

# Prolegomena to the Study of Mennonite Society in Russia 1880-1914

**James Urry**, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

The period between the end of the Great Reforms and the outbreak of the First World War was a time of immense change in Mennonite life. Social life became increasingly complex and diverse as Mennonites expanded across the Russian Empire and were drawn increasingly into Russian society. Change, however, was accompanied by a degree of continuity, at least in the farming communities which constituted the core of Mennonite society. Although it is extremely difficult to generalize about Mennonite society, the aim of this article is to present a basic outline of aspects of that society between 1880 and 1914. It is intended only as a provisional outline, and much more research is needed before a clearer picture can emerge.<sup>1</sup>

## **Population, migration and geographical mobility**

Between 1880 and 1914 the Mennonite population of Russia increased 2.3 fold from around 40,000 to 104,000 people.<sup>2</sup> This considerable rate of growth was mostly the result of a natural increase in the population, as immigration was minimal. Emigration, mostly to North America, continued at a trickle, although small numbers also returned to Russia. Russia's population grew at a slightly slower rate than that of the Mennonites, but still rapidly in comparison with many other countries. Between 1880 and 1914 it increased 1.7 fold from 97,705,000 to 165,138,000.<sup>3</sup>

The increase in Mennonite population, however, did not result in a dramatic growth in the older, established colonies of Khortitsa and Molochnaia. As their excess population moved out to settle new land or to pursue new economic ventures, these colonies barely increased in size. Similar movements occurred away from the Volga settlements and from the more established daughter colonies. Between 1880 and 1914 Mennonite society became increasingly mobile, geographically and socially, as its members expanded into remote areas of Russia's far-flung Empire.

Adolf Ehrt calculated that in 1860 92.2% of Russian Mennonites lived

in the region of initial settlement in southern Russia, but by 1914 these settlements contained only 37.7% of Russia's Mennonites. In 1860 while only 7.8% of the population lived beyond the founding settlement area, by 1914 a majority, 62.3%, lived elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

This movement away from the founding settlements, and particularly away from the provinces of Ekaterinoslav and Taurida, did not occur at an even pace throughout the period 1880 to 1914. Initially the movement was restricted mainly to southern Russia and later to Russia's European provinces. In 1897 85% of Mennonites still inhabited four of the provinces of New Russia, while over 97% lived in provinces west of the Ural Mountains, the boundary between European and Asiatic Russia. By 1914 only 68% of Mennonites lived in New Russia, 80% were settled in European Russia, and 20% had chosen to pioneer areas in "Asiatic" Russia (see Table 1).

The great expansion of Mennonites away from southern Russia and particularly out of European Russia occurred after 1900, especially in the years after 1906. After this date Siberian land was opened for settlement once peace returned to Russia following the Russo-Japanese War and the revolutionary disturbances of 1905. Before these events Mennonite settlement had begun in Central Asia, largely at the Molochnaia daughter colony of Terek.<sup>5</sup> The full extent of the migration to Central Asia and Siberia is still unclear, but between 1900 and 1914 the numbers migrating exceeded 10,000 people (3500 to Terek and 7000 to Siberia).<sup>6</sup> This was the largest movement of Russian Mennonites since the 1870's, when between ten and fifteen thousand Mennonites emigrated to North America. The move to Siberia was particularly significant. Whereas the 1897 census reported only 34 Mennonites in Siberia, official statistics in 1914 gave the Mennonite population as 7,250. This, however, is an underestimate for in 1913 the Mennonite population of just one Siberian settlement, Barnaul near Slavgorod, was 10,416.<sup>7</sup> By 1914 the Mennonite population of Siberia possibly numbered between 13 and 18,000 people or between 12 and 17% of the entire Russian Mennonite population (see Table 1).

	1897		1914	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>European Russia</b>				
Ekaterinoslav	23922	36.4	29370	28.2
Taurida	25508	38.8	35244	33.9
Kherson	5386	8.2	4406	4.2
Kharkov	1214	1.8	441	0.4
Volga region	4616	7.0	8175	7.9
Orenburg	1766	2.7	4601	4.4
Ufa	308	0.5	490	0.5
Other areas	791 <sup>(a)</sup>	1.2	426	0.4
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Total European Russian	63511	96.5	83153	80.0

**"Asiatic" Russia**

Caucasus	1681	2.6	2937	2.8
Turkestan	581	0.9	1468	1.4
Siberia	34	0.05	13119	12.6
Central Asia	—	—	3329	3.2
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Total "Asiatic" Russia	2296	3.5	20853	20.0
Total	65807	100.0	104006 <sup>(b)</sup>	100.0

**Table 1: Distribution of Mennonite population in Russia in 1897 and 1914**  
*Sources:*

1897 Ehrt, *Mennonitentum in Russland*, 83-84

1914 *Die Mennonitenten-Gemeinden in Russland waehrend der Kriegs-und Revolutionsjahre 1914 bis 1920*. (Heilbron: Kommissions-Verlag der Mennoniten Fluechtsfuersorge, 1921), 30 Table 2

*Notes:*

a) This includes the figure of 381 living in the Don region; no such figures were given for 1914 although the Mennonite population of this area continued and increased up to 1914.

b) The source actually calculated the population at 106,235, the same figure as proposed by Ehrt, but I have adjusted the total and proportionately all the regional totals to a population figure close to that given in the text (see the discussion in note 2 for details). As such the figures given for each region appear as precise for those presented for 1897 which are derived from official census returns. Readers are advised that all the 1914 figures are only approximate.

This geographical expansion and increased mobility of Mennonites mirrored that of the larger Russian population in both scale and direction.<sup>8</sup> Between 1870 and 1910, the population of the North Caucasus region in which Terek was situated increased 2.3 fold to over five million people.<sup>9</sup> The expansion of the Siberian population was even greater. Between 1897 and 1910 Siberia's population increased by about 40% to over nine million inhabitants. Between 1906 and 1914 almost 3.5 million people migrated beyond the Urals; in 1908 alone, almost 760,000 people entered Siberia.<sup>10</sup> By 1914 Russia's people, including its Mennonite inhabitants, were on the move.<sup>11</sup>

The great impetus for this movement, for Mennonites and others, was a search for land. Russian society, in spite of a considerable advance in industrialization since the 1860's, was still predominantly an agrarian society.<sup>12</sup> Mennonites, while still living in rural communities and retaining many of their ancestors' agrarian values, were members of an emergent industrial society.<sup>13</sup> While the majority of Mennonites migrating to new lands within Russia between 1880 and 1914 did so in search of agricultural land, their desire was to exploit this land for commercial profit rather than for mere subsistence purposes or the maintenance of communal life. The quality and skills of the Mennonite migrants, however, varied greatly. Some came from poor backgrounds in the mother colonies and were unskilled even at farming; others were well-to-do, eager to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new regions, virgin soils and larger farms. The Siberian land grants in particular

promised an alternative to the restrictions of settlement in daughter colonies. Mennonites were given individual title to land and the freedom to farm as they wished, even if the majority of Mennonites chose instead to settle in compact Mennonite villages.<sup>14</sup>

Mennonites, however, were involved in other commercial activities than farming. Since the 1860's they had moved in search of business opportunities, establishing mills, building engineering workshops and factories, opening stores and other commercial concerns. Many businessmen followed the railroads as they expanded across Russia and established themselves at crucial rail junctions to take advantage of local and regional markets. Sometimes this occurred in conjunction with the establishment of Mennonite farm settlements, at other times businesses were isolated from such communities, although occasionally Mennonite farmers were attracted by the presence of Mennonite commercial concerns in a new area. For example, the first Mennonite to settle in Omsk in Siberia did so to establish an agency for agricultural machinery and only later did Mennonite farmers settle in the area.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of Mennonite settlements in the Ufa region is another example of this process. Here a flourishing Mennonite community was established, located on the main rail route leading from European into Asiatic Russia. Centred on the rail junction at Davelenkanovo, the Ufa Mennonites combined large-scale farming based upon private land purchases with commercial and industrial enterprise.<sup>16</sup>

### **Rurality, urbanism and social mobility**

The majority of Mennonite migrants moved from established rural backgrounds to found new farming communities. Although exact figures are unavailable, probably as many as 90% of Mennonite migrants settled as farmers in rural areas, predominantly in conjunction with other Mennonites. However, migration for commercial reasons, either in agriculture or business, brought Mennonites increasingly into contact with the rapidly growing urban and industrial areas of Russia. Mennonite businessmen in both town and country were far more likely than Mennonite farmers to live close to, and in contact with, members of the larger Russian society.

