kleine Gemeinde delegates conducted a more thorough tour of Manitoba and proceeded to Ottawa. There, they received a letter of guarantees dated July 23, 1873, from John Lowe (the "Lowe Letter"). This was primarily a restatement of the pledges he had extended in his letter of May 3. A loan to help with costs of migrating was extended in addition to the subsidy for travel costs Canada was already providing. Satisfied Canada had met their demands and granted what they considered a *Privilegium*, these delegates returned to Russia without seriously considering the United States further.[61]

Tensions between Britain and Canada again erupted while the Mennonite delegates were touring Manitoba, when the Foreign Office learned that Hespeler had provided Russian Mennonites with official correspondence between the British and Canadian governments. Lord Kimberley drew attention to his instructions sent the previous December that Canada was to take no further steps to induce Mennonite migration and demanded a "full explanation." This explanation was provided by J. H. Pope who claimed, falsely, that only "extracts" of documents had been provided to Hespeler.[62] In fact, Pope had provided Hespeler with full copies of Zohrab's original communication to the Foreign Office and translations of the Mennonites' original requests, in addition to excerpts of Colonial Office letters, thereby implicating British and Canadian officials in efforts to promote Mennonite emigration.[63] Canada's rash actions, undertaken without proper approval from Britain, had one controversial result: Order-in-Council 957, designed to give legal effect to the promises in the Lowe Letter, was approved and then belatedly cancelled and marked "secret" by Lord Dufferin, the governor general, because of directives from the British Foreign Office.[64] Nevertheless, diplomatic escalation was avoided, and immigration to Canada would ensue in 1874.

The seven delegates who returned early to the United States pursued further negotiations with American officials. On August 8, 1873, three delegates petitioned President Ulysses S. Grant for the right to operate German schools in their colonies and exemptions from military service and jury duty. Further inquiries on their behalf were made by Jay Cooke, financier of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and his associate Michael Hiller.[65] Although Grant was supportive, as these matters fell under state and not federal jurisdiction, Grant and his Secretary of State Hamilton Fish could not extend guarantees in these matters.[66] In subsequent years, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas would pass laws granting military exemptions on religious grounds.[67]

Beginning in December 1873, the US Congress considered a proposal that would facilitate Mennonite bloc settlement.[68] Migration from the Russian colonies presented a logistical challenge: their landholdings in Russia could only be sold to other Mennonites and selling at once would greatly depress their value. Consequently, Mennonites proposed to migrate over the course of several years, but, as land in the United States could not be set aside or reserved as in Canada, non-Mennonite settlers might claim adjacent land in the intervening time. Further complicating matters was that American railroad companies owned alternating sections of land. The seven delegates had negotiated a contract in which the Northern Pacific Railroad Company agreed to reserve for purchase all its privately owned sections of a tract of land in the Dakota Territory. But the delegates also wanted to be able to purchase the adjoining government-owned sections so that Mennonites could live in exclusive and contiguous bloc settlements, akin to what they had in Russia and what Canada had already offered them.[69]

At the urging of Grant and Secretary of the Interior Columbus Delano, Congress considered granting discretionary power to the secretary of the interior to withdraw government-owned sections from sale and reserve land—a power similar to that held by Delano's Canadian counterpart. While a bill to this effect languished in the House of Representatives, the Senate seriously considered and debated its "Mennonite Bill," which allowed for the reservation of land for up to two years, to a maximum of 100,000 acres per contiguous area and 500,000 acres aggregate per declaration. Those in favour referred to the desirability and industriousness of the Mennonites and the history of various colonies that had became US states. Those opposed spoke of the "homogenous unity" of the country that "successful republicanism" required.[70]

The Canadian concessions were explicitly invoked, both by Mennonites and their American supporters, during this debate. In a petition to both the House of Representatives and the Senate, Mennonite leaders claimed, "The Canadian government has offered to present us as much land as we would occupy, within the before-mentioned time, but a party of us would prefer to settle in the United States, if the opportunity is given us to locate in colonies."[71] Similarly, while debating the Mennonite Bill, Senator Windom, a Minnesota Republican (and stockholder of the now-struggling Northern Pacific), noted the "very great advantages" offered by the Canadian government and read the Lowe Letter in full. He further stated:

> The Senate will have observed by the reading of this [the Lowe Letter] that the inducements offered by Canada are very much greater than

> these people ask to be offered by this country. . . . They prefer our country, and unless we choose to drive away forty thousand of the very best farmers of Russia who are now competing with us in the markets of the world with some ten million bushels of their wheat, if we choose to say that Russia shall raise that wheat or that Canada shall provide it instead of our own country, we can simply reject the proffer of these people, and they probably will not become our citizens. I deem it of the utmost importance that this bill should pass.[72]

Senator Daniel D. Pratt likewise stated that "unless they are induced to come here by something like this bill they will go to Canada" because "the Canadian government has held out greater inducements to them to emigrate there than this bill proposes."[73]

Invoking the guarantees from the Canadian government to leverage American legislators was certainly an intentional negotiation ploy on the part of the Mennonites and Hutterites. The four delegates who travelled to Ottawa never pursued serious negotiations with the United States, as they were preoccupied with guarantees of religious freedom which they correctly assumed the United States government would not grant.[74] The seven delegates who did negotiate with the United States had shown no interest in settling in Manitoba the year prior, but now used the Canadian inducements in an attempt to improve terms of American settlement.[75]

In the end, the Mennonite Bill failed. Debate continued until April 23, 1874, when the Mennonite migration to North America had already begun.[76] The prevailing view in the United States was best summarized by Senator Matthew H. Carpenter of Wisconsin:

