The Social Background to the Emergence of the Mennonite Brethren in Nineteenth Century Russia

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The aim of this article is to examine the emergence of the Brethren as a social group within the larger Mennonite community established in Russia by 1860 and its development into a religious community. I shall concentrate on the nature of Mennonite society and the forms of community which had developed by 1860, and attempt to locate the Brethren within these social and community structures. In order to examine the forms of society and community that had developed by 1860, it is first necessary to understand how these had come into being and to realize that during the nineteenth century Mennonite society in Russia was in a process of transition as part of a larger transformation of Mennonite life.[1] This transformation involved a transition to capitalism and the emergence of a modern, industrial society within a nation state, a transition that was occurring across much of Europe during the nineteenth century.[2] The Brethren are but one aspect of this larger transformation of society and ideas.

A model of agrarian Mennonite social and communal forms

Mennonites are a people who choose to join a community of believers and to participate in its religious life. The choice is marked by baptism. In reality, most Mennonites have been historically a people born into a pre-existing Mennonite community where they have socialized into a distinct set of life practices and enculturated in the ideals and values of the faith. The process of socialization and enculturation was far more effective and comprehensive in the small-scale, cohesive rural communities which once predominated in Europe than it is today in a world where there are more people, more complex social forms and very different modes of communication.

What this process of socialization and enculturation created was a particular kind of person committed to a particular interpretation of the Christian faith. Baptism, however, still involved a degree of personal commitment. On the one hand there was the private covenant between an individual and God to live a life of faith, on the other was the public contract between an individual and a community to live in a specific moral and ethical social environment according to the rules of the community enforced by the accepted forms of discipline in the community. This community was a religious collectivity, a congregation of baptized people.

The congregational-community was the dominant, corporate social institution of Mennonite life. By corporate I mean it was the only social entity which possessed a distinct identity, which persisted through time with precise rules which determined and defined its membership.[3] The domestic groups in which Mennonites were primarily raised, socialized and enculturated, were not corporate groups (although the association of a particular family to a particular farm might produce a corporate category). The domestic group went through a developmental cycle and lacked perpetuity: after marriage a couple lived with their parents, then set up their own household, raised their children who married, lived with them for a time before leaving, and so the cycle began again. These domestic units thus did not persist through time, but were formed, reformed and dissolved. Only family names remained constant in the male line as corporate categories reflecting the importance of kinship in Mennonite social life. Otherwise the congregational-community remained the major focus of identity and the main arena of corporate, community activity.

The congregation marked Mennonites off not only from the larger social world, but also from Mennonites who identified with other congregational-communities. Such Mennonite and non-Mennonite communities were proscribed for ideological reasons. Social communication with outsiders was constrained, social solidarity within the congregational-community was enforced by strict discipline while positive social integration was encouraged between members, continuity of membership being achieved primarily through endogomy. A spirit of egalitarianism prevailed within communities and officials in charge of congregational affairs were the only recognized sources of authority beyond that of the patriarchal heads of households. Even so, congregational leaders were chosen by the community and were accountable to the baptized members of the congregation.

The congregation, because it was coterminous with the community, was both localized in space and limited in size. It was localized because its members had to be able to maintain social relationships at the face to face level, to meet together for worship, to order congregational affairs and to maintain discipline. The same demands of community management and maintenance influenced the size of congregations. It would appear that the ideal size was between 200 and 500 members; beyond this communities became unstable while if membership dropped too low, i.e. below 100, the

community was difficult to sustain.[4] One major reason for this was that recruitment became difficult if the principle of endogamy was to be maintained.

Given the fecundity of Mennonites, congregational-communities tended to grow rapidly in size even if no new members were recruited. Pressure on existing land resources in a locality meant households became geographically dispersed. The congregational-community was placed under pressure and could divide, either by mutual agreement or by schism after a period of discord. When new households were established in new localities it was often possible to establish a new congregational-community by amicable agreement. In an agrarian, pre-industrial environment where communications were limited, the process of amicable separation could be achieved by careful stages which did not threaten the existing systems of organization and authority. The new, distant set of households were at first subordinated to a mother congregation, but acted as a distinct community, eventually achieving full independence when they elected their own leaders. If this process was achieved successfully the new congregational-community would often affiliate with the older congregation, recognizing its seniority and accepting its authority in specific matters. Such affiliated congregational-community produced through a progress of amicable segmentation while nominally independent, formed a loose federation. In times of crisis the leaders of the groups could co-operate in joint action. Such connections often gave added authority to leaders within and beyond their communities. The opportunity for joint action, however, was rare and everyday life of community members continued to be restricted to their own congregations. In time there was a tendency for each congregation to develop distinctive patterns of social and religious practice which created cultural differences between communities which might later become a source of conflict.

Conflict, however, was more likely if the local congregation continued to grow in membership without being dispersed or where, even when dispersed, failed to develop independent organizational and authority structures. Schism then occurred. While schism could occur in congregational-communities for a host of other reasons (ideological differences between members, the enforcement of discipline, arguments over authority, disagreements between kin and affines etc.) such problems were often exacerbated by the unwieldy size of the community or its geographical dispersal. Schisms created new corporate congregational-communities, but the bitterness often associated with the separation of kin and affines often created further conflict which persisted over generations. Each community-congregation defended the correctness of its stand and often claimed to be the legitimate inheritor of earlier ideas, practices, and forms of authority. At the same time congregational-communities produced through a process of schism often attempted to be more cohesive than those formed through amicable division, marking the boundaries of their distinctiveness off from non-Mennonites and particularly from other Mennonites from whom they were eager to disassociate

themselves by clearly emphasizing their religious differences. Popular forms of marking such differences focussed on religious/ritual practice, dress and other cultural markers.

Community, congregation and pre-industrial Mennonite society in Polish-Prussia

The major focus of Mennonite life in Polish-Prussia was the congregation. The Mennonites, however, were divided into a number of congregations, some affiliated to each other but also divided by doctrinal differences, largely associated with "mother" congregations in the Netherlands. By the eighteenth century many of these connections with the Netherlands had weakened and there were signs of possible reconciliation between congregations of different doctrinal backgrounds. But new divisions had also emerged within congregations in Polish-Prussia according to place of settlement, occupational status and forms of authority.

The major doctrinal difference was between the Flemings and the Frisians, Mennonite groups which had their own congregations. A small group of Groningen Old Flemish Mennonites also existed. Within each of these doctrinal groups were a number of congregational-communities, mostly formed by amicable separation, for although there had been periods of schismatic segmentation, there also had been reconciliations. The differences between Flemings and Frisians were marked by more than differences in doctrine and practice as with time both had developed social and cultural distinctions. Some of these were the result of attempts to mark differences between the groups, but others were the logical outcome of social isolation in particular localities and association with neighbouring non-Mennonites.

Similar social and cultural differences also emerged within congregations and between loosely affiliated congregations. Royal Prussia was a plural society and Mennonites adapted to local customs, dialects and occupational forms. The expansion of settlement and separation from mother congregational-communities encouraged this cultural drift, in spite of Mennonite separation from the wider world. These changes were more marked in isolated rural areas than the core areas of initial settlement. At the same time an opposing tendency emerged among Mennonites settled in, or close to, urban areas, especially Danzig (Gdansk) and Elbing (Elblag), who were involved in commercial activities. Mennonites in these areas tended to be more socially differentiated and occupationally diverse than those in rural areas, and these differences were reflected in the more unequal distribution of wealth among the Mennonites.