By 1914 small but significant Mennonite urban communities were located in many south Russian industrial and commercial cities: Melitopol and Berdiansk in Taurida, at Barvenkovo in Kharkov province, in the city of Ekaterinoslav and at railroad junctions at New York and Millerovo where there were Mennonite mills, factories, shops and trade-agencies.<sup>17</sup> But even in the new Asiatic settlements some Mennonites moved directly to urban areas and prospered rapidly, far more rapidly than Mennonite farmers settling in the same region. In Omsk and Slavgorod Mennonites businesses flourished as towns grew into cities in the years before 1914. Even so, the percentage of Mennonites living in urban areas before 1914 must have been only 3-5% of the total Mennonite population.<sup>18</sup>

Also involved with geographical mobility was social mobility, occupational change and a gradual shift away from the strongly rural base of Mennonite society. However, it is not always easy to draw a clear line between rural and urban communities, as a number of Russian settlements designated as "rural" more closely resembled urban than rural settlements.<sup>19</sup> For Mennonites urbanism should also not be seen as only a movement of Mennonites into Russian towns and cities. By 1914 some villages in the established south Russia Mennonite settlements had grown into large townships, with industrial areas and non-Mennonite inhabitants (for example Khortitsa/Rosental, Halbstadt and Waldheim). One Khortitsa village, Schönwiese, had even been incorporated into Alexandrovsk, a neighbouring Russian city whose population had grown from 6,707 in 1805, to 38,225 by 1910.

Such shifts of population, combining geographical and social mobility, were common across all of Russia as the country industrialized. In 1897 about 13% of Russians lived in urban areas and by 1914 this had increased to 15%.<sup>20</sup> In Taurida province where Molochnaia was situated over 20% of the population was urban by 1910, an increase of over 180% since 1870. In Ekaterinoslav, a province with a large Mennonite population, between 15 and 19% of the population was urban by 1910, an increase since 1870 of between 90 and 179%.<sup>21</sup> Siberia's urban population more than doubled between 1897 and 1910 to over a million people.<sup>22</sup> But Russian cities were not only much smaller than modern western cities, but many of their inhabitants also maintained strong ties with their rural homelands. Many urban dwellers, particularly those employed in factories were peasants who maintained links with their village communities.<sup>23</sup> The numbers of urban, proletarianised workers, as well as educated, middle-class townsfolk, were still quite small.

Mennonite social mobility, however, was restricted to a drift away from farming settlements to cities or larger townships. Social mobility reflected an increasing degree of social differentiation in Mennonite and Russian society after 1880. Since the earliest days of settlement in Russia, Mennonite society had been differentiated according to occupation, wealth and status. But the transformation of Mennonite life during the nineteenth century further elaborated these distinctions while conditions both within and outside the Mennonite world created the possibility for new forms of social differentiation.

### **Education, initiative and social differentiation**

One of the key factors in social differentiation as well as social mobility was the continued development of education. Education became an important factor in the definition of a person's social status, provided access to new occupations and increased the opportunities for social mobility. The improvement and expansion of education which became a major focus of Mennonite activity during the nineteenth century, was accelerated in the period 1880 to 1914 and particularly after 1905.

Most Mennonites in Russia, irrespective of gender, were literate. By comparison only 28% of Russians were literate in 1897, with literate males greatly outnumbering literate females. Although Russian literacy rates increased by 1914, especially among the young, well over 50% of the population was illiterate.<sup>24</sup> The high Mennonite literacy rate reflects the fact that nearly all Mennonites received an elementary education. "Basic" is perhaps a better term than "elementary" as the majority of elementary school graduates could read only basic texts, write family letters and do simple arithmetic. But even the most basic Mennonite education exceeded that available to most Russian peasants. In 1911, in spite of a massive input of resources since 1900, only 45% of school-aged Russian children attended elementary schools, the numbers being lower in rural than urban areas. Also in rural areas twice as many boys attended school than girls.<sup>25</sup> Whereas a Mennonite child attended elementary classes for between five and seven years, most peasant children attended for only two or three years. Many never completed their schooling and although a majority of parents considered some kind of education essential, they viewed the value of education rather differently from most Mennonites.

For peasant parents a basic education provided their children with sufficient skills to deal with what they considered the alien world beyond their community. Also the acquisition of such skills did not alter or challenge established patterns of peasant life. For Mennonites education was essential for social, cultural and religious reasons. While many Mennonites did not wish schools to challenge or change their basic values, there was a clear sense that education improved the person and enriched the community. For some parents, moreover, education provided new opportunities for their children.

While an elementary education gave most Mennonites an advantage over the mass of the Russian population, it was really insufficient to promote social mobility in those areas of Russian society where education was important. This required Mennonites to attend advanced schools beyond their settlements and gain higher qualifications. Again the differences between Mennonites and the mass of the Russian population is marked. Whereas in 1911 only 1% of pupils attending Russian elementary schools progressed to secondary educational institutions,<sup>26</sup> the Mennonite figure was higher, though still low in absolute terms. However, figures of Mennonite students progressing to secondary education compare favourably with those for Western Europe and the United States. In 1904, 6% of Mennonites attending Mennonite schools were enrolled in Mennonite secondary institutions (mainly high schools (*Zentralschulen*)).<sup>27</sup> One can calculate roughly that in 1900 about 3% of Mennonites in the age group 10 to 19 were receiving a secondary education, a percentage similar to Germany, greater than in Britain (under 2%), but less than in the USA (over 6%).<sup>28</sup> Between 1905 and 1914 the number of Mennonite higher educational establishments, particularly high schools, dou-

bled.<sup>29</sup> Probably by 1914 about 15% of the school-aged population were attending schools above the elementary level, just under 8% of the age group 10 to 19, higher than in Germany and Britain in 1910 (over 3% and 2% respectively), but still behind the US (just under 9%).<sup>30</sup>

The number of Mennonites attending centres of higher education beyond the Mennonite community, at Russian and Western European universities, was still small. Although their numbers increased markedly by 1914, in that year probably only about 100-120 or about 1% of the age group 20-24 were studying at such centres. This is a lower percentage than in most of Western Europe (1.2% in 1910), and well behind the USA (almost 3% in 1910).<sup>31</sup> However, we lack figures for the many Mennonites receiving a private technical or professional training in Russia and Western Europe before 1914.

