

Broken Promises or National Progress: Mennonites and the Russian State in the 1870's

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Tsarist New Russia's Prussian Mennonite settlements were state sponsored and supervised colonization projects from the very beginning. The partnership rested on high expectations, but brought with it some disillusionment and disappointments as well. Still, the established structures and networks helped to provide a productive working relationship with acknowledged positive outcomes for all concerned. Russian Mennonite leaders assumed from the outset that their arrangements with the state were permanent. The benevolence of Catherine II (who they asserted had invited them to New Russia), the support of Paul I (who signed a Mennonite *Privilegium*, a Charter of Privileges, "for all time"), and the support of a relatively liberal tsar, Alexander I, formed a foundation that seemed unshakably secure. As one source suggests, the document of settlement terms which was brought from St. Petersburg by the Mennonites in 1800, became the most important item which their archives would ever hold.¹

Some government ministers, certainly, and the tsars themselves, knew of course that some policies and structures needed to be improved in the Russian state.² By the beginning of the nineteenth century the problem of serfdom, for example, had become an issue needing urgent attention. Individuals like Radishchev, groups like the Decembrists, and soon other voices, among them those of the literati and jour-

nalists, repeatedly attacked their rulers and bureaucrats for failing to deal effectively with their nation's weaknesses and growing problems.³ Then at mid-century the national humiliation brought on by the disastrous Crimean War highlighted the shortcomings of Russia as a military power in western and Eastern Europe. In Mennonite circles that war and their involvement in it raised the issue of state service and implicitly the question of church-state relations in ways that had never before been analyzed and thought through.⁴

To Alexander II (1818-1881) it was clear that the agenda of modernization and reform, essentially though not totally side-stepped by his father Nicholas I, would now have to be given a front and centre position on the national agenda. A number of liberal-minded ministers were brought in to head up the effort to bring Russia into the modern age. Then came the long-awaited ukase of March, 1861, which freed the serfs. Although it came as a surprise to many Russians, it set the pace and tone for other major reforms brought in during the next ten years.⁵ For nineteenth-century conservative Russia, especially under Nicholas I, this was a decidedly radical move. The consequences could not be fathomed all at once. The Mennonites of New Russia, who had managed quite well without serfs, did not feel the real impact of this new law at the time, but the new labor pool would certainly benefit them later on. What else Alexander II and his ministers had in mind by way of reform would soon be revealed to the colonists.⁶

A number of other reforms followed the serf emancipation bill in quick succession. The new agricultural administrative structure of the *zemstvos* (local elected assemblies) was introduced in 1864, along with a number of changes and improvements in the justice and educational systems a little later. The latter two, particularly education with its expanded emphasis on teaching Russian culture and the language, had more immediate applications for Mennonite communities. These changes became problematic for some groups almost immediately.⁷

The Mennonites' greatest anxiety surfaced with the announcement of new military legislation proposed by Dmitrii A. Miliutin, one of the more forceful reforming ministers in Alexander's regime.⁸ As the new Minister of War, Miliutin had his eye on western European developments, in particular the growth of the Prussian army and the victories it was scoring in Central Europe in the 1860s. He was determined to see Russia overcome its military deficiencies and regain the military prominence it had once had on the European scene. Miliutin's ideas for change were intended to solve a whole host of problems. Mennonites could certainly have endorsed the decision to reduce the term for active military duty from twenty five to six years, with another nine or ten years in the reserves, the abolition of the most cruel forms of corporal punishment, and even the efforts to improve the literacy of new recruits in the armed forces. The proposal to introduce universal military conscription was, however, a very different matter as far as Mennonites were concerned.

As seen from Miliutin's desk, universal military conscription had much to commend it as a way to improve the Russian armed forces and, consequently, the state of the nation itself. This policy would eliminate century-old discriminatory prac-

tices that laid military service obligations below the officer levels almost entirely on the peasant class. It would also further equality for all Russian citizens by terminating numerous exemptions for privileged groups such as the nobles and merchant classes. Many of their members had been able to have their sons freed from service through traditional privilege or payment of fees for obtaining substitute recruits. The policy would, of course, also touch on the privileges of various minorities, including foreign colonists.⁹ Public announcements that major new military legislation, including universal military conscription, was now officially under consideration, first appeared in the Russian press on 4 November 1870.¹⁰ Governor General P.E. von Kotzebue of Odessa had the task of informing the south Russian Mennonite communities, and spelling out the degree to which these new state service proposals would also apply to them.

Diedrich Epp, a management supervisor from the village of Novovitebsk in the *Judenplan*, brought home the news from an information meeting which he had attended in Chortitza a few days earlier. Even before that, a Mennonite civic official of Berdiansk, Isbrand Friesen, had received the news directly from von Kotzebue himself. All the Mennonite leaders in the colonies soon knew that the new conscription legislation would indeed extend to the Mennonites of New Russia as well.¹¹ Jacob Epp, Diedrich's brother, and a minister in the Mennonite congregation of the *Judenplan*, expressed his personal response in a diary entry for 18 November:

He [i.e. Diedrich] brought a distressing piece of news that everyone will in the future have to perform military service, as in Prussia. Of what use is now our *Privilegium* given to us and our descendants in perpetuity [*auf ewigen Zeiten*] and freeing us from military service? Can it still protect us against the higher authorities? Alas, I fear our church is facing a difficult future, for the judgments of God are upon us...¹²

In his last entry for the year he reiterated the same concern: Only one cloud of tribulation and affliction threatens our faith. It relates to our freedom from military service, but so far the government has told us nothing. We have richly deserved punishment, for the life in our congregations is more worldly than Christian...What will the new year bring? God alone knows.¹³

These political developments should not have come as a complete surprise to Mennonite leaders in Russia. The Prussian Mennonite experience with conscription legislation in recent years might already have suggested that something similar was in the making for Russia too. Prussian Mennonites had actually faced a difficult discussion on the military question as early as 1847-48, when a new military law restricting exemption privileges had been proposed, which had then become actual legislation within a new Prussian constitution accepted on 31 January 1850.¹⁴

One consequence of the Mennonite debates generated by the issue was the emigration in 1852-53 of twenty-two Prussian Mennonite families—and soon many more—to the Volga region of Samara to set up what became known as the Am Trakt colony. A second settlement, Old Samara, also referred to as Alexandertal, was

established not far away in 1859. The final phase of these last Prussian Mennonite settlements in Russia did not end till 1870. That, as noted above, was precisely the year when the announcement of universal military conscription in Russia was being prepared for publication. It is understandable, in that context, that a further request to emigrate, which came about that time from the Prussian Mennonites, would be refused. As a matter of fact, the exemption privileges granted these latest colonies were already reduced from what had been promised the Mennonites in 1800.¹⁵ In both cases exemption from military service was granted for twenty years only; after that the state would require a payment of 300 silver rubles for each exempted Mennonite recruit. The Prussian Mennonite dilemma of the 1850s and 60s was made even worse by further legislation which narrowed exemption privileges proposed in the West Prussian Landtag in 1862, and which was passed in a similar form in the Bundestag of the recently-formed North German Confederation.