Within congregational-communities settlement patterns varied. Community may be more a measure of social consciousness and the intensity of social interaction than merely a reflection of physical contiguity, but living close together in individual households undoubtedly assisted congregational solidarity. In some rural areas this was more possible than in others, but in

towns it depended on a number of factors. It is clear that in Danzig many Mennonites lived in ghettos on the edge of the city as only a few wealthy individuals managed to avoid the burgher's restrictions on the ownership of property and a trade in the city. On the other hand in both rural and urban areas networks established through ties of kinship and marriage allowed Mennonites a degree of mobility; young people often visited relations and assisted with childrearing. But by the late eighteenth century the divide between town and country was widening and many Mennonites, unable to take up farming, were either moving towards the urban areas or were employed in craft industries, particularly cloth manufacture, in country areas adjacent to towns.

These changes can be attributed to the changing nature of the economy of Polish-Prussia in the eighteenth century, which was itself a reflection of the political fortunes of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic of which it was a part. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Danzig, and the entire region of Royal Prussia, had been affected by the decline in the Polish economy and it was not until the latter half of the eighteenth century that the economy improved.[5] The occupational differences apparent among Mennonites at the time of the first migration to Russia were thus a product both of earlier economic decline and recent improvements.

Basically the majority of the population remained rural, although a number of people were forced to supplement their income by cottage industry. In the towns an urban elite, often associated with trade, had long existed but the real focus of the communities still lay towards the agrarian area and rural activities. Farmers ranked higher than tradesmen and merchants, and most of the leaders of the congregations came from established farming families with a tradition of providing religious and community leadership. Such leaders tended to be more aware of the wider world and more "educated" than the average Mennonite and members often married among themselves. No systematic study has been made of Mennonite marriage patterns according to status and occupation, but interesting correlations probably could be established in this regard for Mennonite society in Polish-Prussia by the eighteenth century.

In spite of this internal social and regional differentiation between and within congregations, Mennonites continued to form distinctive communities within the larger pre-industrial society of Polish Prussia. Their distinctiveness, however, was not unusual at this period. The Polish-Lithuanian Republic was not a nation-state in a modern sense, but an advanced agrarian polity in which only the ruling elite possessed any degree of cultural homogeneity (see Figure 1).[6] The majority of the population subject to these elites were agricultural producers, peasants often enserfed and lacking social or cultural homogeneity, diverse by language, dialect and custom, affiliated to their local area and to a limited range of social networks. Mennonites therefore formed but one section of a complex society, vertically divided and differentiated by a range of cultural phenomena.

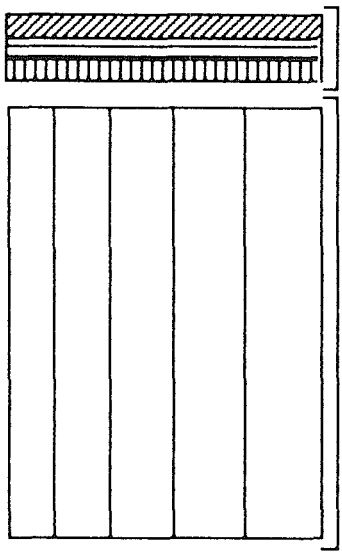

Figure 1 : Advanced Agrarian Polity (after Gellner). (In terms of pre-partition Polish-Lithuanian republic).

In Royal Prussia Mennonites were surrounded by an extremely diverse population. Ethnically and linguistically it was complex, with Germanic and Slavic speaking groups, each internally differentiated by other cultural factors, including religion, Protestant (Lutheran and Reformed) Catholic, Mennonite and Jews.[7] Mennonites were protected and allowed a reasonable opportunity to practise their faith in the areas of Royal Prussia under the King's protection. Only in Danzig did Mennonites face concerted opposition, but the city, although part of the Repulic, was a very different polity from Royal Prussia. A commercial port, ruled by civic burghers mainly of Dutch or German descent of the Lutheran faith, it was a more homogenous society, intolerant of outsiders, members of other religions and people with different customs who wished to live within its environs and to participate in its economy.[8] It more closely resembled the industrial societies homogenized with a nation state that were to emerge in the nineteenth century, than the agrarian state of the rest of the Republic.

The political weakness of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic throughout most of the eighteenth century probably assisted Mennonites to maintain their congregational-community structures in rural areas. But the partitions of the Republic between 1772 and 1795 forced them to reconsider their place in the larger social and political environment which emerged. The Mennonites were no longer part of a weak agrarian polity but were integrated steadily into an emergent, politically strong Brandenburg Prussia. The Prussian state was already a *Rechtsstaat*, a state based less on customary privilege and more on the rule of law.[9] Centralized and expansive, the Prussian state demanded the

allegiance of all citizens irrespective of language, culture or faith. Ultimately it proved intolerant of such differences and devised ways of reducing or removing those distinctive features of culture which threatened its hegemony. The Mennonites, as pacifists, proved particularly odious to a state concerned with the implementation of a citizen's militia to further its expansionist designs and many chose to migrate to Russia.

Congregation, colony and community in Russia

The leadership of the Prussian congregations had hoped that the Mennonite settlers in Russia would establish a single congregational-community. But the old divisions between Flemings and Frisians proved intractable and separate congregations were founded in Khortitsa. In Molochnaia after 1805, however, a single Flemish congregational-community was established but with a short period a schism resulted with a small group, the Kleine Gemeinde, being formed. After 1818 groups of Frisians arrived in the colony with their own ordained leaders. An attempt to unite the Flemings and Frisians, along with members of another immigrant congregation of Groningen Old Flemish persuasion in a common union of congregations within the larger community, failed. The larger part of the Flemish community rejected union and other links with non-Mennonite religious organizations and schism resulted. The large Flemish congregational community attempted to dominate affairs in Molochnaia but in the 1840s its leaders came into conflict with the Russian authorities and their chief agent for reform in the colonies, Johann Cornies. The large congregation was forcibly divided into three congregations although for a long period they remained united in spirit.[10] During the 1830s and 40s new migrants arrived in Molochnaia including members of other independent congregations of Groningen Old Flemish who in Russia re-established their congregations and retained separate identities. All, however, aligned themselves with the existing Ohrloff (Flemish), Rudnerweide (Frisian) and Alexanderwohl (Groningen Old Flemish) union. The complex pattern of congregational-communities in the three New Russian settlements by 1860 is outlined in Figure 2.

Settlement in New Russia, however, resulted in establishment of new forms of community and authority unknown in Polish-Prussia and with little justification in established Mennonite practice. The Mennonites were placed by the Russians in compact settlements, distinct colonies as they were known, and from which non-Mennonites were largely excluded. Within the colonies they were settled in close-knit villages with households built adjacent to one another. These new forms of settlement resulted in Mennonites widening and strengthening their communal attachments as they identified not only with kin and congregational brethren, but also with fellow villagers who might well be neither kin nor brethren. They also identified with the colony as a whole, although usually with a regional district of the colony centred on a major village in the local area. The strengthening of the Mennonite sense of

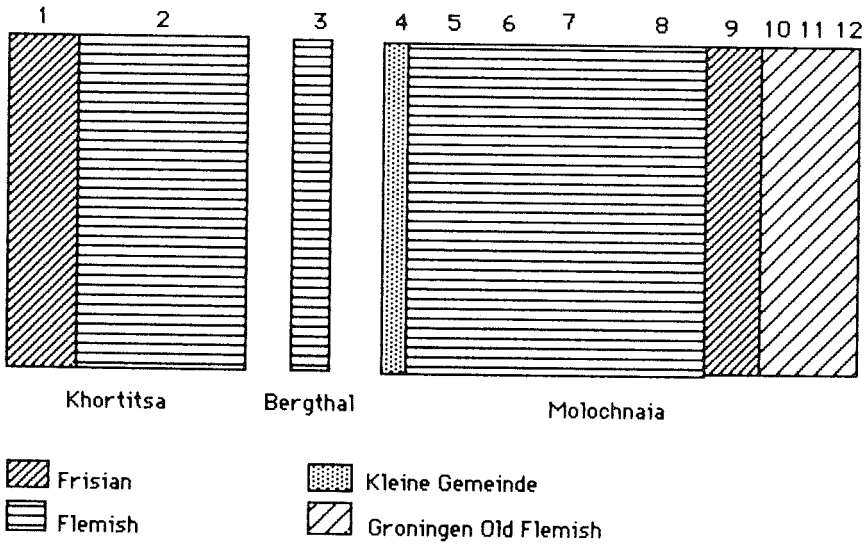

Figure 2: Mennonite congregational-communities in New Russia 1860.