> We do not desire to have a town or a county settled by any foreign nationality, speaking their own language, having their national amusements, and in all things separate and distinct from Americans. The idea is and should be, and it should never be departed from, that in inviting foreigners to settle in this country they should take their place with our citizens; they should come here not to be Germans or Frenchmen or Italians, but to be Americans, to become American citizens, to speak our language, to support our institutions, to be of us in all things. Now certainly the greatest obstacle in the way of this result would be to give the different nationalities a separate and distinct location, as this bill proposes to do.[77]

The Canadian policy of allowing bloc settlement provides an interesting counterpoint. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald laid out the rationale for this position in an 1881 debate about German and Scandinavian immigration practices:

> Large tracts of land are selected in advance, and then they come in large bodies, . . . and unless they are allowed to settle together in that way they will not come at all. Perhaps, in the case of German or Irish or any other immigration, it would be better to have the different races scattered throughout the territory, so that by degrees they might amalgamate, and become, in the end, Canadians; but the first thing to do is to get them to come, and if they will not come readily and scatter over the country, then we must bring them out in communities.[78]

Though both Canada and the United States desired to see their immigrants scatter and assimilate, pragmatism dictated the Canadian approach. What Canada lacked in quality of land, it compensated for with additional benefits in the form of bloc settlement and religious privileges, in order to induce settlement and consolidate territory.

In Russia, preparations for emigration were well underway in late 1873 and early 1874. Yet Mennonites continued their efforts to obtain an exemption from Russian policy. A deputation to see the tsar in the fall of 1873 was again unsuccessful and resorted to leaving a petition with the Ministry of Crown Lands. Other than a temporary military service deferral until 1880, there had been no resolution by January 1, 1874, when the Russian law came into effect.[79]

To better assess the appetite for emigration among Mennonites, the tsar personally dispatched General Eduard von Todleben to their colonies in April 1874. Todleben was a hero of the Crimean War well known among Russia's German colonists. In a report to the minister of the interior, Todleben opined that there were three groups of Mennonites. The first comprised those who had already sold their property and were influenced to emigrate either by religious "fanatics" within the Mennonite population or by foreign agitators. The second and largest group were those contemplating emigration but hesitant to do so owing either to being more educated or disagreeing that the law violated their religious beliefs. This second group was nonetheless wary of the Russian government's reforms. The third group, an extreme minority, intended to stay in Russia for the sole purpose of buying cheap land and property from those departing. In confidence, Todleben stated his belief that the policy of Russification rather than military service was the primary reason for emigration.[80]

To the Mennonites, Todleben made it known that he had been authorized to speak on behalf of the tsar. While emphasizing the difficulties North American emigrants would face and using the experience of the recent US Civil War to cast doubt that a military exemption could be achieved in the United States, Todleben compromised and offered alternative forms of state service outside of the military. The immediate prospect of mass emigration was staved off,

although negotiations would continue until the end of the deferment period in 1880. In April 1875, an exemption was granted in law allowing Mennonites to provide service in the marine department, fire brigade, or forestry department. Forestry service quickly became the Mennonites' preferred choice. In negotiating the "Todleben Compromise," Mennonites and Todleben eventually came to an agreement whereby forestry service would be provided in exclusively Mennonite units, with the majority of expenses paid by the Mennonite colonies.[81]

Appeased by the Todleben Compromise, two-thirds of the Mennonite population would remain in Russia, evidently believing their religious convictions were sufficiently accommodated.[82] A bumper crop in Russia in 1874 may have also swayed some undecided individuals against emigrating.[83] Although not all Mennonites were persuaded to stay, Russia conspicuously did not issue them passports until after Todleben's intervention.[84]

Ultimately, 17,075 Mennonites emigrated to North America, most between the years 1874 and 1876. Canada attracted 6,940 Mennonites, consisting of residents of the Chortitza and Fürstenland colonies, the entire Bergthal colony, and a majority of Kleine Gemeinde from the Borozenko and Molotschna colonies, all of whom settled in Manitoba. The United States attracted 10,135 Mennonites, which included a minority of the Kleine Gemeinde, the entire Alexanderwohl congregation, and others from Molotschna, Crimea, Volhynia, and Prussia; they settled in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the Dakota Territory.[85] Additionally, 1,254 Hutterites—nearly the entire population in Russia—emigrated to the Dakota Territory.[86]

Negotiations Evaluated: The Interests of Each State and Migrant Group

The lack of a satisfactory agreement between Russia and its Mennonite population in the early 1870s meant that community leaders of some fifty thousand colonists seriously explored emigration. Russian authorities did not want to lose the industrious Mennonites but also had to address domestic pressures and modernize as a state. These pressures explain why the Russian authorities did not immediately accede to the Mennonites' demands. Furthermore, Russia's demands were hardly outrageous in substance. Officials made it clear from the outset that Mennonites could serve in noncombatant roles, which was the same opportunity afforded to Mennonites in Prussia.[87] The concession of not needing to carry a weapon represented an even greater degree of accommodation but was

nonetheless rejected.[88] The resulting breakdown in negotiations nearly led to a mass emigration. Evidently, Russian authorities had underestimated the Mennonites' ability to skilfully negotiate with other countries. Only at the last minute did the tsar dispatch Todleben and reach a compromise acceptable to two-thirds of the Mennonite population. As for those who emigrated, Russia seems not to have been bothered with their departure. Russian authorities considered them to be religious "fanatics" and even their co-religionist Peter M. Friesen described them as "unmanageable, pious foster children whom it was impossible to satisfy."[89]

From the Russian vantage point, the Todleben Compromise must be seen as a success. Two-thirds of the industrious Mennonite population remained in Russia, and the loss to Russia's military was more than compensated for. As Lawrence Klippenstein has observed, forestry service on the southern steppes had a higher marginal benefit to the state than a few extra soldiers in the military.[90] When considering Russia's need to modernize, and that the Canada-bound emigrants were unlikely to accept any state service, there was no zone of possible agreement.[91] Excluding the most ardent opponents of reform from the calculation meant the Todleben Compromise assuaged the concerns of the vast majority of Mennonite for whom an agreement was still possible.

