

THESIS

**A HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND
OF THE GERMAN-RUSSIANS FROM
THE VOLGA DISTRICT IN RUSSIA
LIVING IN NORTHERN COLORADO**

Submitted by

C. H. Becker

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science
Colorado State College
of
Agriculture and Mechanic Arts
Fort Collins, Colorado**

June, 1938

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1938

COLORADO STATE COLLEGE
OF
AGRICULTURE AND MECHANIC ARTS

May 17, 1938

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY

SUPERVISION BY Conrad H. Becker

ENTITLED A Historical Study of The Social Background Of
The German-Russians From The Volga District In Russia
Living In Northern Colorado

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF Science

MAJORING IN Sociology

CREDITS 5½

Olay F Larson
In Charge of Thesis

APPROVED *L. A. Moorhouse*
Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in

Committee on Final Examination

Committee on Graduate Work

L. A. Moorhouse
Robert H. Lumber
Olay F Larson
James G. Hodgson

V. E. Drewson
Geo. T. Avery
Alvin Keger

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge the special aid of the following members of the Colorado State College faculty in the development of this study: Olaf F. Larson, Associate Professor of Sociology, for valuable assistance, guidance and technical counsel; James R. Miller, Experiment Station Editor, for valuable technical counsel; James G. Hodgson, Colorado State Librarian, for assistance in procuring material; B. F. Coen, Associate Professor of Sociology, for inspiration and encouragement.

PREFACE

Some years ago the writer was pastor of a small Lutheran congregation of German-Russians in Eaton, Colorado. It was a struggling mission, supported largely by gifts from the Iowa Synod of the Lutheran Church and from individual friends. The congregation possessed a small frame church. A congregation in Iowa had donated a bell for the church steeple. A certain Sunday was set aside for the dedication of this newly acquired bell. But, alas, when the bell was to be rung for the first time it swung to and fro, but no sound came forth. Someone had stolen the clapper out of the bell.

Expressing his deep hurt at the occurrence, one of the elders made the remark; "We surely are a people without a country. In Russia the Russians hated us because we were Germans. In America the Americans hate us because we are Russians."

Since that time the writer has been interested in the German-Russians. Eighteen years of work among them have convinced him that both as a cultural group and as individuals they are maladjusted in Northern Colorado. An attempt has been made to find a reason for this situation. In so doing it has been discovered that there is little or no material available in the English language on the social background of the German-Russians. The

German-Russian himself knows little or nothing about his history. This presentation is the result of the desire to provide a history in the English language of the social background of the German-Russians.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The reaction of society in Northern Colorado toward the German-Russians is largely unfriendly and unfavorable partly because they are so little understood. The situation here is not unlike that in Lincoln, Nebraska. "In Lincoln the same ignorance, prejudice, and misunderstanding obtains concerning the Russian German which invariably exists in American cities having foreign colonies and which too often characterize the attitude of the average American toward the immigrant in general. Many people who have lived in the city for years are ignorant of the fact that the mother tongue of these foreigners is German instead of Russian. Not one in one hundred of these persons can understand, speak or read the Russian language."¹ Recently the writer discussed this subject with a college instructor who had taught public school among the German-Russians for more than two years, and who was still under the impression that they had been driven out of Germany and had migrated to Russia because of religious oppression. This illustrates how little is known of the history of the German-Russians.

1. Williams, Hattie Plum, A Social Study of the Russian-German. Unpublished thesis, University of Nebraska, 1916, p.8.

Population

The German-Russian immigration to Colorado is of comparatively recent date. The peak of the immigration to the United States seems to have been in 1913, when² about 1,000 families arrived.

According to the United States Census of 1930, there are in Colorado 12,979 people born in Russia and 23,116 children of persons born in Russia, making a total of 36,095 people chiefly of German-Russian stock, in a total Colorado population of 1,035,791.³ This is 3.5 percent of the state's total population.

The population of Russian origin in selected Northern Colorado counties constituted from over 12 percent to almost 16 percent of the total in 1930, as Table I shows.

Table I. POPULATION OF RUSSIAN ORIGIN IN SELECTED
NORTHERN COLORADO COUNTIES

County	People born in Russia	Children of persons born in Russia	Total population of Russian origin	Total population of counties	Percentage of total population of Russian origin
Larimer	1,502	2,690	4,192	33,137	12.7
Logan	959	1,835	2,794	19,946	14.0
Morgan	1,025	1,865	2,890	18,284	15.8
Weld	3,029	5,873	8,902	65,097	13.7

Only a very small percentage of these Russians are of

2. Ballensky, J. J., Wolga-Duetsche an der unteren Wolga und in Nord-Amerika. Lincoln, Nebraska, 1926, p.7.
3. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, vol. 2, Population.

Slavic descent. According to investigations made by the writer, less than 3 percent of the Russians in Larimer County are of Slavic descent; the remainder are of the German-Russian stock.

Evidence of Maladjustments Indicating Need for Study

During the past year the writer has made a preliminary survey of 150 families of German-Russian origin living in the Fort Collins-Timnath-Wellington-Waverly-Harmony-LaPorte districts. The results obtained from this survey have led the writer to believe that a large percentage of the German-Russians in Northern Colorado are maladjusted. This belief is substantiated in part by such facts revealed by this preliminary study, as the proportion of the German-Russian population dependent upon public assistance; the low occupational status; and the small percentage of children continuing in school beyond the eighth grade.

Occupational Status. -- The majority of the families studied are occupied either as farm renters or as hand or beet-laborers (Table II). Only a few have attained full or part ownership of farms although fifteen were part-owners in 1930, but are so no longer. These facts indicate the relative importance of occupations usually associated with an inferior economic status and seasonal employment.

TABLE II. OCCUPATION OF A SAMPLE OF GERMAN-RUSSIANS
IN LARIMER COUNTY, COLORADO

Occupations	
Total, all occupations	150
Hand-laborers	42
Beet-laborers	26
Renters	49
Farm owners	5
Part-owners of farms	8
Business	3
Small home owners, retired or performing only part-time jobs	17

Dependence on Public Assistance. -- Of the families receiving some form of relief at some time between May 1, 1936, and April 30, 1937, in Larimer County, Colorado, 38.8 percent were German-Russian stock, according to the Case Supervisor of the Public Welfare department.

TABLE III. NUMBER OF FAMILIES ON RELIEF IN LARIMER
COUNTY, COLORADO, May 1, 1936-April 30, 1937.

Type of Family	Number	Percent
Total, all types	2890	100.00
American families	1426	49.4
German-Russian families	1122	38.8
Spanish families	342	11.8

It is a conservative estimate that at least 65 percent of all German-Russian families of Larimer County were on relief at some time between May 1, 1936, and April 30, 1937. The German-Russians therefore constitute an important group from the standpoint of public assistance programs and agencies.

Education -- In the 150 families studied, 347 children of school age are found; of these, only 51 children are now attending high school, or have been attending high school at some time during the last two years. These 51 children are found in 38 different families.

Four young people of college age from the 150 families have at one time attended college. Three are attending college at the present time. Three of the college-age group have attended a business college; three are attending business college at the present time. Three are attending a school for beauty operators. This brief analysis of current educational attainments indicates a lack of formal education which not only needs an explanation, but which has implications for the possible development of problems in the future and for the solution of present maladjustments.

The facts revealed by the preliminary survey of a group of German-Russian families, when considered in relation to the importance of this group in Colorado's total population, indicates the need for the study of these people. It is believed that information must be provided concerning the social background of the German-Russians before any thorough study and explanation of the current problems of this group can be satisfactorily attempted.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this presentation is:

1. To determine the important factors in the social background of the German-Russians which may be of importance for their social, economic, and personality adjustment in Colorado.

2. To make available in the English language a history of the German-Russians.

METHOD

The material presented in this thesis is largely derived from secondary sources in the German language.

These secondary sources are supplemented by the United States Census data; material based upon personal interviews and personal experiences gathered in 18 years of work among the German-Russians; a preliminary study of 150 German-Russian families in the Fort Collins-Timnath-Wellington-Waverly-Harmony-LaPorte Districts; and information provided by the Public Welfare Department of Larimer County, Colorado.

In a number of instances the various authors of source materials do not agree as to dates and occurrences. It is difficult to clear up these inconsistencies because of lack of original manuscripts and material.

PART I.

THE COLONISTS LEAVE GERMANY FOR RUSSIA

CHAPTER II

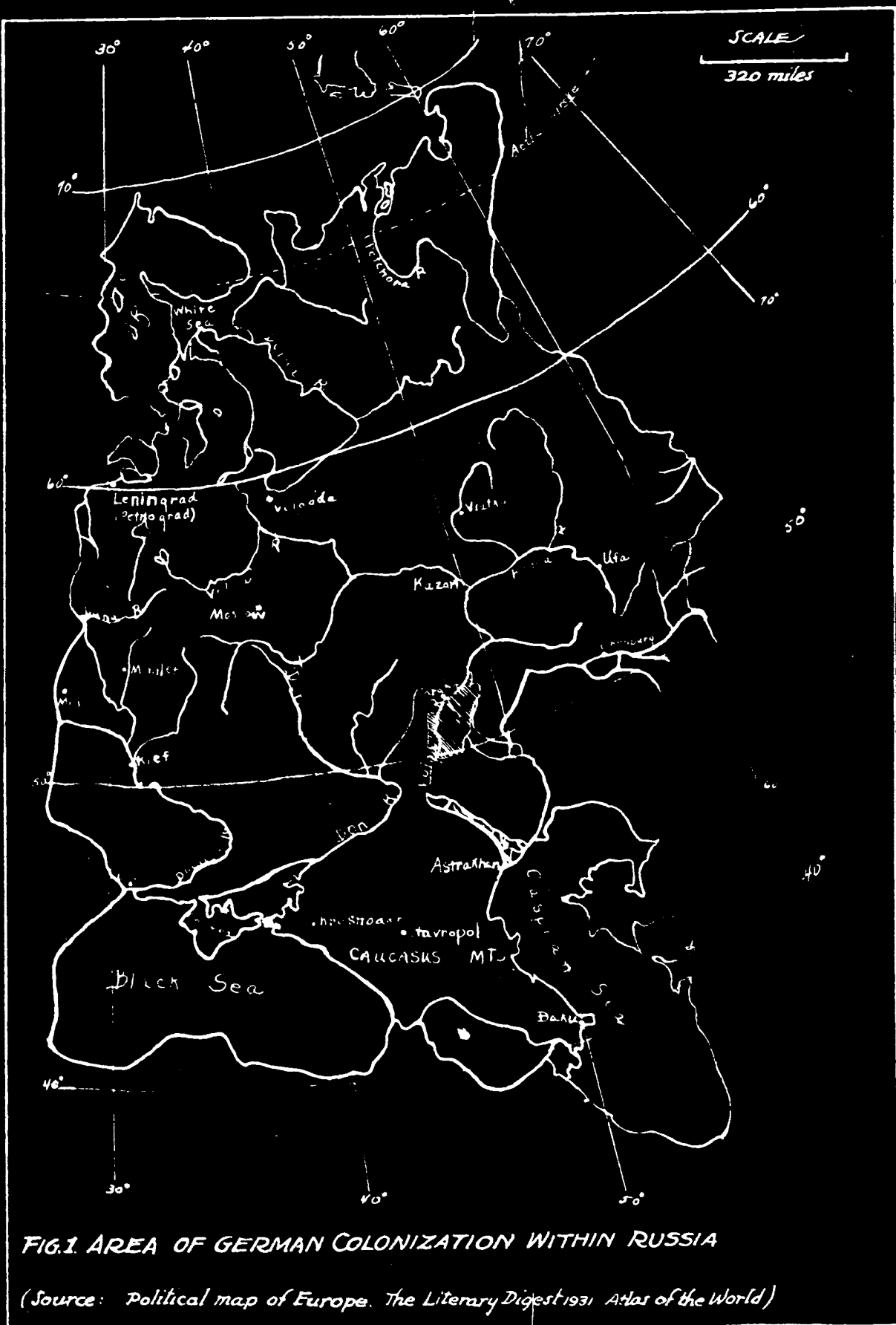
THE PROCLAMATION OF 1763

The Russian Penetration of the Steppes

From 1238 to 1462 Russia was under Mongolian tyranny. Although this rule was broken in 1462, the Mongolian barbarians still lingered on the Russian confines, especially in the district along the middle Volga between Kazen in the north and Astrakhan in the south. (See Fig. I). Before Russia could be unified and the steppes brought under cultivation, these lingering Mongolian-Tartar tribes had to be conquered.¹ This was accomplished from about the middle of the sixteenth century by Russian peasants who drove back the Tartar shepherds. In time there grew up a chain of Cossack villages along the middle Volga.

However, along the east river bank of the Volga, Kirghiz and Bachkir nomads replaced the earlier settlers. These were subject to Russia in name only. They were undesirable neighbors who often broke into the Cossack villages and plundered and destroyed. The Russian Government could afford little protection, and the inhabitants were too few in number to protect themselves. Other Russians could not be induced to settle in the region because of the fear of the robber bands, which controlled

1. Morfill, W. R., Russia, 1893, p. 50.



not only the steppes but also the Volga river,² thus preventing the development of trade and commerce.

Efforts to Interest Colonists to Come to Russia

Various efforts had been made at different times to interest colonists in going to Russia. The Baroness Westmacher, for instance, had bought illegitimate children from Corsica and Sardinia, paying 3 and 4 ducats for each child.³ Plans were made to import criminals from England. The policy of the Government at that time was to make use of every chance, be it ever so small, to interest immigrants in going to Russia.

With the reign of Catherine the Second, 1762-1796, the second epoch in the "Europeanizing of Russia began."⁴ This was the movement to introduce Western culture into Russia. Under Peter the Great this movement had first been started by inviting there merchants, craftsmen, and professional people, chiefly from middle and western Europe.

Catherine very early recognized the necessity of an increased population for Russia. "To this end she even opposed the Christianizing of her non-Christian population, because they practiced polygamy and she believed that polygamy was conducive to a more rapid growth in

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2. Bauer, Gottlieb, Geschichte der deutschen Ansiedler an der Wolga, Saratow, 1908, p. 17.
 3. Lane, Adolf, Deutsche Bauernkolonien in Russland, Koloniale Abhandlung Heft 31, Berlin, 1910, p. 6.
 4. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien an der Wolga, Stuttgart, 1919, p. 11.

population.⁵ In an "Ukas" to the Senate on October 14, 1762, she gave the Senate permission to accept all newcomers who wished to make their homes in Russia, all except Jews.⁶

Less than two months later, December 4, 1762,⁷ she issued a proclamation, inviting all foreigners to emigrate to Russia. This proclamation was to be published and printed in all foreign newspapers.⁸ A commission was organized whose primary duty it was to promote this program. The work of the first Commission was very ineffective, chiefly because Russia had had no previous experience in a program such as this. Finally, on July 22, 1763, Catherine decreed that the Commission "must show immediate results; that Government agents promote the whole program and assist immigrants in every way possible."⁹ The agents of the Commission were to provide free lodging and care for the immigrants until they had found a permanent home in the new land; however, free lodging was to be given them for no longer than a month. They were to assist the colonists in every way possible in establishing a new home; 200,000 rubles were set aside for this purpose.

5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op.cit., p. 11.

6. Ibid. p. 11.

7. Schunemann, Georg, Das Lied der Deutschen Kolonisten in Russland, Drei Masken Verlag, Muenchen, 1923, p.11.

8. Polnoe Sobranie Rossiiskoi Imperii, St. Petersburg, 1830. Nr. 11720, (of 4 XII. 1762) p. 129.

9. Beratz, Gottlieb, Die deutschen Kolonien an der Wolga, Verlag von J. Engelhorn's Nachfolger, Stuttgart, 1919

This money was to be spent in building houses for the immigrants, in furnishing these houses, in building factories, and in providing seed and necessary implements for the newcomers. Further instructions to the Commission demanded that exact records be kept of all immigrants.

These records were to indicate the profession, the size of the family, whether the immigrant desired to become a Russian citizen, and the nationality of the immigrant.

Although all of Russia was to be open to the colonists, yet the Russian Government recognized the necessity of, and also considered in its plans, the settling of the newcomers in definite territories. It was self-evident that the colonists would have to be located in that territory where there were few Russian inhabitants. Three possibilities were offered the immigrant; land in parts of Siberia; land in the southeast part of Russia; or land along the middle or lower banks of the Volga River.

Relation of Catherine to the Germans

Catherine, who was responsible for bringing the Germans to Russia, was a German princess from the House of Anhalt-Zerbst and had been born in Stettin, Germany. Since she was a German, she was especially anxious to win Germans for her colonization program in Russia.

Many thousands of copies of Catherine's proclamation were sent into her homeland. The first Germans left Germany for Russia in April, 1763.¹⁰ At first only small

10. Ballensky, J. J., op. cit., p. 5.

numbers could be enticed to leave their homeland for the new country. This was largely the fault of Russian Government agents, who were dishonest in their dealings with the immigrants.¹¹

In order to expedite the movement, a new plan was tried in 1765. A number of French agents were employed who were to try to secure immigrants in large numbers. Contracts were made between the Russian Government and these agents. A copy of one of these contracts between the Government and a certain Baron Canean de Beauregard shows that Beauregard agreed to secure 3,000 colonists, for which the Government promised to supply him sufficient land and enough money for their transportation as well as for getting the colonists settled in their new home in Russia.¹² The commission of the agent was to consist not of cash, but rather of rentals, which the colonists were to pay over a number of years. He was also guaranteed the hunting and fishing privileges in the specific territory in Russia to be colonized. A copy of a contract between one of these agents and the colonists is also on record, at least in part.¹³ In this contract the colonists promised to pay to the "Director" Precourt one-tenth of all the field-harvest, which they might harvest for an unspecified number of years in their new home; that they will give him first choice of anything they

11. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 18.

12. Ibid. p. 18.

13. Beratz, Gottlieb, op. cit. pp. 40 - 43.

might have to sell, so long as he is willing to pay the market price; that within a period of ten years, they will repay all loans made to them by the agent. They also promise to "behave well during the transport, to keep clean as much as possible, not to eat raw fruit, not to become intoxicated, and not to leave the ship."¹⁴

Each agent employed a large number of sub-agents whose duty it was to secure the desired quota of colonists as quickly as possible. Some of these agents later became officials in the new villages. Most of them, however, were more or less undesirable characters, who had come in conflict if not with the civil law, at least with the military laws of their respective home lands. Among them were quite a number of deserters from the army.¹⁵ In addition to these private agents the Russian Government agents also continued to secure colonists.