The acquisition of a secondary and higher education greatly increased the career opportunities for many Mennonites and the possibility of social mobility. However, few details are available as to the career paths of most graduates. A number were children of wealthy industrialists or estate owners who followed their parents into business or estate farming. Others committed themselves to serving the community which had often supported the costs of their education. Teaching was still the favoured way to serve the community, although by 1914 the range of career openings had widened. Educated people could achieve a certain status and mobility (geographical and social) within the Mennonite world. By 1914 an increasing number availed themselves of the opportunities provided by higher education to achieve social mobility in the larger Russian world. These included those who gained professional qualifications in medicine or the law, and technical papers in engineering, architecture etc. By 1914, however, the number of such people qualified to practice their professional skills was still extremely small. According to one calculation there were 25 Mennonites trained or in training in medicine in Russia before the Revolution (18 of whom practised in Russia), 34 engineers who had qualified and were in practice in Russia, and nine lawyers.<sup>32</sup>

The path of social mobility leading to social advancement, however, was more often pursued by means other than higher education. Mennonites with only an elementary education, a keen entrepreneurial sense and a capacity for hard work, discovered many opportunities in the favourable economic environment of postemancipation Russia. Between 1880 and 1914 more Mennonites developed a degree of social mobility through individual initiative and success in economic ventures than through the acquisition of educational qualifications. They did so by renting or purchasing private land for commercial production, founding or buying flour mills and engineering concerns, opening stores and trade agencies and a host of other ventures. Often considerable risks were involved. Individuals who chose to take advantage of the opportunities of the new economic environment beyond the colonies often had to loosen ties with family and kin and abandon the secure Mennonite

village world in which most had been born and raised. A surprising number, however, seemed willing not only to contemplate a complete change of life, but also rushed to take advantage of perceived opportunities. When economic conditions improved in farming or business, particularly in flour milling, many speculated in what often proved to be unsound ventures.<sup>33</sup> The motivations behind such risk taking are still unclear, although they probably included a desire for greater wealth and freedom from the routine of farming and the parochialism of small-scale Mennonite communities. Such speculation was also a development of Mennonite entrepreneurship fostered earlier in the century and reflected the continued emphasis on individualism, of the self-made person seeking their own way in the world.

Instead of social advancement, social mobility could involve a loss of status and wealth. Some Mennonites were downwardly mobile, at least in relative terms, chiefly because they were unable to keep up with the steadily rising living standards of many Mennonites. In rural Mennonite villages the unskilled poor had few opportunities for employment. If they lacked access to land and were unskilled in crafts, they had only their labour to sell. But the increasing availability of cheap, peasant labour reduced the chances of maintaining an acceptable standard of living in the Mennonite world. With the continued decline of the protoindustrial craft industries, even skilled and semi-skilled Mennonites had little choice but to move elsewhere for employment. Some concentrated in Mennonite townships with industry or in villages close to urban industrial areas; others were forced to leave the colonies and seek work in Russian towns and cities. Many therefore subsisted on the fringe of Mennonite society as shop assistants, petty clerks, factory supervisors or workers, carriers, and boatmen. A few were lost to the Mennonite world entirely, assimilated into Russian society, usually into its darker and lower orders.

### **The internal structure of Mennonite society**

If Mennonite society exhibited increasing physical (geographical) and social mobility in the period between 1880 and 1914, these changes must be seen against the continuities in Mennonite society during the period. Too much attention perhaps can be given to those on the periphery of Mennonite society. By concentrating on the migrants to new areas, on urban dwellers, the highly educated, the intelligentsia, wealthy estate owners and businessmen — even on the poor and at risk — it is easy to gain a false impression of Mennonite social structure. In particular a concentration on new developments fails to take account of the central feature of Mennonite social structure throughout the history of prerevolutionary Mennonite society: the village-based farmer. The farmer and his family constituted the rump of society and dominated the social and political life of most communities.

In 1914 over 70% of Mennonites were involved in farming, a figure similar to the whole of Russia (see Table 2). But whereas the vast majority of



Russia's population were still peasant cultivators, the majority of Mennonites were commercial farmers. The large percentage of Mennonites involved directly in agriculture reflects the continued rural base of Russian and Mennonite society. As late as 1914, well over 90% of Mennonites lived in rural areas, including most teachers and tradesmen, many craftsmen and artisans and even factory workers.<sup>34</sup> Indirectly, all depended on the agricultural economy of their settlements and on the continued prosperity of farming.

To say that the majority of Mennonites were farmers, or to clarify the range of other occupations, says little about the finer features of Mennonite social structure. There was considerable variation between farming households, dependent on a number of factors, including location, size of landholdings and the wealth, political power and aptitude of individual farmers. Such variations occurred at all levels: between farmers in a village, between groups of farmers in villages in a settlement area (colony) and between different settlement areas (colonies) depending on their adaptation to local conditions (environmental and in terms of access to commercial markets). How long the settlement in which a farm was located had been established, or how long a farm had been owned by a particular family also have to be considered. Self-employed craftsmen and artisans ranged from those with small businesses based in their households to quite prosperous entrepreneurs with large workshops. Mennonites employed for wages (see Table 2) included unskilled labourers, boatmen and carters, semi-skilled factory and mill employees, shop assistants and clerks, and skilled doctors, teachers, and managers of factories, estates and mills. Comparison between these groups is difficult, if not impossible.

	<b>Russian Mennonites (1914)%</b>	<b>Russia (1913)%</b>	<b>Germany (1907)%</b>	<b>England and Wales (1911)%</b>	<b>USA (1910)%</b>
Agriculture	72	70.2	35.2	7.7	30.9
Wage earners in manufacturing etc.	18.5	16.7			
Craftsman /Artisans			54.1	72.1	47.7
Commerce and Service industry	4.5	7.2			
Other	4	3.6	10.2	15.7	21.4
	1	2.3	0.7	4.4	–
Total	100	100	100.2	99.9	100

**Table 2: Socioeconomic Structure of the Mennonite Society Compared with the Societies of Russian, Western European Countries and the United States**

*Sources:*

Mennonites (1914) based on Ehrt, *Mennonitentum in Russland*, 96 (with adjustments of categories and percentages).

Russia (1913) Eason, "Population changes", 88 (Table 5) (with retitling of categories).  
Germany (1907)/England and Wales (1911) Peter Flora (with Franz Kraus and Winifred Pfennig), *State, economy, and society in Western Europe 1815-1975: a data handbook in two volumes* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1987), Volume 2, 515, 529.  
USA (1910) *The Statistical history of the United States from colonial times to the present* (Stamford, Conn: Fairfield publishers, nd.), 74.

An alternative way of considering Mennonite social structure is to view the various groups as social classes in the process of formation.<sup>35</sup> By 1880 the majority of Mennonites were involved in commercial activities, part of the emergent industrial base of Russian and European society. Their way of life was based upon privately owned property (farms and businesses), the sale of products in the marketplace, the employment of external labour and the maximization of profit. The basic economic framework for the emergence of social classes was thus well established.

The physical distribution of Mennonites in space, both within and beyond their settlements, reveals clearly the formation of classes. Richer farmers tended to concentrate in the established colonies and in certain prosperous villages. Here they controlled not only the best household sites and the best land, but also dominated local politics. Poorer farmers were usually situated in less prosperous villages in the older or more often in the newer daughter colonies. Within villages they were forced to live at the margins of the community, in small houses with little or no garden space. They were either restricted, or more often excluded from political decisions affecting village life. While many of the established villages only had small numbers of extremely poor inhabitants, this was because many families had been forced to move away in search of work. To many Mennonites living in the security of their prosperous rural villages, the poor were conveniently "invisible". But it was in the larger, semi-industrialized settlements that the distinction between location and social difference was more apparent. By 1914 ghettos of poor Mennonites had begun to form and in these places a differentiation between the home and the workplace developed, especially when Mennonites became factory workers.