For the Mennonites who remained in Russia, these negotiations must also be seen as a success, even if later Russian Mennonite scholars, notably Peter M. Friesen, would view those who emigrated as implacable and unpatriotic.[92] Without the threat of their emigration it is doubtful that Russia would have granted the Todleben Compromise. The process of creative bargaining yielded an improvement to continued life in Russia. Further, the mass departure depressed prices of goods and land, creating a "buyer's market" which was used advantageously by those who remained to alleviate their landless situation.[93]

The United States managed to attract 10,135 Mennonites and 1,254 Hutterites. The United States had an advantage over Canada with respect to both its better quality of land and private railway companies. The private railway companies could act unilaterally, lowering the risk of the United States angering Russia while financing the costs of immigration. Accordingly, the United States gained more settlers without taking diplomatic risks, extending public credit, granting special privileges, or passing further laws to allow for bloc settlement, Still, it should be observed that the combined population of Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota and Dakota Territory was 941,179 in 1870 and 2,364,408 in 1880.[94] Thus, while the United States attracted a larger absolute number of settlers than Canada,

those 11,389 settlers constituted less than 0.5 percent of the aggregate population of those jurisdictions, which explains the relatively more relaxed, laissez-faire approach of the United States compared to Canada.

The Mennonites who settled in the United States might be described as more economically oriented, in that they and their delegates prioritized the favourable settlement locations in the United States over the robust legal promises from Canada. They obtained preferable land in a more temperate climate with greater access to markets, while conceding bloc settlement and more explicit guarantees of religious freedoms. Yet these Mennonites did obtain full exemption from military service, albeit from state legislatures rather than federal Congress. They also had their co-religionists to look to for re-assurance. For it was Mennonites already in the United States who gave Cornelius Jansen the idea of emigrating from Russia. Their presence was evidence that Mennonites did not need a *Privilegium* to live in the United States peacefully and without aggrieving their religious principles.[95]

Concerns over the absence of guaranteed bloc settlement may have been allayed by the wide availability of homestead land. As Alvin Esau notes,

> the aggressive competition between railway companies to settle railway owned land and the availability of contiguous plots of homestead land with that railway land created various ethnic enclaves without government accommodation, in any event. Many Russian Mennonites settled in Kansas and Nebraska, where various townships eventually evolved into what might be called exclusivist Mennonite settlements.[96]

Therefore, a more charitable analysis of the choice to settle in the United States would be that ethnic enclaves were formed de facto if not de jure, which, when coupled with preferable land, outweighed the need for legal guarantees of reserved land.

Britain alone seems to have understood the back-and-forth the Mennonites were undertaking with the Russian government. Hindsight has proven Lord Loftus's diplomacy to be skilful, perceptive, and remarkably prescient. His dispatch of August 1872 predicted almost exactly what unfolded two years later. The "private information" he had obtained was correct. Russia did relax the military service laws and grant a compromise. Loftus's doubts that the emigration would not occur at all were justified. Although emigration did occur, it was far from the "general" emigration predicted by Zohrab and Hespeler. This migration was, as Loftus had predicted, "governed . . . by the advantages . . . offered to them."[97]

For Britain, large-scale Mennonite immigration to Canada appeared unlikely in any competition with the United States. British officials were correct insomuch as Canada was forced to offer far greater inducements to obtain a smaller share of the immigrants. Meanwhile, there was a real risk of the British Empire harming its diplomatic relations with Russia, particularly after the expulsion of Cornelius Jansen and Wilhelm Loewens. From Britain's perspective, the risk-reward analysis did not justify British or Canadian officials becoming involved in the negotiations for Mennonite migrants. Britain's passive approach was therefore justified even if it was to the detriment of its Dominion. In the end, Britain was narrowly successful in avoiding serious diplomatic escalations with Russia.[98]

In contrast to its mother country and its neighbour to the south, Canada had the most to gain or lose from the ordeal. The United States was expansionist and had a much larger population base while Canada was on the defensive and in dire need of consolidating its new territories in Manitoba and the North-West. At the time, Canada had almost no established Euro-settler population in its North-West. Yet the Dominion had a weak negotiating position. Its land was less desirable than that of either Russia or the United States, it had no private railway companies, and its efforts were hampered by a passive and cumbersome imperial bureaucracy. This explains the aggressive approach taken by government officials Pope, Lowe, and Hespeler that ultimately led to the latter's recall from Russia.

But while Britain's fears of Russian sanction were not unfounded, neither were Canada's anxieties over American competition. In early 1874, Michael Hiller, agent of the Northern Pacific, visited Mennonites in Russia and cast doubt on Canada's promises. Though Canadian officials responded with additional pledges, a minority of Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites decided to settle in Nebraska.[99] In 1875, Minnesota increased its share of immigrants at Manitoba's expense, when one group was unwittingly diverted en route by a fellow Mennonite, and another twenty-eight Bergthaler families who had already settled in Manitoba moved south after a harsh first winter.[100]

Kim Korven observes that "in order to facilitate the Mennonite migration, Canada practiced a subtlety, bordering on subterfuge, on the British government." At the same time as it was aggressively extending inducements to attract Mennonite migrants, Canada claimed to Britain it had maintained "the policy of non-interference" and had not "in anyway, instigated Russian Subjects . . . to emigrate."[101] Attracting an industrious settler population on the

frontier was more important than following instructions from the mother country to the letter.