Key:

Khortitsa and related colony-communities

1. Kronsweide/Kronsgarten Frisian
2. Khortitsa Flemish "Federated"
3. Bergthal Flemish Congregations

Molochnaia

4. Kleine Gemeinde
5. Lichtenau-Petershagen Flemish
6. Pordenau Flemish
7. Margenau Flemish
8. Ohrloff-Petershagen-Halbstadt Flemish
9. Rudnerweide Frisian
10. Alexanderwohl Groningen Old Flemish
11. Waldheim
12. Gnadenfeld

"Pure" Flemish Congregations

"United" Congregations

Members of the Molochnaia Church Council (f.1851)

community was to have an important influence on the development of cultural life in Russia. At the level of everyday social interaction most Mennonites now only associated with Mennonites and the close settlement patterns increased the community's vigil over the ethical and moral conduct of brethren. The authority of congregational leaders was enhanced and strengthened within congregations and outside by contact with other congregational leaders and with local civil and government officials. At the same time it must be admitted the new settlement patterns also increased the potential for social conflict. The close-knit households and villages increased social tensions; the authority of the congregational leaders was often resented and the potential for political power-seeking between established leaders and potential leaders was made more likely. In the long term, however, the settlement in colonies, the creation of forms of secular civil administration within the settlements and the resulting challenge to congregational leaders to represent the larger interests of the Mennonite community over their individual congregations, proved to be an even greater source of conflict.

The Mennonite community as represented by the colony was a community no longer coterminous with a single congregation. In Russian eyes the colony was the major corporate entity in which Mennonites lived. The colonies, like other settlements of foreign colonists, had been established by Russian decree and the government provided the special regulations which specified how the colony should operate. Over the years these general regulations which applied to all colonists were expanded and elaborated until they covered many aspects of community life, including moral behaviour, which once had been the sole preserve of the congregation. In the Mennonite colonies these regulations were enforced at the local level (colony and village) by Mennonites and other Mennonites were also involved in implementing official development policies. The regulations and the development policies were concerned neither with the maintenance of a distinctive Mennonite identity separate from the "world," nor with individual congregational purity. Instead their purpose was to integrate Mennonites into the Russian state so they could participate in the expanding economic and social world emerging in New Russia. Ultimately this implied changing the very fabric of Mennonite society. The Russians recognized the colony as the major political unit of Mennonite life, the village with its mayors as the local socio-political entity and together they constituted the Mennonite colony-community. While the congregations were recognized as important features of Mennonite life, they were viewed primarily as religious groupings whose "clergy" were to help sustain the wider sense of colony-community expressed through the village and colony administrations.[11]

When groups like the Kleine Gemeinde broke away from the main congregation they could neither be forced out of the colony, nor could they of their own volition move to a new location and establish an entirely separate congregational-community, as would have been possible in Prussia. The larger congregational-community was stuck with the Kleine Gemeinde in

their midst and the Kleine Gemeinde was forced to associate with other Mennonites. The Russians refused to consider the schism as significant; all Mennonites were Mennonites in their eyes. In the same way later divisions, as well as the immigration of new congregations, were of little concern to the authorities. Although this close entrapment of different congregations within the colonies was often a source of conflict, it also encouraged some members of separate congregations to co-operate and establish forums for debate. At the same time the size of some individual congregations grew well beyond that of many Polish-Prussian congregations, creating new challenges and new strains on the sense of congregational-community. Another result of the Russian creation of the colony-community was that congregational discipline could not always be enforced and sometimes conflicted with official sanctions. Mennonites condemned by their congregational-community could not be expelled from the colony-community, while many offical sanctions, including forms of punishment, contradicted Mennonite principles of faith and were not recognized by some congregational leaders.

In a sense the colony-community possessed many features of a distinct polity. The system of indirect rule instituted by the Russians after 1800 as part of a wider reform of regional and provincial government, was intended to create the basis for a nation-state more on western European models.[12] In this regard the oft-made claim that the Mennonites constituted "a state within a state" needs to be qualified.

The agro-polities established at the colony level before 1860 bear a striking resemblance to the forms of agrarian states outlined above for Polish-Prussia (compare Figures 1 and 2). The comparison is more than just a product of how the diagrams have been drawn. Like the culturally diverse polities of preindustrial Europe, the colonies were divided vertically by congregations which represented more than just differences in doctrine and practice. The congregational-communities in Molochnaia were divided also by cultural differences; their members often spoke different dialects, wore different dress and had very different views on many subjects such as education, domestic organization etc. Usually these differences were the result of the varied backgrounds of members of the congregations and reflected their different histories before migration to Russia. The differences between the three Groningen Old Flemish congregational-communities in Molochnaia, centred respectively in Alexanderwohl, Waldheim and Gnadenfeld, are a good example of cultural differentiation between groups descended from a common community in the eighteenth century. All had experienced very different settlement patterns before migrating to Russia in the nineteenth century and in Molochnaia maintained their separateness by establishing distinctive congregations.

But in one significant sense the colony-communities differed in structure from established preindustrial agrarian polities: there was no clearly demarcated, homogeneous ruling strata above the vertically differentiated heterogeneous congregational-communities. It is not that Mennonite society was

not undifferentiated, but the fact is that no single group of non-congregational affiliated Mennonites as yet dominated the polity-like colony. The social differentiation of Mennonite society occurred *within* congregations, but created new alliances *between* congregations. These horizontal distinctions heralded the emergence of new forms of society and community in Mennonite Russia: an industrial society and a commonwealth of Mennonite communities in which congregational affiliations gradually declined in importance.

The social differentiation in Mennonite life and the emergence of industrial society

Many of the social and occupational differences between Mennonites which had developed in Polish-Prussia were in part transferred to Russia. But in the colonies, at least in the initial years, there was a levelling of many of these differences. This was due in part to the fact that most Mennonites attempted to take up farming, using their artisan or entrepreneurial skills merely to supplement their incomes. The pioneer conditions of early settlement also forced groups to cooperate closely, strengthening the sense of egalitarian community. In the long-term, however, the frontier environment provided an impetus to social differentiation as Mennonites responded to the immense opportunities afforded by New Russian conditions. Some Mennonites took entrepreneurial risks and amassed fortunes, others drew on existing skills and developed them to suit new conditions. Even the average farmer eventually became richer than his forebears and many of his contemporaries in Prussia. Not all the differences, however, were manifested in wealth as a variety of occupational distinctions were either maintained or developed in Russia. The colonies were not just political entities; they were also distinct economic worlds with their own infrastructures of craft and service industries. The expansion of the administrative functions of the colonies also created a demand for more trained officials and encouraged the further development of schooling. Education became another factor in social differentiation. All these differences were accentuated by a rising population in the colonies caused by the high birth rate and continued immigration. Differences in wealth, occupation and education became more clearly defined and a section of the community emerged which possessed limited access to the skills essential for social success. Impoverished, lacking land and access to good employment and advanced education, these socially deprived people, mostly small cottagers, were disenfranchized from colony affairs.