The idea of considering an emigration option, brought up in 1862, emerged again in the petition of a five-person Mennonite delegation sent to Berlin in 1868 to seek a twenty-year period of legal emigration for those who might want to leave for reasons of conscience. This request was turned down, although Bismarck did offer a two-year delay of conscription for young men whose families were planning to emigrate at the time. It was at these meetings that the Prussian Mennonites were told that Russia would soon pass legislation very similar to that from which they were trying to escape in Prussia.¹⁶

By this time the Prussian Mennonite community as a whole had become rather sharply divided in its responses to the legislative changes. A small group declared its willingness to accept active military service. While the majority found the government-proposed alternative of noncombatant service acceptable, another minority segment centred around *Aeltester* (Elder) Gerhard Penner and the Heuboden congregation, along with a small congregation led by *Aeltester* Wilhelm Ewert at Obernessau near Thorn, stood firmly for holding on to the traditional privilege of total exemption if at all possible, and failing that to keep open the option of emigration. Penner, and to a lesser degree Ewert, were vigorous participants in a wide-ranging debate on the military question led by Jacob Mannhardt and published in *Mennonitische Blaetter* from May, 1872 to August, 1873.¹⁷ Russian Mennonite readers, including no doubt a number of the delegates involved in military exemption discussions, may have drawn support from both sides of this debate and applied it to their own petitions in St. Petersburg.

In South Russia other individuals had begun to talk about these issues. Cornelius Jansen of the Berdiansk Mennonite congregation, who had close connections with Prussian Mennonite congregations, was one of these persons. Not yet a citizen of Russia, Jansen was a nephew of *Aeltester* Gerhard Penner in Prussia, and related through his wife Helene to a kinship line from the Kleine Gemeinde community. Some years earlier its leaders had openly questioned the non-combatant war support provided by the south Russian Mennonites during the Crimean War.¹⁸

With training as a merchant from his Uncle Gerhard Penner, Jansen had first

come to Berdiansk in 1850, but then returned to Danzig two years later. In 1856, just at the close of the Crimean War, he brought his family to Berdiansk and stayed to make his living in the recently established grain-shipping business of that region. During the time of his residence he also served for a number of years as a representative of the Prussian and Mecklenburg consulates in Russia.

In the summer of 1870 Jansen received a query on settlement possibilities in Russia from two Prussian Mennonite delegates, the afore-mentioned *Aeltester* Wilhelm Ewert and one Peter Dyck.¹⁹ In fact, Jansen had been entertaining personal thoughts about emigration for some time. It was not Russia that he had in mind, however, but North America, particularly the United States. That, he now advised these delegates, was currently the route to go if their congregations were planning to leave Prussia at this time. Information about the United States had reached Jansen through contacts with Prussian Mennonite leaders like Jacob Mannhardt, editor of *Mennonitische Blaetter*; and a recent publication on Prussian Mennonite nonresistance written by William Mannhardt. Other material had come to him from several English Quaker missionaries, particularly from Isaac Robson, who had visited him a few years earlier, his colleague Thomas Harvey, as well as Joseph Sturge. The latter was a merchant who had first mentioned Robson's plans to visit Berdiansk and had emphasized the fact that Robson had been in the United States earlier.

Sturge also gave Jansen some literature that contained general information about life in America. It was in fact the interference of Russian censors in Jansen's plan to reprint Quaker religious literature in Russia that first made Jansen conclude that the cause of religious liberty was under a cloud in Russia. By now he had begun corresponding with American Mennonites like John F. Funk, an editor in Elkhart, Indiana, who was giving much space to Russian Mennonite emigration interests in his paper *Herold der Wahrheit*. This man and some of his friends, through their own letters, encouraged Jansen and others actively to pursue the idea of emigrating to the United States.²⁰

As an intimate friend of Isbrand Friesen, who was in close touch with higher authorities in Russia, Jansen was among the very first Mennonites to learn about the proposed new military service legislation. By then Friesen had been in touch with Peter Schmidt, director of the Agricultural Society at Steinbach in the Molotschna settlement. Jansen, who later said that the news about the new service laws "hit him like a bolt of lightning", confirmed the "rumors" about the reform legislation by checking with von Kotzebue himself. The latter conceded readily that what they were hearing and reading about military service reforms was indeed accurate, and that more information would be available shortly.²¹

Several other prominent Mennonite leaders who also felt that emigration might now be the only option to deal with the military conscription dilemma, backed Jansen almost at once. One of these was *Aeltester* Leonard Sudermann, a leading minister in the Berdiansk congregation and one thoroughly committed to the traditional interpretation of the Mennonite *Privilegium*. In the Molotschna Alexanderwohl congregation he had a supporter in *Aeltester* Diedrich Gaeddert, with *Aeltester* Isaak Peters, a leading minister of the Pordenau congregation, also

holding the same view.²² These men, as well as other Molotschna Mennonite ministers and civic authorities, learned about the new legislation well before the end of November. When asked for advice, a former Guardians' Committee member and now a senator in St. Petersburg, Eduard von Hahn, counseled the Mennonites to take their concerns to officials in the capital as soon as possible. Friesen brought a personal report of his discussions with Kotzebue to a Molotschna ministers' meeting just before Christmas. Despite considerable skepticism about the authenticity of this information, it was decided that a regular conference should take place in early January in order to prepare an appropriate response to the report.²³

In any case, it may have seemed that there was not enough time left to contact all the Russian Mennonite settlements to get them involved in the delegation, or else it may have been assumed that the Chortitza and Molotschna leaders would be allowed to speak for the others in this matter. In any case, the Bergthaler people, led by *Aeltester* Gerhard Wiebe, hesitated to get involved in negotiations at this point. Whatever the reasons may have been, the first Mennonite delegation did not include representatives from the Bergthal settlement, the Kleine Gemeinde, the Samara Mennonites, the Volhynian groups, or the Hutterites, who were seen by state authorities as part of the total Mennonite community.