Though Canada attracted fewer immigrants, relative to its population the 6,940 Mennonites were a windfall. Manitoba's population was only 25,228 in 1871 and 62,260 in 1881.[102] Thus, even assuming a population growth of zero, Mennonites would have constituted 11.1 percent of the province's population in 1881, a proportion more than twenty times higher than that of American Mennonite immigrants in their respective jurisdictions. Canada's aggressive inducements made sense internally even if not to Britain.

While the Canadian Prairies did not yet have a large European settler population or an extensive railway network, Canada successfully leveraged its ability to offer greater religious guarantees and bloc settlement and attracted nearly 7,000 settlers to Manitoba. In the absence of a transcontinental railroad or system of local government, Korven describes this as "a remarkable accomplishment in Canadian settlement policy."[103] Yet Korven's analysis, while accurate, overlooks the interconnectedness of the negotiations: the lack of state infrastructure drove Canada to offer greater inducements to settlers so that it could consolidate its territory while simultaneously enabling Mennonites to migrate as a group. For, as Korven writes, the Canada-bound Mennonites

> immigrated as families and as villages, not as individuals. This meant they could reproduce their system of social organization when they arrived. As [John H.] Warkentin notes, "[p]erhaps nowhere else in North America has a peasant culture from Europe been so completely re-established."[104]

As noted, in the United States, extensive railway landholdings and a larger population prevented contiguous bloc settlement and made legislators reluctant to grant a form of colony. In Canada, it was this absence of infrastructure and lack of population that enabled and allowed the Mennonite immigrants to obtain bloc settlements, regain self-government, and re-establish the society they had in Russia.[105]

Further, the concessions the Mennonites extracted from Canada were equally remarkable. While Canadian officials initially offered no aid to Mennonite settlers, a year later, the Mennonites had secured promises of military exemption, bloc settlement, religious freedoms (including in schools), and financial aid and assistance to immigrate. The Canadian government's acquiescence to all the Mennonites' demands was a resounding success for the latter. The privileges secured were "paramount" in their decision to emigrate to Canada rather than the United States.[106] Moreover, the

concessions from Canada continued even after the migration began. In 1875–1876, the Canadian government reserved another large tract of land for Mennonites, continued to negotiate reduced rail tickets, and amended the Dominion Lands Act to allow for Mennonites' semi-communal practices.[107]

Canada and its would-be settlers thus had a *consensus ad idem*—a meeting of the minds—in their agreement for immediate settlement. Yet, this meeting of the minds was all too temporary and, ironically, driven by diametrically opposite intentions on either side. In Canadian migration, Mennonites sought isolation to escape the reach of the state, while Canada sought to extend its authority and assert sovereignty through Mennonite settlement. Canada was using an anti-modernist population to propel its modernization while Mennonites were utilizing a state in need of modernization as a vehicle from which they could contest modernity.[108] In the long-term, the two sides were destined for conflict.[109]

Accordingly, as Canadian statecraft turned to nation-building, Mennonites' privileges were gradually eroded. When local government was introduced in Manitoba in 1879, some Mennonite groups resented the encroachment on their self-government and refused to participate in elections.[110] Beginning in 1898, non-Mennonites could purchase land on once-exclusive Mennonite land reserves. Mennonite rights to operate their own schools were rescinded in 1916 with the imposition of compulsory English-language "National Schools" resulting in fines, seizure of property, and jail sentences for those opposed. As a direct result, 8,000 Mennonites emigrated to Mexico and Paraguay between 1922 and 1930.[111] Though military exemptions were granted for the First World War, alternative service—unacceptable for this group of Mennonites in Russia in the 1870s—was implemented during the Second World War.[112] Thus, the Mennonites' privileges in Canada were nearly completely extinguished within seventy years, mirroring the pattern that Russia had begun in the 1870s. Still, for a brief period, the immigrants secured all that they had hoped for in Canada. They received their *Privilegium* and transplanted their way of life from the Russian steppe to the Canadian prairie and lived separate from the world.

Conclusion

What initially began in 1871 as a meeting between six Mennonite deputies and a handful of Russian officials quickly transformed into a complex, international affair. By 1874, negotiations had drawn in the highest authorities from Britain, Canada, the United States, and

Russia. In Britain, these negotiations alarmed ambassador Lord Loftus, foreign secretary Earl Granville and colonial secretary Lord Kimberley over the Canadian government's overzealous offer of inducements to the detriment of British interests. The Canadian government's overenthusiastic efforts involved Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and governor general Lord Dufferin in addition to J. H. Pope as minister of agriculture, John Lowe as his secretary, and William Hespeler as their immigration agent. On the US side, Mennonite and Hutterite delegates petitioned President Ulysses S. Grant and both houses of Congress, and the Mennonite Bill stalled only after much debate in the Senate. Along the way, a host of others became involved, including Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and railway financier Jay Cooke. In Russia, Tsar Alexander II personally dispatched General Todleben, and numerous other figures also became involved with the negotiations, including Grand Duke Nikolaevich, Governor General Kotzebue, and foreign minister Prince Gorchakov.

Mennonites simultaneously pursued negotiations with all three states and this yielded benefits for those who migrated and those who remained. Canada would not have pursued the Mennonites so vigorously—notably with Hespeler—in the absence of competition from the United States. As for the United States, Canadian inducements factored explicitly in the debates in Congress. For its part, Russia did not reach a satisfactory agreement until faced with concrete Mennonite plans to emigrate to North America. For the Mennonites as a whole, the migration could be described as keeping in stride with the goals and values they had established at the outset. Of foremost concern was military exemption, followed by contiguous bloc settlement and ethnoreligious considerations. How these non-material interests weighed against quantitative economic interests manifested in the choices made by each group of Mennonites.