The forces which influenced the emergence of these social differences were varied. At first they were the result of Mennonite initiatives, but increasingly after 1820 they were the result of specific Russian policies, organized and implemented at the local level by Mennonites. There was a conscious attempt by Mennonites and non-Mennonites to alter Mennonite

society, even though the eventual consequences of the policies could not have been foreseen by their prime movers.

The leading figure in these changes was the Molochnaia Mennonite Johann Cornies. Cornies directed the Agricultural Union, an organization which began as a kind of Ministry for Agricultural Development, widened its scope to one of Economic Development and eventually became a Ministry for Cultural and Economic Development during the 1840s, subordinating even the colony administration to its control. Cornies took little notice of the existing vertical congregational divisons in the colony except where they could be used to facilitate the policies of the Union. Congregational leaders who opposed the Union's plans were removed; congregations were divided into manageable regional units; formal procedures were initiated to regulate inter-congregational affairs and to mediate disputes. As such the Union became the modernizing arm of the Russian state in the colonies taking on many of the features of a reformist agency in the community.

Cornies reinforced the existing trend towards the colony becoming a distinct and important economic entity integrated into the larger economic environment developing in New Russia. This had profound social consequences for the community. At the core of each colony, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, Cornies hoped to establish a society of independent, efficient farmers who would respond to market conditions. They were to be serviced by local artisans and tradesmen, assisted by a cadre of efficient, trained bureaucrats. Crucial to Cornies' plans was his intention to reform the educational system, which in hindsight can be seen as essential to the formation of a modern, industrial society.[13]

Until Cornies' Union took control of the educational institutions in Molochnaia, schools had been under the authority of the congregations and village officials. Even before the Union intervened, however, there are clear indications that education had become regularized and standardized in the colony in response to the demands for trained administrators by the Russian government. What Cornies did was to "secularize" education and further the process of standardization. As the nineteenth century progressed, culture became something school-transmitted rather than something transmitted by the congregations or in the household. While the socialization and enculturation of the young was still into a Mennonite environment, in a sense it was much broader. The generalized education younger Mennonites received provided them with a range of skills and abilities which permitted them, if they so chose, to be adaptable in terms of occupational choice and socially mobile within and beyond the Mennonite community. They could shake off not only old community ties, but also, as individuals, seek their own way in the world, free of kin and the occupations and concerns of their ancestors. Their intellectual horizons were greatly widened and the social world of farm and village, as well as the ideas and opinions of older congregational leaders, were seen as narrow, restrictive and parochial. On the other hand younger Mennonites still felt tied to a distinctly Mennonite world. But this world was a

much broader community than that of the early years of settlement.

By 1860, however, such attitudes were still confined to a very small minority of the Mennonite population and not all those affected had experienced the influence of the new social forms in Russia. The emergence of industrial societies was occurring in association with the formation of nation states elsewhere in Europe. In Prussia Mennonites had been subject to change much earlier and more profoundly than their Russian brethren. As "German" speakers the Mennonites of West Prussia and Danzig had been increasingly Prussianized from the time of the partitions. Although this process was interrupted by the Napoleonic Wars and by shifts in policy, Prussianization increased steadily during the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the major forces leading to the integration of Mennonites into the larger society was education which sought to socialize children into the ideals and values of the Prussian state while at the same time urging them to seek a role in the emergent industrial society. During this period the Mennonite sense of constituting a separate community in Prussia weakened. The process of rapprochement between divided congregations, which had begun in the late eighteenth century but which had been reversed in the early Russian settlements, intensified in Prussia during the first half of the nineteenth century. The vertical differences between congregations declined to insignificance, regional differences were overcome by increased communication while the horizontal distinctions between individual Mennonites on the basis of wealth, occupation and education increased.

The significance of these Prussian trends for the Russian situation, especially that in Molochnaia, should not be underestimated. Not only were many Russian colonists in constant contact with their Prussian brethren, but many Mennonites, particulary skilled artisans during the Cornies era, emigrated to Russia between 1820 and 1850, singularly or in groups. These new settlers had already experienced the forces of transformation from an agrarian, preindustrial society towards an industrial society. They had a different sense of community and congregation from many of the Russian Mennonites and the skill, or at least the will, to seek to establish a new order in Russia. The immigrant artisans of the 1830s and 1840s were also often independent, semi-educated individuals with a clear sense of their personal rights and forms of religiosity which contrasted markedly with many of the established farmer-colonists living in Russia.

By 1860 Mennonite society in Russia was in a transitional state with old ideas of congregational community and the proper forms of social status derived from earlier experiences of agrarian society still very much apparent. Indeed many of these attitudes had been strengthened by the counter-reaction which occurred in the political sphere following Cornies' death in 1848. In line with the priorities of European agrarian society the possession of land and the life of a cultivator were seen as the ideal. Land gave a person power and status in the community and most of the farmers were elderly and extremely conservative in outlook, raised as they had been in the older

pioneer years of settlement. But the division of the colonies into landowners and landless obscures more critical social divisions in the Mennonite world.

The landless were far from being a homogeneous group.[14] Their ranks included the children of landowners who lacked capital to establish their own farms, craftsmen and artisans and their children, some rich others poor, businessmen and other entrepreneurs, school teachers, administrative clerks and finally many impoverished groups who had never owned land and who existed on the margins of Mennonite society. The leaders of the landless in the struggles over land which broke out in the 1860s came mainly from the elite landless: artisans, craftsmen, teachers and clerks, many of whom were either recent immigrants or people educated in the reformed schools during the Cornies era. It was obvious to these leaders, as it had been to Cornies, that the numbers of landless would increase as the population grew and the availability of land in the colonies decreased. While the leaders of the landless were motivated by a number of factors to become involved in the struggle for land, ranging from self-interest to deeply felt moral indignation, their actions had obvious political consequences. In the spirit of reaction which followed Cornies' death in 1848, conservative forces, dominated by landowners, controlled community affairs. The landowners through their possession of land controlled the wealth of the colony, its political institutions and were influential in congregational affairs. But they did not possess a monopoly of wealth. In the post-Crimean War economy of New Russia there was money to be made not only from agriculture but also from trade, the production of goods and milling. The elite businessmen and artisans, as well as the educated teachers and the clerks, were frustrated in their claims to status in a community dominated by landowners who supported archaic views that attributed high status to farmers while looking down upon the activities of businessmen, trades people and the educated. The mobility of these new groups, socially and physically, was also severely restricted by the attitudes and policies of the landowning group which led to feelings of frustrations and social discord. Below this disenfranchized elite, however, lay a mass of poor landless, lacking social consciousness of their common condition but whom the Russian government obviously recognized as Mennonite. If they could be mobilized, political control could be wrested from the conservative farmers and the new elites could assume their rightful place in community affairs.