The effect of this double program was, of course, soon to be felt. Soon there were in the neighborhood of 25,000 Germans who were ready to leave their homeland for Russia.¹⁶

The Proclamation of 1763

The most important of Catherine's decrees, was that of July 26, 1763. The following translation from the German is based on the text presented by Bauer.

14. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, Op. cit., p. 20

15. Ibid. p. 21.

16. Ibid. p. 23.

Imperial Manifesto of July 26, (!) 1763

"By the Grace of God,
"We, Catherine The Second, Empress and Autocrat of all
Russians.

Since it is known to us that our Empire possesses vast stretches of land which still lie unused, and since it is also known to us that these lands could profitably be used as habitations for the human race; since most of them possess an almost inexhaustible supply of valuable ore and metals, are well supplied with timber, possess rivers, seas, and oceans suitable for the development of industries, factories and other projects as well as for the promotion of commerce; therefore all this has caused us to proclaim the Manifest, so advantageous to all our faithful subjects, which was issued the fourth of December of the past year, 1762. However, in that Proclamation we gave only a summary of the advantages which we have to offer to those foreigners who might wish to find a new home in our Empire. For this reason We command that the following Decree, the details of which are herewith given, be given wide publicity for the purpose of informing those more fully, who might wish to migrate to this country, and that the stipulations of the same be faithfully executed.

1. We permit all foreigners to come into our Empire to find a new home in whatever Government they might so desire.
2. Such foreigners may announce themselves after their arrival in Russia at their own convenience, not only in the Government Office located in the Capitol and opened especially for foreigners, but also in the specified bordertowns of our Empire, either at designated governors or in the absence of these, at the highest municipal authorities.
3. If, among those foreigners who desire to settle in Russia, there should be some who do not have sufficient means for transportation, they are to announce themselves to our ministers or ambassadors at the foreign courts, who shall not only transport them to Russia without delay, but also supply them with the money necessary for such transportation.
4. As soon as such foreigners shall have arrived in our Capital and shall have announced such arrival at the Government office, or in a specified border-town, they shall be required to disclose their true intentions, as to what vocation they wish to follow, whether they desire to become merchants or to follow some other crafts,

and whether they wish to become citizens and of which town; or if they desire to organize whole colonies on free and fertile soil and pursue agriculture and other useful trades. Specific locations shall be assigned to them according to their wish and desire as soon as we shall have perceived from the available records in which parts of our Empire there are lands suitable for locating and establishing homes; in addition to the before-mentioned lands there are many more vast territories and locations from which also selection can be made according to the needs of the individual.

5. Immediately at the arrival in our Empire of a foreigner, who wishes to settle and establish a home and who has announced such intentions either at the specified Government Offices or in the border-towns of our Empire, such a one should, as specified in paragraph four, disclose his true intentions and then take the Oath of Allegiance according to the rites of his religion.

6. In order to indicate the full extent of our goodwill in the interests and advantages of those who wish to establish themselves in our Empire, we proclaim the following to be our pleasure.

(1). We grant all foreigners coming to our Empire full freedom in the practice of their religion according to their own church laws and usages: those who do not wish to live in cities, but rather in colonies in hitherto uninhabited territories we grant full freedom to build churches and bell-towers and to engage the necessary number of priests and church workers; however, they shall not be permitted to build monasteries. Everyone is warned herewith under threat of punishment of the full extent of the law to refrain absolutely and under all conditions from attempting to influence any Christian fellow-believer living in Russia to consent to or accept his faith and join his congregation. All nations bordering on our Empire belonging to the Mohammedan faith shall be excluded from this decree; We not only permit that proper attempts be made to win these for the Christian faith, but also we permit everyone to subject these people.

(2). No one coming to Russia to find a new home shall be required to make contributions to the treasury of the Empire; neither shall they be required to quarter soldiers in their homes, in other words, every one shall be free from all taxes and assessments according to the following regulations; those who in large numbers of families or in whole colonies settle in hitherto uninhabited territories shall be free for a period of thirty years; those settling in cities and registering either in merchant-crafts or trade-unions, or those desiring to live in the Capital St. Petersburg or in one of the neighboring cities in Livland, Estland, Ingermanland, Carelen and Finland, or in the Capital Moscow, shall be free for a period of five

years; those living in any of the other Government - Province- of any other cities shall be free for a period of 10 years. In addition to this every one coming to Russia, not only for a short period, but actually to establish a new home, shall receive free lodging for half a year.

(3). Every possible provision shall be made and at all time helping hands shall be extended to all foreigners who desire to establish a new home in Russia, whether they desire to become farmers and hand-laborers, or whether they desire to erect factories and develop manufacturing or other projects; not only shall they be given sufficient good land to satisfy the needs of every individual, but they shall also be extended the necessary credit for the erection of factories and the development of new projects, from which Russia may hope to gain future benefits, especially those hitherto unknown in Russia.

(4). Everyone shall be loaned enough money without interest out of our treasury for the purpose of building houses, for purchasing various necessary kinds of domestic animals, and for the purchase of instruments, implements, and materials necessary for the development of agriculture and crafts. The capital thus loaned shall be repaid without interest within ten years in three equal installments falling due at the end of every three-year period.

(5). The jurisdiction of colonial government shall be left entirely to the opinion of the individual (whole) colonies to the extent that the governmental authorities appointed by us shall in no wise interfere in the arrangement of the local government in the colonies. However, further than this the colonists are required to submit to our Civil Government. Should they even desire to procure from us a special person as guardian of their rights and their security, who should protect them with a guard of soldiers until such a time when they become better acquainted with their neighbors, then even this request shall be granted.

(6). Every foreigner desiring to find a new home in Russia shall be permitted to import his property duty-free, no matter what this property may consist of, however, with this reservation that this property be for one's own use and need and not for the purpose of sale. Whosoever should bring goods, in addition to his own needs, for the purpose of selling, him we permit duty-free importation of goods to the extent of 300 rubles, again however, only in case such a person remains in Russia for a period of at least ten years; failing to do this such a one will be required on the journey back to pay duty both for the goods brought into Russia as well as the goods taken out of Russia.

(7). Foreigners settling in Russia shall not during the whole time of their stay in Russia, be forced to perform military or civil service against their will, except for the usual land-service; even the performance of this land-service shall not be demanded from anyone

until the before-mentioned free years have passed. Should anyone desire to enlist in the military service of his own free will, he shall be given 30 rubles money at the time of his enlistment in the regiment in addition to his regular wages.

(8). As soon as foreigners have reported to the Government offices established for their benefit or to one of our border-towns, and have declared their intentions of traveling into the interior of the country and there to establish homes, they shall be given board-money as well as free transportation to their destination.

(9). Those foreigners who have established themselves in Russia and have erected factories and developed manufactories and other projects, in which goods are manufactured hitherto not found in Russia, shall be granted freedom from any and every duty, for a period of ten years, whether it be for exporting goods to other countries.

(10). Foreign capitalists, who shall build factories and develop other projects, shall be permitted to purchase serfs and peasants necessary for the development of such factories and projects.

(11). We also permit those foreigners who shall settle in colonies and villages to hold market-days and annual fairs according to their own needs and desires, without being required to pay any duty or taxes whatsoever.

7. All the before-mentioned arrangements and advantages shall be enjoyed not only by those who have migrated to our Empire, but also by their children and descendants, even if they are born in Russia, to the effect that their free years shall be computed from the day of arrival of their forefathers in Russia.

8. At the expiration of the before-mentioned free years, all foreigners who have settled in Russia shall be required to pay the usual tax, which does not work a hardship on anyone, and to perform the land-service, the same as our other subjects.

9. Finally and in conclusion, if any of those foreigners who have settled in our Empire and who have subjected themselves under our dominion, would wish to leave our country, we will grant them permission to do so with this provision, that such a one shall be obliged to pay a part of his well-earned wealth which he has accumulated in our Empire to our treasury according to the following schedule; If he has resided in our Empire for five years or more, he shall pay a tenth; after this time everyone can travel without hindrance wherever he wishes.

10. Should there be foreigners desiring to settle in Russia for other reasons than the before-mentioned and who would like to secure other conditions and privileges, they are to make application to our Government Office established especially for foreigners, which office then shall re-

port to us in detail either in person or by letter, in which case we will not hesitate to grant even more favorable conditions according to circumstances. Of this everyone can be assured because of our love of justice."

Issued at Peterhof in the year 1763, July 26, (!) in the second year of our reign.

The original has been signed by Her Majesty's own hand in the following manner:

Katherina.

Printed by the Senate, July 25, 1763.¹⁷

This decree is actually the beginning of the history of the Volga colonies, although it does not indicate any particular territory or province in Russia as the territory for colonization,¹⁸ it "gives permission to all foreigners, who might emigrate to Russia, to find a new home in whatever Government they desire to do so." The decree promised the newcomer that he might follow whatever vocation or profession he desired. Naturally these liberal promises opened the way for undesirable elements. However, Catherine's first and chief concern was a large number of newcomers, quantity rather than quality. Further promises indicated that her chief aim was to entice peasants to come to Russia. Poverty was to be no hindrance. Free transportation was to be provided. Upon arrival in Russia¹⁹ the colonists were to be shown a "register of lands suit-

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17. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., pp. 7-11.
In Russian in Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii No. 11880, pp. 313-316. Date given as July 22, 1763.
 18. Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii XVI. Nr. 11880, p. 22.
 19. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 15.

able for farming." Naturally these were directed to that territory where the Government wished to place them. The only promise extracted was an oath of allegiance to the Russian Government.

Paragraph six of the manifest was the most important, as it contained the promises made by the Government to the newcomer. The most important of these promises was absolute freedom of religion for those who organized new villages. They were to be given the right to build their own churches and bell-towers, to call pastors, and to elect their own church officers. They were forbidden to found monasteries and to do mission work among those of the Russian orthodox faith. However, mission work among the Mohammedans was encouraged.

The Colonists were to be absolutely free from taxation for varying periods of time. A difference was made between those finding their new homes in the city and those who were peasants. The city dweller was to be free for 30 years. Free living quarters were to be provided for six months. Interest-free loans were to be made for periods of 10 years. If necessary, they were to be provided with military protection. No duty was to be paid for goods and valuables in the amount of \$300 brought along from the homeland, provided the colonist promised to remain in Russia for at least 10 years. He was free from military and civil service for all time. Very special privileges were extended to those who would manufacture goods not

found in Russia up to that time, which were to be free from export duty for 10 years.

Catherine Plans to Colonize the Volga Territory

It was Catherine's desire to unify Russia, an objective which could be realized only by conquering the roving Tartar, Bashkir, and Kirghiz nomads in the territory between Kazan and Astrakhan along the Volga. These could be conquered only by increasing the population in this thinly settled territory. It was therefore logical to direct the newcomers to this location. In fact, an invitation of a somewhat later date mentions only this location.²⁰

Catherine's program was to especially invite German peasants to organize German villages along the Volga. Not only were they to increase the population, but at the same time they were to act as carriers of German culture, whose duty it would be to develop the steppes along the Volga into fruitful farm lands and at the same time to introduce advanced methods of farming to the Russian peasants. It was also hoped that, by developing commerce along the Volga, business relations with Persia might be established.²¹

Thus the colonist is found settling on both banks of the Volga River in the Provinces of Saratow and Samara.

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20. Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii V., 16, St Petersburg, 1830, Law No. 12098, pp. 648-55.
Also, Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 16.
21. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 16.

The Province of Samara, located on the east banks of the Volga, was soon called the "Wiesen-seite," the "plains-side," so called after the great plains to be found there. The Province of Saratow, located on the west side of the Volga, was called the "Berg-seite," "hill-side," after the hills to be found on that side. Saratow, the industrial center of this district, had about 10,000 inhabitants in 1765.²²

It was one of the major accomplishments of Catherine the Second that she conquered these roving Tartar, Bashkir, and Kirghiz nomads in the territory between Kazan and Astrakhan, thus unifying Russia and that she did it with the help of the German immigrants.

22. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 30.

CHAPTER III

THE GERMANS RESPOND TO CATHERINE'S INVITATION

German interest in Catherine's Proclamation

Catherine had wisely appealed to the Germans because Germany, especially the central and southern provinces, were suffering from the effects of the French Wars of the eighteenth century and particularly the Seven Years' War. There was much unemployment and the poorer classes especially were suffering greatly. The kings and nobles of the various provinces did little or nothing to relieve the situation; in fact, some of them were glad to get rid of at least a part of the poverty-stricken population. Others, however, became alarmed when so many thousands wanted to leave the homeland. Decrees forbidding emigration were issued on February 27, 1764; others followed on April 21, 1765. Prussia finally issued a prohibitory decree on May 1, 1766.¹

As long as only individual provinces forbade the emigration of their subjects, the movement continued almost uninterruptedly, as it was easy to escape to a neighboring province and leave from there. Only after the German Emperor issued a prohibitory decree was the movement slowed up considerably. This was done by Joseph the Second in

1. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 23-4.

1768. By this time, however, the Russian agents had secured so many colonists that not enough ships were available to transport them to Russia. Colonists arrived by the thousands, all seeking land.

The activity of the Russian agents continued until about 1767. A few of them remained in Germany, and as late as 1784, we read of a group of Germans leaving the Palatinate for Russia.

The Germans were much interested in improving their economic status. Little wonder that they were attracted and soon convinced by the glowing accounts of the wonderful opportunities which Russia offered them. They were told "the Volga provinces are like those of the upper Rhine. The climate is mild; the soil is very fertile; the new land is a veritable paradise, rich in vineyards, grain, honey, wood, and streams filled with fish."²

Sources of Migrants

Thus we find groups gathering in every part of Germany, making ready for the departure. Church records show that the colonists came chiefly from central Germany, while a few came from the southern provinces. They came from the provinces of Hessa, Hanau, Isenberg, the Rhineland, Westfalia, Wuerttembery, Baden, Bavaria, Bohemia, Tyrol,

2. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 26.

Alsace, Lorraine, Saxony, Anhalt, Silesia, East Prussia,³ Hannover, Mecklenburg, the Palatinate, from Austria, and a few from Danzig. There was also a scattering of Danes, Swedes, Dutch, English, French, Swiss, and Italians.⁴ Very likely these were people who had made their homes in Germany and then emigrated to Russia with the other Colonists.⁵ As late as 1919, the Hessian dialect was used extensively in the colonies; thus it is probable that the largest number of the colonists came from the province of Hesse.

Volume of Migrants

The exact number of those who emigrated cannot be given. Various estimates are to be found. Waeschke, on the basis of records found in old church registers and on the basis of reports of Commissioner von Kotzer, estimates that from May, 1765, to the fall of 1766 more than 4,000 persons passed through Rosslau, Germany, on the journey to Luebeck. This is considered a very conservative estimate. Large numbers left Germany from Hamburg, others from ports in Holland. According to Bauer, the last large group of colonists from Germany came into the Volga territory in the year 1768. More than 8,000

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3. Bassler, Theodor, Das Deutschtum in Russland, der Kampf um das Deutschtum, 12 Heft, Muenchen, 1911, p.17.
 4. Lane, Adolph, op. cit., p. 7.
 5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 41.

families numbering more than 27,000 persons migrated to
 6
 Russia from 1763 to 1776.

Period of Migration

The greatest volume of migration to Russia continued
 7
 from the year 1763 to 1776. Rosslau on the Elba was the
 chief gathering place for the migrants, the first ones
 8
 arriving there April 8, 1764. From Rosslau they were
 taken to Luebeck, from which port most of the colonists
 9
 left Germany for Russia. Bauer says that the first colo-
 nists left Luebeck on May 23, 1764, and arrived in the
 Volga district on June 24, 1765, at the place where
 10
 Katharinenstadt is now located.

Character of Migrants

The migrating groups became the terror of the prov-
 inces in Germany through which they journeyed. Tired and
 hungry as they were from the day's journey, they would buy
 all the food available. Disorder, quarrelling, and fight-
 ing ensued, and the noisiest and most forward invariably
 11
 won out. Little wonder that many left the ranks of the
 wayfarers before they reached the ports, realizing that
 the majority came from the lowest strata of society.

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6. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 21.
 7. Ibid., p. 21.
 8. Ibid., p. 23.
 9. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 17.
 10. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 23.
 11. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 27.

"Tramps and vagrants who sought better luck in a new country, having been cast out from their own fatherland; impoverished peasants; degraded noblemen; craftsmen and merchants, who had lost everything; prostitutes; escaped and paroled convicts; musicians; deserted soldiers; in short, shipwrecked humanity of every class for whom the homeland no longer offered protection; idlers who believed the promised land to be a paradise, where one might live well without work," such is the description of the colonists given by Christian Gottlieb Zuege in his book, Der Russische Kolonist oder Christian Gottlieb Zueges Leben in Russland, (Zeitz and Naumberg, 1802).¹² Busch writes, "It was not always the best and the most industrious who left Germany for Russia, but rather those who wanted to escape work and were bound for adventure."¹³

Not all the writers agree that the colonists were of the less desirable elements, but some contend rather that they were average citizens from the various walks of life.

Administration of Migration

The passage from Germany to Russia often lasted a number of weeks, and extreme difficulties were encountered on the journey.¹⁴ Provisions which should have been pro-

12. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 28, quoted from Zuege, Der russische kolonist.

13. Busch, E. H. Materialien zur Geschichte und Statistik des Kirchen und Schulwesens der Evangelisch Lutherischen Gemeinden in Russland. St. Petersburg, 1862, p. 303.

14. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 17.

vided the passengers free of charge were sold to them at exorbitant prices. The most common wants of life, even drinking water, were at a premium. Most of the time the bread was spoiled beyond use. All this was in spite of the fact that the colonists had been promised "bread, Zwieback, pickled meat, wine, and French whiskey."¹⁵ Conditions became more bearable after they arrived in Kronstadt, since Catherine herself now took charge of the colonists. They were quartered in barracks in Oranienbaum near Kronstadt, where she visited them personally. The colonists swore allegiance to Catherine in the Lutheran church near Kronstadt. Here they also made their first acquaintance with the Russians.

All colonists were required to pass through St. Petersburg. Records indicate that some of the first settlers, a group of watchmakers, settled in St. Petersburg in the first weeks of 1764. It seems that a few of the more wealthy colonists were permitted to remain there. Peterhof, Zaraskoje Sello, and Gatschinia, were some of the German settlements near Petersburg founded at this time.¹⁶

Many weeks passed before the colonists were finally permitted to continue their journey. This delay was due primarily to the lack of money. However, after a while money was again made available and they were supplied with adequate clothing and were moved into the interior, but

15. Beratz, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 45.

16. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 29.

only very slowly. Again they were exploited by the leaders. They arrived at their destination after winter had already set in. The Volga river was frozen; the steppes were snowbound. The first winter was spent in Russian villages. The colonists had been invited by Catherine to become "bearers of culture" in Russia; thus we find them "acting as lords,"¹⁷ thereby soon incurring the disfavor of their Russian hosts. Living as they did in the Russian villages, they learned a smattering of Russian. Spring found them on their way again. After many months of extreme hardships, they arrived in Saratow, the center of the colonization program.