The first government officials the delegation met with in St. Petersburg, Governor General von Kotzebue and a Mr. Ettinger, president of the Guardians' Committee, offered encouraging words and asked whether the alternative of working in a medical corps would be acceptable in lieu of active military duty. Such a proposal, said one of the delegates, had also been given to the Mennonites of Prussia, but it had not dissuaded them from emigrating. This early hint that such a thought might be in the minds of Russian Mennonites would hardly have escaped the attention of the officials present. Meetings with other officials made it clear that an alternative service for Mennonites, such as serving in a medical corps, was already under discussion. The petitioners were, however, taken seriously and promised that their request would receive further attention. The officials sensed almost immediately that these petitions did not include the medical corps alternative as something the Mennonites would accept without protest. Von Kotzebue added that Mennonites would not be able to bypass a service obligation this time. Elsewhere in these conversations it was pointed out that another group speaking up loudly for continuing exemptions, that is, the representatives of the nobility, would not tolerate the perpetuation of the traditional Mennonite privilege regarding military service. And it did not help that at least one official expressed surprise that the delegates were not all fluent in the Russian language.²⁴

By 1872 the Governor General had decided to recommend to the Conscription Commission that Mennonites could be given concessions without giving up the fundamental principle of reform. As he saw it, they were open to some kind of compromise. Kotzebue noted further that foreign offers to provide military exemptions, from the United States for example, were being treated cautiously by the Mennonites. He thought the Mennonites might accept certain forms of alternative service "which would not exceed the bounds of their religious convictions." Yet, he

added, "they are prepared to make any sacrifices in order to atone for any privileges granted by the state." He also believed, he said, that giving the Mennonites a twelve year period to get used to these new ideas would make the implementation of the new arrangements easier. That would be helped also by designating certain specific places where Mennonite recruits could fulfill their obligations and which could "facilitate their spiritual needs". Kotzebue also reminded the Commission that Mennonite support had been given willingly to the military during the Crimean War.²⁵

The series of visits by delegations to St. Petersburg and other domiciling places of the tsar would include at least five more from the main Mennonite colonies, as well as several separate ones from the Hutterites, the Berghaler and the Kleine Gemeinde communities, possibly as many as ten altogether.²⁶ All of them reiterated the main elements of the initial conversations. Some highlighted the cause of freedom of conscience and religious liberty, while others gave weight also to the Charter of Privileges given them seventy-five years ago.

Sudermann and Goerz had in fact traveled right on to Prussia after the first delegation completed its St. Petersburg visit in March, 1871. They undoubtedly reported in Danzig and elsewhere that the Prussian military service legislation patterns were now being duplicated in Russia, and concluded quickly that the older *Privilegium* arrangements for total exemption were indeed a thing of the past. In the case of Sudermann, at least, this will have certainly reinforced his view that emigration plans, already under discussion in Berdiansk, must now move full steam ahead. These initiatives were also given added urgency by the fact that the long-standing office of the Guardians' Committee was abolished later that same year.²⁷

All this time Cornelius Jansen clearly remained the leading promoter of a full-scale emigration. He had already begun to release a stream of letters and soon also pamphlets, and was making high-level consular contacts in Berdiansk, Odessa and St. Petersburg. All these actions and printed materials sent to various parts of the Russian Mennonite community recommended emigration to America, preferably to the United States. However, other colony leaders had not given up on the royal court. The failure of a second delegation to meet the tsar personally during one of his visits to Yalta led to a third Mennonite leaders' conference on 11 January 1872.²⁸ At this meeting Jansen took the opportunity to speak forthrightly in favour of emigration as the only route to take. He also urged that an exploratory delegation be sent to America immediately. The resulting division of opinion prevented plans for preparing another delegates' visit to the capital. It seems that Jansen's opposition became most explicit (and possibly most divisive) at the point where he condemned the compromising arrangements of war support given by Mennonites during the Crimean conflict two decades earlier.

The day after this conference Jansen met with his pro-emigration colleagues, including Leonard Sudermann and Diedrich Gaeddert, and all agreed that definite steps to undertake an emigration needed to be taken immediately. Only weeks before, Jansen had made further contacts with the British consul J. Zohrab at Berdiansk to ask if Canada might provide special concessions should an emigration

to that country come up for consideration. Two weeks later, at another conference in Alexanderwohl, a third delegation with another petition for the authorities in St. Petersburg was appointed. Jansen and Sudermann apparently were not present at that gathering.²⁹

All the designs for appealing personally to the tsar (and these efforts continued energetically) reflected the conviction that the tsar alone was really in a position to help. Hence the delegates hesitated to take any other answers, such as the ministers' responses, as the final word. The basis of that view was that since it was Tsar Paul I who had signed the original *Privilegium* "for all time", it would logically be the current tsar, Alexander II, who would make sure that the promise would remain unbroken.³⁰

Reformers and other government officials shared a rather different set of assumptions. As they saw it, the circumstances and needs of Russian national life had changed significantly since 1800. They believed that the special conditions and national needs of an earlier day might indeed have justified the granting of special privileges and provisions which would attract foreign colonizing groups. However, the reformers were now arguing, with the passing of that pioneering period such conditions no longer existed, so that many of these privileges and special provisions for this minority ought now to be abolished, or at least modified significantly to meet current needs. Russia, these men contended, needed at this time in its history to bring about greater equality of citizenship while simultaneously issuing a call to all Russians to render more responsible service, not only to local communities but to the state as well. In their minds this contemporary objective made all the reform proposals rational, logical and necessary for the future good of the country as a whole.³¹ As the comments of *Russki Mir*, a widely-read liberal Russian newspaper had it in an 1872 summer issue: "It is a great pity that tens of thousands of Mennonites cannot reconcile themselves to the new order of things which now exists in all of Europe." The writer was ready to let Mennonites leave rather than to perpetuate the principle of inequality any longer, especially when that principle favoured foreigners and not the native Russian population.³²

Meanwhile the emigration movement took on a life of its own, evolving at a fast pace. Already in the spring of 1872 a private party of three Russian Mennonite young men, including Bernhard Warkentin of Altonau, Molotschna, plus two friends from Bavaria, Germany, had left for America as tourists. Quite possibly they intended also to gather more settlement information first-hand. All five came from well-do-do families and were making the trip at their own expense. Warkentin would remain in the United States and affect the course of emigration considerably once it got underway.³³

The third delegation to St. Petersburg made little progress in trying to reach the tsar with Mennonite service concerns. It was simply told by the ministers at court that a decision had been made to grant Mennonites the alternative of serving in hospitals and the medical service, but without use of weapons (contrary to the practice in Prussia, it was added). To the surprise of the delegates, government officials seemed remarkably well-informed about events in the Mennonite colonies,

including the fact, as Senator Gerngross put it, that a foreigner had been "promoting emigration propaganda" at their early January meeting. The Mennonite representatives quickly prepared and handed in a memorandum in which they defended their position, refuted all charges and reiterated their undiminished loyalty to the tsar and his government.³⁴