These new social divisions cut across the differences between congregations. Members of every social group could be found in each congregation. What is more, as their sense of social solidarity increased, especially among the landless elites, they established social and political contacts across congregations at the expense of older social linkages based upon the vertical divisions of the congregational-communities. While exact figures are unavailable, the majority of the really conservative landowners were members of the older, established Flemish congregations. Although these congregations contained a large number of poor landless, the other, more recently settled congregations, contained a higher proportion of skilled,

Name	Place of Residence	Congre-gation	Date of Birth	Date of immi-gration	Occupation	Comments
August Lenzmann	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF	1823	1836	farmer/Elder	NC
Benjamin Lange	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF	c.1800	1836	Minister/teacher	NC (sons joined the Tm)
Wilhelm Lange	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF		1836	Minister/teacher	NC (Br to Benjamin)
Wilhelm Bartel	Gnadenfeld/Berdiansk	GnGOF	1820–30?	1830s	merchant	M Br — see Table 3
David Hausknecht	Gnadenfeld	Fr?			teacher	Tm
Jacob Buhler	Prangenau/Berdiansk	Fr	c.1830		merchant/miller	died 1855
Bernhard Buhler	Prangenau/Berdiansk	Fr GnGOF	1834		merchant/miller	M Br
Nikolai Schmidt	Steinbach	Fl *GnGOF	1815		Minister/estate owner	Tm
Johann Schmidt	Steinbach	Fl *GnGOF			estate owner	Tm
Heinrich Schmidt	Pastwa	GnGOF				NC?
Abraham Matthies	Rudnerweide	Fr	c.1820		merchant	NC
Dietrich Dick	Rudnerweide	Fr	1809		merchant	Tm
Jacob Bekker	Rudnerweide	Fr *GnGOF	1828	1836	teacher	M Br — See Table 2
Abraham Wiebe	Rudnerweide	Fr *GnGOF			merchant	Tm
Johann Classen	Liebenau	Fr?*GnGOF	1820	c.1820	merchant	M Br — See Table 2
Heinrich Hübert	Liebenau	Fl (Ohl)a	1810		farmer/miller	M Br — See Table 2

Andreas Flaming	Schardau	Fr *GnGOF?	1825		Minister/farmer?	NC? Brother to M Br — See Table 2
Benjamin Janz	Grossweide	Fl *GnGOF				M Br
Abraham Braun	Grossweide	Fl			teacher/miller	NC
Abraham Cornelson	Grossweide/Elisabethal	Fr	1826		teacher	M Br — See Table 2
Peter Siemens	Konteniusfeld	Fl (Ohl)	1828		teacher/miller	M Br
Peter Dick	Pordenau	Fr			merchant	Tm
Abraham Dick	Pordenau	Fr			merchant	Tm
Leonhard Sudermann	Berdiansk	Fl	1821	1841	merchant	NC but later linked to Gn
Hermann Sudermann	Berdiansk	Fl	1814	1839	merchant	NC
Jakob Reimer	Felsental/Gnadenfeld	Fr *GnGOF	1817		teacher	M Br — See Table 3
Abraham Peters	Ladekopp	Fl?	1826	1839?	teacher?	M Br — See Table 2
Christian Schmidt		Lutheran	1833		carpenter	M Br Became important leader

Table 1: Members of the Wüst brethren.

Notes: GnGOF (Gnadenfeld Groningen Old Flemish); Fr (Frisian); Fl (Flemish); Ohl (Ohrloff); WGOF (Waldheim Groningen Old Flemish); NC (no change); Tm (Templar); M Br (Mennonite Brethren); *Indicates a change in Congregation; c. (circa).

educated landless, some of whom had been born and brought up in Prussia. The Frisian congregation particularly appears to have contained large villages with, presumably, a number of landless. The Ohrloff Flemish congregation, Cornies' own community, contained a number of educated landless who were to play a leading role in the landless struggle as part of that congregational-community's larger programme to regain control of the colony-community during the 1860s. Political differences in the Molochnaia by 1860 therefore tended to correspond more to new social differences than to older congregational divisions. At the same time these social differences also began to correspond to differences in world view, including religious attitudes and allegiances which again linked people of different congregational affiliation but of similar social status in common religious concerns and practices.

The social background of the Mennonite Brethren: leaders and supporters

Most of the early leaders of the Molochnaia Brethren had already been involved for some years in a number of groupings active in social and religious affairs in the colony. These included religious study groups associated with particular congregations, especially Gnadenfeld, school reform movements, missionary support groups and other unofficial bodies. Membership of these groupings often overlapped, but the one we know most about was the informal circle associated with the Evangelical Separatist revival preacher, Eduard Wüst. The Wüst Brethren, as they were known, supported the ideas and activities of Wüst and included non-Mennonites. From the nucleus of this group appeared many of the key figures of the two new community groups to emerge in Molochnaia in the 1860s, the Brethren and the Templars (Table 1).[15]

Twenty-eight members of the Wüst Brethren can be identified by name, of whom eleven were later to become Brethren and seven Templars. The dates of birth of seventeen can be ascertained and the majority would have been in their 30s during the 1850s when the Brethren were active. It is also clear that a number had been born outside Russia, mainly in Prussia, had migrated as children or as adults and thus had direct or indirect experience of a social and community system different from that which had developed in Russia. The occupations of most can also be identified. Ten were merchants or entrepreneurs, eleven were teachers or had attended secondary school and received instruction to the level where they could teach or become clerks. Others were involved in milling, a major area of entrepreneurial speculation in the boom conditions following the Crimean War. At least three were wealthy, independent landowners. Only two could be described as colony-farmers, and both had received a secondary education.

It is clear that none of the Wüst Brethren belonged to the poor landless, although many lacked land. Landowning colony-farmers are also under-

Name	Place of Residence	Congre-gation	Date of Birth	Date of immi-gration	Occupation	Comments
Abraham Cornelsen	Elisabethtal	Fr	1826		teacher	left Brethren 1862
Cornelius Wiens	Elisabethtal	Fr?	1830s/40s			banned 1864 moved to Kuban, step-son of Franz Klassen
Isaak Koop	Elisabethtal	Fr?	1817	before 1860		step-son of Franz Klassen
Abraham Wiens	Elisabethtal	Fr?	1830s/40s			
Franz Klassen	Elisabethtal	Fr?	1815-20?			Deacon 1860-61
Martin Klassen	Lichtfelde	Fr?	1821?	1841?		banned 1862
Abraham Wiens	Lichtfelde	Fr				
Daniel Hoop (Hoppe)	Schardau	Fr?	1823	1854	Son of tailor	excommunicated 1861 put out 1862?
August Strauss	Schardau	Fr?	before 1820	1840s		left Brethren? Moved to Crimea
Jacob Bekker (Becker)	Rudnerweide	Fr	1828	1836	teacher?	leader 1861-2 extremists
Isaak (Johann) Regehr	Pastwa	Fr?	c.1830			put out 1862?
Andreas Voth	Pastwa	Fr?			teacher	moved to Crimea 1863
Jakob Wall	Pastwa	Fr?				put out 1862
Heinrich Hübert	Liebenau	Ohl.Flem.	1810		farmer/miller	
Johann Classen	Liebenau	GnGOF	1820	c.1820	teacher/merchant	
Diedrich Classen	Mariental	GnGOF		c.1830		nephew of Johann
Peter Stobbe	Ladekopp	Ohl.Flem?		c.1839?		
Abraham Peters	Ladekopp	Flem?	1826	c.1839		banned 1864 later Deacon Kuban

Table 2: The Eighteen Signatories to the Brethren Secession Document January 6th, 1860

represented. The Brethren therefore belonged largely to that minority group of educated, landless, upwardly mobile group, excluded from colony and congregational affairs. This is not to say that many were inactive in their congregations and communities, only that they did not receive popular support and social recognition. Most lived or came from the eastern villages of the colony, where a major new settlement had occurred since 1820. They were mostly members of the Frisian and Groningen Old Flemish congregations. Many had changed their congregational affiliation within the United congregations, a move which had been eased and legitimized during Cornies' rule to reduce inter-congregational conflict. As individuals they had chosen to associate with the congregation which professed a more "active" religiosity often associated with pietist and evangelical tendencies — Gnadenfeld. Their membership of a particular social group was thereby strengthened by their ties with a progressive congregation and, given their social networks, it is not surprising to find some linked through ties of marriage.