When Mennonites became established in specific, distinctive locations and followed particular occupations which required special skills and contact with non-Mennonites, they often developed communities with their own cultural manners which distinguished them from other Mennonites. Whether or not by 1914 this process had reached a stage where different groups had become so separated as to constitute clearly bounded units, with different dispositions including an awareness of their separateness and distinctiveness which denied a sense of common affinity, of belonging to a larger Mennonite community, is difficult to substantiate. It is unlikely that matters had reached this stage by 1914, but the basis for such a divorce had been laid.

## **Social relationships with Mennonite society**

Mennonite society, including the emergence of class, can also be examined by considering Mennonite social relations. All Mennonites lived in small domestic units based primarily on the family, although these units sometimes included grandparents. Within domestic groups there was an increasing tendency towards nucleation and, especially in richer, non-farming households, on having fewer children.<sup>36</sup> Social relations within the family still were based primarily on kinship, age and gender. Kinship is an obvious feature of domestic life. Gender played a role in differentiating between male and female roles in the household and such roles were clearly defined in childhood and reinforced in adulthood. Domestic space was differentiated by gender, women controlling the house and gardens, men the yard and the fields. The public domain outside the household was dominated by males. The male head of the household had power and authority over his wife and children, combining aspects of age and gender in a well defined tradition of patriarchy. These attitudes towards age and gender extended beyond the domestic sphere into other areas of Mennonite life: patriarchy ruled in religious and political life, and age brought authority and power, if backed by a clear demonstration of ability. In terms of social relations, however, ties through kinship and marriage extended in a complex network beyond the immediate family and continued to figure prominently in Mennonite social relationships beyond individual households.

Besides kinship and other major established feature of Mennonite life influencing social relationships was a sense of place, the feeling of belonging to a locality and a community. This was felt most strongly in terms of village identity, but included a recognition of belonging to a congregational and a colony community. Social networks founded on friendship, shared work and business ties were the major bases of such social relationships. Joint ventures, such as the formation of cooperatives and credit unions, very popular in the period 1900 to 1914, helped to create new forms of cooperation and social ties within and between communities.

By 1914, however, the established forms of social relations were subject to the forces of change. While the aged, the orphaned, the disabled, the sick and the poor had always been a concern of the congregational community, the actual care of people fell mostly upon the kin of those involved. Increasingly, however, the larger community began to accept responsibility for its less fortunate members. By 1914 a Mennonite welfare "state" had begun to emerge with a school for the deaf, a mental institution, hospitals, orphanages and homes for the poor and aged.<sup>37</sup> Although family and kin continued to bear the burden of social welfare the development of such institutions reflects a weakening of kinship. Mennonite geographical and social mobility also weakened established communities, separating family and kin, neighbours and friends. While improved communications through the expanding

railway network, and an improved postal and telegraph system, somewhat mitigated the tyranny of distance it could not replace the old, closely knit worlds of agrarian communities.<sup>38</sup> Social mobility, especially that associated with education and changes in occupation, had other, complex affects on social relations.

Within domestic units relationships based on age and gender often showed signs of change. The position of women altered as mothers received assistance from peasant maids and cooks and through developments in household technology. But the greatest changes came with the improved educational opportunities. Although the numbers of girls and young women progressing to higher education and beyond was considerably lower than for boys and young men, their numbers were rising by 1914 when there were six Mennonite girl's and two co-educational high schools in Russia. Whereas in 1895/96 over one hundred boys attended the Khortitsa High School, only 17 girls were enrolled in the Girls' School; but by 1902/03 52 girls were enrolled compared with 187 boys. By 1914, although the classes of the High School had expanded to over 200, the Girls' School had 92 enrolled of whom 82 were Mennonites. Between 1895 and 1913, 1187 girls attended the Khortitsa Girls' School.<sup>39</sup> Young women also began to study beyond the colonies, gaining professional skills as kindergarten teachers, nurses and midwives and even attending classes in art and music in Russian cities. Female teachers were employed in a profession long dominated by men.<sup>40</sup> How these changes in domestic activities and in education influenced the status of women in the Mennonite community is difficult to assess, but among young people opinions were undoubtedly different from their elders.

In terms of age the major influence was also education. Through schooling children developed very different worldviews from those of their parents. These included differences in opinion about possible future occupations, and attitudes to a whole range of social, political and even religious issues. Such differences established a basis for potential generational conflict, not only in families but also within the larger community. This is apparent in certain disputes between the older elite, particularly conservative congregational leaders, and a minority of young, highly educated Mennonites often with a broader understanding of the world than their seniors. Parents, however, did not necessarily expect their children to adhere to their opinions, to follow their way-of-life and even to support them in their old age, as had long been their expectation. Some parents, recognizing that they inhabited a rapidly changing world, encouraged their children to secure an education and to be socially and occupationally mobile. It should be stressed, however, that these changes in attitudes regarding age and gender were restricted to very few families, usually those of the progressive and educated. In the bulk of farming households, and among most of the poorer groups, opinions were still very conservative. And in both progressive and conservative households children tended to sub-

mit to the authority of their parents. Open conflict was rare and young people fulfilled their expected role as dutiful children.

Where social relationships had altered most markedly by 1914, however, was at the community level. Ties of kinship were often weakened as differences in wealth, status and occupations became increasingly marked between related individuals and families. Prosperous farmers had a tendency to “disown” kin whose status, occupation or life-style were markedly inferior to their own. New forms of relating to various sectors of the community developed, with a degree of solidarity emerging among those who shared the same educational standard, wealth, occupation, and status. This can be seen not only in everyday activities, but also in long-term political and business relations. Social links with the poor, with labourers and small craftsmen become increasingly restricted to work and business transactions although in small villages usually the entire community was still invited to weddings and funerals. But in everyday life only certain individuals in the community, for instance shopkeepers, established links across the emerging social divide by giving credit to the poor while also serving their more prosperous customers.<sup>41</sup>

Marriage patterns reveal most clearly the emergence of class relations in Mennonite social relations. Marriage alliances tended to follow the patterns of inequality based upon wealth, occupation and education. Well before 1914 the farming elite avoided choosing partners from certain sections of the community. These included people from particular households, village districts, and even entire villages. Gossip and innuendo concerning certain families, their ancestry or relations, condemned many to social ostracism. Such negative prescriptions had their corollary in the positive encouragement given to children who selected spouses from favoured households, districts or villages. Like married like, so by 1914 the wealthy married the wealthy; rich farmers married members of rich farming families; teachers married teachers or educated spouses; the poor married the poor. Of course there were exceptions, but usually in terms of a desire to “marry-up” and improve one’s position through a strategic union with a wealthy or influential family. In future generations such marriage patterns had the potential to reinforce existing social differences into major social cleavages and hence to alter even further the nature of social relations.

### **Mennonite society and Russian society**

There are many issues involved in any consideration of Mennonite and Russian society before 1914. One is to consider the structural aspects, particularly the socio-economic bases of the two societies in terms of similarities and differences. There is also the problem of the place of Mennonites in the broader perspective of Russia as a nation state. Finally, there is the issue of the actual social relationships between Mennonite individuals and groups with other, non-Mennonites in Russian society.