The next few months were extremely busy ones for Jansen and his supporters in Berdiansk, Alexanderwohl, and elsewhere. Jansen made his own plans to visit North America personally in the spring of 1873. But on 27 March, before he could complete arrangements, he and one William Loewens (Loewen?), both Prussian citizens, it was noted, were handed permanent expulsion papers and expelled from Russia. A requested intervention from several non-Russian consular offices gave Jansen two extra months to prepare for the journey. On 26 May 1873, he and his family bade farewell to many friends and acquaintances both within and beyond his congregation. Some came to say goodbye at night because they feared to be seen with the expelled family. After visits with friends in several European countries, they arrived in Canada on 10 August, and by the 13th of the month they were in Kitchener, Ontario, where Jacob Y. Shantz, a Canadian Mennonite immigration agent, offered the Jansen family a temporary home. It has been said that if Cornelius had been a Russian subject he would probably have found himself sent off to Siberia.³⁵

Not all was lost, however. Jansen had managed to organize the emigration process sufficiently so that interested groups could now go ahead on their own. His intensified consular inquiries had lodged the emigration plans in high places, and a number of leading churchmen were by now committed to moving. The fact that these plans received less than a warm reception from United States-related consular offices had heightened expectations that Canada might provide an option. Jansen himself definitely hoped to keep both paths open so either one could be explored further if necessary.³⁶ Moves to investigate a Canada-oriented course of action gained much support and direction from the visit of William Hespeler, a Canadian immigrant from Germany who had heard about the immigration discussions of South Russian Mennonites during a stay in Germany. After sharing this information with Canadian immigration authorities, Hespeler was appointed special immigration agent to help follow up Russian Mennonite immigrant prospects as soon as possible.

Hespeler first arrived in Berdiansk on 25 July 1872, only to be told by the local British consular officials that they could not talk to him, and that he had better leave Russia at once. They realized that Russian authorities knew of his coming and that a dim view would be taken of anyone helping him in his current endeavors. When asked about other persons he might talk to, the consulate gave Hespeler Jansen's name in Berdiansk. After much correspondence between the two, Hespeler made another visit to South Russia. His immigration discussions with Mennonite representatives were cut short this time by the Russian police, who pressured him to leave. Canadian authorities now asked Hespeler to step back, but these contacts had important consequences for further emigration strategies. Hespeler had specifically recommended an exploratory delegation to Canada, and had been authorized to offer Canadian financial assistance for such a project.³⁷

A scouting visit that would include a short tour in Manitoba was undertaken in the spring of 1873. Members of the delegation must have had conversations with the young men who had visited the United States in 1872. Of that group Bernhard Warkentin had remained in the United States, disappointed, it seems, that he had not been chosen to head the larger scouting team but still very busy sending letters and private reports to friends back home. Among them one David Goerz in Berdiansk, who would play a prominent role in establishing a settlement in the United States later on. An 11-man delegation with Kornelius Buhr, a Bergthal estate owner along at his own expense, spent nearly half a year on the road. They looked at various parts of the United States, including Minnesota, the Dakotas and especially western areas in Kansas and Nebraska. A northern jog with an extended tour of southeastern and also western Manitoba (thought to be "too cold" in the earlier Warkentin reports) enlarged the itinerary and affected the outcome of the visit in important ways.³⁸

The delegates could not agree on what recommendations to make to their home communities in South Russia. Jakob Peters and Heinrich Wiebe of Bergthal, who also represented Fuerstenland and many Chortitza families, together with the Kleine Gemeinde delegates David Klassen and Cornelius Toews, agreed on Manitoba. They signed an immigration contract with the Canadian government in Ottawa on 23 July 1873. The other delegates, speaking for Crimean, Volhynian, and Molotschna groups, as well as the Hutterites, favoured emigrating to the United States.³⁹

Meanwhile the delegations to St. Petersburg had continued, but by year's end had failed by all appearances to make any further impact on government policy regarding alternative service. The universal military conscription bill became law on 1 January 1874. As it turned out, though, this was not the end of the story. Emigration would be permitted for six more years, and by now a very sizable segment of the Mennonite population was getting ready to leave.⁴⁰ In fact, the government itself was well aware that a Mennonite emigration plan had emerged by now. A few individuals had left already in 1872, followed by a group of around 35 families in the spring of 1873. There were definite indications that hundreds of families, and possibly a thousand or more, would follow. At one point in the St. Petersburg discussions it had been said by someone that all the Mennonites of South Russia would leave unless the original exemption privileges would be completely restored. Apparently the officials now agreed that decisive governmental intervention was required immediately.⁴¹

In the early months of 1874 a special emissary of the tsar, General Eduard von Todleben, known to the Mennonites from the Crimean War years, received a commission to personally assess the situation in the Mennonite colonies. He had authority to offer further accommodations to the wishes of the Mennonites, in order, if possible, to squelch the emigration altogether. Todleben's encounters with the Molotschna and Chortitza settlements were basically cordial, if somewhat less deferential in Chortitza than in the Molotschna settlement, and the General could get a hearing without difficulty. This was, after all, the sort of personalized response from

the tsar's government that had not been forthcoming so far. Todleben consistently represented himself as speaking directly for the tsar, but the questions and conversation allowed the general to see for himself that the issue had seriously divided the Mennonite community. Some leaders were obviously determined to take their people out of the country. He was also convinced that a large number of families seemed ready to consider a solution other than emigration if additional service concessions were made. It was his feeling, however, that some individuals were, as he put it, leaving simply for personal gain, hoping to acquire more land or assets of other kinds.⁴²

At this point Todleben informed his audiences that he had been authorized to discuss with them another variant of alternative service. His new offer proposed that young Mennonite recruits would be allowed to serve in maintenance shops, in fire fighting detachments or in forestry programs of the Department of State Domains. They would be assigned to work in closed units where they would be given pastoral and administrative help as determined by the Mennonites themselves. Mennonites would also be required to pay the major portion (80%) of the upkeep of these establishments, plus the living expenses of the assignees.⁴³

Todleben's new suggestions struck an almost immediate chord of sympathy among the listeners. The Mennonites quickly chose forestry work as the kind of activity that would meet service requirements they could agree to in good conscience. An amendment to the new law, formulated in Article 157 and passed by the State Council on 8 April 1875, included all the concessions worked out in the Todleben negotiations. Carefully drafted and detailed terms of operation were then formulated and added to the contract. Among other things, this document made clear that the program would indeed be under civilian administration, and that the lines of responsibility for both Mennonites and the government would be clearly defined.⁴⁴

Six afforestation camps became quickly available to accommodate the first recruits for this state service program. All of them were situated in proximity to one or the other of the main Mennonite settlements of New Russia. The first recruits took over their assigned duties at Azov and Velikianadol, north of Mariupol near the Bergthal settlement, in 1881. Other camps were set up at Razin, Vladimirov, Staroberdiansk (Old Berdiansk), and Novoberdiansk (New Berdiansk) in the next few years. At least five additional main camps, including one in Siberia, would be opened in the pre-revolutionary period.⁴⁵

Most of the emigration-minded groups were not swayed by the Todleben arguments or by his accommodations. The General did some special pleading with the Bergthal *Aeltester* Gerhard Wiebe, but again to no avail. The emigration leaders simply wanted to know if he, the tsar's special emissary, could help them get their passports and visas for departure quickly. This Todleben did graciously without any objections or hesitation. Property sales continued and in some communities quickened their pace, though often at very depressed prices.