The most accommodating Mennonites remained in Russia, the least accommodating state, and accepted alternative forestry service. In doing so, they kept their developed land, real property, and their established civil society. The Mennonites who immigrated to the United States received guarantees of military exemption from state legislatures while securing bloc settlement in practice, if not by law. In return they settled on more favourable land than the Canadian immigrants, but nonetheless had to start over on a new continent. The minority who immigrated to Canada secured what they thought were iron-clad promises from the Dominion government of military exemption, contiguous bloc settlement, and the freedom to run their schools, albeit at a cost of relocating to the least desirable land.

In the context of a complex, protracted negotiation involving a myriad of political and business figures, Mennonites showed themselves to be sophisticated negotiators with "a keen eye for their own interests." They demonstrated an ability to engage in creative bargaining and leveraged concessions from three states to their own benefit. In this context, it is untenable to claim they were merely "the quiet in the land." Rather, in the early 1870s, these Russian Mennonites were the disquieted heard around the globe.

Notes

[1] The author would like to thank Ernest N. Braun, Katie Williams, James Urry, Conrad Stoesz, Jeremy Wiebe, and the anonymous reviewers for their feedback and assistance.

[2] Ernst Correll, ed., "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11, no. 3 (July 1937): 225–226.

[3] Ernest N. Braun, "Why Emigrate?," *Preservings*, no. 34 (2014): 4; C. Henry Smith and Cornelius Krahn, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, 5th ed. (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1981), 291–292.

[4] Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786–1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), 183–202; Theron F. Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 231–294.

[5] See, for example, Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)*, trans. J. B. Toews et al., rev. ed. (Fresno, CA: Board of Christian Literature [M.B.], 1980), 575–625, particularly 591–592, where he describes the North American emigrants as having "the greatest aversion to culture."

[6] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 193–197.

[7] James Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe—Russia—Canada, 1525 to 1980*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006), 3–4; Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 225.

[8] E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), 14–27.

[9] Lawrence Klippenstein, "Broken Promises or National Progress: Mennonites and the Russian State in the 1870s," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 18 (2000); Braun, "Why Emigrate?," 5–6; Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood*, 106; James Urry, "The Russian State, the Mennonite World and the Migration from Russia to North America in the 1870s," *Mennonite Life* 46, no. 1 (Mar. 1991): 13–14.

[10] The first transcontinental railroad across the United States was completed in 1869. By 1883, there were five. By 1890, the US Census declared the frontier line had disappeared. In comparison, the first railroad across the Canadian North-West was completed in 1885. An aggressive policy of immigration only began in 1896. See Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 1; Pierre Berton, *The National Dream: The Great Railway, 1871–1881* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970); Pierre Berton, *The Last Spike: The Great Railway, 1881–1885*

(Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); and *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, s.v. "Sifton, Sir Clifford," by David J. Hall, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sifton_clifford_15E.html.

11 See James Richtik, "Competition for Settlers: The Canadian Viewpoint," *Great Plains Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 39–49; and Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 194–195.

12 Adam Gaudry, "Fantasies of Sovereignty: Deconstructing British and Canadian Claims to Ownership of the Historic North-West," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 46–74. In this article, "international" and "state" are used in a nineteenth-century European context, which did not recognize First Nations as having standing. Indeed, it is telling that Métis and First Nations were excluded from negotiations, despite Mennonite delegates encountering and being aware of both.

13 Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 188; Donald, F. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849–1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960), 99–141.

14 Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada: The Fenian Raids, 1866–1870* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

15 Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870–1925* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 12.

16 Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 12; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 188.

17 Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 37.

18 Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 188.

19 Braun, "Why Emigrate?," 8; Urry, *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood*, 100–103.

20 P. Albert Koop claims that the migration was "primarily an economic phenomenon . . . born in the landless strife" of the colonies, but Delbert Plett and Ernest Braun dispute this narrative. Braun states "the landless issue—as a motivator for emigration—can easily be overstated." P. Albert Koop, "Some Economic Aspects of Mennonite Migration: With Special Emphasis on the 1870s Migration from Russia to North America," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 55, no. 2 (Apr. 1981): 151–155; Delbert F. Plett, "'Poor and Simple?': The Economic Background of the Mennonite Immigrants to Manitoba, 1874–79," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 18 (2000): 114–128; Ernest N. Braun, "Why the Majority of Russian Mennonites Did Not Emigrate in the 1870s," *Mennonite Historian* 41, no. 2 (June 2015): 4; Braun, "Why Emigrate?," 7–8.

21 Jacob Sudermann, "The Origin of Mennonite State Service in Russia, 1870–1880," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 17, no. 1 (Jan. 1943): 24–30; Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 586–588; Gustav E. Reimer and G. R. Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar: Cornelius Jansen and the Great Mennonite Migration* (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956), 44, 48–49.

22 Harry Loewen, "A House Divided: Russian Mennonites Nonresistance and Emigration in the 1870s," in *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*, ed. John Friesen (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 131; Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 588.

23 Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, 51.

24 Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, 41–48, 51–53; Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 210–211.

25 Ernst Correll, ed., "Sources on the Mennonite Immigration from Russia in the 1870s," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24, no. 4 (Oct. 1950): 339–340.

26 Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, 41–43, 49–51.

[27] Delbert Plett, *Storm and Triumph: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde (1850–1875)* (Steinbach, MB: D. F. P. Publications, 1986), 267–282; Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, 51–54, 63–65; Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 587–590; Sudermann, "State Service," 33.

[28] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 211–213.

[29] Correll, "Sources on the Mennonite Immigration," 338–339.