Compared with other European states (see Table 2), right up until 1914 Russia was more an agrarian than an industrial society. A consideration of its social structure based upon occupational roles reveals that even after many decades of industrial activity Russia was still a land of peasants, the majority of whom lived and worked in rural areas. Only in certain urban centres could a more Western European or North American class-like social structure be found, with a middle class and a small, but growing, working class employed mainly in factories.<sup>42</sup> Although many of these workers were children or an earlier generation of factory employees' most were unskilled peasants, recent migrants from country areas. A consideration of Russian social structure based upon occupational definitions, although interesting and of significance in terms of urban society, does not greatly assist our understanding of Russian rural society and of Mennonite/Russian relations in the period 1880 to 1914.

In towns, but particularly in the countryside where the majority of people lived, there existed an immense divide between the various sections of Russian society. Not only did factors such as wealth and socio-economic status divide the population, but cultural differences also created deep divisions. These cultural differences manifested themselves in the various attitudes and practices of the distinctive groups which made up prerevolutionary Russian society. Cultural differences involved not just the significant ethnic differences between the polyglot population of the Russian Empire, which in many regions settled by Mennonites were of major significance, but more importantly the peasants' very different sense of identity and way of life from the small social minorities who held power and influence in the Empire.<sup>43</sup> These differences included such factors as concepts of the person, attitudes to property, particularly in terms of ownership and use of land, morality, justice and social relationships. What one social historian has called "the rural nexus" between peasants and land owners remained the major structural feature of prerevolutionary Russian society.<sup>44</sup>

Matters are further complicated by a continuation, if not a strengthening by government policy through most of this period, of the old estate (*soslovie*) system.<sup>45</sup> This system provided everyone in society, in principle at least, with an "official" and legal status. Not only did everyone have a defined status in society, but as a consequence they were supposed also to have a defined role to play in what frankly was still an agrarian, rather than a "modern" state system. Out of step with the emerging industrial sections of Russian society "based upon status, and occupation," the estate system created a "high degree of ambiguity and flux" in society.<sup>46</sup>

For instance Mennonites, in spite of their education, wealth and status, were classified as peasants in the estate system. But as a system of social classification, the estate system suited the interests of certain groups, particularly the established land holding elites. Such groups had long held considerable

power and influence in Russia mainly through their support of the autocracy. But these elites increasingly were in conflict not only with the interests of the bulk of the rural population, but also with the growing urban, middle-classes (consisting of professional people, bureaucrats, merchants and industrialists) and the emergent proletariat (mainly industrial workers). However, none of these groups proved very successful at combining against the interests of either the autocracy or the ruling elite, as each pursued its own particular interests.

Particularism, whether based upon the system of estates, ethnic identity, occupation, wealth or class, helped to polarise Russian society before 1914.<sup>47</sup> Politically, socially and culturally there was little sense of homogeneity among the many groups who inhabited the Empire. Russian nationalism, based either upon Slav solidarity or Great Russian hegemony, merely added to the polarisation of society and to the proliferation of interest groups. Russia's rulers, in spite of embarking on a path of industrialization and attempting to become a major force in world affairs, failed within the Empire to develop a "civil society" like that of other Western, industrialized societies. This occurred in spite of a concerted government effort after 1905 to promote the development of such a society through a new wave of reforms. A system of private peasant landholding to replace the old, peasant commune was introduced, plans for the re-organization of local and central government were drawn-up, the legal system was to be revised, industrial altered, universal education was to be introduced and religious freedoms redefined.<sup>48</sup> But by 1914 few of these reforms had proceeded beyond the planning stage or were stalled in the Duma (parliament) or committees of the State Council. Government plans there thwarted by its own indecision and ineptitude, by conflict and division between sections of its bureaucracy, by the influence of various interest groups who wished to maintain or secure their own particular privileges and by the general economic backwardness of the country.

Mennonites at this period are best viewed as yet another interest group in Russian society, bent on pursuing their own social, cultural and economic interests. Due to earlier government policies Mennonities had secured a comfortable niche for themselves in Russian society with particular privileges: the freedom to practise their religion, to own and control land and resources as private and communal property, to manage their own schools and to avoid military conscription through a unique form of alternative service — the Forestry Service. At the same time Mennonites had taken full advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the state and the country, accumulating property, position and wealth. A small number achieved status in Russian society and a degree of influence in local and even national affairs.

When Russia had reformed many of its social and political institutions in the years after 1860, most Mennonites had felt that their faith and freedoms were threatened. In fact following the Great Reforms many Mennonite

rights were preserved, at least for a time, and even new privileges were granted. When, after 1905, new reforms aimed to create a more united, civil society through reducing the privileges of certain long-favoured groups in society, the Mennonites, like other interest groups, protested vociferously.<sup>49</sup> All kinds of Mennonite "rights" again seemed threatened. While all Mennonites wished to take advantage of living in Russia, many were unwilling to become part of an integrated and homogeneous Russian society.

Such attitudes aligned Mennonites with those sections of Russian society who wished to preserve their independence and privileges. At another level Mennonites also can be identified with the minority of Russian society who, in broad principle, based themselves on the rule of law, rather than with the majority of peasants who followed local customary practices. Involved in commercial dealings, Mennonites had clear opinions as to their legal status in terms of rights of the person and rights to land and other forms of private property. This linked most Mennonites, along with their relative wealth, education and special privileges, with the Russian bourgeoisie and ultimately with the ruling elite. By contrast they were alienated from the peasant masses and, for different reasons, from the small, but increasingly vocal, working class.<sup>50</sup>

Social relations between Mennonites and other Russians were extremely complex and must be viewed against the background of increasing diversification of Mennonite society. As in everyday life Mennonites associated mostly with other Mennonites, opportunities to establish extensive social relations with non-Mennonites were limited. At work many farmers dealt with peasants employed as workers or servants. In southern Russia these peasants were mainly Little Russians (Ukrainians), although some were Great Russians from provinces in central Russia who came to southern Russia in large numbers for seasonal employment before 1914. In remoter regions of the Empire Mennonite farmers employed people from the various ethnic groups in their locality.

Mennonite communication with their employees was often limited. Language was a major factor in the continued isolation of Mennonites from relationships with outsiders. Even as late as 1914 many Mennonites in the established colonies, especially older farmers, could speak little of the local Ukrainian dialect. Their vocabulary usually was limited to words and phrases associated with work, the giving of orders or the disciplining of workers. As many of the older women who managed households spoke only Low German, domestic servants learnt Low German in order to communicate. Jewish grain dealers and peddlers who were particularly active in southern Russia, often spoke not only High German, but also Low German with their Mennonite customers.

Also indicative of the low levels of social interaction of the majority of Mennonites with the larger Russian society was their generally negative attitude towards Russians and Russian culture. To most farmers Russians, espe-



cially their peasant workers, were idle, dirty and dishonest, at best to be treated like children, at worst like mere beasts.<sup>51</sup> Of course there were notable exceptions to these attitudes and individually some farmers, their wives and families had close and friendly relations with their employees. But negative stereotypes concerning peasants were extended to other sections of Russian society. Often Russian officials, at least those in lower administrative positions, were viewed as devious and dishonest. Russian culture, even Russian literature, was viewed as degenerate and dismissed as of little value. Most of these attitudes were the result of a general ignorance of Russian life and society and were a direct consequence of the physical and social isolation of Mennonite society.

Interestingly those Mennonites located at the top or at the bottom of Mennonite society, because of their closer contacts and more intense social relations with various sections of Russian society, had a greater knowledge of Russian life than most farmers. Their experience and understanding of Russian society, however, were often very different.