Of the eighteen signatories to the original Brethren secession document, five can be identified as former Wüst Brethren (compare Tables 1 and 2).[16] If the fifteen additional names attached to the document the Brethren sent to the Ohrloff congregation in March 1860 (see Table 3)[17] are added, the number of former Wüst Brethren is increased by two. Who were the other twenty-six Brethren who formed the "core" of the initial Brethren secession?[18]

Although much detail is missing, the picture already drawn for the Wüst Brethren members is repeated for this group of early Brethren. In terms of education and occupation those that can be identified show many similarities with the Wüst Brethren. If anything, a younger generation is now represented; five at least were unmarried in 1860 (Bernhard Penner, Heinrich Bartel, Abraham Regehr, Jacob Bekker and Benjamin Bekker). Again a number, perhaps as many as half, were born outside Russia, mostly in Prussia. They largely lived in or came from the eastern villages, and from a group of particular villages (see Tables 2 and 3). This undoubtedly reflects links of kinship and marriage.[19] Surprisingly many were members, or former members, of the Frisian congregation and those who were still members of this congregation were banned after secession. Otherwise they were members of the Gnadenfeld or Ohrloff Flemish congregation with the possible inclusion of some Groningen Old Flemish from Waldheim (although some Waldheim villagers may have been members of the Gnadenfeld congregation, again after transfer).

The Khortitsa Brethren who emerged after 1862 are more difficult to identify, although their leaders show strikingly similar social backrounds to the Molochnaia leaders. Abraham Unger, for instance, was a wagon maker and businessman; Heinrich Neufeld was a silk manufacturer and entrepreneur. There is also a good selection of teachers and well educated clerks and minor administrators represented. The links with the Frisians are also

Name	Place of Residence	Congre-gation	Date of Birth	Date of immi-gration	Occupation	Comments
David Classen	Ladekopp	GnGOF?		1820s?		brother of Johann Classen
Simon Harms	Liebenau	Fr				married H. Hübert's daughter — moved to Kuban
Gottlieb Strauss	Waldheim	WGOF?		1830s		
Friedrich Strauss	Waldheim	WGOF?		1830s		to Kuban
Johann Strauss (1)	Waldheim	WGOF?		1830s		to Kuban
Johann Strauss (2)	Waldheim	WGOF?		1830s		
David Doerksen	Waldheim	WGOF?	c.1830?	1830s		to Kuban; son-in-law of Gottlieb Strauss
Jakob Reimer	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF (prev. Fr)	1817		Estate owner	son-in-law of Gottlieb Strauss
Heinrich Bartel	Gnadenfeld/ Berdiansk	GnGOF	1830–c.1840	1830s	merchant/ miller	Deacon 1860–1 involved in troubles
Bernhard Penner	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF	c.1838?	1836		later Adventist
Benjamin Bekker	Rudnerweide	Fr	1833	1836		younger brother to Jakob Bekker
Abraham Regehr	Rudnerweide	Fr	1830s/ 40s?			
Wilhelm Bartel	Gnadenfeld	GnGOF	1820–30?	1830s?	merchant/ miller	elder brother to Heinrich left Movement 1862
Heinrich Flaming	Schardau	Fr		1830s?		to Kuban
Jakob Kroeker	Lichtfelde	Fr	1822			

Table 3: The Fifteen Additional Signatories of Brethren in Letter to Ohrloff March 19th, 1860

strong. But Khortitsa was not as strongly differentiated in terms of society or culture as Molochnaia.

This analysis of the social background of the early Brethren confirms and extends the recent repudiation of earlier arguments that the Brethren were associated with the poor landless and the agitation for land reform during the 1860s.[20] While many of the early Brethren were landless, they were not necessarily poor. Indeed quite the opposite. And none are known to have been actively involved in the land reform movement. The argument that the Brethren can be viewed as a social protest movement against social deprivation and injustice can thus be rejected. On the other hand the Brethren can be considered as a socially disadvantaged group, but only in as far as their membership included many who were sensitive to their social standing in a community which failed to recognize their status and skills and moreover denied them a constructive role in civil or religious affairs.

But what of the membership newly attracted to the Brethren and baptized into the movement during the early years of the movement, in the period of turmoil between 1861 and 1865? Were many of these people from the same social background as the early leaders of the Brethren? Or did they include people from the ranks of the poor, including many landless?

From all the sources currently available I have been able to identify by name fifty-six people associated with the Molochnaia Brethren between 1860 and 1865 in addition to the thirty-three identified in Tables 2 and 3. All but one are male.[21] I have also identified thirty-six persons for Khortitsa, all male. In terms of their ages, occupations and other details there is very little information available, although more teachers and merchants are included. By January 1861, 102 adults had been baptized in Molochnaia and between 1860 and 1865 between 260 and 299 persons were baptized.[22] Some were Khortitsa Mennonites baptized in Molochnaia, although between 1862 and 1866, 202 persons were baptized in Khortitsa, 116 in 1862 alone. But a number of the early Molochnaia Brethren never submitted to baptism and left the movement early; a number baptized between 1860 and 1865 also left or were excommunicated during the periods of internal strife and never returned. By 1865 there were probably only about 100 members in Molochnaia, with others obviously in the Kuban. Even so the numbers of Brethren are minute in terms of the total population. In 1860 Molochnaia's population was almost 20,000; Khortitsa's almost 10,000. But were there more supporters and sympathizers than members, especially before 1865? Who attended Brethren meetings, particularly when such assemblies involved popular forms of worship?

The evidence is unfortunately equivocal. Some of the early reports on Brethren meetings, however, do indicate that they were held outside the colony where landless Mennonites were renting or share-cropping land previously inhabited by Nogai Tartars who had migrated to Turkey following the Crimean War. Some Brethren had moved to these areas to escape persecution in the colony. It would be understandable if people, settled away from the colony, often alienated from the established institutions of commu-

nity life in their congregations and villages, were attracted to the services of the Brethren with their less formal structures of worship.[23] To raise this type of issue, however, involves the consideration of other aspects of the early Brethren, in particular their relation to the existing society and community forms and their vision of a new religious brotherhood.

Fellowship and congregation among the Mennonite Brethren and the emergent Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia.

The individuals who drew up the secessionist document of January 1860 referred to themselves on more than one occasion as a "fellowship of believers" *(Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen)*; only in their March address to the Ohrloff congregation did they refer to themselves as a congregation *(Gemeinde)*. The idea that they were a fellowship, a new kind of religious grouping, suited their earlier experience in select religious gatherings, their criticisms of existing community structures and their hope for a new sense of religious community. They felt they were all members of a select group who individually had experienced a new sense of faith and personal salvation (they had been "born again") who ought to be allowed to meet together "to strengthen the faith of true believers" and hold communion separately from the unregenerate in the community. Their attempts to establish an exclusive fellowship, marked by the holding of a separate communion service within the body of their own congregations, had failed. At the time of secession all their energies were focused on the act of communion as the focus of the fellowship of existing members, rather than on the act of baptism as marking the gateway to membership of the new community of believers as was later to be the case. Beyond the need to secure exclusive, separate fellowship in communion services, very little thought seems to have been given by the early Brethren as to the exact form their new grouping should take.