[30] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 216–217; Correll, "Sources on the Mennonite Immigration," 340–341.

[31] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 217–218.

[32] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 218.

[33] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 221–223; Ernst Correll, "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11, no. 4 (Oct. 1937): 267–270.

[34] C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites: An Episode in the Settling of the Last Frontier, 1874–1884* (Berne: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927), 49–51.

[35] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 221–222.

[36] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 14.

[37] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 225.

[38] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 268–269.

[39] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 223–224.

[40] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 224–226.

[41] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 224–226.

[42] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 14–18; James Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy: The British Government and the Mennonite Immigration from Russia to Manitoba, 1872–1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 87, no. 2 (April 2013): 225–249.

[43] James Urry, "The British Colonial Office and Russian Mennonite Settlement in Canada, 1872," *Mennonite Historian* 15, no. 3 (Sept. 1989), 8.

[44] Robert F. Baumann, "The Debates Over Universal Military Service in Russia, 1870–1874," (PhD diss., Yale University, 1982), 204–205.

[45] Baumann, "Debates Over Universal Military Service," 205.

[46] Baumann, "Debates Over Universal Military Service," 205–206.

[47] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 273.

[48] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 14–16.

[49] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 14; Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 234.

[50] Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 277.

[51] "Immense Immigratory Irruption," *The Saint Paul Daily Press*, Jan. 26, 1873, 4; Cornelius Krahn, ed., "Some Letters of Bernhard Warkentin Pertaining to the Migration of 1873–1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24, no. 3 (July 1950): 251–252. David Goerz and Bernhard Warkentin settled in Illinois and then Kansas, and helped establish the Mennonite Board of Guardians and Bethel College.

[52] Ferdinand P. Schultz, *A History of the Settlement of German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake, Minnesota* (Minneapolis: self-pub., 1938), 31.

[53] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 16–17; J. Y. Shantz, *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba. Together with an Abstract of the Dominion Lands Act* (Ottawa: Department of Agriculture, 1873), 19.

[54] Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 588–589, 600–602; Gerhard Wiebe, *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America,*

trans. Helen Janzen (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981), 30–31; Loewen, "A House Divided," 136–137.

55 Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, 65–704, 200–202. The deputation arrived in St. Petersburg on February 26 and had an audience with Nikolaevich on March 6. The minister of the interior decided to expel Jansen and Loewens on March 3, and the ukase was signed on March 10 (all OS). There is no conclusive link between the deputation and the expulsion but it is curious timing.

56 Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 236–237; Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 17–18.

57 Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 278–280.

58 Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 280–282.

59 Ernst Correll, ed., "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Documents and Sources, 1873–1874," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1948): 48–49.

60 The number of delegates is sometimes given as twelve, which includes Cornelius Buhr, who travelled at his own expense but was not an official delegate. See Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 36–44; Hans Werner, "'Something . . . We Had Not Seen nor Heard of': The 1873 Mennonite Delegation to Find Land in 'America'" *Preservings*, no. 34 (2014), 11–20; Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, 39–76; and Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, 293–305.

61 Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 16–17, 24–27; Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, 59–60, 65; Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 44–49; Werner, "Something . . . We Had Not Seen'," 20; Ernst Correll, "The Mennonite Loan in the Canadian Parliament, 1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 20, no. 4 (Oct. 1946): 255–275. The loan was secured with collateral from Ontario Mennonites.

62 Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 238–239; Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 18.

63 James Urry notes that "if Russian police had intercepted the documents, there is little doubt that they would have raised diplomatic concerns between the British and Russian governments." Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 237–239. See also Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 18.

64 Lord Dufferin to Sir John A. Macdonald, Oct. 1, 1873, Library and Archives Canada, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, MG 26A, vol. 79, 30931–30934; Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 18–19; Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 241, 248–249; Blake Hamm, "Revisiting the Canadian *Privilegium*: The Lowe Letter, Good Faith, and International Law," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 94, no. 3 (July 2020): 316–318.

65 What appears to be an early draft of the petition written by Hutterite delegate Paul Tschetter contemplated a request for self-government within a closed colony, essentially replicating the terms of Russian settlement. For the petition and response, see Ernst Correll, ed., "President Grant and the Mennonite Immigration from Russia," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 9, no. 3 (July 1935): 146–149. For the draft see J. M. Hofer, trans. and ed., "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873, II" *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 5, no. 3 (July 1931): 214–215n42; also Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 255. Thanks to Rod Janzen and Wesley Tschetter for their correspondence on this point.

66 Though Cooke and Hiller initially pressed for a quick response before the delegates left for Russia, Fish's reply of Sept. 5, 1873, was not received by Paul Tschetter until "early December" in the Julian calendar, i.e., no earlier than Dec. 13, 1873. Did Hiller and Cooke ship the letter to Russia instead of telegraphing it for reason of financial hardship and Jay Cooke & Company's impending bankruptcy on Sept. 18, 1873? Was it given to Cornelius Jansen

and other Mennonite contacts in the United States? Or, because Fish answered in the negative, was the delay intentional so as not to diminish support for migration? See Correll, "President Grant," 148–149; Rod Janzen, *Paul Tschetter: The Story of a Hutterite Immigrant Leader, Pioneer, and Pastor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 86–88; and Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar,* 96–97.

67 See *The Laws of the State of Kansas* (1874), chap. LXXXV, 134, approved Mar. 19, 1874; *Laws Passed by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska* (1877), 48–49, approved Feb. 14, 1877; *General Laws of the State of Minnesota* (1877), chap. 16, 54, approved Feb. 20, 1877.

68 Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, 77–91; Ernst Correll, ed., "The Congressional Debates on the Mennonite Immigration from Russia, 1873–74," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 20, no. 3 (July 1946): 178–221.