Group departures began in larger numbers in the spring of 1874. The first families, Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, arrived at Fort Garry near Winnipeg on 31 July

1874 and these were followed by Bergthaler Mennonites to establish what came to be known as the East Reserve. Hundreds of additional families from the so-called *Reinländer* (a later designation) body of families from Chortitza and Fuerstenland, came in a major second wave to Fort Dufferin on the Red River just north of the Canada-US border; the first of these disembarked on 14 July 1875 and moved to the West Reserve. Both the East and West Reserves received new arrivals till the emigration basically ended in the summer of 1880. Together the newcomers comprised a body of more than 1200 families, or about 7000 persons in all.⁴⁶ The first immigrant contingent arriving in the United States had already come in 1873 and soon much larger bodies, including the entire Alexanderwohl church from the Molotschna, groups from Volhynia, along with the Hutterites and others came. Some went to the Dakota Territory and Minnesota, and more to Kansas, Nebraska, and Illinois. The United States total was about 10,000 persons, making for a migration of over 17,000 individuals, about a third of the Russian Mennonite population. Two thirds of the Mennonites had found it possible to stay in Russia.⁴⁷

Actually, the attempts to escape Russian conscription had not ended altogether. Some Mennonites remaining in Russia were not yet satisfied with the *Todleben* arrangements, and still worried about other changes. That reality was underscored by the "great trek" of more than a hundred families led by Class Epp, which moved from the Am Trakt region in the Volga area to Central Asia in the 1880s, from where some of them departed for America not much later. Others would leave Russia for Canada in the 1880s and 1890s, but that is another story.⁴⁸

Leaders of the colonies in Mennonite Russia realized rather tardily that the emerging forms of democracy would ultimately call into question their privileged classification in nineteenth century Russia. For three generations the promises and arrangements made by Russia's autocratic tsars had seemed unchangeable. Gradually, however, they came to see that these rulers too had to deal with changing times. When faced with fundamentally different citizenship responsibilities and new types of state obligations, they perceived a threat to the very foundations of their communal existence and felt that more negotiations were required. They believed that to succeed they must again see the tsar himself; the bureaucrats, it seemed, could not really understand and respond sensitively to their concerns.

Discussions of the military service issue alongside rather sweeping educational, local government and other reforms, openly split the Russian Mennonite community. For this inherently religious community, a growing list of questions loomed large above the day-to-day routine. Could any kind of state service be accommodated to their central tenets of faith? How could one live with a government decree that conscience could not accept? Were the core values of Mennonite community and church life really facing a test of survival? Or were there perhaps ways of riding out these stormy waves of change?

Todleben's accurately assessed their situation. The Mennonites had been relatively successful in the colonies, economically and otherwise, and the state officials, having benefitted from Mennonite productivity, generally did not want to see them leave. When the Mennonites realized that they had in fact been heard, and

that the new military law would be adjusted just for them, they moved quickly to obtain the maximum privileges which the amendments could provide. The leading emigration proponents and their followers could interpret this only as a compromise of the faith. Emigration, the reoccurring theme in Mennonite history, seemed to be the only viable solution.

The government got much of what it wanted too. Losing a hundred men of military age could hardly affect the nation's military strength. Moreover, service in the national forests, improving the productivity of the southern steppes, could actually benefit the nation as a whole. The larger toll of losing more than 17,000 people could, of course, not be totally ignored. Most of them though, it could be argued, had left nearly all their property behind, sold to those staying, for relatively little money.

As a matter of fact, growing agricultural and nascent industrial development along with the population expansion of the remaining Mennonites soon filled the emigration gaps. Many of the best farmers, established businesses (though still few in number) and the majority of hard-working people remained. The modernizing impetus, so sorely needed in nineteenth century Russia, would remain alive, and its faithful Mennonite citizens would share in its benefits along with other Russians in the decades to come.

As 1880 dawned, Mennonite eyes in Russia focused rather narrowly on the upcoming service recruitment. Much work was needed to plan management in the camps, and to establish the formal structures in which Mennonite service for peace, as it has come to be called, would be institutionalized under the new law. Most of the people found it difficult to conceptualize the future of these new obligations as anything but onerous. Experience alone would show whether something good, as Todleben had promised, would come out of all this or not. In Manitoba not a few of the 1870s Russian Mennonite immigrants, with the die now cast, may have had those same questions on their minds.⁴⁹

Notes

¹ The most comprehensive treatments of the early decades of Mennonite settlement in New Russia are to be found in James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press Limited, 1989); and George K. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland. Band I und II* (Lage, Germany: Logos Verlag, 1997 and 1998) [henceforth cited as *Geschichte*]. See also John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1989), 11-146. Urry, 64ff, outlines the main features of the basic administrative structures and community organization in the Russian Mennonite colonies after 1789. For Russian administrative legislation related to Mennonite settlement cf. "Ustav o koloniiakh inostrantsev v Imperii", in *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii Vol. II* (1857), Part II.

Later on the Mennonites constructed a special fire-proof building to house the Charter. The original document is believed to have been destroyed sometime during the Civil War or in some other period of destruction which ravaged the Mennonite colonies. Cf. Harvey L. Dyck, trans.

and ed., *A Mennonite In Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D.Epp 1851-1880* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 14-15 (henceforth cited as *A Mennonite in Russia*), and D.H.Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten: Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben* (Odessa, Russland: privately published, 1889). Reprint by *Mennonitische Post*, (Steinbach, MB, Canada, 1984), 62-65. When in 1837 the Mennonites first approached Nicholas I about confirming the 1800 *Privilegium*, they were told that they did not need such written reassurance, since the original promise given by Tsar Paul I would hold for all his successors. What the Mennonites wanted was given by Tsar Nicholas I, however, by an order of 9 November 1838. Cf. Isaak, 21-22, and "Streiflichter auf die erste Gemeindebildung an der Molotschna", *Unser Blatt* I (May 1926), 172. To date nothing has come to light to suggest that a similar petition was made to Alexander II when he became tsar, or that he responded to such a request.