In contrast, their view of the existing Mennonite community was clear and condemnatory. They referred to the community as the Mennonite Brotherhood *(Brüderschaft)*, a grouping which was not religious. It was a category defined neither by God nor by Mennonite tradition but by government decree: "We have [in our criticisms] the entire Mennonite brotherhood *(ganze Mennonitenbrüderschaft)* in mind, because the supreme authorities *(hohen Obrigkeit)* consider it one true brotherhood *(wahre Brüderschaft)*."[24] This brotherhood was decadent, corrupt and full of unrepentent sinners. The "churches" *(Kirchen)* and their leaders no longer enforced the discipline needed to maintain a true fellowship of believers. The brotherhood (read colony-community) had lost its direction (sense of congregational-community) and therefore its right to continue to represent Mennonites who wished to live a Christian way of life.

The majority of the colonists and their leaders (civil and religious) saw things somewhat differently. The Brethren were not a new religious fellowship, but a dangerous "society" *(Gesellschaft)*, a term with political

connotations at this period, suggesting a conspiratorial cell. When the religious emphasis of the Brethren could no longer be denied, their opponents adopted the equally political term "sect" *(Sekte)* and argued that the secessionists disregarded established congregational and basic Mennonite principles.[25]

The Brethren's separation was quite unlike earlier Mennonite group divisions. Their members were drawn from a number of different congregations rather than a single religious group; they were all lay people and no ordained religious leader provided them with legitimate authority to constitute a new congregation. In many ways they could be seen (in modern parlance) as a sectarian movement in the Mennonite colony-community and within congregational-communities rather than a schism of an existing congregation.[26] As such they not only threatened existing authority and community structures, but also contravened established practices. The Mennonite authorities had good reason to fear such sectarian movements given the disturbances caused by similar groups outside the colony, especially among certain renegades from Wüst's congregation at his period.[27]

If the Brethren had only a very vague idea of the kind of community they wished to establish, they were soon forced to organize themselves into a more formal grouping. The opposition of the Mennonite establishment and actual persecution and widespread intimidation of individual members at the local level, forced them into action, while at the same time supporters and sympathizers within the colony and in the Russian administration urged them to organize themselves into an acceptable religious group. The need to secure official recognition required the Brethren to conform more closely to established Mennonite forms than perhaps had originally been intended and created tensions which contributed to the conflicts and confrontations which plagued the Brethren movement between 1860 and 1865.

The community organizations and practices which the Brethren attempted to establish were therefore a compromise between fulfilling the original ideals of the secessionists, catering to the demands of new members who joined the movement and conforming to Mennonite ideals in order to maintain the support of sympathizers and thus gain official recognition.

If the original secession had been a break with established practices, the organization of community structures and practices remained innovatory, often radically opposed to established Mennonite forms. The religious services, with their use of Low German, dancing and the playing of musical instruments contrasted strongly with the use of High German and the dour assemblies of most established congregations.[28] The eagerness to proselytize and attract members shifted the emphasis away from the exclusive fellowship meeting to hold communion services, to public acts of baptism expressing the promise of a new faith. The form of baptism adopted, immersion, also helped to mark the Brethren and their community apart from the established congregations.[29] The need to appoint recognized and legitimate leaders led to the election of ministers in May 1860 according to normal democratic Men-

nonite practice. But in their secession document the Brethren had argued that leaders could be chosen by "true believers" or "without human assistance," by God, as were the apostles and prophets. The latter point was undoubtedly intended to justify the Brethren's secession without the legitimation of ordained leaders. In time, however, this belief, combined with an egalitarian ethos and a disregard for established practices, resulted in the emergence of dictatorial individuals like Gerhard Wieler, Jakob Bekker and Heinrich Neufeld who exercised arbitrary power in totally undemocratic ways. For a time all was confusion among the Brethren; community, in organization and practice, became chaotic, almost anarchic in character, with strong hierarchial leaders combined with general disorder and lack of direction among a confused following.

The crisis was resolved by the strong measures revealed in the June Reforms of 1865. While some of the Brethren innovations were retained, the general trend was to establish a congregational structure with clear authority structures combined with a conservative social ethic which in many ways resembled that of the established congregations. The new form of baptism was confirmed, but candidates were carefully screened for their fitness for the elect fellowship and the number of new baptisms dropped sharply; between 1866 and 1871 only 97 candidates were baptized (only 19 a year on average) compared with almost 300 between 1860 and 1865. The wilder excesses of religious worship were strictly proscribed, although the use of Low German survived for a longer period. Religious leadership was elective and subject to the same checks and balances in the exercise of authority as operated in established Mennonite congregations. The re-establishment of such authority structures was one of the features many objected to in the Reform; the original fellowship of believers was being institutionalized with new leaders, a new elite, many of whom were not members of the original movement.[30]

But the Brethren did not become just another congregation in the colony-community of Molochnaia or Khortitsa. If all the original fellowship had, as originally intended, moved to the Kuban, they may well have formed a distinct congregation which did not emphasize its "Mennonite" nature so clearly.[31] If the Khortitsa Brethren had continued to reorganize themselves along Baptist lines they too may have moved away from the Mennonite camp. But the decision of some Brethren not to move to the Kuban and to remain in the colonies combined with the threat of military service in the 1870s, forced the Brethren to reconsider their identity as a distinct religious community. They opted to remain within the larger Mennonite community and so secure their right to remain settlers and to participate in the system of alternative service reserved for Mennonites. This strategy required a degree of close co-operation between the different Brethren groups scattered as minorities in most settlements where they had developed slightly different ideas and practices since 1865. A new form of centralized organization emerged in the form of the General Conferences first held in 1872.[32] This

reorganization of the Brethren helped renew their efforts to proselytize within the Mennonite community, to act out a sectarian role within the brotherhood. A new wave of conversions began in the 1870s with eighty baptisms alone in Molochnaia in 1876. At the same time small cells of Brethren emerged in the newly founded daughter settlements established elsewhere in Russia as cohesive congregation-colony-communities. The Brethren had become an established congregational group in Russia, but still within the Mennonite fold.

Conclusion

A consideration of the forms of community and the structure of society which had developed in Russia by 1860 is obviously important in understanding the background to those involved in the formation of the Mennonite Brethren and in their attitudes to the social, religious and political conditions they believed were dominant in the Mennonite colonies of their time. But understanding the preconditions associated with the emergence of the Brethren should not be confused with claims that such conditions *caused* the schism to occur. Many accounts of the origins of the Brethren have attempted to establish clear causes in terms of either social conditions or, more commonly, the religious situation in the Mennonite colonies. The causes of the schism often appear quite clear: they were the result either of social conflict or a real moral and spiritual decline in the religious life of the community. Such simplistic arguments can be easily refuted not only by the historical facts, but also by exposing their teleological basis.

How important then is an understanding of the origins and development of the Brethren to an understanding of the wider Russian Mennonite experience in the nineteenth century? In terms of the emergence of the Brethren it is now clear that they were not such a radical break with the social or the religious world which had existed before 1860 as has often been argued. The simplistic picture of a Mennonite flock lost in a wilderness, existing in cultural isolation, in religious ignorance and spiritual darkness, awaiting the Brethren to shepherd them into light and renewal, cannot be sustained. Nor can the Brethren be seen as the only bearers of the message of religious progress and social conscience after 1860. On the other hand the Brethren undeniably became a force to be reckoned with. And that reckoning continues to provide a challenge to anyone interested in the Russian Mennonite experience after 1860, in Europe and North America.

Notes

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[1]For a more detailed presentation of this argument see James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789–1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1988).