There are no indications that the colonists settled in villages in the Volga territory according to the provinces from which they had come in Germany.

17. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 21.

PART II.

THE GERMANS ALONG THE VOLGA

CHAPTER IV

YEARS OF HARDSHIP

All Must Become Farmers

A colonization bureau for foreigners, with its chief function the finding of permanent homes for the newcomers, was established in Saratow. The chairman of this Bureau was a Russian but other officers were German.

Some of the more wealthy colonists were permitted to remain in Saratow and were assisted in building factories. Records indicate that among the 137 Germans remaining in Saratow in 1769, only 78 were men.¹ Many more would have remained had they been permitted to do so. One of the promises of Catherine had been that the colonists might live anywhere in Russia and might follow their own vocations, but great was their disappointment when they were informed that they would have to farm or perish. Many of the colonists had expected to be teachers, since they were to be "bearers of culture". Little had they expected to do manual labor.² According to the report of Count Orlov to Catherine in 1769, only 579 of 6,433 families³ could farm or had the desire to become farmers. But farm they must, as there was no other way of making a living;

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1. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 31.
 2. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 304.
 3. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 37.

neither would the Government assist them unless they did so. If we consider the type of immigrant, the fact that many of them had been failures in their homeland--vagrants who feared the hardships awaiting them on the steppes--we can well understand why they did not become successful farmers, especially since they were not acquainted with the climate or with soil conditions.

Despite this disappointment, most of the colonists left Saratow with high hopes and great expectations. Each family had received two horses, one cow, one Russian hookplow, one wagon, a harrow, an axe, a spade, an augur, seed for the first planting, and 150 rubles from the Russian Government.⁴ The Government was to be paid back within 10 years.

Provisions Made by the Russian Government

The colonists had been assured that everything had been prepared for them on the steppes, the land laid out, and houses built. The fact was that the Government had actually planned all these things, but only on blue-prints. The Manifest of March 18, 1764, had decreed that the district be divided into plots comprising an area of not more than 70 and not less than 60 "Verst" (Verst equals .6629 miles) square. One thousand families were to live in each district. Colonists of different faiths were to live in different districts. Each family was to receive a plot of ground of 30 "dessiatine" (1 D equals 2.7 acres) 15 d. 4. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 43.

were to be plow-land, 5 d., hay-land, 5 d., woods and meadows, and 5 d. farm-yard, threshing place, garden, and pasture. The colonists were not to receive a deed to this land, but rather it was to be held on a rental basis, "Erbleihe." After the death of a father the land was to be turned over to his youngest son. The oldest son was to learn some sort of a craft. In case the youngest son was still a minor, one of the older brothers was to act as guardian. In case he was unable to take over the property, the father was to appoint one of the other sons as heir. The heir was to support the mother until the time of her death and the sisters until the time of their marriage. The personal property was to be disposed of according to the will of the father. In case he had left no will, one-fourth of the property belonged to the mother one-fourth to the daughters, and one-half to the sons. However, the colonists soon disregarded these various stipulations.

Thus, in the actual sense of the word the colonists could not own real estate. They could, during their lifetime, live on a certain piece of land, but they could not sell this land, and after the death of the father, the property, automatically passed on to the next lessee. The property could not be mortgaged. In case a family should move out of the parish, all rights to the land would be lost, which then would again become the property of the whole congregation. The congregation was to have the

ultimate decision over all the land. This was actually the principle of the Russian "mir" applied to colonial conditions; no private holding of property but only common ownership.⁵ The principle of re-distribution at the end of a certain term of years was later adopted and applied.

Each village was to receive land for the erection of a church, a school, factories, and other necessary buildings. Rivers, lakes, swamps, sandpits, quarries, etc., were to be common property.

The afore-mentioned manifest also provided for village government, the various officers to be elected by the people of the village but ratified by the Russian Government.

Many thousands of rubles had been spent by the Russian government in St. Petersburg to prepare for the arrival of the colonists, but very little had actually been accomplished with the money spent. Graft had been practiced by too many petty officers. There seemed always to be a shortage of funds.

Thus it was little wonder that when the colonists finally arrived very few preparations had actually been made, and in many places none at all.

Suffering and Hardships because of Inadequate Preparation

One can only indicate the sufferings and hardships through which the colonists passed during the first years

5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 32.

in Russia. Strangers in a strange land, they were stranded on the steppes of inner Russia.

Zuege, in his "Der russische Kolonist", writes:
 "Terrified, we looked at each other, realizing only slowly that we were stranded on limitless plains, covered only with dry grass about 9 inches tall."⁶

They were assured that the houses, which were to have already been built for them, had been let out to contractors and would soon be built. The fact, however, was that materials had been provided for only 250 houses. There were 1,516 families on the way to Saratow for whom no houses had been provided. Supplies for these houses were not contracted for until the spring of 1786. These building materials did not arrive until a year after the colonists had arrived. Thus the colonists had to help themselves as well as they could, living in tents, adobe huts, and crudely built houses of unfinished logs. Their plight became serious with the arrival of the next winter. To protect themselves against the intense cold, they actually dug caves in the ground, where two or three families huddled together under conditions that could hardly be called civilized. Fried fish was almost their only food that first winter.

The colonists in all the villages suffered severely from ill health. They were not accustomed to the severe

6. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit. p. 33. Quoted from: Zuege, Der russische Kolonist.

climate of inner Russia. Living quarters offered little protection against the cold. Drinking water was very bad and typhoid developed. There was little understanding of disease. Medical attention was at a minimum. Many of the colonists were not accustomed to the strenuous work. Thus disease took many lives during those first years. Not only was the number of colonists decimated, but also the number of cattle was greatly decreased.

In a few isolated instances the Government had actually completed the dwelling places before the arrival of the colonists. These were purchased or leased by the wealthier colonists under the aforementioned arrangements. Despite the fact that the manifest had guaranteed the newcomers freedom from taxation, these colonists were required to pay a heavy tax on the properties thus purchased. This tax was later remitted when the colonists appealed to headquarters in Petersburg.

A number of colonists had been brought to Russia through the solicitation of private agents, especially French agents. The plight of these colonists was even more deplorable than that of those who were brought in by Russian agents. The contracting agent would reserve the best portions of land for himself. Much of the money designated to help the colonists become established was pocketed by the agents. One of them, Hogel, received enough money to purchase oxen for the colonists, but they were never purchased. Another agent, Picted, had received

3,200 rubles from the Government to build stone houses for the colonists; two houses were built.

There was no thought of engaging ministers, school teachers, doctors or nurses.⁷

The individual colonists were not assigned definite plots of ground, thus serious quarrels with the neighbors resulted. One of the agents, de Boffe, went so far in 1768 as to demand one-tenth of the crop as well as of the poultry and cattle raised.

On December 23, 1769, the colonists sent a committee to the Saratow Bureau to protest against these exploitations. Even these protests had little effect.⁸

Crop Failures.

There was some slight consolation in the discovery that the soil seemed to be rich and well adapted to raising good crops. But what did these craftsmen, artists, merchants, scholars, and vagrants know about farming? Most of them had spent the 150 rubles given to them by the Government for the purchase of farm implements. Even if some still had two oxen, how could anyone begin farming with two oxen?

Crop failures were not uncommon in the colonies. During the first few years these failures could be ascribed to the fact that the colonists did not understand soil and climatic conditions. The seed was sown either too early or too late.⁹ Later on there were ever-recurring

7. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 36

8. Ibid. p. 36.

9. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 40.

crop failures due to dry seasons.

Natural enemies during the first years included great flocks of wild geese. The field-mouse, "Zieselmaus," also did very great damage. Even as late as 1815 to 1820, each family was required by law to deliver a certain number of tails of the mice to the authorities in each village. Failure to do so was punishable by fine. Crop failures due to grasshoppers are reported for a number of years. Complete crop failures seldom occurred.

In most villages sufficient grain was stored during years of plenty to carry the villagers through at least one year, and often two or three years, of crop failures. Each family was required by law to contribute a proportionate amount of grain. It was during years of scarcity that grain speculators took advantage of the less fortunate colonists.

Warfare with Russian Neighbors.

The greatest danger to the newcomers were the Asiatic hordes along the Volga. The least dangerous of these were the Kalmucks. They were satisfied to steal cattle and rob lonely wayfarers when the chance presented itself. Much more dangerous were the Kirghiz and Bachkirs. The villages on the "plains-side," "Wiensenseite", of the Volga suffered especially from their attacks. Whole villages were plundered and the inhabitants taken away and sold as slaves or killed. This was the plight of the vil-

lage Marienthal in 1776. The minister, Wernbacher, and 150 men from the village of Katharinenstadt tried to rescue their neighbors, but all were murdered in a most brutal manner.¹⁰ Women and girls suffered a most pitiful fate. A number of the villages attempted to protect themselves by building fortifications. The village of Sarepta¹¹ had to suffer much from the attacks of the Kalmucks.¹¹ Later this village received a small garrison and a few guns for protection. So the colonists lived in villages along the banks of the Volga, and the villages were built together as closely as possible. This fact later greatly influenced the economic welfare of the colonies. The field work could be done only by groups of men, five to ten in a group, in order to protect the cattle, horses, implements, and themselves against attacks of the marauders.

Villages along the "hill-side", "Bergseite", suffered less. Bauer reports that over a period of 18 years 9,400¹² horses were stolen from the German villages.

It is interesting to note that these plunderers considered their activities as perfectly legitimate. Thus "before they would break into a village they would bless themselves with the sign of the cross and call upon God

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10. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 39.
 11. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 45.
 12. Ibid., p. 45.

for His protection and blessings. They would also bless the plunder and thank God for their success."¹³

Such conditions were permitted to continue as late¹⁴ as 1840, only slowly becoming more settled. Permanent relief came only when a number of villages were built along the Ural River, which were guarded by a sufficient number of Cossacks.

It is little wonder that various groups of colonists from time to time attempted to return to Germany. Before leaving they had been promised that they would be permitted to return to Germany in case they did not like conditions in Russia or could not stand the climate. They did, however, decide to remain until all provisions had been¹⁵ used. A group of 18 people led by Gaertner and Streng tried to return to Germany from Katharinenstadt. All were murdered by their guides, who really were a band of robbers. For many years it was believed that these 18 had succeeded in returning to Germany. Forty more families from various colonies, under the leadership of Geyer and Buege, attempted to return to the homeland but were forced¹⁶ back by the Cossacks.

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- 13. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 39, quoted from Cataneo, Johann Baptista, Keine Reise durch Deutschland und Russland, Chur 1787, p. 123.
 - 14. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 15.
 - 15. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 17
 - 16. Ibid. p. 17.

CHAPTER 5

THE TRANSFORMATION OF STEPPES ALONG VOLGA.

The Adoption of Strip-Farming

From the first a number of colonies suffered from scarcity of land. We have noted that the villages were concentrated as closely along the river as possible, in order to protect the colonists against the marauding Asiatic hordes. Thus, for a number of years, there was little planning and much confusion in the farming of the land. Some villages had more land than they could possibly take care of; others did not have enough to provide even a low standard of living, and so a number of villages were brought to the verge of ruin. Two villages Caesarsfeld and Chaisol, both located on the "plains-side" were actually vacated.^I Thus the original plan was discontinued and the method of "strip-farming" adopted. Each family received a narrow strip of land running east and west from the Volga as far as 50 kilometers back into the steppes. One can readily understand how this method made farming much more difficult. Since the colonists lived in the villages, field work necessitated their driving many miles to reach their farm land.

Government Control

In Saratow the colonists had promised to repay their

1. Erdmann, Johann Friedrich, Beitraege zur Kenntniss des Inneren von Russland. 2. Teil, Leipzig, 1825. p. 282.

loans after a 10 year period. However, even the most successful villages were in no position to repay these loans after so short a time. To avoid bringing about utter ruin, the Immigration Bureau in Saratow extended these loans for another 10 year period. In fact, additional loans were granted to replace cattle that had died or had been stolen, and implements and other necessities that had been destroyed or stolen. In 1782 this Bureau in Saratow was discontinued and a form of District Government inaugurated. This arrangement was not nearly so successful, as the officers of the District Government were not so well acquainted with the conditions of the German colonists. Henceforth the German colonies were treated like Russian peasant villages.² An "Economy Directory" was established in Saratow which had absolute control over the German-Russian villages. Every marriage engagement, every birth, and every death had to be reported to this office. A complete report had to be made of every acre under cultivation, of the seeds sowed and the crops harvested, of the number of swine and cattle in the villages. In fact, complete reports had to be given to this Directory of all conditions in the villages. A veritable spy system was introduced, resulting in much jealous bickering and quarrelling among the villagers. This system also resulted in developing a spirit of dependency. The colonists were afraid to undertake anything without first consulting with the elders, "Vorsteher," who in turn would consult the

2. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 43.

Directory in Saratow.

Successful Methods.

Despite all hardship endured, comparatively successful colonies finally developed. The success achieved was due largely, of course, to the fertile virgin soil, but very largely also to the determination and industry of the colonists, who realized that they could survive only through effort and determination. However, here again, at least in a number of instances, the German "Wanderlust" asserted itself; and a number of the colonists took up the journey to the Black Sea. Records indicate that they were overtaken by a tribe of Tartars and every one killed.

Slowly conditions in the villages along the Volga became settled and stabilized. Although there was very little growth from immigration after 1776, yet the number of colonists grew very rapidly due to the high birth-rate, so that by 1769 there were 23,109 Germans in the Volga colonies. However, while the individual families grew very rapidly in size the number of families decreased. Thus in 1769 there were 8,000 families with 23,109 persons; by 1775 there were only 5,500 families, while the number of persons remained almost the same. Throughout the history of the colonies, the families were very prolific.

A total of 104 colonies were founded, 52 on each side of the Volga. (See Fig. 2).

The Immigration Bureau in Saratow had for a long time succeeded very well in keeping the Central Government in



- German village
- ◎ German county seat

Capitals of colonies are underlined:
 Saratow - "Hillside" colonies
 Pokronusk - "Plainside" colonies

Source: Geographisch-Administrative Karte des Autonomen
Gebietes des Wolgadeutschen. Pokrowsk (Kosakenstadt a/Woiga),
Druklichungsdruck: Berliner Lithographisches Institut, Berlin W. 35

St. Petersburg ignorant of the actual state of affairs in the Volga colonies. After unsuccessful attempts at reform of conditions in the colonies by Count Orlov, a thoroughgoing reform was undertaken by Senator Gablitz. He reopened the Immigration Bureau at Saratow in 1797. This Commission now consisted of a chief judge appointed by the Czar, two "Beisitzer," assistants, a secretary, two doctors, a bookkeeper, and a surveyor. The appointment of all these members was to be ratified by the Government Minister in St. Petersburg. It was the duty of this Commission to supervise all phases of life of the colonists along the Volga, except criminal matters and differences between the German colonists and their Russian neighbors. This Commission was quite successful until 1866, when its duties were limited to matters pertaining to school and church. Eleven years later, in 1877, the Bureau was again discontinued.³

During its existence the Bureau for Immigrants in Saratow cooperated with the church councils of the various villages. With the re-establishment of this Bureau the steady development of the Volga colonies was assured, at least for some years to come.

The colonists soon learned to know soil and climatic conditions, and slowly but surely the villages began to prosper. Well they could, because they were cut off from

3. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 49.

the rest of the world. They had little contact with Germany; they knew little and cared less about what was going on in the world around them. All they asked was to be unmolested by their Russian neighbors.

Adoption of Russian "Mir".

However, before the economic program could be developed to its fullest extent radical changes had to be undertaken. Chief among these changes was the adoption of the Russian "mir" system. Henceforth the congregation was no longer the sole owner of land in the colonies, but rather the land was re-distributed to the various households about every 10 years. One of the reasons for this change was to equalize the burden of taxation.

Another reason for the adoption of the Russian system was the fast-growing population. Individual families grew so rapidly that it became absolutely necessary to apportion more land to them in order to safeguard their economic independence. Difference in soil conditions and location made a permanent distribution of land unadvisable. Thus, in order to avoid widespread dissatisfaction and to take into account the future growth of population, this system was adopted.

It is impossible to establish the exact year in which this change was made. Bonwetsch states that the change was made no later than 1800, very likely considerably earlier.

The first distribution was made on the basis of the

number of households in the villages. In 1813 this system was changed. Up to 1813 taxes had been levied and apportioned by the Government according to heads or laborers in the families. The villages were taxed according to the number of laborers. The congregation in the village, however, redistributed these taxes according to the number of "Revisionsseelen," "revision-souls". This was a head tax based on the number of adult males in the colony at the time of a revision or re-distribution. This request can be understood only if we suppose that the returns of the "dessaitins" depended largely upon the number of available laborers. The disadvantages of this system soon became evident. In order to secure and hold as many laborers as possible, every effort was made to discourage the formation of new families. Grown sons who married remained in the "Great Family", thereby strengthening the labor unit. Households with only one or two laborers were at a great disadvantage, as it was almost impossible to hire outside help. Naturally, when the next revision was undertaken the families with many workers needed more land. Thus in 1816 the "soul-land-system" was adopted. All land belonging to the colony was divided into three parts: good, medium, and poor. Every male in the colony received a share of each kind of land. Thus the large family also received a larger share of land. This, of course, was conducive to the formation of large families. It had a direct influence on the increase in the number of children. Num-

bers of children in the family meant more land for the family.

This system was also conducive to the strengthening of the patriarchal family system which is so characteristic of the German-Russians. Grown, middle-aged men with families of their own remained in the household of the father or even of the grandfather. The father was the only one who had the right to represent the household. His authority was supreme in the family. The plan of the Government, that the elder sons should follow some trade besides farming, was of course, brought to naught by this system.

This plan was not adopted unanimously by all the colonies. As late as 1830 there were colonies which had not adopted it.

In those colonies where the system was adopted the number of "dessaitins" per capita had to be reduced in proportion to the growth in population. Originally 30 "dessaitins" had been apportioned to each "revision soul." By 1793 the number had been reduced to 20 and by 1810 even to 15.

Some of the colonies undertook a revision every six years, others every 10 years.