Mennonite estate owners employed large numbers of peasants as labourers and servants, but they also maintained business contacts and social ties with the non-Mennonite landed elite in the countryside and in urban areas. Mennonite industrialists and millers often employed Russians of various ethnic backgrounds and foreigners (including "Prussian" and "German" skilled and semi-skilled workers, managers and engineers) in their plants and through business contacts had links with other non-Mennonite merchants and industrialists. The younger professional people, including teachers who had been educated in Russian institutions, had a wide knowledge of Russian society and often maintained links with non-Mennonites. Merchants, some shopkeepers and colony administrators also had experience in dealing with Russians and the wider world. Most of these Mennonites were literate in Russian, although spoken fluency in the language varied greatly, especially among older people. They also possessed more knowledge of the country, its people and system of government than the average farmer. But many of these Mennonites also lived, worked, or maintained close connections with exclusively Mennonite communities.

Mennonites in the lower orders of society, particularly those living in urban and industrial areas, had contact with non-Mennonites of their own social status through residence, work and other activities. They often spoke the language and shared aspects of a common culture with peasants and working people. Very little is known about these contacts.

### **Mennonite community, cultural cohesion and social diversity**

Throughout this article Mennonite society has been discussed as if it constituted a cohesive whole. But it has also been argued that differences in regional settlement, occupation, social structure and social relationships, were

becoming more marked and significant by 1914. If it obviously is incorrect to talk about *a* Russian society before 1914, given the deep social and cultural (including ethnic) cleavages that existed, is it still possible to conceive of *a* Mennonite society?<sup>52</sup> It might perhaps be better to envisage the larger Mennonite community as a loosely knit confederation within which a variety of diverse Mennonite social groups operated and interacted.

What is clear, however, is that after 1880 certain Mennonites developed a clearer sense of the social basis of their communities, usually with a view of continuing the separation of Mennonites from the larger society and maintaining their control of their own affairs. This increasing consciousness of Mennonite social and cultural life was matched by the development of strategies and policies to promote social change by a Mennonite elite.

Following the Great Reforms, a number of institutions were created to encourage a wider sense of solidarity between the Mennonite congregational and colony-based communities established before 1860.<sup>53</sup> As an emergent industrial society living in a backward state with a predominantly agrarian society, Mennonites discovered they needed to establish state-like institutions to function and to develop in the wider world. This required the creation of a larger sense of community, a Russian Mennonite Commonwealth,<sup>54</sup> based upon a shared Mennonite identity involving more than just membership of a local village, colony or congregation. The leaders of this Commonwealth worked to protect Mennonite privileges and to strengthen cultural life through the promotion of common interests and the continued development of Mennonite institutions. As the number of institutions and the work of the elite expanded, Mennonite activities acquired political overtones and the Commonwealth increasingly resembled a proto-state.

But Mennonite state-like institutions were weakly articulated at a level which embraced all Mennonites. Only in the organization of the Forestry Service established after 1880 did Mennonites create an administrative structure covering all Mennonites, and this only after confrontation with the Russian state over what was considered a basic principle of faith. In other areas community activity was restricted either to the regional, settlement level (usually a colony or a colony and its daughter settlements), or to congregations, based in parishes and united into regional and central conferences. The sectarian divide which had emerged after the formation of the Mennonite Brethren in 1860, prevented joint action between "Church" Mennonites and the Brethren in a single conference, in spite of numerous attempts to overcome their differences.<sup>55</sup> Some professional groups, most notably the teachers, also developed strategies of cooperation at colony and district levels. Finally, various welfare agencies and institutions appointed boards of management, although these were usually subordinated to regional administrations or religious conferences.

Community institutions were dominated by a small, educated Mennonite

elite consisting of leading congregational officials, teachers of the senior schools (many of whom were also ministers), and the secretaries of local government offices, wealthy landowners and industrialists. The latter provided essential administrative and managerial skills as well as financial support and advice. These elites were supported to varying degrees by the conservative farming majority who remained in control of local village affairs. But the community leaders who controlled most of the social and cultural institutions beyond the village level, did not act as representatives of the people in any democratic sense. Often they were not elected to their leadership roles, but took it upon themselves to direct the future path of Mennonite life. The poor, the young and women had as little say in the larger decisions of the community as they did at the local, village level.

The vision of Mennonite society and culture promoted by these elites through committees, boards and conferences, often represented a compromise between the narrow interests of conservative farmers and their own desire for social and cultural improvement. Some of the elite were concerned about the widening social and cultural gap, not only between Mennonites but also between the Mennonites and the rest of Russian society. But this was not a concern shared by the majority of Mennonites. The prosperous colony farmers merely wished to ensure that their privileges vis-a-vis the bulk of the Russian population were maintained. Many were also unwilling to support initiatives to establish greater contact between Mennonites and non-Mennonites, or to accept responsibility for those, Mennonite and especially non-Mennonite, less fortunate than themselves. When specific needs arose, Mennonites could be extremely generous contributors of aid. Such assistance, often carefully noted in the Mennonite press, was intended often to enhance the social status of the giver or to exhibit their wealth, surely a sign of God's reward of the righteous and the pious. But as yet there was little developed sense of social justice among the bulk of the population.

The years between 1905 and 1914 saw an acceleration of change in Mennonite life. Economically conditions generally improved, especially for farmers in the established southern Russian settlements. In the so-called "Golden Years" between 1910 and 1914, when harvests were bountiful and incomes rose steadily, many Mennonites saw little but a rosy future. However, the movement of Mennonites to new areas, particularly Siberia, and increasing economic differentiation on the population, had a profound impact on Mennonite society. At the national and local level Mennonites experienced the centrifugal forces of change. And the feeling of being threatened by government reforms, by increasing social and political discord beyond the colonies, left some unsure of their future. As economic opportunity, migration and social inequality pulled Mennonite groups apart, the political need to reassert Mennonite identity as a distinctive people, with their own faith and culture, forced the elite to reconsider strengthening community life at all levels from the village to the Commonwealth.

By 1914 many of the elite leaders who had directed the Mennonite Commonwealth since the Great Reforms either had died or were retired. They had held office for a long time and were replaced by a new generation of leaders, a young elite less experienced in the politics of the village, the colony and the Commonwealth. A number were members of the emergent Mennonite intelligentsia, often teachers, or individuals trained as teachers. As in earlier years some were also ministers. But unlike the older elite many were not closely identified with specific, local Mennonite communities. They had often been educated in Russian or Western European centres of learning and had lived and worked in different communities, Mennonite and non-Mennonite. While this provided them with a much broader view of the world than most colony farmers, it also widened the gap between their values and opinions and those of the older conservative mass of the population. The ideals and aspirations of these new community leaders, though welcomed by the young, were often resented by older, established farmers. But school teachers and ministers were still held in high regard by many of these farmers so they were rarely challenged openly.

The new elites encouraged activities to strengthen a sense of Mennonite culture based on more than just faith. Certainly religious life was to be strengthened but from above, not from below. Ministers were to receive more theological training; religious instruction was to be improved in the schools through new texts. Other cultural activities, including the study of literature, art and music were promoted, especially among the young in schools and *Jugendvereine*. Of particular interest were the plans to develop a greater understanding of Mennonite history through the establishment of an archive, new school texts and the publication of local histories. Not just Mennonite religious witness was to be chronicled, but also Mennonite cultural contributions to the development of modern Russia.

The lifting of many censorship restrictions after 1905 permitted the elites to publicize their views in pamphlets, books, journals and the Mennonite press. The new avenues of communication were exploited to the full with the aim of creating a greater sense of Mennonite identity and uniting a socially and geographically divided community. While the elite stressed that Mennonites had to act as loyal Russian citizens, ultimately they hoped to raise Mennonite social standing, to strengthen their cultural distinctiveness and to maintain political control over their own affairs. In this their activities directly conflicted with the aims of the Russian state who wished to integrate Mennonites, along with all other ethnic and privileged groups, into a single Russian society.