[2]See R. J. Holton, *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

[3]For a discussion of the ideas of corporateness, a concept derived from H. S. Maine, see M. G. Smith, *Corporations and Society* (London: Duckworth, 1974), especially pp. 254–57.

[4]These figures are guesstimates. Interestingly in the case of Hutterites, where the principles of corporate communalism are much more clearly articulated in terms of social relationships and social interaction than among Mennonites, when their communities reach a population of 130–150 they tend to divide; see John H. Hostetler, *Hutterite Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 186; Carolyn L. Olsen, "The Demography of Colony Fission from 1878–1970 among the Hutterites of North America," *American Anthropologist* 89 (1987), 823–37.

[5]See Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland, Volume I: The Origins to 1795* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 256–92.

[6]This diagram and the associated ideas are derived in part from Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), especially Chapter 2: "Culture in Agrarian Society."

[7]See William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: the Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772–1914* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), Chapter 1: "The Nationalities in the Eighteenth-Century Polish Commonwealth."

[8]See the comments of Peter J. Klassen, "Faith and Culture in Conflict: Mennonites in the Vistula Delta", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (from now on *MQR*) LVII (1983), 194–200.

[9]See Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change Through Law in the Germanies and Russia 1600–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

[10]Urry, *None But Saints*, Chapter 7.

[11]It is clear that some Russian officials tended to view the congregations as just parishes of a larger consistorial system such as existed in the Protestant colonies linked with the Lutheran Church and those colonies which were part of the Catholic Church.

[12]George L. Yaney, *The Systematization of Russian Government: Social Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711–1905* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973).

[13]Urry, *None But Saints*, Chapter 9; on the importance of education to the emergence and continuance of industrial society see Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 28–29, 35–38.

[14]The landowners also should not be seen as a homogeneous group; some were artisans and businessmen who had invested in land while others, including the few educated in the high schools, shared many of the opinions and values of the informed landless elite. Certainly the landowners did not constitute a distinctive class but as the conflicts became more embittered they formed a powerful interest group.

[15]Information derived from the following sources: J. Prinz, *Die Kolonien der Bruedergemeinde* (Moscow, 1898); A. Kroeker, *Pfarrer Eduard Wuest, der grosse Erweckungsprediger in den deutschen Kolonien Suedrusslands* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Central Publishing House, 1903); P. M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789–1910)* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978); Heinrich Sawatzky, *Templer mennonitischer Herkunft* (Winnipeg: Echo Verlag, 1955).

[16]Information from the sources listed in note 15 with the addition of Jacob P. Bekker, *Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro, Kan.: Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the Midwest, 1973), and Alan Peters, "Brotherhood and Family: Implications of Kinship in Mennonite Brethren History," in Abraham Friesen, ed., *P. M. Friesen and His History: Understanding Mennonite Brethren Beginnings* (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1979).

[17]See Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 239–40; the document in Bekker (*Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, 59–61) misses out one name (there were two Johann Strauss') and thus gives only 32 names. See *Mennonitische Blaetter* (Feb. 1863), 13, for confirmation of the 33 signatories on an early printing of this document.

[18]Peters, "Brotherhood and Family," 53–60, gives more detailed lists of members from 1860 to 1878.

[19]See Peters ("Brotherhood and Family") on the ties of kinship and especially the marriage links among these people.

[20]The strongest claim for such a connection was made by Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* (Langensalza: J. Betz, 1932), 59, and

was soon refuted by Peter Braun in his review of the book ("Einige Zurechtstellungen zu Dr. A. Ehrts Das Mennonitentum in Russland," *Mennonitische Blaetter* (May 1932, 53–55). But for a long time it remained an easy explanation for many (see Cornelius Krahn, "Some Social Attitudes of the Mennonites of Russia," *MQR*, IX (1935),173). John A. Toews *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), 51–52, also refuted such arguments. See also Peter J. Klassen, "The Historiography of the Birth of the Mennonite Brethren Church," in Abraham Friesen, ed., *P. M. Friesen and His History: Understanding Mennonite Brethren Beginnings* (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1979) for a good discussion of interpretations of the early Brethren.

[21]There are indications in the documents presented by Friesen that women played an important part in the early Brethren movement but, alas, as in so many other areas of the documentation of Russian Mennonite history and culture, they are not dealt with in detail and often not even named; see also the comments of Peters, "Brotherhood and Family," 36.

[22]Friesen (*Mennonite Brotherhood*, 285, 290, 314, 316–17, 320, 468–69, 489, 500, 1009 n137) gives different figures for different periods, so it is difficult to be exact. However, it is clear that he was working from a list of baptismal candidates and it is a pity he did not provide posterity with both the names and the numbers.

[23]The whole issue of Classen's success in securing the promise of land in the Kuban may also have been a significant factor in support for the Brethren, but there is little on this matter in the surviving documents.

[24]Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 231; I have adjusted the translation a little with reference to the original German text. It should be noted that the Brethren did not single out any specific congregation for criticism, but condemned the general community and thus all the congregations. But the reference to the Russian authorities was presented with suitable defference to avoid official condemnation. This clearly reflects the experience of some of the early members in drawing-up official documents. Unfortunately for the Brethren, their general criticisms were quickly interpreted as applying to everyone irrespective of their religious views and this weakened their potential support base in the community.

[25]The period following the 1848 Revolutions in Europe witnessed an increase in official suspicion of new groupings in Russia, including religious movements, and such attitudes only began to change in the late 1850s. The charge of being a "sect" was intended to link the Brethren with disruptive religious movements among Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran subjects at this period which were a cause of concern to Russian officials.

[26]Contrast the division of the Brethren with that of the Templars where the latter claimed to be (at least initially) a legitimate schism from the Gnadenfeld congregation with ordained ministers to legitimate their separation; see Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* (Halbstadt, H. J. Braun 1908), 239–41.

[27]Although hinted at by Friesen, Bekker and Isaak, these disturbances are clearly discussed in Prinz, *Die Kolonien*.

[28]These activities have usually been interpreted as an abnormal deviation and never part of the real intentions of the founders. For an attempt to reassess these activities see Harry Loewen, "Echoes of Drumbeats: The Movement of Exuberance among the Mennonite Brethren," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 3 (1985), 118–27.

[29]Peter Klassen ("The Historiography," 124) has criticized me for this suggestion, but even if it was not the *intention* of the Brethren to mark their differences, it was certainly one major *result* of their action and the mode of baptism was the main marker of their difference from other congregations in the years to follow.

[30]On objections in Molochnaia and Khortitsa, see Friesen *Mennonite Brotherhood*, 460–61; business meetings were called "Babylonian." The new elite, including men like Daniel Fast, Jakob Janz and later Abraham Schellenberg, were educated individuals with links to the Ohrloff congregation. Indeed, the key role of converts to the Brethren from the Ohrloff congregation needs more research; see Friesen, *Ibid.*, 424–25, 545, 546 and Heinrich Janzen in J. B. Toews ed. and trans., "The Early Mennonite Brethren: Some Outside Views," *MQR* LVIII (1984), 116–21.

[31]It is interesting to speculate why, even after going to the Kuban, so many Brethren returned to live in Molochnaia and Khortitsa. Many, as has been shown, were not farmers and unsuited for the pioneer life and as merchants and businessmen, tradesman and artisans needed to be close to a prosperous, established colony in order to survive economically.

[32]J. B. Toews has recently made much the same point, although the exact nature of the

Khortitsa Brethren's connections with the Baptists, the threat of military service and the importance of maintaining a distinctive "Mennonite" identity need closer examination; see Toews, "Brethren and Old Church Relations in Pre-World War I Russia: Setting the Stage for Canada," *JMS* 2 (1984), 47.