The disadvantages of the "mir" are evident. No attention was paid by anyone to soil conservation. Why should anyone fertilize the soil, if next year or the year after someone else would have the advantage there-
4. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 52.

from. Thus everyone exploited the natural resources as fully as possible. It was this system which retarded the development of the colonists as well as that of the colonies and which has helped develop such an extreme opposition in the German-Russians against all things new and against all advancement. The colonists were reluctant to accept innovations in agricultural methods. They were forced to progress only through crop failures.⁵ Thus the inefficient Russian plow, the "socha," was used for many years.

Another deplorable situation which resulted from the adoption of the "mir" must be mentioned. Each male received his share of the three grades of land, and since these shares were determined by chance they were usually located in widely scattered sections, very often at a considerable distance from the village. Consequently it became impossible for the colonists to return to their homes in the evening. At the beginning of the spring field work they would leave their villages for weeks at a time, pushing onward to wherever their lands were located. Much valuable time and labor was lost in this manner.

Yet this system was the best under prevailing conditions. Despite all these difficulties, the colonies began to flourish and prosper.

5. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 24.

With the improvement of economic conditions there went hand-in-hand an improvement in the internal affairs of the villages. A new generation had grown up which finally felt at home in Russia. This new generation not only had been trained to hard work, but it had seen the success of its own efforts.

CHAPTER 6

AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COLONIES

Agricultural Character of Colonies

The character of the German-Russians was agricultural from the beginning and remained so throughout their history. The agrarian program was fairly successful.

Wheat and rye were the chief crops of the colonists; more wheat than rye was raised. Some hulless barley was raised as also were oats and hirse. The colonists introduced potatoes into Russia but with only moderate success. Peas and lentils were also raised. Head lettuce was to be found in some sections.

There always was a scarcity of fruit. Sour cherries grew in abundance, also muskmelon and watermelon, "Arbuse" the latter being native to Russia and needing little care and attention. Soon the colonists learned to pickle the whole watermelons, putting them up in barrels; they learned also to dry them, and even to distill whiskey and brandy from them. Cucumbers, "Kukumern", were grown in large quantities. Tobacco raising developed into quite an industry, supplementing the income of the colonists. Later, flax was grown quite extensively. Mulberry trees took the place of more desirable fruit trees. Some flowers were grown, but only for decorative purposes.

Wild honey was found in abundance and often took the place of sugar, which was very difficult to secure.

The colonists did not greatly enlarge the Russian agricultural program. That was not the purpose of Catherine's program. However, they were not especially successful in introducing new methods in agriculture nor in effecting more efficient crop production. Dire necessity persuaded them to build reservoirs to store the water in the spring.¹

The people who left Germany for Russia were not agricultural experts as was previously indicated. In fact, a large percentage of them were hardly acquainted with agricultural conditions. Since contact with Germany was almost impossible, the colonists actually learned the principles of agriculture from the Russians, taking over many of the Russian usages.² However, they very soon overtook the Russians, developing agriculture far beyond what had been known in Russia before. The German plow, as well as the scythe, "Reffsensen," were used in place of the Russian hook-plow and the sickle.

Methods of Farming

After a short period of experimenting, the colonists adopted the system of summer fallowing. At first this was not believed necessary, because of the fertility of the soil, which was actually so rich that the grain would readily lodge during wet seasons. The only fields that

1. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 19

2. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 61.

were fertilized were those upon which tobacco was raised. Soon it was noticed that fields upon which only grain was raised needed rest. Then these fields were used as pasture for a few seasons, while others were used for the production of grain. This plan also served as a means of eradicating weeds which grew very profusely. It also helped to provide fuel for the colonists. The forests had been exploited during the early decades without any thought of the future; soon a shortage of fuel was felt. Henceforth cow dung was used for fuel. Risch received a medal from the Government for discovering that the dung from animals made good fuel. The fuel was called dung-wood, "Mistholz."³

Spring work was begun about the end of March. At that time each year, the whole congregation assembled for a prayer-meeting, asking the Lord to bless their labors and the crops. The next morning they migrated to the land! At times the entire families moved out; at other times only the men left the villages. They would not return until all the crops had been planted. The same procedure was followed when the crops were harvested.

The people on the plains-side would thresh, or rather flail, their grain on large "Gummen," threshing-floors, immediately after it was cut. This system eliminated much work, in that the grain did not need to be hauled into the villages. Much grain was wasted in this way, however.

3. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 40.

Threshing methods were most primitive. Grain was simply flailed or threshed by riding horses or oxen over the unthreshed grain, thus really treading it out. Chaff was separated from the grain by throwing it into the air, and letting the wind flow the chaff away. In the period from about 1850 to 1860 "(Putzmachinen)" fanning machines were introduced.

Dairying and Cattle Raising.

Throughout their history the colonists manifested little interest in dairying or cattle raising. This possibly was due to lack of pasture. Years of drought as well as severe storms would ever and again diminish the herds. It is reported that in 1833 a single storm killed 1,700 head of cattle in one village.⁴ Livestock diseases also did much damage. Dairying and cattle raising was confined to the needs of the different households. Cataneo reports that during his time every household had from four to eight cows which "did not give much milk, but the milk was one-fourth cream".⁵ Oxen were largely used in the place of horses. Haxthausen reports, for the year 1843,⁶ 582 horses and 400 cattle for 93 households.

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4. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 63.
 5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 63, quoted from Cataneo, Johann Baptista, Eine Reise durch Deutschland und Russland, p. 142.
 6. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 64, quoted from Haxthausen II, August Freiherr von, Studien ueber die inneren Zustaeude Russlands, Hannover & Berlin, 1847-52, p. 37.

Sheep raising declined from year to year; however, hog raising increased. Hogs were fattened with corn, potatoes, and pumpkins. Haxthausen again reports, for 1843, 122,000 sheep and only 92,000 hogs for 104 villages. Even the camel was introduced into the colonies. Little is known about when, where, or by whom, the camel was introduced, but its use is reported from a number of villages. It was used for farming, being hitched to the plow beside the ox, and it was used for transporting both persons and goods.

Prices for cattle were very low. Cataneo reports the price of a cow as being 3 to 6 rubles, a young ox 4 to 8, and an old ox 8 to 12 rubles. Prices for horses were about the same. A sheep and a goat could be bought for from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 ruble.⁷ Pork could be bought for from 2 to 3 kopeks; a whole butchered hog could be bought in Saratow for from 70 to 80 kopeks.

Raising and Marketing of Grain

Cataneo reports that the average land owner possessed about 20 "Dessaitin".⁸ The average yield of grain, especially wheat, per "dessaitin" was about 96 pud. A pud was 40 pounds. The average farmer raised about 1,000 pud net annually on his 15 "dessaitins" of grain land.⁹ This estimate seems to have been a liberal one and is possibly true of the colonies during the time of their highest development. His estimate would make it possible for the

7. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 64.

8. Ibid. p. 64.

9. Ibid. p. 64.

farmer to sell 600 pud on the market.

In 1775 there were about 5,500 farms in the German colonies. During the time of Cataneo, 10 years later, there were about 6,000 farms. Thus the colonists raised about 3,600,000 pud of wheat for the market. Cataneo reports that during his time 20 kopeks was paid for rye, 25 for wheat, 50 for hirse, and 10 for barley and oats. Grain exports netted the colonists about 720,000 rubles annually. However, other writers point out that the estimates of Cataneo are altogether too liberal. Economic conditions in the villages in no way indicate that the export trade was so lucrative. Other writers¹⁰ point out that, on the contrary, most colonies did not raise much more than enough for their immediate needs; in fact, they did not raise enough to pay the taxes that were soon levied. The reason for this was that most families simply could not cultivate more than five "dessaitins". Praetorius re-¹¹ports that in 1768, 64 families in the colony of Galke cultivated only 320 "dessaitins". However, as soon as the colonists had learned to cultivate the soil and as soon as more efficient methods were adopted, crop returns greatly increased. The only statistics available for the first half of the 19th century report an export trade for the German colonies in 1814, of 700,000 rubles for wheat,

10. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 65.

11. Ibid. p. 65.

143,000 rubles for tobacco. Beginning with the 19th century, crop yields and exports increased steadily. The following table prepared by Cataneo is presented by ¹²Bonwetsch for 1850:

12. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 65.

TABLE IV. COMPARISON OF POPULATION, "DESSAITINES" per HOUSEHOLD, TAXES AND DEBTS PAID TO GOVERNMENT FROM 1765 to 1850.

Year	Number of Families	Number of Inhabitants	Increase in Percentages of "Revision Souls".	Sum total of "Dessaitines".	Each "Revision Soul" gets "dessaitines".	Number of cultivated "Dessaitines".	Taxes paid by individuals in rubles.	Taxes Paid to Government in Rubles.
1765	8,000	27,000			30			
1775	8,502	23,184						
1794					20			
1798			26.27		15.5			
1808	40,000					87,647		
1811				448,000		137,083	6.28	
1816		55,000	54.8		10.4		13	257,208
1834			78.2					
1835		127,028		825,571	5.6		13	
1850			50.97		3.8			

These figures cannot be accepted as authentic; in fact, some of them are self-contradictory. It is, for instance, hardly possible that the number of cultivated "dessaitin" was more than doubled in the period of 3 years. Two facts are indicated by the tables: the very rapid growth in population and the rapid decrease in the "dessaitin" per "revision soul". Taxes, however, increased very rapidly. These taxes could be paid only with a proportionate increase in productivity. The following is a table of taxes and assessments levied for the year 1834,¹³ for all the colonies:

TABLE V. TAXES AND ASSESSMENT FOR ALL THE COLONIES IN
1834.

REAL ESTATE TAXES..	13 rub.	per "revision soul"	406,398 rub.
CONGREGATIONAL TAX.....	25 Kopeks	"	".... 7,796 "
WATER ASSESSMENTS.....	5	" " "	".... 1,559 "
SUPPORT OF OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS.....	95	" " "	".... 29,635 "
SALARIES FOR MINISTERS, ELDERS, SCHOOL TEACHERS, ETC.....			256,787 "

13. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 67 quoted From Goebel, Fredrich, Reise in die Steppen des suedlichen Russlands, 2 Baende Dorpat, 1838, p. 283.

Liquidation of Debts.

In addition to these assessments the debts to the Government had to be paid. These were first liquidated by paying 1 ruble annually for each laborer from 16 to 69 years of age. Later this debt was paid according to households and not according to individual laborers. The debt owed the Government was finally liquidated in 1846. On April 20, 1782, the Government had cancelled 1,210,197¹⁴ rubles 89½ Kopeks of this debt. The Government had¹⁵ loaned the colonists a total of 8,199,813 rubles.

The colonies were not all equally well-to-do, due chiefly to the differences in soil, in the amount of land available, and in the industry of the colonists. The soil on the "plains-side" was much more fertile than on the "hill-side".

There were great differences in the economic status of the individual families. Despite the care exercised in apportioning the land, some families received poorer land than others. However, the industriousness of the individual families was also a deciding factor.

Even under the "mir" system the individual congregations possessed some land. This land was rented out and the income therefrom was used to supplement the village treasury. From this treasury the costs of adminis-

14. Beratz, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 99.

15. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 69.

tration were paid, roads built, a fire department maintained. The chief expense was the maintenance of church and school.

Industrial Development

Industry was not developed to a great extent in the colonies. Agriculture at all times continued to be their chief source of income.¹⁶ Katharinenstadt and Sarepta were the villages in which industry found its greatest development. Katharinenstadt had a public market where one might purchase wine, sugar, and coffee. For a time¹⁷ it was quite a grain market. Balzer was the first village to develop as an industrial center and a manufacturing town.¹⁸

The "plains-side" developed no actual industries or special crafts. The "hill-side" developed industry first, because scarcity of land was felt there earlier. It was in the villages on this side that cloth weaving was developed quite extensively. A number of colonists became quite wealthy through this industry. As for example, Reinecke of the village of Kutter, Schmidt of Messer,¹⁹ Borell of Balzer, and others. This home industry of cloth weaving was first introduced by Konrad Popp from the village of Goloi-Karamysch and by Pinneker from Mohr.²⁰

16. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 57.

17. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 59.

18. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 56.

19. Ibid. p. 58.

20. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 60.

Slowly the industry grew in a number of villages. In the years 1866 and 1867, 69 cotton mills were found along the Volga in this territory, keeping about 6,000 small hand-looms busy. These looms used 8,000 pud of red cotton thread in these 2 years. Goods worth 1,156,000 rubles,²¹ were woven.

In 1860, 1000 looms were busy during the winter months in the village of Norka.

A number of tanneries operated successfully in a number of the colonies.²² In 1860, 52 tanneries in the various colonies sold leather valued at 120,000 rubles.²³

In 1850 attempts were made to develop the industry,²⁴ but without success.

Success in growing sugar beets led to the erection of a large sugar factory in the village of Anton. It continued to operate for 50 years. It was owned by a Polish nobleman, Laeskowsky, who with the knowledge and consent of the pastor and the village government, exploited the colonist to the extreme. The best soil was depleted and lands were cleared of heavy timber. Later, under a new village government, the colony refused to be exploited any longer, whereupon the factory no longer showed profits²⁵ and was closed after 3 years.

21. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 58.

22. Ibid., p. 58.

23. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 57.

24. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 57.

25. Ibid. p. 57.

A cotton mill owned by Borel and a sugar factory owned and operated by Russians in Sebastianowka, engaging 289 laborers in 1870, are the only industries mentioned in the extensive statistics of Mathael²⁶ for all Russia for this period.

Flour mills were built along the Volga, and soon flour was sent up and down the Volga, greatly enriching the colonies.

Bauer reports that in some of the colonies oil presses were developed which produced oil from sunflower seed.

Peter Lippert of Katharinenstadt, a wealthy factory owner, created a trust fund, the earnings of which, were to be used to train young men in various crafts. This fund was supplemented with contributions from the Seratow Kantor and from a number of other private sources. However, the fund never grew larger than 9,737 rubles, 17 kopeks, and Bauer reports that up to 1863, nothing ever²⁷ was accomplished with it.

The special industrial forms and their results are the main factors that characterize a Volga colonist from the German settler in the South of Russia.²⁸

26. Mathael, Friedrich, Die deutschen Ansiedlungen in Russland, Leipzig, 1866.

27. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 59

28. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 15.

CHAPTER 7

THE MIGRATION FROM 1846-1870

The Need for Migration

Until about the middle of the Nineteenth Century, the Volga colonists were fairly well-to-do. But as early as 1830 the need for more land was beginning to make itself felt - at first in a few scattered villages, but soon in the whole region. The "hill-side" felt the need very much sooner than did the "plains-side". This need for more land was brought about by the very rapid increase in population. There was no new land to be distributed; consequently the number of "dessaitins" per "revision soul" had to be reduced. In 1765 the population of the Germans in the Volga territory numbered 27,000, with 30 "dessaitins" per "revision soul"; by 1850 the population had increased to more than 127,028 persons with only 3.8 "dessaitins" per "revision soul." In some of the parishes the number of "dessaitins" per person was reduced to as low as 1.2.
low as 1.5.

The Government finally had to step in, in order to relieve the situation. New lands were opened to the colonists on the east side of the Volga. The territory of the people on the "plains-side" was simply extended. The colonists from the "hill-side" received new land a considerable distance into the interior. About 250,000 "dessaitins" of the Kirghiz steppes were assigned to

1. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 98.
2. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 69.

them in the district of Nowe-Usen, along the rivers Nachoi, Karaman, and Jersulan.³ It was hoped that in this manner the number of "dessaitins" per "revision soul" might again be raised to 15.

The Government simply opened these lands to the colonists, leaving it largely to the decision of the individual villages in what manner the redistribution of the land should be made. This was a fairly simple matter for the people of the "plains-side". They could still remain living in their villages and had to go out only a little farther to work their lands, but for the people from the "hill-side" the problem was not so simple. Few were willing to leave the old colony and the villages which they had helped develop and where they knew everyone, and go out into the wild steppes to begin all over. They were reluctant to leave the mother colony whose churches, schools, granaries, and markets they had helped build.⁴

In order to make a success of the new colonies, only those who had adequate implements, horses, and cows --and above all, enough farm laborers--were to go. It was this very element, tho--those in the better circumstances, who did not care to leave, as that would have reduced their own proportionate share of "dessaitins" per household. Investigation also established the fact that the new land

3. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 69.

4. Ibid., p. 69.

was not nearly so desirable, being much less fertile.

Enticing Inducements

In order to entice some of the colonists to leave and take up the new lands, various promises were made. Those who would leave were to be given extra shares of the wealth which had been accumulated by the various villages through a period of years. This wealth consisted of money, of grain stored up in the great elevators, and of a few other items. These promises were quite an attraction for the poorer families, but for the wealthier families the plan meant quite a sacrifice, as they had contributed the greater share of the accumulated wealth. Each person leaving for the new colonies was promised 26 rubles. As this sum was not large enough to interest many, it was later raised to 100 rubles per person. Free transportation was to be provided by those remaining behind. They even promised to pay the taxes for 3 years for those who could leave.⁵

The migration at first proceeded very slowly. Land which had been assigned to the various families was not taken up. These unused lands were later rented by the local governments. Instead of encouraging the migration, the local officers discouraged it, so that they might derive greater profits from renting these unclaimed lands.⁶

5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 89.
6. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 69.

However, in time extreme need, as well as very inviting inducements, exerted their influence upon the colonists, and a very considerable number of people left the mother colonies for the new territory. In a number of instances, 30 to 50 percent of the population migrated to the new territory.⁷ This migration did have the effect of checking the lowering of the number of "dessaitins" per "revision soul" although this number was not increased. Thus the economic conditions of the mother colonies did not improve. This was due primarily to the fact that the soil had been exploited, and the colonists had not yet learned how to replenish the soil. The dung from the villages was thrown into the river and into caves, rather than spread upon the land.⁸

New Colonies

During a period of 25 years, until the year 1867, the colonists paid a total of 350,000 rubles for this new colonization project. The less desirable part of the population was largely transported to the new district. The migration into the new territory continued until about 1870. Even after that time, individual families continued to move. Almost all the old colonies took part in this movement, but not all mother colonies founded new colonies.⁹

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7. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 93.
 8. Faure A., Das Deutshtum an der Wolga, Flugschriften des Altdeutschen Verbandes, Heft 26, Muenchen, p. 320.
 9. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 90.

Again the colonists had to endure extreme hardships in the new territory but not entirely without their own fault.¹⁰ Not only the poorer, but very largely also the more shiftless class of the old colonies had migrated. The hardship they endured was a duplication of the hardship endured by the first settlers almost 100 years before. There was little law and order; might was considered right. Quarrelling and fighting were the order of the day.