69 Substantively, the requests made by the seven delegates to President Grant, Congress, and the Northern Pacific Railroad Company differed little from those made by the other four delegates to the Canadian government. Both groups sought an exemption from military service, the right to administer schools, and the ability to live in closed bloc settlements. The contract with the Northern Pacific reads like a *Privilegium* except it was granted by a private company rather than a government. See Correll, "Sources on the Mennonite Immigration," 344–347; and Leonhard Sudermann, *From Russia to America: In Search of Freedom*, trans. Elmer F. Suderman (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1974), 16.

70 Correll, "President Grant," 149–150; Correll, "Congressional Debates," 183–188, 192, 194–196, 216; Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar,* 82–97.

71 Correll, "Congressional Debates," 179.

72 Correll, "Congressional Debates," 185; *Congressional Record*, 43rd Congress, 1st sess., 1874, 2, pt. 4: 3054–3055.

73 Correll, "Congressional Debates," 209–210.

74 In his diary, Paul Tschetter recounted Bergthal delegate Heinrich Wiebe stating that the United States "did not appeal much to him" because "the question of military service is the most important." Wiebe believed "the English government would be more liberal and grant a Charter guaranteeing exemption from military service, which was better than what [the United States] could offer," and that "one should not only consider the land question but also not forget the matter of freedom, for that is the reason why we came to this country and are making this long journey." Leonhard Sudermann observed that "the Bergthaler brethren . . . seem to have decided to settle in Manitoba" while still touring that province. Hofer, "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873, II," 199; Sudermann, *From Russia to America*, 20.

75 Prussian delegate Wilhelm Ewert was not impressed with Manitoba due to its marshy land, an abundance of mosquitoes and grasshoppers, the presence of typhus, and market and supply problems. Similarly, Andreas Schrag of Volhynia quickly concluded that Manitoba's low-lying, swampy land with its many grasshoppers "did not suit us." Paul Tschetter also noted the poor quality of roads, railroad facilities, and lumber, as well as the tariff on goods imported from the United States. The Prussian, Volhynian, and Hutterian delegates left Manitoba after just five days. The Molotschna delegates stayed a further week, but first impressions of Manitoba left Leonhard Sudermann "considerably disheartened." See "Abschrift eines Briefes den Wm. Ewert als Deputierter der westpreußischen Gemeinden im Jahre 1873 an seine

Familie geschrieben hat. Fargo im Territorium Dakota, den 29. Juni 1873," *Der Mitarbeiter*, Oct. 1929, 1–5; Orpha V. Schrag, "Andreas D. Schrag: The Delegate and His Diary," *Mennonite Family History* 12, no. 3 (July 1993): 104; Hofer, "The Diary of Paul Tschetter, 1873, II," 202–204; Sudermann, *From Russia to America*, 16; and Koop, "Economic Aspects," 149.

[76] Correll, "Congressional Debates," 221. Jay Cooke's bankruptcy the previous year could not have helped, nor could the interests of other US railroads that were competing with the Northern Pacific for settlers.

[77] Correll, "Congressional Debates," 210. See also Senator Sargent's remarks at 216–217.

[78] *House of Commons Debates*, 4th Parliament, 3rd sess, 1881, vol. 11, 1361 (Mar. 14, 1881).

[79] Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 589–590; Sudermann, "State Service," 32–34; Dana M. Ohren, "All the Tsar's Men: Minorities and Military Conscription in Imperial Russia, 1874–1905" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2006), 100.

[80] Todleben's report is referenced in Georg Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada, 1873–1880, II," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 7, no. 1 (Jan. 1933): 25–27; and in Koop, "Some Economic Aspects," 151n33. Portions of his letter are reproduced in I. M. Kulinich, "Migratsionnyye protsessy nemetskogo naseleniya v Prichernomor'ye i Priazov'ye (Khersonskaya, Yekaterinoslavskaya, Tavricheskaya gubernii Ukrainy) v XIX-XX vv," in *Migratsionnyye protsessy sredi rossiyskikh nemtsev: istoricheskiy aspekt* (Moscow: Gotika, 1998), 56–57, 59–60.

[81] Leibbrandt, "Emigration of the German Mennonites," 25–27; Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 590–591, 594–597, 602–606, 609–625; Sudermann, "State Service," 35–44; Klippenstein, "Broken Promises or National Progress," 104–105; Ohren, "All the Tsar's Men," 150–156. During the US Civil War, American Mennonites had to pay a commutation fee or hire a substitute in lieu of providing military service.

[82] Johann Epp wrote an unpublished defence of the anti-emigration stance for the American periodical *Herold der Warhrheit.* He argued that civilian services were "more consistent with the spirit of our Confession of Faith than paying a fee or hiring a substitute as has been done in other lands"—a reference to American Mennonites during the Civil War. But Harry Loewen notes that Mennonites later assisted the Russian military. Leonard Gross, ed., "The Coming of the Russian Mennonites to America: An Analysis by Johann Epp, Mennonite Minister in Russia, 1875," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 48, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 466; Loewen, "A House Divided," 139.

[83] Braun, "Why Emigrate?," 7–8.

[84] Rev. H. R. Voth recalled that passports which had been requested nine months earlier finally arrived "a comparatively short time" after Todleben's appeal. Gerhard Wiebe requested passports from Todleben but noted that "until Bergthal was finished completely with its business, no one received a passport," perhaps astutely, for we know from his report Todleben was aware of the buyer's market of "cheap property" that would ensue and make debts harder to satisfy. In 1875, a final attempt through bribery was made to dissuade Gerhard Wiebe before the bulk of the Bergthal colony emigrated. See Smith, *Coming of the Russian Mennonites*, 93–99; Wiebe, *Causes and History*, 38–40, 43–48; and Leibbrandt, "Emigration of the German Mennonites," 27–28. For more on passports see Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1873–1874,"

53–55; Abraham F. Reimer, *Building and Leaving Borosenko: The Diary of Abraham F. Reimer*, trans. Steve Fast (Hillsboro, KS: self-pub., 2018), 174, https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Abraham_F_Reimer_Diary_Translation.pdf; Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar,* 101.