The elite strategy for the development of Mennonite society viewed the Mennonites as a separate, cohesive community where future generations would find both a home and employment. But many younger Mennonites were finding their own future in Russian society beyond the Mennonite world. By 1914 education, wealth and opportunity were drawing them away from the elite's

vision of a Mennonite Commonwealth, while poor Mennonites found little appeal in the elite's view of their future.

It is therefore obviously impossible to talk about *a* Mennonite society in terms of a single, united society existing by 1914 even if the sense of a Mennonite Commonwealth which had become established in Russia during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, continued to be strengthened up to 1914. There was nothing unusual in this. Prerevolutionary Russia was a country which contained a diversity of social identities and cultural groups, with little common sense of political and social purpose. But many of the tensions inherent to Mennonite society before 1914, were tensions inherent in the larger society of which Mennonites were a part.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Symposium on the Bicentennial of Mennonites in Russia: the Experiences of Mennonites in Russia/Ukraine/USSR 1789-1989, Winnipeg, November 9-11, 1989. I wish to acknowledge the continuing support of David G. Rempel and the comments of Al Reimer and Roy Vogt.

<sup>2</sup>Adolf Ehrh, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* (Langensalza: Julius Belz, 1932), 52, calculated the 1914 population at 106,235. Peter Braun in his critical comments on Ehrh ("Einige Zurechtstellungen zu Dr. A. Ehrhs 'Das Mennonitentum in Russland,'" *Mennonitische Blätter*, 5 (May, 1932), 53) suggested a figure closer to 101,000. Here I follow the figure suggested by David G. Rempel (*The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: a sketch of its founding and endurance. 1789-1919* (Privately Printed, 1974), 94). As with the larger population of Imperial Russia, the only reliable figures available for the Mennonite population are those for 1897 which are derived from Russia's only prerevolutionary, nationwide census.

<sup>3</sup>Warren B. Eason, "Population changes." In Cyril E. Black ed., *The transformation of Russian society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 73 (Table 1). The 1897 figure was 125,640,000.

<sup>4</sup>Ehrh, *Mennonitentum in Russland*. 83.

<sup>5</sup>C. P. Toews, *The Terek settlement: [a] Mennonite colony in the Caucasus* (Yarrow, B.C.: Columbia Press, 1972).

<sup>6</sup>On Mennonite settlement in Siberia see J.J. Hildebrand, *Mennonitensiedlungen in Siberien* (Winnipeg, 1952), G. Fast, *In den Steppen Sibiriens* (Rosthern, Sask.: J. Heese Verlag, nd.) and John B. Toews, "The Mennonites and the Siberian frontier (1907-1930)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (from now on *MQR*), 47 (1973), 83-101.

<sup>7</sup>David G. Rempel, *The Mennonite colonies in New Russia* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stanford, 1933, 239n; Ehrh (*Mennonitentum in Russland*. 78) gives a figure of 12,400 in Siberia in 1914.

<sup>8</sup>Barbara A. Anderson, *Internal migration during modernization in late nineteenth-century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Stanley Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth in the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century* (Chicago: Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1975), 35.

<sup>10</sup>See the discussion of population and migration in Donald W. Treadgold, *The great Siberian migration: government and peasant in resettlement from emancipation to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 31-35 especially Table 3. Over half a million people, including some Mennonites, "returned" from European Russia during the same period; see Anderson, *Internal migration*, Chapter 5 for a further discussion.

<sup>11</sup>"There was a new "emigration fever" prior to 1914 as Mennonites discussed plans in the

press of further migration to Siberia, and also overseas emigration to North America (California and Saskatchewan), Argentina, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand and even Persia (see articles and letters in *Friedensstimme* for 1912/1913).

<sup>12</sup>Teodor Shanin, *Russia as a "developing" country: The roots of otherness: Russia's turn of century Volume I* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist economy 1850-1917* (London: Batsford, 1986); see also James Urry, "Mennonite economic development in the Russian mirror." In J. Friesen ed. *Mennonites in Russia: essays in honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989).

<sup>13</sup>James Urry, *None but saints: the transformation of Mennonite life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup>Toews "Mennonites and the Siberian frontier;" Rempel, *Mennonite Commonwealth*, 77; the system of land distribution resembled that of North America and, as in America, it is possible that in time Mennonite village communities would have broken up.

<sup>15</sup>Hildebrand, *Mennonitensiedlungen*, 17-18.

<sup>16</sup>*Ufa: the Mennonite settlements (colonies) 1894-1938* (Steinbach: Derksen, 1977).

<sup>17</sup>See Roger L. Thiede, "Industry and urbanization in New Russia from 1860 to 1910." In Michael F. Hamm ed., *The city in Russian history* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976) on urban and industrial development in New Russia.

<sup>18</sup>On Mennonite elites in urban areas see George K. Epp, "The urban Mennonites in Russia." In J. Friesen ed. *Mennonites in Russia: essays in honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989).

<sup>19</sup>See the comments in Hans Rogger, *Russia in the age of modernization and revolution 1881-1917* (London: Longman, 1983), 125.

<sup>20</sup>Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth*: Anderson, *Internal migration*. Chapter 4.

<sup>21</sup>Fedor, *Patterns of urban growth*, 98, 131; see also detailed figures of the growth of specific urban centres in the two provinces in *ibid.*, 186-187, 199-200.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>23</sup>Rogger, *Russia in the age of modernization and revolution*, 108-109, 113-114.

<sup>24</sup>However literacy rates by 1914 were increasing as education expanded, especially among the young. On literacy see Anderson, *Internal migration*, 32-38, and Jeremy Brooks, *When Russia learnt to read: literacy and popular literature 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>25</sup>Ben Eklof, *Russian peasant schools: officialdom, village culture, and popular pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 285, 293.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 457-62.

<sup>27</sup>Calculated from figures in *Friedensstimme* quoted in T. D. Regehr, *For everything a season: a history of the Alexanderkrone Zentralschule* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1988), 11.

<sup>28</sup>See figures in Hartmut Kaelbe, *Social mobility in the 19th and 20th centuries: Europe and America in comparative perspective* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985), 40 (table 2:1). The percentages of Mennonites in each age group for this and subsequent comparisons are from Ehrt, *Mennonitentum in Russland*, 54.

<sup>29</sup>Peter Braun, "Education among the Mennonites in Russia." *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 2, 156; Regehr, *For everything a season*, 15, 17; Adolf Ens, "Mennonite education in Russia". In J. Friesen ed. *Mennonites in Russia: essays in honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 85-88.

<sup>30</sup>Kaelbe, *Social mobility*, 40 (table 2:1); from high school Mennonites had to progress to Russian "classical" (*Gymnasias*) or technical schools (*Realschulen*) to enter University and Technical Institutes. Before 1914 Mennonites and other colonists opened their own middle schools.

<sup>31</sup>Regehr, *For everything a season*, 17; in 1914 the *Friedensstimme* reported at least 70 students were studying in St. Petersburg (*Ibid.*, 130, n. 28) For the comparative figures see Kaelbe, *Social mobility*, 42-43 (table 2:2).

<sup>32</sup>See Cornelius Krahn's listing of Mennonite graduates in C. Henry Smith, *Smith's story of the Mennonites* (5th edition). (Newton: Faith & Life Press, 1981), 353-56 based on the pioneering research of N. J. Klassen, "Mennonite intelligentsia in Russia." *Mennonite Life*, 1969, 51-60.

