

Causes of the Mennonite Migration

Persecution by Prussian authorities (Poland no longer existed)

- continued pressure for military service
- economic restrictions
- extra taxes and other persecution
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Terms offered by Catherine the Great (Russian Government)

p.213 Loewen and Nolt

- 1) each family would receive 165 acres of land, it was not allowed to be subdivided
- 2) they were given freedom to worship
- 3) they were promised exemption from military service
- 4) free transportation and support until they were established
- 5) autonomy, freedom to establish educational and political institutions as suited their needs. This included their own courts except for capital offenses
- 6) The right to use their own language
- 7) They were allowed economic freedoms, the rights to run their own distilleries and control taverns.
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- 8) They were not allowed to convert Orthodox Church members (native Russians)
- 9) Their rights would not be passed on to partners or children in the event of mixed marriages.

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Prussians tried to stop Emigration by:

- 1) Did not allow direct solicitation of Mennonites
- 2) Denied passports to all those who had property

1788 AD Departure

- 228 families leave Prussia most are “Flemish”
- most of these settlers were labourers and craftsmen from towns, they were poor people, not farmers
- 1000 people or more, not one minister among them, they establish the Chortitza colony
 - I) usually ministers were chosen from the well to do, because they were lay ministers and paid their own way.(priesthood of believers)
 - II) no communion or marriages, sermons read from a book
- solved the issue by sending a list of possible nominees to elders in Prussia, they mailed back who they chose. Some still didn't accept these people as actual ministers and elders until a “real” elder came out and ordained them years later.

Chortitza July 1789

They end up settling on a dry barren and hilly steppe, not the better grasslands that they were promised. They were tricked by Potemkin into settling on his land.

Some refused to settle in that spot. Gave in later out of desperation

The government support they were promised was slow in coming or non existent, their possessions were pilfered from the barges on the way down stream.

They faced many obstacles: lack of resources, grasshoppers, drought, natives. They had to learn new farming techniques and at first focused mainly on livestock; cattle and sheep.

Bitterness over the hardship had them excommunicate the two deputies Bartsch and Hoppner who had organized the deal. They even got them thrown in jail. Their grandchildren did erect a monument to them 100 years later as a sign of appreciation.

Molotschna 1803

162 families arrive. They are wealthier farmers, they paid a 10% emigration tax in Prussia and left. They left with money and fared much better than the Chortitza colonizers.

They receive a parcel of land along the Dniepr river. Fairly lush grassland. They had some conflict with the local Tartar natives who were used to using it for pasture land of their own.

They had access to the town of Taranog as a market for their dairy products.

They had ministers who came along with them and established a normal church life upon settling.

Villages

The Mennonites adopted the village system of settlement in their colonies in Russia as a source of protection for themselves.

- 1) Villages were groups of 15-30 families
- 2) The houses were stable, barn and home all in one, with the gable end of the house facing the street.
- 3) One broad street ran down the centre of the village with the homes on either side.
- 4) Orchards were planted in the front of the house at the start and later they were in the back of the houses.
- 5) Land was divided into long narrow strips so that no one would get all the bad land.
- 6) Common pasture land was set aside for the community. Money earned from this area was used to support the “welfare” and later to buy land for daughter colonies.

Village Government

Colonies basically ran their own government and had very little to do with the Russian government

- Each village's land owners elected a representative/ overseer called the Schulze
- The villages had a local council called a Gebeit. It was headed by the Gebeitsamt. It was in charge of justice, fire regulations, insurance, welfare and dealing with delinquents, and even inheritance laws.
- Ministers were always well to do land owners so they were part of this system
- poor people who did not own land had no vote or say in the system.

Agricultural Obstacles

- grasshoppers, drought
- new agricultural demands, most were used to dairy farming in Prussia
- learn to switch to cattle and sheep
- grew grain, fruit, bees, watermelon

Johann Cornies (1830)

Cornies was a successful farmer and by the end of his time of service for the colonies and Russian government he was a very wealthy owner of a large estate.

Russian government appointed an Agricultural Improvement Society (Cornies became head)

- Cornies power came directly from the Czar's government
- Cornies also had power over all of the other German/ Lutheran colonies, Jewish, Russian and Tartar farmers as well.

Some new techniques introduced by Cornies

- fallow, dry farming (leaving patches bare)
- introducing fertilization
- new and better breeds of livestock
- new crops: silk (mulberry trees), tobacco
- shade and fruit trees (so continues the Mennonite war for or against trees)
- new farm machinery

Cornies manages to expand his powers to education and to an extent the welfare system of the colonies

- he had the power to force the "lazy" to work, he enforced this strictly

Many were angry at Cornies and did not appreciate him although we now recognize his influence as being largely positive.

Problems

- 1) Land
- 2) Religious Divisions and Theocracy
- 3) Nationalism

1) Land

- As population expanded farmers were not allowed to split up their farms due to the original terms of settlement
- By 1870 2/3 of the family heads had no land. These people were Anwohner (landless)
- Only landowners had a vote in the affairs of government
- Ministers and other church positions were traditionally chosen from the wealthier members of the church, poor people had less of a voice. They controlled the public money.

- Response:
- create daughter colonies
 - rent land from the local natives
 - (Cornies) industrialize to give the landless jobs.

2) Religious Theocracy

- The government of the colonies and its religious organization became intermingled (church and state became almost one IRONY)

Kleine Gemeinde: Klaas Reimer

- Felt that church was too formal
- Church was too lax in its discipline (should ban drinkers)
- Church shouldn't be involved with the government
- didn't like the fact money was raised for the Napoleonic Wars
- The Kleine Gemeinde felt you should not turn your brother over to the government, you should deal with it as a church
- Don't go to weddings, too much lust for the eye and flesh.
- No services at funerals or eulogies, too much pride

1838 they split from the Chortitza colony church. Some people were whipped as punishment

Mennonite Brethren (1860)

"...if Pastor Wust would not agree to administer communion only to those who were redeemed children of God, how much less would the elders of the Mennonite Church Bruderschaft do this, who, aside from Gnadenfeld, did not know who was converted or unconverted, holy or unholy... And thus we agreed to observe communion among ourselves, in peace and quietness and also to include the Wurttemberg brethren..." Smith p.279
by 1860 they have separated and have communion by themselves and are practicing immersion.

".. the total Mennonite brotherhood has decayed to the extent that we can no more be a part of it" "... fear the unavoidable judgement of God" Smith p.280

Evangelical Mennonite Church

- 1905, They wished to have baptism by immersion, stricter church discipline and to "have communion with non Mennonite Brethren." They want to evangelize.

This began to cause problems in a legal sense, how did the Russian Government know who was now a Mennonite?

3) Nationalism

Nationalism begins to sweep through Russia in the late 1860's and early 1870's just as it had swept through Prussia and the rest of Europe earlier.

The Russian Government begins to attack and remove the Mennonites special privileges.

- 1) Russian is made the official language of the schools, classes must be taught in Russian.
 - schools are placed under Russian government control
- 2) Russian is made the official language of the local government, records must be kept in Russian
- 3) Mennonite military exemption is removed, "...if Mennonites were allowed their exemption then all Russians would want to be Mennonites!"