The broader context of tsarist colonization policies under Catherine II, Paul I, and the beginning of Alexander I's reign are dealt with in Roger P.Bartlett, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia 1762-1804* (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne and Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

² The need for reform of Russian governmental structures and policies, beginning essentially with the reign of Peter I (1682 -1725), remained an ongoing concern of Romanov rulers (or at least some of their appointed ministers) right up to the 1917 Revolution. Cf. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky. *A History of Russia. Fourth Edition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

³ The efforts of Catherine II and Nicholas I to silence radicals in their reigns are familiar to all students of Russian history. Cf. Riasanovsky, 254ff and 323ff.

⁴ The literature on the course and outcome of the Crimean War is extensive. A relatively recent and conveniently accessible retelling of the story is in Michael Hurst, "Crimean War (1853-56)", *Modern Encyclopaedia of Russian and Soviet History* Vol. 8, (1978), 104-114. On the Mennonites' non-combatant participation in the war cf. James Urry and Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonites and the Crimean War, 1854 - 1856", *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Vol. 7, 1989, 9 - 32.

⁵ Still a useful introduction to the Alexandrine reforms is W.D. Mosse, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia. Revised edition* (New York: Collier Books, 1962). See also the recent summary in Epp, *Geschichte*, Band II, 209ff.

⁶ The Russian Mennonite colonies had, in fact, experienced their own reform movement in the time of Johann Cornies (1789-1848), a very forthright and progressive landholder who received strong government support for introducing needed changes in the Mennonite colonies as he (and the Guardians' Committee which supported him) saw it. This applied not only to economic but to educational, social and other areas, such as helping neighbouring non-Mennonite minorities, as well. Cf. Harvey L. Dyck, "Russian Servitor and Mennonite Hero: Light and Shadow in Images of Johann Cornies", and his translation, "Agronomist Gavel's Biography of Johann Cornies (1789- 1848)", *Journal of Mennonite Studies* Vol.2, 1984, 9-41. See also Urry, 108ff.

⁷ The Kleingemeinde and Bergthaler communities of South Russia, in particular, expressed serious reservations about the proposed educational, juridical and local administrative changes which were legislated at this time. See Delbert Plett, "Non-resistance and the Imposition of Worldly Offices", in Delbert Plett, ed. *History and Events: Writings and Maps Pertaining to the History of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1866 to 1876* (Steinbach, MB: D.F.Plett Farms, 1982.), 57 - 62, and also Gerhard Wiebe. *Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981), 19ff, translated by Helen Janzen from the original Wiebe work published in Winnipeg in 1900 as *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika*, 19-23.

⁸ Cf. Forrestt A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia* (Nashville,TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), and J. J.H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in*

Russia 1462 -1874 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁹ Cf. Robert Fred Baumann. *The Debates Over Universal Military Service in Russia 1870-1874* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1982), 104ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Issue No. 237 of *Pravitel'stvennyi Vestnik*, dated 4 November 1870. The announcement asked the Minister to "compose and submit in statutory form for imperial approval, proposals for the structure of reserve elements in the army, and for the extension of direct participation in the military conscription, in accordance with some general conditions, to all classes of the empire", cited in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations 1789-1936", unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984, 45 (henceforth cited as "Mennonite Pacifism").

¹¹ Cf. J.J. Hildebrand. *Aus der Vorgeschichte der Einwanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Manitoba* (Winnipeg, MB: privately published, 1949), 22, and Abram Goerz. *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Forstdienstes der Mennoniten in Russland, nach urkundlichen Akten zusammengestellt* (Gross Tokmak, Taurien: H.Lenzmann, 1907), 3.

¹² Cf. Jacob Epp personal papers, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA), Vol. 2169, 18 November entry in personal diary, Book #4 (1859 - 1871), and the published version of the diary in Harvey L. Dyck, ed. and trans., *A Mennonite in Russia*, (Toronto, 1991), 304.

¹³ John B. Toews, "Non-resistance and Migration in the 1870s: Two Personal Views", *Mennonite Life* Vol.41 (June, 1986), 11 (henceforth cited as "Non-resistance and Migration").

¹⁴ The latest survey of the Prussian Mennonite military service exemptions discussion is in John D.Thiesen, "First Duty of the Citizen: Mennonite Identity and Military Exemption in Prussia, 1848 -1877", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (MQR) Vol. LXII (April 1998), 161 - 188.

¹⁵ George K.Epp, *Geschichte*, Band II, 113ff, and Bernhard Harder, *Alexandertal. Die Geschichte der letzten deutschen Stammsiedlung in Russland* (Berlin-Charlottenburg: Kohnert, 1930). Cf. also Martin Klaassen. *Geschichte der wehrlosen Taufgesinnten Gemeinden von den Zeiten der Apostel bis auf die Gegenwart* (Koeppenthal: Der Vorstand der Mennonitengemeinde, 1873).

¹⁶ Thiesen, 167-171.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 177 - 184.

¹⁸ Cf. Delbert Plett, *Storm and Triumph: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde (1850-1875)* (Steinbach,MB: D.F.P Publications,1986), 251ff, and Gustav E.Reimer and G.R. Gaeddert. *Exiled by the Czar: Cornelius Jansen and the Great Mennonite Migration, 1874* (Newton,KS: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956), 6ff. based on the extensive Cornelius Jansen papers at the Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas, and henceforth cited as Reimer and Gaeddert.

¹⁹ "Reisebeschreibung von Marienburg ueber die Grenze bei Eydkuehnen in Russland...nach Berdiansk", handwritten manuscript written in 1870, MHCA, Vol. 1082, File 22, "Mennonites in Russia—Assorted Materials".

²⁰ Reimer and Gaeddert, 33ff. Articles on the military service concerns of Russian Mennonites began to appear in Funk's paper *Herold der Wahrheit*, (with an English edition published as *Herald of Truth*), as early as April, 1870. Cf."From Germany" in *Herald of Truth*, reprinted in Clarence Hiebert, comp. and ed. *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1974), 1 (henceforth cited as *Brothers in Deed*).

²¹ Reimer and Gaeddert, 43-44.

²² George K. Epp has attributed anti-Russian culture prejudice to Sudermann, suggesting that to be an added motivation for Sudermann's strong support of emigration. See *Geschichte*, Band II, 221. Gaeddert's observations on what was happening may be traced in his diary as excerpted in Toews, "Non-resistance and Migration", 10-11. On Isaak Peters see P.M. Friesen, *Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt, Taurien: Raduga, 1911), 77-78. In the fall of

1874 Peters was expelled from Russia because, as Jacob Epp put it, “[he is] supposed to have preached against the Russian government “, meaning, most likely, for having promoted emigration vigorously. Toews, “Non-resistance and Migration”, 11. For Peters’ view of the need for emigration cf. also his articles, “Die Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Suedrussland”, in *Zur Heimath* I (May 1875), 1, and “An Account of the Cause and Purpose that Led to the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America”, *Herald of Truth* Vol. 44, 7 - 21 November, 1907.