The new colonists governed themselves. Very often they misused this privilege by electing the worst "good-for-nothings"¹¹ as village elders. For months a fight continued in the village of Gnadendorf over the question of which side of the church the men were to occupy during church services! Incidents such as this were only an indication of the spirit which prevailed among these colonists.

Everyone was more than busy with his own affairs, consequently little time remained for improving the welfare of the colony at large. The new villages were poorly laid out and gave the impression of extreme poverty.

There was great scarcity of wood and other building materials.

Whole buildings were torn down in the mother colony and rebuilt in the new colony; for instance, a wooden church was torn down in Schaffhausen and rebuilt in a new village.

10. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 90

11. Busch, E. R., op. cit., p. 309.

However, conditions improved very rapidly. Good crops were raised, and soon the colonists prospered in their new homes. Very soon also good leadership asserted itself in the various villages.

A second migration began about 1850. This time a number of the Volga colonists migrated into the Caucasus region. A comparatively small number took part in this movement, and quite a number of these returned to the¹² Volga before very long.

Nine parishes were organized in the new territory. The first colony in the new territory, founded by the people from the "plains-side", was called Weizenfeld, (wheat field,) near the river Nachol in 1846. The name Weizenfeld is typical of the interests of the people in the new colonies. In the course of time, 44 Evangelical¹³ and 17 Catholic colonies were founded in the new district.

One of the villages, Fresenthal, founded in 1850, tried a new plan to bring about progress. A village farm was developed for which each household had to contribute one "dessaitin." This farm was operated jointly by the villages. The profits were used to build a brick school house with a tin roof and iron cross. Other villages soon followed this example.

Throughout the history of these new colonies the mother colonies assisted them in every possible way.

12. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 93.

13. Ibid, p. 90.

The ministers soon took over the leadership in the new parishes. It was largely due to their leadership that these colonies progressed so rapidly.¹⁴ There was one colony in which the people had the reputation of being "always happy and carefree, whereas otherwise dissatisfaction and complaining had become second nature of the colonists." Those colonies which did not possess strong leadership developed much less constructively. Quarrelling among various factions very materially hindered sound progress.

The migration into the new territory continued until about 1870. Even after that time, individual families continued to move. The last German colony to be founded was^{15.} neu-Warenburg, in 1902.

Mennonite Colonies.

A factor which helped greatly to advance the new colonies, especially in the Samara Government, was the influence of the arrival of the Mennonites. They had been invited by Catherine as early as 1786, with the promise of religious freedom and freedom from military service. Further immigration from Germany had been forbidden, after the first great exodus in 1764-1774. After the death of Frederick the Great, in 1787, a number of Mennonite colonies sent representatives to Petersburg to resume confer-

14. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 92.

15. Ibid. p. 90.

ences with the Prussian Government. They succeeded in securing exceedingly inviting promises. They were promised 65 "dessaitins" of land per family, irrespective of the number of persons in the family; they were promised that the Government at no time in the future would demand¹⁶ oaths from them.

In 1788, 400 Mennonite families left Prussia for the southern part of Russia. From 1803 to 1840, 1,150 Mennonite families migrated to the Molotschna region, north of the Black Sea.¹⁷

The next Mennonite movement was to the newly opened territory in the Nowo-Usensk. Kroeppental was founded in 1853, Alt-Samara in 1861. Later eight more small Mennonite villages were organized in this new territory.

The development of these Mennonite colonies was much more progressive than that of the Germans coming from the Volga territory. This was due to the fact that they had left Germany so much later bringing with them new machinery and better methods of farming, because they had received a much better education. Then, also, these Mennonites were much more industrious than were the colonists from the Volga region. They were much better disciplined. The Mennonite colonies became models and exerted a very beneficial influence upon the colonists from the Volga region.

As a result, much more rapid progress was made in

16. Klaus, Gesetzessammlung 26, No. 19, 372, p. 178.
 17. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 94.

these new colonies than in the mother-colonies. The ministers also exerted a greater influence in the new colonies. However, their salaries were considerably lower than those of ministers in the mother colonies. Their average total income was not more than from 800 to 900 rubles per year. Living costs were higher. They also had to send their children elsewhere for adequate educational advantages. Most of the ministers still came from the southern part of Germany and from Switzerland, especially from the Mission School in Basel. A few of the ministers had been educated at the new theological seminary at Dorpat, in Russia.

There was an ever greater lack of teachers in the new district than in the old colonies. The Mennonites had the most adequately planned villages. The people were called Prussians. They were thrifty and sober, making use of everything new to further their land. The Herrnhuter settlement of Sarepta was considered a model colony. It was the first to introduce cloth weaving into the new territory. It was also noted for the production of fine mustard and fine baked goods, especially "Pfefferkuchen."¹⁸

18. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 21.

CHAPTER 8

YEARS OF DECLINE

Lack of Economic Planning and Development.

Only a beginning was made in developing the colonies to their full capacity. Much more could have been done in developing crafts and industries. For over a period of 100 years the Saratow Kantor was interested only in its own welfare. There was little or no thought of the welfare of the colonies. In fact, the colonists were exploited ever and again in the interests of the office-holders.

The first step in developing the Volga region would have been to engage the services of good economists and technicians. Bauer believed that the Saratow Government did not engage such men, because their coming might have put an end to the dishonest, lucrative dealings of the officials. Even the village officials did not permit the colonists to make agricultural reports to the Saratow Bureau. The Government was requested to develop orchards in some of the colonies, but without results. A few orchards were planted by the colonists themselves, but only enough to meet their immediate needs.

The colonist could see only his immediate needs and¹ interests. He could not look into the future; therefore; he did not plan for the future. He could see only the benefits of raising wheat and tobacco and a few other products, but he could not see the advantages of raising large

1. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 63

quantities of flax or developing large orchards. So he continued to raise only wheat and tobacco!

With respect to children the only advantages he could see was in their work. He could not see how an education might benefit them. That was too far in the future. Therefore he sent his children to school for only as long a period as the Government forced him to send them. A certain colonist, Jacob Hetze, wrote an article in which he pointed out these various deficiencies in the colonies and outlined plans through which they might be remedied. He directed attention to various improvements in agriculture that might be made in the school program. This article he sent to the Government Bureau for Colonial Welfare in Saratow. After hours of waiting in the outer office of the Bureau Director, that gentleman appeared. Without looking at Jacob Hetze he said, handing him the manuscript: "Here you have your foolishness! Henceforth keep your nose out of things that do not concern you, or we will teach you how to occupy your time more profitably." That was the end of that!² Is it any wonder that the colonists did not progress--that in time they even opposed all change and all progress?

Possibly the greatest hindrance to progress was the "mir" system. No one owned property; every 10 or 12 years³ the land would be redistributed. By using this system of land distribution, every enterprising individual was

2. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 63.

3. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 21.

hindered from making progress. It took away the adaptability of the congregations to the new circumstances gradually being formed. Natural resources were exploited; the soil was depleted; much time was lost going to and from their plots of ground; many men and considerable livestock perished during storms which overtook them on these expeditions.^{4,5.}

Broken Promises

The Germans had first come to Russia upon the invitation of the Russian Government, under Peter the Great, and later under Catherine the Great. They had succeeded in transforming the steppes along the Volga. The reasons why Catherine had invited them to Russia have been stated; also the reasons why the Germans accepted the invitation. All rights granted the colonists had been given freely and willingly by Catherine and her Government, if only thereby the colonists could be induced to come.

The efforts of the Volga colonists had been so successful that the Russian Government might well have been satisfied with the results.

Despite all this, a reaction on the part of the Russian Government against the Germans set in soon after the death of Alexander the First. This reaction took

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- 4. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 15.
 - 5. Busch, E. H. op. cit., p. 306.

the form of hatred against the Germans, a feeling which grew from decade to decade. It became manifest through a series of laws and regulations passed by the Russian Government, changing privileges of the German Colonists. This movement was but one more manifestation of Pan-Slavism, so closely connected with the awakening of national consciousness, a trend which can be noticed in all the European people from Napoleon's time on. Its purpose, of course, was the unification of all people within the boundaries of the various groups. The natural result, of course, would be the development of a uniform culture within the boundaries of the various nations. Such a development is perfectly justified if the culture of the governing group is at the same time the most progressive. It becomes a tragedy if thereby the most progressive groups are subjected and even eradicated, and thus are forced to fail in their true mission of "culture bearers." It is from this point of view that the attitude and the actions of the Russian Government against the German colonists can be understood.

For many years there was very little or no contact between the German colonists and their Russian neighbors. There were limited business contacts, but the average German peasant had rarely spoken to his Russian neighbor.

The negative influence was first felt through refusal to co-operate with Fessler in his reform program

of attempting to provide better schools and churches; and through refusal to organize an adequate teacher's seminary, or training school; and in many other ways.

Beginning about the middle of the nineteenth century, certain circles in the Russian Government began to look upon the Volga colonists as a foreign element which should be eradicated as soon as possible. As early as 1819, passports were refused to Germans wishing to colonize in Russia. Where immigrants were admitted, they were to be colonized in individual villages but surrounded by Russian villages. No longer were they to have their own government. After 1866 the colonies of the Saratow Government⁶ were autonomous only in matters of church and school.

In a law of May 18, 1886, the colonists were freed from the payment of head-tax; however, the rent tax had been so increased that it became a real burden.

Although Catherine had promised the colonies freedom from military service for all time, beginning with 1873⁷ or 1874⁸ they were forced to perform military service the same as all Russians. Many of the first recruits were listed as illiterates, since all were considered illiterate who could not read and write Russian. The German recruits were stationed as far as possible from home, so as to be entirely under the Russian influence.

6. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 108.

7. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 52.

8. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 109.

The Mennonites were free from military service according to a decree of May 14, 1875.

One of the promises in the original Manifest of 1762 had been that the colonists would be provided with sufficient land. The following table⁹ indicates to what extent this promise was kept:

TABLE VI. GROWTH OF POPULATION AND THE AMOUNT OF LAND AVAILABLE PER HOUSEHOLD, 1798-1875.

<u>Year:</u>	<u>Revision:</u>	<u>Percentage of Increase in Population:</u>	<u>"Dessaitin" per Male:</u>
1798	5-6	26.27	16.5
1816	6-7	54.89	10.4
1834	7-8	78.20	5.7
1850	8-9	50.97	3.8
1867	9-10	20.78	3.2

There was an increase in 82 years from 5,502 families with 23, 154 persons to 19,214 families, with 198,948 persons. By 1869 the number of "dessaitin" per male on the "hill-side" had been decreased to one and one-half.

Beginning with the year 1809 the colonists were required to meet all Governmental obligations on an equal basis with the native Russians. In the liquidation of their debts owed the Government, the colonists were ex-¹⁰ploited to the extreme.

9. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 47.
10. Ibid, p. 52.

Another manner in which they were exploited, was through costly, long-drawn-out court processes. Every possible occurrence was made the basis of a prosecution. Petty officers would encourage the colonists to begin suit upon the least provocation, receiving bribes from both the plaintiff and defendant.

11. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 67

PART III.

GERMAN-RUSSIAN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER 9

THE GERMAN VILLAGE IN RUSSIA.

A German Village

"A slender church steeple, dozens of windmills struggling endlessly to supply all the village needs for water!" This is the picture given us by Bassler of a German village in Russia as seen from a distance.¹ As one approached the village, a half-dried-up creek had to be crossed, a few groves of scrawny oaks and wild plum trees were passed. The streets were very wide, sometimes as wide as 70 meters (229 feet).² This was a protection against fire, since buckets were the only equipment of the village fire-department. The streets were very long and laid out at right angles. Usually the church was the largest building and was located as nearly in the center of the village as possible. This was as it should have been, since village life very largely centered about the church. The houses were located somewhat back from the streets. Each yard, "Hof," was surrounded by a board fence; if the owners could not afford a board fence, a fence was woven from willow twigs. The villages were extremely simple, as was also the life in them. Few of them boasted stores or shops. If one wished to buy things, one had to go to Saratow or Katharinenstadt. The village was only the place for people to live!

1. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 225-6.

There were very few sidewalks and no commercial places of amusement.

All German villages looked alike. They were characterized by their cleanliness. Yards and streets were kept clean by sweeping.

The villages for the most part were located along the steep banks of the River Volga. Most of them suffered from lack of water. For this reason most villagers were very saving with their water. It was not to be wasted for taking baths! Everyone was happy when warm weather came so that dwindling water supplies might be replenished. Then, also, one might take a bath in the creeks or even in the Volga!

The great Volga had convinced her children that the world was divided into two parts; one the "Bergseite," the "hill-side", the other the "Wiensen-seite," "plains-side". Everything that happened in the world happened either on the "Bergseite" or the "Wiesenseite". Even Germany was located on the "Bergseite", since that was the more important one!

The colonists in the villages on either side looked with contempt upon the people in the villages of the other side.⁴

One could travel for days without coming through a

3. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 326.

4. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 19.

single Russian village.⁵ This was German territory! Here lived German colonists who were cut off from the rest of the world and who looked with contempt upon everyone who was not one of them, "nicht ein von unsere Leit!" No one was welcome here who was not a German colonist. The stranger could come to do business and to bring messages from the outside world, but after he had completed his errand he had to move on. "No one was tolerated who did not speak the German-Russian dialect and who was not of German stock."⁶ Russians were considered "foreigners" and were not permitted to make their homes in these villages.

Most of the villages were named after some individual who had played an important part in the founding or development of the village. Thus the village of Doenhof was named for "Count Doenhof", who had come to Russia with one of the first groups and who was the first elder of this village. Another village called Holstein, was named after a duke by the same name. This was true⁷ of many others.

Most of the villages were large. At the turn of the Twentieth century, the German population of 50 villages on the "hill-side", including Saratow, totaled

5. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 19.

6. Ibid., p. 24.

7. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 8.

215,470; Saratow, 12,500; Norka, 13,416; Frank, 11,700; Balzer, 10,302; Grim, 10,761; Tsaritsain, 2,000; and Sarepta, 1,625. The German population of 94 villages on the "plains-side" totaled 227,988. Thus the total German Protestant population totaled 443,458. In addition to this, there were 110,219 German Catholics living in 15 villages on the "hill-side" and in 39 villages on the "plains-side". There were in addition, 10 small Mennonite villages with a total German population of 1,141. This⁸ makes a grand total of 554,818 German Volga Colonists.

Village Government

Village government rested in the hands of the village Council, which was elected by the congregation at its annual meeting. Each household was entitled to send only one representative to these meetings. The annual meeting took care of many matters pertaining to the welfare of the village. Here it was decided what villagers should have the right to vote, at this time the conditions were ratified for the calling of a new pastor; the village budget was set up, and disposition made of many other matters.

The village Council consisted of the village "Schulze", deacon, or elder, his two assistants, and the "Schreiber, Gras-Schreiber", or secretary.

From three to sixteen villages constituted a parish.

8. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 30.

The "Ober-Schulze", the great-elder, was the head of the parish. He was elected for a term of 3 years and was assisted by, from 2 to 4 "Beisitzer", assistants who were elected for terms of 2 years. The parish secretary held his office for an indefinite term.

The parish council consisted of the chief elder, and from 2 to 3 assistant deacons from each congregation. This council also acted as the parish court. Only matters of much importance were taken before the judge of the province.

Village government was divided into 3 departments; the Session, which was in fact the executive department; the Economic department, in whose hands lay the raising of taxes, the erection of granaries, arrangement for elections, ratification and payment of village and district officers, the erection of public buildings, and the ratification of ministers and the judicial department, whose function it was to decide all matters of dispute, to settle all estate, and to issue passes, etc.^{9.}

Corruption in Village Government

Throughout most of the history of the colonies there was much dissatisfaction with village government. Accusations of corruption were raised frequently. The villagers appealed to the ministers for intervention but

9. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 51.

without avail. Claus makes the accusation that the ministers worked hand-in-hand with the village officials. Much faith was placed in the village judges; however, they were not able to relieve the situation, as their hands, too, were tied by the actions of corrupt officials. It was seldom that a district secured the services of an honest and efficient officer. In the rare instances when it did occur, even such officers were unable to remedy conditions, because they were dependent upon the co-operation of other officers. It usually happened that an honest man was forced to leave the colony after a short stay; on the other hand, it was true that the most important offices in the district were usually filled by untrustworthy and inefficient men whose only desire was to enrich themselves and gain their own advantage. Bauer reports that in one of the villages the controlling officer was the son of a school teacher. He served in village governments for about 50 years, being the absolute authority, and succeeded in enriching himself and controlling the village despite the fact that he never learned to write a letter either in German or in Russian. During his 50 years of service, he occupied every office of the district. He was protected by the ministers in the colonies and they cooperated with him. He had five wives in succession, all of whom were ministers' daughters. He placed more than a dozen of his relatives in office. His name was Thaler, (German for dollar,) and he was nicknamed

"the slick dollar." Bauer speaks of much political corruption in all the villages.^{10.}

The election of the deacons was influenced very largely by the local representative of the Saratow Government. He made propaganda for the desirable candidates. It was almost impossible to keep men in office who were not sanctioned by the authorities in Saratow.^{11.}

Once a year the first deacons of the various villages were called to Saratow for consultation with the men of the Saratow Bureau. At such times the taverns and houses of prostitution in the neighborhood of Saratow did a flourishing business.^{12.}

Bauer claims that at no time was there any considerable improvement in the administration of the village government or of the Bureau in Saratow. In their political views, the colonists at all times were strictly conservative.

10. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 53.

11. Ibid., p. 73.

12. Ibid., p. 80.

CHAPTER 10

THE COLONIST, HIS HOME AND HIS FAMILY LIFE

The Colonist

"The colonist had taken on the character of the plains upon which he lived. He had become phlegmatic and slow. The expression of his face changed only with the changes which took place in the steppes upon which he lived. At one time they elevated him to a position of wealth; at other times they plunged him into abject poverty. Suffering a period of extreme poverty, he would draw his heavy wolf or sheep-skin coat about and would sit resignedly in his poorly heated house. He drank "kofe," a kind of coffee, and ate fried potatoes. This was the only food the unkind steppes begrudged him. However, when the steppes had been kind to him and he had raised a good crop his outlook upon life became entirely different. He now took on new life. Repairs were undertaken, houses and barns were painted. His tables were set lavishly, he became extremely hospitable. His conversation centered around "waasa Land," wheat land, and "Duwack,"¹ tobacco."