<sup>33</sup>On the milling industry see David H. Epp, "The emergence of German industry in the south Russian colonies." *MQR*, 55 (1981), 289-371; on the mill craze see Rempel, *Mennonite Commonwealth*, 64-65.

<sup>34</sup>See Ehrst, *Mennonitentum in Russland*, 96 on Mennonite social structure and my comments in "Through the eye of a needle: wealth and the Mennonite experience in Imperial Russia." *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (from now on *JMS*), 3 (1985), 13-14. For an impression of the diversity of occupations in villages see description of the individual villages in the Halbstadt volost' in Emil Blank, "Die Halbstaedter Wolost." *Odessaer Kalender*, (1910), 101-03; (1911), 102-119.

<sup>35</sup>The following discussion has benefited from Ira Katznelson's analysis of class formation, "Working class formation: constructing uses and comparisons." In Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg eds, *Working class formation: nineteenth-century patterns in western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), especially, 13-22.

<sup>36</sup>The fall in family size among the Mennonite elite can be attributed in part to later age at marriage. A brief analysis of over 300 Mennonite Brethren marriages in 1913 revealed that almost 24% of women married under the age of twenty compared with only 3% of men, H. M. "Die mennonitische Generationsdauer." *Friedensstimme*, 88 (9. Nov., 1913), 8.

<sup>37</sup>See James Urry, "The cost of community: the funding and economic management of the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth before 1914." Paper presented to the Conference on Anabaptist Mennonite faith and economics: breaking the silence, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, May 24-27, 1990.

<sup>38</sup>In 1913 the Molochnaia and Khortitsa Mennonites posted 45,981 letters abroad and in return received 72,381, see S. D. Bondar, *Sekta Mennonitov v Rossii* (Petrograd: V. D. Smirnova, 1916), 186. Bondar claims (*Ibid.*, 188) that 90% of the letters involved contact with Germany, but many undoubtedly were to or from North America. Correspondence published in North American newspapers, especially the *Rundschau* reveal extensive contact between Russian Mennonites and relations in Canada and the USA. The *Rundschau* was also used by Russian Mennonites to communicate with family and brethren in Russia, as the *Mennonitische Post* is today in Canada and Latin America. In 1913 the *Rundschau* letters from Russia included a disproportionate number from Siberia, out of 178 letters, 43 or 24% were from Mennonites in Siberia.

<sup>39</sup>Figures for enrolments in Khortitsa schools from 1891/92 to 1902/03 appear in David Epp, "Die Arbeit an unserer Jugend." *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, (1903), 57-67; figures for Girls' School for 1895/96 to 1912/13 appear in Heinrich Epp's "Die Chortitz Maedchenschule." *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1913), 98, 99 (this issue of the *Jahrbuch* has a series of articles on Mennonite Girls' schools). Figures for the Girls' School for 1913/1914 appear in *Botschafter*, 26 (1/14 April 1914), 3.

<sup>40</sup>The Deaconess Home (Moriya) in Molochnaia was established in 1909 to train nurses, the Halbstadt Girls' School around 1910 opened a fifth class to prepare young women for higher education. Some women attended a famous kindergarten training centre in Berlin, Germany.

<sup>41</sup>Based upon interviews with children of Mennonite shopkeepers. For shopkeepers as social mediators between classes in Western Europe, see David Blackburn, "Between recognition and volatility: the German petite bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century." In Geoffrey Crossick & Heinz-Gerhard Haupt eds, *Shopkeepers and master artisans in nineteenth century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1984).

<sup>42</sup>See Alfred J. Rieber, *Merchants and entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) and Rogger, *Russia in the age of modernization and revolution*, 120-23 on urban elites in Russia.

<sup>43</sup>On aspects of social identity in prerevolutionary Russia see the recent discussion in the journal *Slavic Studies* 47 (1988), 1-38 involving Leopold H. Haimson, "The problem of social identities in early twentieth century Russia," William G. Rosenberg "Identities, power, and social interactions in revolutionary Russia" and Alfred J. Rieber, "Landed property, state authority, and civil war," see also Haimson's reply "The problem of social identities in early twentieth century Russia: observations on the commentaries by Alfred Rieber and William Rosenberg." *Slavic Review* 47 (1988), 512-17.

<sup>44</sup>Moshe Lewin, "Introduction: social crises and political structures in the USSR." In his *The making of the Soviet system: essays in the social history of interwar Russia* (London: Methuen, 1985), 12.

<sup>45</sup>Gregory L. Freeze, "The *soslovie* (estate) paradigm and Russian social history." *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 11-36.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 34. Shanin, *Russia as a "developing" country*, 62 (Table 1.2) and 64 (Table 1.3) pro-

vides a useful contrast based on the 1897 census material between a view of Russian society structured on the system of estate classifications, and that based on the source of income of the principle breadwinner.

<sup>47</sup>Rieber, "Landed property, state authority, and civil war," 29.

<sup>48</sup>On the general crises on the issue of reform between the government and the gentry see Roberta Thompson Manning, *The crisis of the old order in Russia: gentry and government* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1982); on land reform see George Yaney, *The urge to mobilize: agrarian reform in Russia 1861-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982) and Dorothy Atkinson, *The end of the Russian land commune 1905-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983); on local government reforms see L. Haimson ed., *The politics of rural Russia 1905-1914* (Loomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), Neil B. Weissmann, *Reform in Tsarist Russia: the state bureaucracy and local government, 1900-1914* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981) and Francis W. Weislo, "Sostlovie or class? Bureaucratic reformers and provincial gentry in conflict, 1906-1908." *The Russian Review*, 47 (1988), 1-24; on school reforms see Eklof, *Russian peasant schools*; and on religious reforms Peter Waldron, "Religious reforms after 1905: Old Believers and the Orthodox Church." *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 20 (1987), 110-39.

<sup>49</sup>On initial Mennonite reactions to the 1905 revolution and the establishment of the Duma see Leonard Friesen "Mennonites in Russia and the revolution of 1905: experiences, perceptions and responses." *MQR*, 62 (1988), 42-55.

<sup>50</sup>See Len Friesen, "Mennonites and the fissuring of Russian society." (Paper presented to the Symposium on the Bicentennial of Mennonites in Russia: the Experiences of Mennonites in Russia/Ukraine/USSR 1789-1989, Winnipeg, November 9-11, 1989).

<sup>51</sup>See the frank comments of Gerhard Wiens, "Russo-German bilingualism: a case study." *Modern Language Journal*, 36 (1952), 392. These sections, which honestly reflect Mennonite negative attitudes before 1914, were removed from Wiens' article when it was republished in *Mennonite Life* ("Mother tongue frustration." 9 (1954), 32-33).

<sup>52</sup>Readers will have noticed that the term "Russian" has been used in two, contradictory senses. Firstly to describe people ethnically Russian who spoke the Russian language (mostly Great Russians), secondly to describe all peoples of the Russian Empire.

<sup>53</sup>See the discussion in my paper "The social background to the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren in nineteenth century Russia." *JMS*, 6 (1988), 14-24.

<sup>54</sup>Urry, *None but saints*, Chapter 13.

<sup>55</sup>John B. Toews, "Brethren and Old Church relations in pre-World War I Russia: setting the stage for Canada." *JMS* 2 (1984), 42-59; John B. Toews, *Perilous journey: the Mennonite Brethren in Russia 1860-1910* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1988), Chapter 8.