²³ Cf. a letter by Leonard Sudermann to a colleague, dated 29 December 1870, in the Leonard Sudermann papers, Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA), 65-2, File 16, “Early Migration Documents”, and Reimer and Gaeddert, 44. Diedrich Gaeddert noted 1871 meetings of elders on 8 January and 22 January, with a brotherhood meeting in between on 10 January. Toews, “Non-resistance and Migration”, 10.

²⁴ On the work of the first delegation cf. P.M.Friesen, 492-493, Reimer and Gaeddert, 44, and Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben* (Halbstadt, Taurien: H.J.Braun, 1908), 295-306. Epp notes that the Bergthaler had representation at the planning meeting in Alexanderwohl, but were not ready to send someone with the delegation to St.Petersburg. *Geschichte*, Band II, 221 - 223. and Isaak, 295ff.

²⁵ Baumann, 204 ff.

²⁶ On the beginnings of Kleingemeinde delegate planning cf. Delbert Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, 276ff, and on early Hutterite involvements in the negotiations cf. *ibid.*, 278-79, and The Hutterian Brethren, *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren. Vol. II* (St. Agatha, MB: Crystal Springs Colony, 1998), 671ff. George K. Epp viewed the first delegation as quickly bringing about a parting of the ways of those supporting emigration, e.g. Sudermann, and others who were not yet ready to move. *Geschichte*, Band II, 222.

²⁷ On the abolition of the Guardians’ Committee office cf. Harry Schulz, “The German Colonists of Russia. The Repeal of Russia’s Law of the Colonists in 1871 and Its Effect on the German Colonist Population”, unpublished MA thesis, Chapman College, 1969.

²⁸ Some of Jansen’s earlier correspondence, related especially to the non-resistance issue, was published in a booklet entitled *Notizen ueber Amerika* (Danzig: Paul Thieme, 1872). Censorship had prevented its publication in Russia. Another version of this collection appeared at the same time under the title *Sammlung von Notizen ueber Amerika*. See also Reimer and Gaeddert, 45ff, and 119-120 for the Preface to this version. An original of this booklet is found in the Cornelius Jansen papers at Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Connections with the US State Department are noted in a report by Timothy Smith dated 22 July 1871 as cited in Clarence Hiebert, ed., *Brothers in Deed*, 4.

²⁹ Isaak, 310 ff. Jansen’s views on non-resistance are recorded in part in several of his essays appearing in Reimer and Gaeddert, 193-199. See also *ibid.*, 52. Consular correspondence generated by Jansen and others in this period is published in part in Ernst Correll, “Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Sources and Documents, 1872-1873”, *MQR* Vol. XI (July, 1937), 196-227, and (October, 1937), 267-284. On the third delegation preparations cf. Reimer and Gaeddert, 51ff and Isaak, 308 - 310.

³⁰ The wording of the points dealing with a commitment “for all eternity” ran as follows: We assure them (the Mennonites) with our Imperial word that none of the Mennonites now settled and those which may settle in the future, nor their children and descendants will ever be taken and entered into military service without their desire to do so [underlining mine]. We exempt all their villages and houses from all sorts of quartering, except when the troops march through, in which case they will observe the rules of quartering... Cf. Urry, Appendix I, 283, which is based, with minor alterations, on a translation of *Polnoe Sobranie Zakanov Rossiskoz (PSZ)*, XXVI, No. 19, 546, by David G. Rempel in “The Mennonite Colonies in New Russia: A Study of their Settlement and Economic Development from 1789 to 1914”, unpublished PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1973, Appendix II, 325 - 326. A German translation of the Charter of Privileges is in Isaak, 5-7.

³¹ Epp, *Geschichte*, Band II, 212-220.

³² Quoted in Reimer and Gaeddert, 56. Cf. also *US Dept. of State, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United State* (Washington Govt. Printing Office, 1872), 489-490, and a memorandum from the US Embassy, St. Petersburg, of 6 April 1872, to Washington, quoted in Schulz, 24.

³³ Cf. David Haury, "Bernhard Warkentin: A Mennonite Benefactor", *MQR* XLIX (July 1975), 179 -202. The other Russian Mennonites were Peter Dick (Dyck?) from the Brodski estate, and Philip Wiebe from the estate of Vollwerk. Their German companions were Jacob Boehr, an acquaintance of Warkentin's, and his brother Johann from the Palatinate. Their photo with only Warkentin identified, appeared in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Mutual Aid in Canada, 1860-1890: The Mennonite Aid Union and the Russian Aid Committee", *Mennonite Life* Vol. 54 (September 1999), 8. The party of five arrived in New York on 5 June 1872, but Johann left the group upon arrival before any of their traveling in the US had begun. As a result, reports of contacts with the group always refer to four men, e.g. "The Mennonites in Russia: A Visit from There", *Herald of Truth*, August, 1872, copied in Clarence Hiebert ed., *Brothers in Deed*, 15-16.

³⁴ Isaak, 310-311. The "inside information" about Janzen from the Molotschna meetings included allusions to someone who had been petitioning for arrangements that would free Mennonites even from the kind of duties performed during the Crimean War, and would also give them the right to proselytize in Russia.

³⁵ Reimer and Gaeddert, 72ff, and Clarence Hiebert, ed. *Brothers in Deed*, 40. On the involvement of J.Y.Shantz in the Canadian aspects of the immigration, cf. Sam Steiner. *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y.Shantz* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1988), 77ff.

³⁶ Reimer and Gaeddert, 58ff. For the diplomatic correspondence of this period see George Leibbrandt, "The Emigration of the German Mennonites from Russia to the United States and Canada in 1873 - 1880", *MQR* VI (October 1932), 205ff. See also Ernst Correll, "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba: Documents and Sources, 1873-1874", *MQR* XXII (January 1948), 43 - 57.

³⁷ Reimer and Gaeddert, 59ff, and Werner Entz, "William Hespeler, Manitoba's First German Consul", *German-Canadian Yearbook* Vol. I (1973), 149-152.

³⁸ Warkentin's experiences and emigration involvements, including intimate contacts with friend David Goerz from Berdiansk are well documented in the Bernhard Warkentin personal papers at the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas. Cf. also Cornelius Krahn, "Some Letters of Bernhard Warkentin Pertaining to the Migration of 1873-1875", *MQR* XXIV (July 1950), 248-263. For the visit of the 1873 delegation to Manitoba cf. Delbert Plett. *Storm and Triumph*, 293ff, William Schroeder, *The Berghal Colony. Revised Edition* (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 1986), 63 - 70, Leonard Sudermann, *From Russia to America: In Search of Freedom* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 1974), and Lawrence Klippenstein, "Moving to Manitoba: Jacob Y.Shantz, Ontario businessman, promoted settlement on the prairie", *Mennonite Life* Vol. 29 (September 1974), 51 - 53, 61 - 63.