His Interests

The colonist was interested only in farming. He looked with contempt upon professional people and craftsmen.² The people of the "plains-side" were all farmers,

1. Bauer, Bottlieb, op. cit., p. 60.

2. Ibid., p. 60.

who had for many years received the blessings of the land. This made them proud and arrogant. They looked down upon the "hill-side" colonists, who nevertheless represented a higher standard of culture.^{3.}

Two distinct classes of colonists could be recognized on the "plains-side;" the land-owning and the landless classes. During years of poverty the poor man was forced to sell his land to his wealthier neighbor for a period of one or more years, until the time of the next revision. He was forced to sell at any price; even his cattle and his own services were sold in order to save himself and his family from starvation. The wealthy colonist made use of his brother's desperate situation in order to exploit him to the extreme. Whole colonies lost their land in this manner to rich speculators from other colonies; thus, in 1880, the colony Mannheim lost 800 "dessaitins" to the Rauschenbach Brothers from Katharinenstadt.

The colonist knew how to take advantage of conditions in order to enrich himself. Not only individuals became wealthy in this manner, whole congregations, such as those of Katharinenstadt and Basel, were thus able to enrich themselves.^{4.}

The colonist was little interested in public life or in the affairs of the Government. His interests were

3. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 18.

4. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 61.

confined chiefly to sowing and harvesting, to rain and drought, and to all the little cares and worries of the peasant.⁵ The Volga Colonist did not become the "culture bearer" for his Russian neighbors, as Catherine had so fondly hoped. He diligently cultivated his land and was fairly successful in his agricultural enterprises, being satisfied to live from the product of his labors. For him the world stood still. However, he did have one ambition, to become the owner of a flour-mill, of which there were quite a large number scattered along the banks of the Volga. In order to reach this goal he did not even hesitate to speculate. During years of plenty the rich colonist bought all the grain he could; then, during years of scarcity, he sold this grain to his less fortunate neighbors at exorbitant prices.^{6.}

"My household is not a kopek-business, mine is a ruble-business;" "Hier ist keine Kopekenwirtschaft, sondern eine Rubelwirtschaft!"--thus the German-Russian would brag about his business. He was extremely arrogant.⁷ Outwardly the colonist was deeply religious, but only outwardly. "His religion was like the beds in his guest-room, beautiful and soft and piled high with pillows, but never used."^{8.} When put to the test, the colonist

5. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 8.

6. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 21.

7. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 327.

8. Ibid. p. 19.

proved to be egotistical, selfish, and extremely materialistic. His only interest was: "What do I get out of it?" He most severely condemned dancing, yet he condoned it on certain festival days, especially for weddings. He scolded his young people for attending, yet he attended himself. Even the widow, with the show of deepest piety and seemingly with heart-breaking anguish, would give away her children, only to be able to more quickly marry again.⁹

The colonist was extremely conservative. He opposed all advancement. He hated change. What was good enough for his fathers was good enough for him. Only extreme need could compel him to adopt newer methods of farming.¹⁰ Why should he change? His Russian neighbors could teach him nothing. He was superior to them.. And how did he know that methods and machinery brought in from the outside would work? He had never seen them work! He believed only what he saw. He had absolutely no capacity for visualizing something still in the future. He knew what he saw!

The "Old men" were the authority in the home and in the colony. All questions of importance pertaining to the welfare of the family as well as the congregation were decided by the old men, that is, by the heads of the households. The young men of the village had the right

9. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 537.

10. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 60.

to attend the annual meetings of the congregation, but they were there solely for the purpose of "listening and learning."¹¹ The old men sat toward the front of the building, the oldest in the first rows, the youngest in the last rows. Everyone was assigned his place according to his age.

German provincial differences were soon largely erased in Russia. Even the differences between Lutheran and Reformed churches were so insignificant within a short time that both denominations were served by the same pastor.¹²

The House and Yard of the Colonist

The house in which the German-Russian colonist lived, differed greatly from the typical German home. Since the first houses had been built by Russian carpenters, the later style also was typical of Russian architecture.¹³ There were two types, the simple type, which was about 35 feet square, and the double or complex type which was about 49 feet square. The smaller house contained a living room, a porch, a kitchen, and a bedroom. The larger house contained an extra large living room in which the married children and their families lived. The roof was fairly steep. The chimney was of the Russian type, large and massive. Most houses contained large

11. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 311.

12. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., 85.

13. Ibid., p. 86.

windows. Many houses were built of heavy timber; the houses of the poorer classes were of adobe; only the rich could afford brick houses. Very often the roofs were of thatched straw. Five-room houses were the exception.

Paint of the most gaudy colors was used profusely. The colonist loved color. The only way he could supply it, was to buy paint and paint houses, barns, and fences. The people in Doenhof painted their houses and fences yellow. Even in America, for instance in Windsor, Colo., and Lincoln, Nebr., in the German-Russian settlements, the houses of the people from Doenhof can be recognized by their yellow color. The people from Doenhof to this day, even in the United States, are nicknamed "Geel Baan," "Yellow Legs". Some writers claim this was because of their love for the yellow color. Tables, benches, chests, window- and door-frames were painted blue, yellow, or red.¹⁴

The house was built in the front part of the yard.¹⁵
The average yard was 105 feet wide and 210 feet long.

Other buildings in the yard were the bake and wash-house, an ice-cellar, which was filled every winter and to supply ice for almost the whole year, the stone or vegetable cellar, the cow-barn, the horse-barn, the chicken house, the granary, the machine shop, and a fuel-house or wood-barn in which the cow dung was prepared for

14. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 310.

15. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 86.

fuel. Fuel was supplied by kneading straw together with cow dung, and preparing it as sort of a charcoal. Some colonists simply cut the dung in squares, using it for fuel without special preparation.¹⁶

Each yard contained a threshing place, a plot of ground trodden smooth, upon which the threshing was done by rolling a six-cornered stone over the grain spread out upon the ground.

Nearby was the "straw-place," where the straw was stored. The straw was used for bedding and also in preparing fuel.

During the summer the colonist lived in the "summer kitchen," a small building some distance away from the other buildings. Village fire-laws required that the cooking be done only in this kitchen during the summer months. This was a protection against fire, since, in case fire should break out, it would be confined to this small building.¹⁷

The house itself, especially the parlor, was kept immaculately clean. If at all possible, the floor too was painted in gaudy colors. The table was covered with a brightly colored cover. The room was full of home-made trinkets. The beds were piled high with pillows and feather-beds. The stove was of the Russian type, built almost in the center of the house. It was made of brick

16. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 326.

17. Ibid., p. 326.

and adobe and was low and massive.¹⁸ Lying on the back part of this massive stove was a favorite pastime for the colonist during the winter months.

Life in these houses was comfortable, even if fresh air and light were often at a premium. Most of the windows were built so that they could not be opened.

The bodies of the colonists, especially of the older ones, were not so clean as their houses. Since ventilation was very poor, their homes often took on a peculiar musty odor, which clung to the visitor like smoke in a poorly ventilated restaurant.

The Colonist and His Family Life

The life of the colonists on the steppes was simple. They planted their crop in the spring, and when this was completed, they put on their Sunday clothes and sat in front of their houses, "dischkurierend," gossiping.¹⁹

The German-Russians spoke a peculiar Volga dialect which had much in common with the Hessian dialect and was quite different from the High German. Many of the expressions used have an entirely different meaning than in the original German.²⁰

"To this day the colonist has remained German in his convictions and looks upon Germany as his father-land,"²¹ writes Bassler of the Colonist in the year 1911. What was true at that time is true very largely even today.

21. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 24

18. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 86.

19. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 19.

20. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 85.

Bassler writes: "I am reminded of a long conversation I had in Bremen with a German couple from the Volga region. They were cultured people. They had emigrated to Nebraska in the United States and owned a big farm. Their ancestors came from the Rhine region. 'Germany is our real home,' they said. This deep-rooted love for the old home in Germany was found among most Volga colonists."

The Colonist has kept his German characteristics. "Many faces have preserved the true peasant type of
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Central Germany."

German fables, fairy tales, folk-songs, and proverbs were retained for a long time. However, in the later development of the colonies, fairy tales and folk-songs were considered improper. They were told and sung only by the people on the street, "uf der Stross!" Converted people, "bekehrte Lait," would hardly defile themselves by repeating such things. The writer remembers during the first year of his work among the German-Russians, he attended a birthday celebration. After singing a number of religious songs, he proposed a number of the German-fold-songs. There was little response from those present. They seemed to be embarrassed. The next morning one of the church elders came and suggested that the writer never mention such songs again, as the people would surely

22. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 23.

believe "that he was not converted" if he would "sing such songs." When it was pointed out that those songs were in the same book which also contained the religious songs, the elder said; "Yes, but such songs are sung only by people of the world, 'Welt-Lait.'"

"Sex relations among the Russian-Germans, as revealed by the statistics of illegitimacy, are remarkably pure, the ratio of illegitimates to each hundred births in the Protestant colonies on the Volga being an average 1.4, for the years 1906-7-8. (Friedensboten Kalender 1908, 130; 1909, 131, 1910, 131.) The reasons for family purity as indicated by the lack of illegitimacy were to be found in the low marriage age, the universality of marriage, the great importance attached to the wedding ceremony, and the shame connected with illegitimacy in the villages. Public opinion was the most powerful preventive. A public church wedding was denied if it became known that the girl was no longer a virgin."^{23.}

"In the Protestant German colonies on the Volga, the marriage rate during a 6 year period ranged from 10.6 persons to 15.0 persons per 1,000 of the population.

23. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 56.

The rates for the various years were about as follows:

1906,	15.0	per	thousand	of	population
1907,	13.2	"	"	"	"
1908,	13.2	"	"	"	"
1912,	10.6	"	"	"	"

"The marriage rate for the Russian-Germans is decidedly in advance of the rates for the European countries or for the United States."

One of the most effective methods of punishment in the German-Russian colonies was shame. "An instance of this sort of punishment is given by a correspondent in the Dakota Freie Presse, December 27, 1910. A man and his wife in one of the colonies were caught stealing provisions from a neighbor. The customary legal penalties were imposed upon the man; but the woman was taken to the school grounds, where she was made to stand with a link of the stolen sausage around her neck and a little cooking kettle on her arm, while the school children danced about her, in a circle and cried: 'Wurst! Wurst! Kalbas, Kalbas!' The woman was then led through the entire village, followed by the children who made ear-splitting cries."

Marriage Customs

It is interesting to note that many of the old

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24. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 73, compiled from Theologische Fakultät, Friedensboten Kalender 1908, 1909, 1910, 1914. Buchhandlung "Eben-Ezer" Talowkabel Saratow an der Wolga.
25. Ibid., p. 73.
26. Ibid., p. 56.

German customs were retained. This is true even today, especially of customs pertaining to engagements to be married and to marriage itself. One who was interested in marriage could be recognized by his horse. He would feed and care for his horse especially well, beginning in early fall, for with this horse he would take his girl out riding in spring. "Hannes, dou host doch aach was em senn des Jahr, des seh ich o deim fette Gaul," "John, you surely have serious intentions this year. I can see that by your fat horse."^{27.} The young man would not tell the name of the young lady for whom he had fattened his horse. It was a terrible disgrace to be "turned down," "Einen Kerb zu empfangen," by the young lady. Thus he would woo her a long time at first very shyly, then a little more courageously until finally the question could be asked. But the young man could not ask the question himself. He had first to get permission from his parents. If the girl in question met with their approval, the father would get a number of his friends, "Freiersmaenner", who would go with the young man to the home of the girl. She would very likely be expecting them, as very often the young man and the young woman had made the arrangements between themselves. If the parents of the girl had any inkling that the "Freierslait" were coming, they would

27. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 20.

have gone to bed very early. The visitors would have to knock long and loudly until finally the disgruntled father appeared at the door and permitted the visitors to enter. At first they would sit for a considerable time without speaking a word. Finally they would tell the father the purpose of their visit. They had to compliment him and his girl profusely; they extolled his virtues and the beauty and industriousness of his daughter. They would, however, not neglect to point out the good points of the young man. If they were careless enough to praise the boy too much and the father and his daughter not enough, the father would suddenly leave the room and go to bed.^{28.}

This was one time when the father had the advantage. Unless they honored and praised him sufficiently, he would simply refuse to listen to them. They would now respectfully knock at the bedroom door. Reluctantly the father would come out again. Now the visitors were much more careful to humor him; they flattered him, they praised him, until he would finally arise and accept the glass of brandy which the visitors offered him. That was the sign that he had given his consent. Mother and daughter were called, who all the while had been standing behind the closed door straining their ears to hear every word. After a while they would enter the room rubbing their eyes

28. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 21.

and yawning and acting disgruntled because they had been awakened from peaceful slumber. The father conveyed to them the purpose of the visitors and finally asked the daughter if she was willing to take the young man. Pity her, if the father wanted her to take the young man and she refused. The father was the patriarch of the household. The father's will was the only determining factor. The mere fact that the father had asked her was a sure indication that this young man would be her future husband. Consequently her answer was "yes." Thus the young people agreed to take each other, "sie werde sich einig sich zu nehme!" The young man would give the girl a few handkerchiefs as a token of his love, "uf die Trei;" the girl promised to sew him an embroidered shirt, "ein ausgenachtes Hem." Then the whole group hurried to the home of the young man for a big meal, for which all preparations had been made during the day. A number of friends were invited; whiskey was passed time and again. Some cold meats, bread, coffee-cake, "duenne Kuche," tea with sweetening, "Weringe," pickled watermelons, "saure Abuse," and many other delicacies were placed before the guests, who ate and drank and joked for the rest of the night. The next day the engagement was announced to the pastor.

But the visit did not always have such a happy ending. Despite all secrecy, the parents well knew who was going to ask for the hand of their daughter; and they would have told her that no matter when the visitors,

"Brautfreier," might come, no matter how willing the father might appear to be to give his daughter to the young man, she was to give him a negative answer under all conditions. Pity her if she refused to do so! When the father finally called his daughter and asked her if she were willing to take the young man, she would give a negative answer, whereupon the visitors would leave immediately without another word of coaxing. The young man, as well as the spokesmen, had been deeply insulted. Then the girl and her parents would watch all night, that the young man should not hang a basket on her door or throw a crude scarecrow on top of the house-roof. If he succeeded in doing this and the villagers should see it in the morning, it would be a great disgrace for the girl, and she would be teased and taunted for many weeks to come.

The young man would soon forget his insult, and many times he tried for better luck at some other home the very same night. If successful the previously described procedure would take place again.

A formal engagement took place in the home of the minister, usually between Christmas and New Year, "zwischen den Johre", or after Easter. As many as 50 couples were officially engaged at the same time. The pastor examined them to see if they knew their Catechism and Bible History and to determine whether they could read. Too bad if they failed to pass the examination,

as it meant waiting a whole year and again appearing for an examination before they could become married. Most girls began to review and learn their Catechism as soon as they noticed the young man's intentions were serious.²⁹ Lane tells of a girl who appeared before the pastor the following day after she and her young man had been rejected, however, this time with a different young man. When the pastor asked her why she came with a different young man, she replied; "Ich hon mer aan g'sucht, der lese kann.'" "I have found myself one who can read".

If for any reason the engagement had to be broken, the young people again had to appear before the pastor to become "dis-engaged," "sich zurueck verloben." This was possible only if the young people had not had sex relations, "wenn sie noch frei von ihm seia."³⁰ This happened only very rarely, as usually everything progressed smoothly.

When the examination before the pastor had been passed the engagement was announced from the pulpit on the three following Sundays.

The weddings were celebrated as soon as possible. Invitations to the wedding were extended by special bidders who went from house to house and invited the guests with the words of a special poem. Before the

29. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p.22

30. Ibid., p. 23.

bidders left, they were given a drink of whiskey, or a ribbon was tied to their canes. The more ribbons, the merrier and the more elaborate the forthcoming wedding would be.³¹ Sartori reports, (Sitte und Brauch, Leipzig, 1910, p. 64.) that this custom of inviting wedding guests³² can be traced to the province of Saxony.

On the day of the wedding the bridegroom's attendants, "Brautjungen," called for the bride at her home with much noise and much ado; they then called for the groom in the same way and the procession went to church. As many as 30, 40, or even 50 couples were married at one time. The ceremony did not take very long. After this the real festivities began. Immediately after the services there was much shooting and shouting. In case the people were well-to-do, there was band music from a few brass horns and a few clarinets. Then the whole company proceeded to the home of the groom. In some cases a rope had been strung across the entrance to the yard, and the company could not proceed until a few kopeks had been paid. When they arrived at the house, the young couple had to stand outside, so that the parents, relatives, and friends could kiss and congratulate them. The respective fathers admonished them to live a Christian life.

31. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 85.

32. Ibid. p. 85.

After this the wedding-dinner was served consisting usually of soup, "Butterkloes," butter-balls, beef, chicken potatoes, and "Gummera", i.e. cucumbers, and bread. During the course of the meal at least two or three collections were taken up: one for the bride; one for the cooks, one of whom went around with her arm in a sling, claiming that she had burned her arm with hot soup and needed medical attention; and another to pay the musicians.

Suddenly there was a commotion under the table. Someone had removed one of the shoes of the bride. This shoe had to be bought by the groom's attendants. In Russia a few rubles at the most sufficed; but the writer has been at a German-Russian wedding in America where the attendants were required to pay as much as \$20 before the shoe was returned to the bride. Then there was a sound of breaking dishes. Someone had taken a dish and shattered it upon the floor. This signified good luck for the young people.

About the middle of the afternoon the room was cleared for the dance. The first dance was danced by the bride and groom alone. After this the groom was not permitted to dance for the rest of the festivities; the bride, however, danced with everyone who was willing to pay. Whoever wished to dance with her pinned a paper ruble to her dress. This custom persists to the present time. The writer knows of one wedding where the bride earned \$340 through dancing on her wedding day; \$100 to \$150

earned in this manner is not uncommon. However, quite a number of the German-Russian weddings at the present time have done away with many of these customs.

Weddings were happy occasions. It was the one time when most of the restraints were broken down. Drink flowed freely; food was eaten in great quantities. Bodies were heated, passions were aroused, crude jokes were made. Only the bride and groom spoke hardly a word and scarcely looked at each other.

Late the next morning the groom half led, half dragged the poor, tired bride into the bedroom where a bed piled high with feather beds had been prepared by the mothers. The wedding was over, and married life began.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH AND THE SCHOOL IN THE VOLGA DISTRICT

The Church and its Influence Upon the
Development of the Colonies

If it is true that the first immigrants to Russia were largely a shiftless, unreliable class of people; it is also true that soon the philosophy of life of these people changed. Dire necessity had forced them to work. There was no alternative; they either had to till the soil or perish.