85 Braun, "Why Emigrate?," 4; Smith and Krahn, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites*, 291–294. A small number from Crimea (215) had immigrated to the United States in August 1873, settling in Minnesota and Dakota Territory. It took them six months to obtain passports. – See Tobias [B.] Unruh, *The History of the Unruh Family from 1783–1874*, trans. Susanna Unruh Neufeld and Esther Neufeld (n.p., n.d.), provided by John Thiesen (Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, KS); J. John Friesen, "Dates and Data About Our Pioneer Mountain Lake Churches 1874–1949" in *Seventy-Five Years in Minnesota, 1874–1949: Mennonite Churches in Mountain Lake Community* (n.p., 1950), 15.

86 Rod Janzen and Max Stanton, *The Hutterites in North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 37–38. For a Hutterite history of the migration, see Janzen, *Paul Tschetter*, 48–112.

87 Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar,* 39–41.

88 Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 598–601.

89 Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 594; Ohren, "All the Tsar's Men," 195, 199, 206–207.

90 Klippenstein, "Broken Promises or National Progress," 107.

91 Todleben wrote: "Seeing the intransigence of these settlers after all that I had the right to promise for facilitating their military service, I considered it no longer possible to dissuade them from their determination to leave Russia as this could cause objections from their side, which were inconsistent with the established course of the other colonies and which might have a harmful effect on the Mennonites who had decided to remain in Russia." Kulinich, "Migratsionnyye protsessy," 59, translation provided by Vakil Takhaveev (ETH Zürich).

92 Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 575, 591.

93 Plett, "Poor and Simple?," 116, 120–121; Leibbrandt, "Emigration of the German Mennonites," 27–28; Klippenstein, "Broken Promises or National Progress," 107; Koop, "Economic Aspects," 150–152; Gross, "Coming of the Russian Mennonites to America," 469.

94 US Census Bureau, *1880 Census,* vol. 1, "Population by States and Territories, 1790–1880," table 1(b), 4, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1880/vol-01-population/1880_v1–07.pdf.

95 Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 241–242; Kempes Schnell, "John F. Funk, 1835–1930, and the Mennonite Migration of 1873–75," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24, no. 3 (July 1950): 199–229; Edward Krehbiel, ed. and trans., "Christian Krehbiel and the Coming of the Mennonites to Kansas," in *From the Steppes to the Prairies*, ed. Cornelius Krahn (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1949), 25–49.

96 Alvin J. Esau, "The Establishment, Preservation and Legality of Mennonite Semi-Communalism in Manitoba," *Manitoba Law Journal* 31, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 89; see also C. C. Regier, "An Immigrant Family of 1876," *Social Sciences* 7, no. 3 (July 1932), 252–253.

97 Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," 223, 225–226; Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873 (Concluded)," 279.

98 Urry, "A Matter of Diplomacy," 238–329.

[99] Royden Loewen, "New Themes in an Old Story: Transplanted Mennonites as Group Settlers in North America, 1874–1879," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 6–7; Correll, "Sources and Documents, 1873–1874," 52–54, 56; Reimer, *Diary of Abraham F. Reimer*, 168.

[100] Schultz, *German Mennonites from Russia at Mountain Lake*, 55; Wiebe, *Causes and History*, 54.

[101] Kim Korven, "Settling *That Way*: The Canadian Government's Role in the Creation of Communal Religious Settlements on the Prairies," *Saskatchewan Law Review* 73, no. 2 (2010): 258–259.

[102] Statistics Canada, 2012 *Canada Year Book*, "Population, by province and territory, selected years, 1861 to 2009," https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2010000/chap/pop/tbl/tbl01-eng.htm; Statistics Canada, *Censuses of Canada, 1665 to 1871* (1876), "The 1800s (1806 to 1871)," https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/98–187-x/4064809-eng.htm.

[103] Korven, "Settling That Way," 259.

[104] Korven, "Settling That Way," 256, quoting John H. Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 2000), 1.

[105] In the words of P. Albert Koop, "the more religiously oriented response of the Canadian government did attract that part of the migration where . . . religious motivation predominated." See Koop, "Economic Aspects," 150.

[106] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 194–195; see also Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 36; Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 20–21; Loewen, *Village Among Nations,* 9.

[107] Esau, "Mennonite Semi-Communalism," 87–93; Korven, "Settling That Way," 254–259.

[108] I am indebted to ideas developed in Royden Loewen, *Horse-and-Buggy Genius: Listening to Mennonites Contest the Modern World* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016).

[109] Robert J. Sawatzky opines that "in retrospect, the Canadian government should have heeded [Loftus's] advice" to proceed cautiously. For "if Canadian officials had carefully observed the obstinate appeal launched by the Mennonites against the Russian state, Ottawa might have had a better understanding of the emigrants' grievances, and would likely have been better prepared to deal with future conflicts with the Mennonite immigrants in Canada." Robert J. Sawatzky, "A Comparison of the Mennonite and Doukhobor Emigrations from Russia to Canada, 1870–1920," (master's thesis, Dalhousie University, 1998), 82.

[110] Epp, *Mennonites in Canada*, 223–224.

[111] Ens, *Subjects or Citizens?*, 105–157, 199–223; William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 88–115.

[112] Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 198–234.