³⁹ E.K.Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D.W.Friesens and Sons Ltd., 1955), 28-49.

⁴⁰ Miller, 225. The law was published in *Voinskoe povinosti s obshcheponiatnymi ob'isicheniami* (St. Petersburg, 1874). Cf. also the official decrees No. 52982 and 52983 in *PSZ* II Series, LXIX, 1825 - 1881. An enlightening English-language analysis of the law is in Ralph Koprince, "The Russian Conscription Law of 1874", *Heritage Review* XI (September 1981), 3-12.

⁴¹ The group of 36 families, according to one report, had left in the spring of 1873, coming in several contingents from the Crimea. Thirteen of the families moved to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, at least four to Kansas, and a number of families found their way to the Dakota Territory. Cf. "Emigration of Mennonites", "The Russian Emigration" and "The Russian

Brethren", newspaper reports from *Herald of Truth*, reprinted in Clarence Hiebert, ed., *Brothers in Deed*, 45, 78, 85, 88 and 96. The most comprehensive general account of the Russian Mennonite emigration to the United States is now Theron F. Schlabbach. *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth Century America* (Scottsdale, PA and Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1988), 231ff

⁴² On the life and career of General Todleben cf. N.K. Shilder, *Graf Eduard Ivanovich Totleben: Ego zhizhn i deiatelnosti* (St.Petersburg: 1885 - 86). Two volumes.

One source gives the total of landless families in Bergthal alone as 350. Schroeder, 59. Cf. also P. Albert Koop, "Some Economic Aspects of Emigration: With Special Emphasis on the 1870s Migration from Russia to America", *MQR* LV (April, 1981), 143 - 156, and Delbert Plett, "Emigration for Principle or Profit: Socio-Economic Background of the 1870s Emigration", in Delbert Plett, ed. *Pioneers and Pilgrims: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kasas, 1874 to 1882* (Steinbach, MB: D.F.P. Publications, 1990), 261 - 268.

⁴³ Todleben shared his observations in a special report to the Minister of the Interior. Cf. "Bericht des Generals Todlebens an den Minister des Innern ueber das Resultat seiner Reise zu den Mennoniten Suedrusslands 1874", *Der Bote* XI, 14 March 1934, 5 and 28 March 1934, 5. This version was translated by Dr. David G. Rempel from A.A. Velitsyn, *Nemtsy v Rossii: Ocherki istoricheskago razvitiia i nastoiashchago polozheniia nemetskikh kolonii na iuge i vostoke Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1893), 163 - 171. See also Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", 63-65.

⁴⁴ Cf. Friesen, 502-503, Isaak, 325-327, Goerz, 23-25, and Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", 66-69. The details of a memorandum expressing appreciation for the General's visit and proposal included a reference to concerns about the continuation of the right to self-administration in Mennonite schools, with an understanding that due consideration would be given to instruction of the Russian language. It would take at least one delegation to St. Petersburg during the next year to work out additional details of the agreement.

⁴⁵ A more complete discussion of the actual erection of the camps, and the working out of a service program for each site is found in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", 85ff. An outline of the terms arranged for meeting financial obligations is included here.

⁴⁶ On the Bergthal emigration of 1874-1876 see Schroeder, 72-90 and Gerhard Wiebe, 35ff. The Kleingemeinde departures are detailed in Delbert Plett. *Storm and Triumph*, 323 ff. For the Reinlaender move cf. Peter Zacharias. *Reinland: An Experience in Community* (Winkler, MB: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976), chs.1 and 2. See also Francis, 50ff. Passenger lists for the entire body have been published in John Dyck, ed., *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* (Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1993).

⁴⁷ Persons remaining in the Fargo area were recorded as going there in the original Bergthal church books which were taken along to Manitoba. The designations do not appear to have been transferred to the published version of the registers in the *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch*. A listing of 1880s and 1890s emigres who came to Canada is in John Dyck and William Harms, eds., *1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1998), 486ff. The East and West Reserves were tracts of land of eight and seventeen townships respectively in size, set aside exclusively for Manitoba Mennonite settlement on either side of the Red River. Francis, 61ff.

A recent tally of passengers for the 1874-1880 period provides a total of 6930, although researchers allege that several shiploads are not included in this survey. Cf. Adolf Ens and Rita Penner, "Quebec Passenger Lists of the Russian Mennonite Immigration, 1874-1880", *MQR* XLVIII (October 1974), 527-531. Ens and Penner summarize the relative size of the three early groups as follows: Fuerstenlaender (including a large number of families actually from Chortitza)—3200; Bergthaler—3000, and the rest—perhaps just under 700—would be Kleingemeinde people.

Some studies use the somewhat higher total derived from the Jacob Y.Shantz immigrant lists (somewhat inflated at points, according to Ens and Penner) of just under 7400. Cf. Jacob Y.Shantz, "Menonites [sic] to Manitoba. This Book Contains the Names and Number of Families and Souls that Moved to Manitoba", published in Clarence Hiebert, ed., *Brothers in*

Deed, 106 - 107, 242-243, 287-88, 322, 349, 359, and 383. The original is located in the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, with a duplicate available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

On the move to the US see Schlabach, 254-270. See also David A. Haury, *Prairie People: A History of the Western District Conference* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1981), 18ff, and Clarence Hiebert, ed., *Brothers in Deed*, 123ff, which includes ship lists of thousands of immigrants who made the United States their new home.

⁴⁸ The trek to Central Asia has spawned an extensive literature. Most comprehensive, if somewhat confusing at points, is the work by Fred R. Belk, *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia 1880 - 1884* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1976). See also Waldemar Janzen, "The Great Trek. Episode or Paradigm?" *MQR* LI (April 1977), 127-139, and Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", 79ff, for a short summary of the move itself.

⁴⁹ Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", 82-84. The extent to which the emigration provided an actual "peace witness" as we speak of it today, is discussed in John B. Toews, "Non-resistance Reexamined: Why did the Mennonites Leave Russia in 1874?" *Mennonite Life* Vol. 29 (March/June, 1974), 8 - 13. See also Harry Loewen, "A House Divided: Russian Mennonite Nonresistance and Emigration in the 1870s", in Friesen, *Mennonites in Russia*, 127-143, for another perspective on the events discussed here. The views of many Mennonites who did not emigrate to North America are expressed in Leonard Gross, ed., "The Coming of the Russian Mennonites to America: An Analysis by Johann Epp, Mennonite Minister in Russia, 1875", *MQR* XLVIII (October 1974), 460 - 475.