We have noted that attempts to escape to more favorable locations or to the homeland had ended disastrously. Doubtless many of the most undesirable element had perished, leaving the more desirable stock.

Influence of Ministers

One influence of great importance in shaping the cultural development of the colonists was the influence of the ministers of the Church. They soon came to be the recognized leaders of the colonists. Count Orlov had early called attention to the fact that the newcomers were all Christians and would have to be supplied with ministers and priests.¹ Catherine agreed with Count Orlov, and the colonists were supplied with at least a

1. Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii, vol. 16, No. 11,980.

few ministers. Two ministers are mentioned among the first colonists: a Swedish Lutheran, Altbaum (or Ahlbaum), and a German Lutheran minister by the name of Herwig, from Cassel.² Herwig became the first minister of the village Norka. Ministers were placed in Sabastinanowka in 1765; in Talovks a minister by the name of Saeger came in 1767; in Lesnoi Karamysch a minister by the name of Tarnow, in 1767; in Medwedizko, a minister by the name of Mittelstaedt and in Katharinsonstadt, a minister by the name of Wernbacher, both in 1768; in Wodjanor Bujerak, a minister by the name of Brauns, came in 1771.³ A Swiss by the name of Janet seems to have had the most influence in the early development. He preached his first sermon in the village of Sebastianowka on the "hill-side," March 10, 1765. He had been commissioned by the Basel Mission Society, a pietistic organization in Switzerland. He was very active in the various villages of the "hill-side." A revival, due to his influence, began in 1769. Small pietistic groups were organized everywhere, called "Brueder-Gemeinden," groups of Christian Brethern. Many of the pastors in the colonies opposed, or at least disregarded these groups; they were also opposed by the congregations in a number of the villages. The attempt was even

2. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 143.

3. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 54.

made to have the Government forbid gatherings of these groups, all of which only tended to strengthen the movement.

Of course, these groups were not without fault. Their members soon became arrogant and were very critical of others who did not belong to their groups. However, they did satisfy a need in the early history of the colonies. The beneficial influence of these groups seems to have declined very rapidly after the beginning of the 19th century. This perhaps, was largely due to the death of their important leaders. It may also have been due to the fact that conditions in colonies slowly improved.

Pastor Cataneo of the village Norka was another influential leader in the colonies. He came to Norka in 1784 and very soon became interested in farm problems pertaining to seed, crops, and market prices. He insisted that orchards should be developed, and imported apple and pear trees. The parish orchard at Norka soon became a model orchard. Pastor Cataneo decided that it would not be profitable to develop vineyards, as wine could be bought more cheaply at other places. However, he did not succeed to any great extent in interesting his parishioners in these projects, as the parishioners were interested only in the immediate present.

Pastor Cataneo also tried to tame wolves, and he was greatly interested in mammoth bones and Tartar

4.
graves.

He was the first to introduce vaccination against smallpox in the villages; his services were demanded far and wide because of his medical knowledge. Even the Russians came to be treated by him. It is reported that he performed 16 amputations and 27 cancer operations. He was an absolute patriarch in his parish. Only in cases of divorce and very peculiar marriage problems, "ungewohnte Heiratsfaelle," could there be an appeal to the Court of Justice in St. Petersburg. However, no appeal is reported from his parish. When couples would appear before him seeking divorce, he would permit both parties to state their cases; since both parties were usually at fault, he would dismiss them with a sound whipping.^{5.}

Not all the ministers were beyond reproach; numerous cases of improprieties were reported. Usually these were by men who had transgressed against the moral code in Germany and had been sent to Russia for punishment. But as a rule, the ministers were the leaders of the colonies, not only in spiritual but also in secular matters. According to Bonwetsch, this was true at least of the early history of the colonies. Claus speaks of a moral decline, chiefly due to the influence of the ministers, beginning as early as 1850.^{6.}

4. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 56.

5. Ibid. p. 57.

6. Claus, Alexander, op. cit., p. 404.

Herman Dalton has given us the most complete record of early church conditions in Russia. Peter the Great had issued a proclamation in 1702 in which he had promised religious freedom to all Christians in his Empire. Queen Anna, in 1735, had promised "the Lutherans, Reformed, and Roman Catholics, the free and 'Exercitium Religionis' in our whole Empire, so that they may worship and receive instructions according to the principles of their faith." So, it is not strange that Catherine "promised freedom of religion to the colonists for all times."⁷ Due to the influence of Count Orlov, ministers of all three Confessions were engaged in the colonies from the very beginning, at Government expense. It was also due to his influence that Catherine, in 1765, commanded that churches, bell-towers, (according to Russian custom bells were hung in especially built towers,) and parsonages were built by the Government and the costs thereof were charged to the various villages. These churches were built by Russians in Russian styles of architecture. The influence of Russian architecture continued to be noticed throughout the subsequent development of the churches.

The salary of the first ministers was 180 rubles each, per year; somewhat later, it was raised to 240 rubles.

7. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 14.

Church Government

The individual congregations had the right to arrange the interior of the churches and the order of the service according to their own needs and desires, at least as long as there was no governing churchbody. However, in 1785, Consistories were organized in the capitals of the various provinces. It was not until 1804⁸ that a General Superintendent was appointed by the St. Petersburg Government. In 1810, a "Supreme Council for Foreign Confessions" was organized. Finally, in 1819, a "General Consistory for the Empire" was organized, chiefly in the interests of the Lutheran Church. The three parishes of the Reformed Church--Norka, Ustolicha, and Goloi-Karamysch, were under the jurisdiction of the Lutheran Consistory. The Church of the German-Russian colonies was, in fact, one church.

In 1785, there were ten parishes,⁹ three of which were Reformed. The congregation in Saratow was to serve all three Confessions--Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic. In 1793, it was served jointly by the Lutheran pastor May, and the Reformed pastor Cataneo, and a Franciscan Monk Fuchs.^{10.}

At the turn of the century there were 16 Evangelical parishes. Somewhat later a re-division took place which resulted in 17 parishes--9 on the "hill-side" and 8 on

8. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 69.

9. Ibid., p. 70.

10. Ibid., p. 70.

the "plains-side." This number was entirely inadequate, as it was impossible for the pastors to serve the number of villages in each parish. The parish of Pastor Huber, of Hatharinenstadt, in 1807, comprised 22 colonies! It was a physical impossibility to serve so many congrega-^{11.} tions; in fact, very little attempt was made to do so. In 1858, there were 687 families in the smallest parish^{12.} and 1,500 families in the largest parish.

In the early history of the colonies many of the ministers were ordained into the ministry without adequate preparation and some without any theological training. Owing to the great scarcity of ministers, all were acceptable who possessed any amount of education. Beginning with 1892, most of the ministers were educated at the University of Dorpat in Russia. They received a thorough training in theology. However, in 1838, according to a decree of the Central Government, ministers and missionaries from other lands were again permitted to work in Russia. As a result, a number of ministers came from the Basel Mission in Switzerland and worked in the Volga colonies. Their training was entirely inadequate; most of them were not able to write a letter correctly, and their¹³ sermons were little more than pious platitudes.

11. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 70.

12. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 38.

13. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 86.

Church Equipment

Not only was the number of available pastors entirely inadequate, but also, the most necessary equipment was lacking. There were no Bibles, no sermon books and no song books--no books of any kind for religious instructions. Mission organizations in Switzerland, and in Halle, Germany, assisted as much as possible in providing books.

On those Sundays on which the pastor could not be in the villages "Lesegottesdienste," reading services, were held. Usually the elder of the congregation read the sermon. Sermon books for this purpose were introduced chiefly from Germany. Attempts were made in the various colonies to gather money for the purchase of other needed books from Germany, but were unsuccessful, chiefly because of the suspicion of the colonists, who believed that their pastors would use the money for
¹⁴
 themselves!

As a result of this attitude, if the pastors needed books for their congregation, they had to import these and pay for them out of their own purse. Since the salaries of most ministers were very low, they could buy only those books which were absolutely necessary.

The "Volga-Gesangbuch," song book, was the first

church book edited and printed in Russia. It was the first product of the united colonial church. It is "a collection of Christian songs for private and public devotions, for the use of the German Evangelical Colonies along the Volga." It is a collection of songs from various song books, together with a few original songs from the "Congregation of Christian Brethren."¹⁵ The original songs are marked by the extreme emotional pietism. This book, more than anything else, became the means of unifying the German colonies. To this day the German-Russian congregations everywhere are fanatically loyal to this collection of 878 songs. Even in the United States, there is hardly a German-Russian congregation where it is not used.

Salaries of Ministers

In 1820, the average salaries of the ministers consisted of 350 rubles a year, paid quarterly by the Saratow Bureau; the income of the 60 "dessaitines" of the parish farm, which was usually rented out; incidentals paid for official acts, such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, etc.; and some individual donations from the parishioners. The income varied somewhat according to^{16.} the parish.

15. Busch, E. H. op. cit., p. 16.

16. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 71.

In 1858, in a number of the colonies, the ministers received their salaries in grain: one measure of wheat, one measure of rye, and often one measure of oats, from each family in the parish; in addition to this, he received 1,000 pud hay, (pud equals 40 pounds) or the equivalent in pasture; 300 to 600 measures of potatoes; a large vegetable garden; dry birch-wood and other wood for fuel; and incidentals for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, etc. These incidentals amounted to 162 rubles in the smallest parish and 348 rubles in the largest parish. He was also furnished a large rent-free house of from six to ten large rooms, a summer and a winter kitchen, and special living-quarters for the domestic help. The payments in grain had to be made, even in years of drought and other crop-failures, which was a very heavy burden upon many of the colonists, as they had to purchase this grain at very high prices. If they could not give the grain, the equivalent in cash had to be paid. Later on, this system was changed, and the pastors received their salaries in money, usually from 2,000 to 3,000 rubles annually. In December 1832, a law was passed prohibiting the lowering of pastors' salaries by the congregations, once^{17.} the salary had been set.

At the turn of the twentieth century the incomes for ministers had been increased from 1,500 to 3,000^{18.} rubles.

17. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 88.

18. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 70.

Ministers were elected for life and could be removed from the parish only with the greatest difficulty. Most of them served their congregations until the time of their death, all the while drawing their full salaries. Pastor Jordan, in Balzer, served his parish until he died at the age of 85. In those rare instances when a minister was forced to resign, the congregation was obliged to pay him one-third of his previous salary as long as he lived. The widow and children had the right to occupy the parsonage and to draw the full salary for a year after the death of the pastor.^{19.}

Social Position of Ministers

The ministers had very little contact with the outside world. Letters were exchanged with people in Germany and in Switzerland; an occasional visit into a neighboring parish was an event. There was little co-operation between the various pastors and colonies. Conferences were out of the question.

Certainly the position of a minister was not an enviable one; yet there always were many applications from men anxious to fill these positions. In 1824, ministers from the following places served parishes in the Volga Region: two from Saxony, one from Rinland, one from Sarepta, two from Hannover, one from Holland, three from Prussia, one from Weimar, two from Switzerland, one from Mache, one from Livland. The homeland of one was
^{19.} Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 88.

not known, and only one was a son of the colonies--the son of Cataneo in Saratow. Requirements for service in the colonies were placed at a minimum before 1842.

In 1808, a fund was created for the support of ministers' widows and orphans; 7,500 rubles were donated by the family of the Emperor, and 500 rubles were raised by the ministers and colonists. This fund helped much to bind the various ministers more closely together. Every married pastor was required to pay 20 rubles annually to this fund, the interest being used for the support of the widows and orphans. The maximum amount paid out was 200 rubles a year for the widows and 50 rubles for every child.²⁰

The minister was the supreme authority in all matters of spiritual life. Usually his opinion was also decisive in matters concerning village-life, as long as he did not offend the self-righteousness and stubbornness of the peasants and as long as he did not ask them for money.²¹ Claus states in an issue of the "Friedensbote", that the ministers often acted as police officers. They were supported in their position by the village Kantor, and they exerted an unbearable pressure upon the colonists.²² They exerted the greatest influence upon the

20. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit. ., p. 72.

21. Ibid., p. 81.

22. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 84.

village government--not, however, to the material or spir-
 itual advantage and to the elevation of their office.²³

Alexander Claus accuses the ministers of having been inter-
 ested only in their own personal welfare and caring noth-
 ing about the spiritual development of the colonists.

Bauer continues, "it cannot be denied that the colonists
 became impoverished and degraded in the course of years,"²⁴

The reasons for this decline he found in the leadership
 of the colonial government, in the abnormal power of the
 ministers, and finally in the total neglect of the edu-
 cation of the people.²⁵

The interests of the colonists were materialistic
 to the extreme. They could be persuaded to accept some-
 thing new only if they were convinced that they would
 make money by doing so, "nur wenn's Geld ein trage dut!"²⁶
 Thus it is all the more peculiar that the colonists took
 such an active part in church life. They attended church
 services and meetings very diligently.²⁷ Yet this can
 be understood, for the church offered them the only
 social diversion in an otherwise monotonous existence.
 It was a great day when an organ was set up in the vil-
 lage church, especially if the organ came from a far-away

23. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 85.

24. Ibid., p. 83.

25. Ibid., p. 86.

26. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 81.

27. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 21.

land; it was a great year when a new church or a parish-hall was built in one of the villages. The first stone church was built in Schaffhausen in 1832. Most of the churches could not be heated; consequently services were conducted in the parish-hall, "Bethaus," during the winter months. People went to communion twice a year. The "Bibelfest," Bible festival, was one of the big days of the year.

The first Bible Society was organized in Russia in 1813, by Galitzin; however, it was disbanded in 1826.

Newlyweds received a Bible from the congregation. Another means of getting Bibles into the home, was to loan them to the various families and have the loan renewed on the annual Bible festival. Thus, slowly, the colonists learned to read the Bible, and many of them purchased Bibles.

The colonists were loyal to their church, but it was chiefly loyalty to the outward functions of the church. True Christianity, a Christian life, was for the most part sadly lacking. Continuous quarrelling and fighting gave evidence of the fact that true piety was not part of their lives.^{28.} This was due largely to the lack of spiritual influence on the part of the ministers. The minister was honored but also feared and oft times hated.

28. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 82.

He made himself as little work as possible. Although the villages of many of the parishes were only from 3 to 10 miles apart, the minister would not preach more than once on a Sunday, except on very special occasions in the home village. He had his special "Kutscher," driver who would take him to the various villages of his parish with the best coach and horses available. "He would drive through the parishes like a general!" is an expression which the writer has heard many times. As soon as his coach would enter the village, the men would remove their caps from their heads and their pipes from their mouths. If they failed to do so, they were fined or at least severely reprimanded and usually from the pulpit on Sunday morning. Arriving at the church, the church elders would have to stand at attention and help the minister alight from the carriage and escort him into the church. In some of the villages a special carpet runner had to be laid for the minister to walk on. The whole congregation would have to stand at attention until the minister had entered the sacristy, where the church elder had to help him in removing his overcoat and in putting on his clerical gown. At the close of services, which usually lasted $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours, no one was permitted to leave his seat until the elder deacon had again escorted the pastor from the church to the waiting coach. Seldom did the pastor visit the homes of his parishioners. He would visit only the sick of the most prominent families, and then

only when he was called for. He buried only the most prominent members. It was only occasionally that he would visit the prayer-meetings; when he did visit, he came only to inspect.

Children were usually not permitted to attend church services until the time when they went to confirmation instructions. They did not know the minister, and the minister did not know them. During the few weeks when he did instruct them, he made little impression on the children, except that they feared him. About all that was asked of them was to recite Catechism, Bible verses, and songs. If they could not recite they were severely punished. If at the end of a few weeks instructions, they had not memorized enough to satisfy the minister, they had to wait another year or longer, until they had learned the required material. Children who were not yet 15 years old, the usual age for confirmation, but who had memorized the required amount, could be confirmed at an earlier age upon payment of about 2 rubles.

About one-third of all the colonists were Catholics. At first they lived in 31 separate colonies. The spiritual care of these colonies was no better than that of the Protestant colonies. It seems that the Catholic parishes were not so large as the Protestant parishes. Most of the Catholic priests or patres, were from Poland. Bonwetsch believes that it is that fact which retarded

the development of the Catholic villages even more than
 29.
 that of the Protestant villages.

Interest in foreign missions began to develop about the middle of the 18th century; this was due particularly to the efforts of a minister in Norka, Pastor Christian Heinrich Bonwetsch, who served there from the year 1845.
 30

A man who did very much to reform church and school conditions and to bring about a more closely organized Evangelical church in the colonies, was Superintendent D. Fessler. He is described as a peculiar man with a restless spirit and a dominating manner, disliked as a destroyer of peace, but a genius at organizing. He was born in Csuredorf, in Hungary, on May 18, 1756. His father was an inn-keeper. It was his pious mother who persuaded him to enter the ministry. He became a Capucian Monk at the age of 18 and made a name for himself through various school reforms at the Josephine Cloister. Later he was made a professor at Lember; he also served as minister in Breslau and was prominent in Free masonry. In 1809, he was called to St. Petersburg as professor of Oriental languages, but had to leave after only one year because of his atheistic views. He then became the director of a teacher's seminary in Wolsk,

29. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit. p. 82.

30. Ibid., p. 72.

in the Government of Saratow, after which he retired to Sarepta, in the Volga region. At the age of 63 he was instructed by the Czar to organize a Lutheran Consistory in Saratow which would unite the Protestants in the Governments of Saratow, Astrakhan, Worenesch, Tambow, Rjain, Rensa, Simbirsck, Kasa, Orenburg, and Penn. This Consistory was organized on October 24, 1818, but did not begin to function until January 23, 1822. Staaterat Reinholm became the secular representative; Fessler became the spiritual head and the real leader, with the title of Superintendent. Later this office was combined with the pastorate of the church in Saratow. Reinholm's title now became that of "Dempropst," a title long coveted by Fessler, who would have liked to be called Bishop.

Fessler now inaugurated a reform program. He visited all the congregations along the Volga, became acquainted with their needs and with the various pastors, and immediately recognized the need for more ministers. In 1820, there were 40 Evangelical colonies, with 20,500 communicant members and 4,600 children between the ages of 7 and 14, served by only reformed pastors and seven Lutheran pastors; one of these served 12 congregations, a task which made it impossible for him to visit each of his congregations more than 5 times a year.

The first point in Fessler's reform program demanded that no parish comprise more than 4 or 5 colonies

and that the pastorate be located as nearly in the center of the parish as possible. His second undertaking was to secure competent ministers for the colonies. This could be accomplished by raising the salaries of the pastors, which were subsequently raised to 600 rubles a year. Some parishes were consolidated; others were newly organized.

With the organization of the Saratow Consistory, the office of Provost was created, one for each side of the Volga. The Provost was elected for life. It was his duty to visit the various parishes at least once every 3 years. General Synods were called to meet at Saratow at specified times. One of the other reforms and improvements introduced by Fessler was the reorganization of the church council, the members of which were to be elected every 3 years. Their chief duty was the supervision and management of the church property. Also, the office of church guardians who were elected every 3 years and whose duty, was the supervision of the schools.³¹

Church and school were so closely related to each other throughout the history of the colonies that it is impossible to trace the development of one without taking into consideration the development of the other.

31. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 300.

School Reforms

Fessler placed chief emphasis upon better educational opportunities for the colonists. Conditions in the schools of that time were indescribably bad. This was true only of the later development of the colonies. The first colonists had conducted their own schools. At first there was no scarcity of qualified teachers, as many of the early colonists had received an adequate training in Germany. As a result, the first generations³² were much better trained than succeeding generations.

32. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 90.

After contact with the homeland was cut off, the schools suffered a rapid decline. This was largely due, according to Bauer, to the opposition on the part of the ministers to any advancement in the school program. He reports that the ministers opposed every attempt to engage adequately trained school teachers.³³ It was also, due in part, to the fact that the congregations demanded the right to select the schoolmasters, since they had to pay the salaries. They made full use of the granted right by electing whom they wanted, usually the cheapest man they could get. The position was auctioned off to the lowest bidder, usually for only one year, so that after a year the salary might again be lowered.³⁴ Only the least desirable characters would bid for the position. Usually the teachers could neither read nor write, but they could make a great deal of noise. This sufficed for the peasants, who saw in the school master only a parasite.³⁵ Thus the office of school master declined to one of the lowest social positions in the colonies.

No school program can be successful without good teachers. These, however, were almost entirely lacking in Russia--on the one hand because there were no institutions for training teachers, on the other hand because

33. Bauer, Bottlieb, op. cit., p. 90

34. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 75.

35. Ibid., p. 75.

so many villages were interested only in material progress and advancement.^{36.} They could see in their children only an economic asset. Schools, however, cost them money and took their children away from work.

Another reason for the poor results in school was the great number of children under one instructor. Fessler reports that in 1823, there were 73 teachers for 10,890 children. Busch reports that in 1861 there was an average of 400 boys and girls for one teacher in one classroom!^{37.} The scholar could receive absolutely no individual attention.

In no way did the parents give their moral support to the teachers. Schoolbooks were worse than bad, so it was little wonder that the children did not even acquire the most elementary knowledge of the "three R's." Various attempts had been made at school reform; chief among these was the attempt by Johann Friedrich Erdmann through his pamphlet, "Verstellung an die Schul-Kemitaet in Kasan," December 10, 1815. But all such attempts had been unsuccessful.

Fessler placed the school question on the program for the first general Synod. The question remained on the program throughout the history of the colonies. Fessler had worked out an elaborate reform program; a

36. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 314.

37. Ibid. p. 314.

high school was to be organized in addition to the "Dorfschule," village school; these schools were to train teachers for the elementary schools. The Russian Government did not sanction this plan, as it desired to "Russianize" the colonists as quickly as possible. It recommended that the German children be sent to the Russian schools, gymnasiums, and universities--a useless recommendation, as there were no such Russian schools near by. Fessler succeeded in demanding that those who were to be engaged as school masters, pass an examination before the Consistory in Saratow. The right to engage the school masters was again taken out of the hands of the congregations and placed in the hands of the ministers, on October 25, 1819.³⁸ The Superintendent had to ratify the appointment. From that time on the school masters were recognized as church officials. Despite vigorous opposition on the part of the colonists, these recommendations were adopted.

The social position of the school masters was thus raised. From that time they performed many of the ministerial acts in the absence of the pastor, such as baptisms, funerals, etc. They also read the sermons in the services on the Sundays when the pastor was in the other parishes. Soon the congregations became much better acquainted with the school masters than with the minister,

38. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit. p. 90.

and the school master was very often more loved and respected than the pastor. Thus much jealousy arose between the pastor and the teacher, which was always to the detriment of the parish.³⁹ However, actual conditions in the schools had improved very little. Fessler now attempted various other methods to improve the schools. Public examinations were introduced; funds were gathered for the purpose of buying school books; conferences for teachers were called; plans for a model school were worked out. Fessler himself visited the schools everywhere. Ministers were urged to promote the welfare of the schools wherever possible, and to examine the adults when occasion offered. Confirmation gave the pastor a chance to do this. The children were confirmed on Pentecost and were instructed for a period of six weeks preceding Pentecost. Children from outlying congregations had to come to the mother congregation to attend these instructions. The confirmed youth was further drilled on Sunday afternoon. Here, also, the emphasis was upon memory work, which was soon forgotten.

Announcement for marriage gave the pastor another opportunity to examine the adults. As was mentioned before, each couple had to announce their intentions to become married to the pastor some weeks before the date

39. Bauer, Bottlieb, op. cit., p. 90.

of the wedding. At this time they were examined in reading, Catechism, and Bible History. If they failed to pass this examination they had to wait another year before they could get married.

All this pressure brought about some improvements in conditions. The period from 1819 to 1838 saw the greatest development of the schools of the Volga colonists.⁴⁰ In 1833, the Consistory in Saratow was disbanded, Fessler was called to Petersburg, where he died in 1839. After this we again observe a decline in the school program.

After 1832, the Volga parishes belonged to the Moscow Consistory, but since Moscow was so far distant, there was very little supervision over the Volga parishes; it depended chiefly upon the individual pastor whether or not there was progress in his parish.

Bonwetsch believed that the ministers in the Volga colonies did a great deal to elevate the position of the school masters in the colonies.⁴¹ As stated before, Bauer was of the opposite opinion. Both speak of rivalry between pastors and school masters. These rivalries even going so far as to bring about disruption in a number of congregations. Bonwetsch states that the authority of the pastors usually forced the school masters to give in

40. Bauer, Bottlieb, op. cit., p. 90.

41. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit. p. 80.

so that the will of the pastors prevailed. The school masters simply were not sufficiently educated to do their work without the aid of the ministers.⁴²

It is Bonwetsch again who states that it was the ministers who edited a number of school books, a "Fibel" or primer, and a number of "Lesebuecher" or readers. He insists that it was because of their efforts that the teaching of the Russian language was introduced in a number of schools long before the Government demanded it.^{43.}

Any improvement in the schools which demanded an expenditure of money was out of the question, the colonists refusing to build larger schools for an increasing school population. They also strenuously opposed the introduction of all new books, not only school books but also sermon books. For sermon books from which the Sunday sermons were read, they continued to use Brastberger, Schoener, Franke, Hofacker, Kapf, Ahlfeldt, and Huhn, and later Gerek.

In 1833, district schools, "Kreis-schulen," were organized in Lesnoi Karamysch and at Katharinenstadt. Their chief purpose was to train teachers for the village schools. Bauer states that the ministers opposed these schools strenuously, chiefly because they taught

42. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 81.

43. Ibid, p. 81.

the Russian language.⁴⁴ He claims that the ministers at all times opposed the teaching and learning of the Russian language, chiefly because of fear of "Russianizing influences." These schools were supported by payment of 6 1/2 kopeks per "revision soul." In each school there were two teachers, one teaching German and the other, Russian. Arithmetic was taught up to fractions; also singing was taught. The teaching of other subjects depended upon whether or not the teachers wished to teach them. Some students remained in the school for a year; some stayed as long as 5 to 6 years.⁴⁵ In 1874, the district school at Lesnei Karamysch, had 75 scholars and four classes with five teachers. At that time the following subjects were taught: geography, history, German language, singing and organ playing, Russian language, arithmetic, drawing, hand-writing, and religion.⁴⁶ While these district schools were very much better than the common village schools, yet they were never very well attended, chiefly because tuition had to be paid. Neither did they serve as models for other schools. The colonist simply was not interested in improving the school program.

School population increased very rapidly, but no funds were provided for the erection of much-needed schools and for more teachers. There was no thought of

44. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 95.

45. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 98.

46. Ibid. p. 98.

an efficient school program. In the village school in 1860, two teachers attempted to teach 700 children. In Norka, there were 1100 children taught by one teacher and by one assistant, all in one large schoolroom! The school houses were primitive to the extreme. The children sat on benches without desks; if they wanted to write, all would have to kneel and write on the seat of the bench.^{47.} The only subjects taught were Catechism, Bible History, German reading and writing, and elementary arithmetic. The school term lasted from October until Easter. Daily sessions lasted from 8 o'clock until noon and from 2 until 5 o'clock. In villages with many children, half the children would attend school in the forenoon and the other half in the afternoon. Three kopeks had to be paid as a fine for each day's absence from school. One can readily understand that problems of discipline were great. About all the school master could do was to attempt to maintain order.^{48.}

It is largely due to these conditions that few colonists learned to read and write German well, although they attended these schools from their seventh until their fifteenth year. That the children learned anything under these conditions, is really cause for admiration. Despite all handicaps, they did learn to

47. Busch, E. H., op. cit., p. 313.

48. Ibid. p. 313.

read and write better than their Russian neighbors.

The village of Sarepta developed the best schools.⁴⁹ They were almost the equivalent of the German "gymnasium." Sarepta was the only town where the Russian language was part of the school program since 1780. Many of the ministers sent their own children to these schools.

It was self-evident that the lack of knowledge of the Russian language was detrimental to the colonists, since much of the trade and industry was carried on in the Russian language. This was true especially after the colonists were forced to perform military service.^{50.}

Bassler makes the following statement without qualifying it either as to time or place: "The pastors can be credited with establishing 15 private German schools, with 22 teachers and more than 1200 scholars!"⁵¹ He says they were organized chiefly to oppose "Russian-izing influences" among the colonists.⁵²

A secondary church school under the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation was organized at Saratow in 1866. In the "Saratowsche Deutsche Zeitung," No. 67, 1866, is the following report: "With joy we have received the information that the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Saratow is organizing a secondary church school after the pattern of the St. Peter and Anna School

49. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 90.

50. Ibid., p. 95.

51. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 24.

52. Ibid., p. 18.

in Petersburg. The need for such a school has been evident for some time. In March of this year this project was begun, with the wholehearted support of the whole congregation."

"Carl Kressman, pastor of the congregation, spoke at length about the purpose and aim of such a school at the dedication on August 2. He emphasized that the chief purpose of such a school must be the inculcation of true religion in the hearts of young people, because religion is the foundation of the welfare of the home and the state. No education is possible without religion. He emphasized furthermore that a thorough knowledge of the Russian language was fundamental to the training of the German youth. It is important that the colonists be susceptible to progress and accommodate themselves to existing conditions. Progress can only be made if we take an active part in the life in the community in which we live. Pastor Kressman emphasized further that other secular subjects must be part of the school program in addition to religion and the teaching of the Russian language, such as the study of classical languages, mathematics, history, geography, natural history, and physics."

Kressman became president of the institution. However, after a very short time the school was closed, chiefly because of inadequate leadership. Accusations were raised against Pastor Kressman, charging mismanage-

ment of the funds. He pleaded insanity and resigned from his position. In 1873, the school was reopened as a Russian State School.^{53.}

According to the testimony of many German-Russians who came to Northern Colorado from 1900 to 1914, school conditions in Russia remained about as described in this chapter. School population grew and equipment became more and more inadequate. Naturally, under these conditions the results were far from satisfactory.

Pohle, in his book, "Russland und das Deutsche Reich," emphasizes the chief influence of the church and school in Russia when he says: "School and Church in Russia were free and independent and fostered German spirit and convictions. This helped to keep the Germans pure from neighboring influences. In essence, these peasants remained 'German to the bones!'"^{54.} Faure continues: "Not only did the colonists consider themselves to be the higher cultured group in the land, but they also felt themselves Germans of one stock."^{55.}

53. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 71.

54. Pohle, Richard, Russland und das Deutsche Reich. Kurt Schroeder Verlag, Bonn und Leipzig, 1922, p. 90.

55. Faure, Alexander, op. cit., p. 324.

CHAPTER 12

CULTURAL ADVANCEMENT IN THE COLONIES

The Attempts of Alexius von Frese to Develop Culture
in the Colonies.

Alexius von Frese, director of the Saratow colonies from 1843-1859, was an energetic man who had the advancement of the colonies at heart. He proposed various projects and improvements for the benefit of the colonies, such as the introduction of silk manufacture, the planting of large orchards, the development of apiaries, and the improvement of breeds of cattle. He succeeded in having young men trained in the "art of blood-letting," and in having midwives trained. Due to his effort a number of the young men from the Volga colonies were sent to the Odessa region, there to be trained by the farmers, who in general, were much farther advanced than the Volga farmers.^{1.} After months of training, they returned to the Volga, but the only improvements they introduced, were a horse-drawn rake, and "threshing stone," which was five or seven-cornered, instead of the round stone which had been used up to that time.

Frese further attempted to organize an "agricultural Commission for the Volga colonies." He even had a

1. Keller, Samuel, Aus meinem Leben, 1. Walter Momber Verlag, Freiburg, 1. Br. 1922. p. 185.

plan of work outlined for such a commission, which included enriching the soil through crop-rotation, the introduction of new machinery, the improvement of stock, etc. But his attempt failed because of lack of interest and cooperation on the part of the colonists. This lack of cooperation resulted from their opposition to all innovations and from the fear that the acceptance of such a plan might cost them money.² Leadership was lacking which might induce the colonist to see beyond the immediate present and to plan for the future. Frese also attempted to introduce a system of fire insurance. The need for this should have been apparent to all, since in 1850, there were 18,305 frame dwelling in 170 villages.³ Of course, there had been some fire protection previous to the time of Frese; there had even been some fire-fighting apparatus; and in a number of villages the men had been organized into fire departments. Village regulations prescribed the type of lanterns that had to be used in the barns; also in summer, a large barrel filled with water, was to stand next to every house. During the summer months fire could be built only in the "summer-kitchens." Strict observance of these regulations helped a great deal to keep the number of fires at a minimum. Yet, in 1852, there were fires in nine villages, which

2. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 95.

3. Ibid. p. 95.

destroyed 76 buildings at a loss of 38,500 rubles.^{4.}

Frese's effort in behalf of more adequate protection against fires were fruitless. The first effective fire ordinance was not accepted until 1863. This ordinance required all colonists to subscribe to a mutual policy. Costs were apportioned according to the wealth possessed by the villages.^{5.} However, even then the policy could not be enforced in all the villages.

The efforts of Frese were so largely unsuccessful because he was not able to enlist the cooperation of the ministers or of the government in the various village factions and bribery which prevented the development of any new project.^{6.}

Bauer says of the afore-mentioned improvements: "They were the only cultural developments in the Saratow District for a period of over 100 years."^{7.}

Literary Advancement

"Literature! The colonists hardly knew what literature was."^{8.} There were no library facilities in the villages. No school child had more than four books; most of the children had no more than one or two; many

4. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 95.

5. Ibid. p. 97.

6. Bauer, Gottlieb, op. cit., p. 56.

7. Ibid., p. 56.

8. Ballensky, J. J., op. cit., p. 17.

had none. The books were handed down from parents to children. About the only books to be found in the homes were the Bible and the "Volga-Gesangbuch" mentioned before. Only in the homes of the "most pious" could one find a few additional books: a prayer book, usually "Starck's Gebetbuch," a Bible History, and a sermon book. Newspapers or magazines were almost unknown. A number of attempts were made to publish German papers, but every effort ended in failure and heavy financial loss for the sponsor. In 1897, the Catholics began publishing a weekly German paper in Saratow, called "Ciemens." Somewhat later another paper, the "Beobachter," edited by P. Guenther, was published, also in Saratow. A third German paper, copies of which were distributed in the colonies from time to time, was published in Katharinenstadt. Only a few of the German colonists ever got to see a copy of any of these German papers.^{9.} Bassler speaks of only one German political paper and a few religious papers which found their way into the Volga colonies from time to time.^{10.} The "Friedensboten Kalender" was a yearbook published for the benefit of the colonists, giving religious statistics for the various congregations. In addition it contained a calendar, a number of religious poems, a few meditations, and a few short stories. It was

9. Ballensky, J. J. op. cit., p. 18.

10. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 18.

edited by the theological faculty of the University of Dorpat. The oldest copy the writer has been able to trace, dates from the year 1906. However, few of the colonists ever read this "Kalender," and little wonder, since it was written in a style of German entirely beyond the understanding of the colonists. Among many hundreds of German-Russians in America, the writer has found only one who possessed one of these yearbooks.

The Volga colonist possessed a great wealth of folk songs, which in part he brought along from the homeland and which in part was gathered throughout the years along the Volga. He sang upon every occasion. He sang in his home, at his work, on the street. Everyone sang--children, youth, men and women; even the aged whiled away many an hour singing, but they sang chiefly religious songs. It was due largely to the pietistic movement that in the later history, a taboo was put upon the singing of folk songs, at least upon many of them.

Georg Schünemann has made a very valuable contribution to the German literature of the Volga colonist through his book "Das Lied der Deutschen Kolonisten in Russland." ^{11.} In this collection of 434 songs, he points out how every important act in the life of the colonist and every important historical event is reflected in the

11. Schünemann, Georg, Das Lied Der Deutschen Kolonisten in Russland. Drei Masken Verlag, Muenchen, 1923 p. 11.

folk song. A great number of new songs were developed at the time when the Russian Government forced the colonists to perform military service, November, 1874. The songs of this period indicate how great the emotional disturbance was that was created by this regulation. The following song clearly shows just how the German colonist felt, even after a history of 100 years in Russia.

"Kathrine, die war Kaiserin,
Die zog und Deutsche zu sich hin.
Auf hundert Jahr gab sie uns frei,
Die hundert Jahr, die sind vorbei.

(Catherine was Empress,
She drew us Germans to herself.
She promised us freedom for 100 years,
these 100 years are now past.)

"Das Manifest der Kaiserin,
Es dachte nach den Deutschen hin:
Sie sollten pflanzen Brot und Wein
Und sollten auch Kolonisten sein."

(The manifest of the Empress
Was thought for us Germans:
We were to raise bread and wine
and should also be colonists.)

"Wir verliessen unser Vaterland
Und zogen in das Russenland.
Die Russen waren uns sehr beneidt,
Und weil wir warn so lang befreit."

(We left our homeland
And moved to Russia.
The Russians were very jealous of us
Because we were free so long.)

"So brachten sie's dahin mit List,
Dass wir nicht mehr sollten sein Kolonist.
Ei, keine Kolonisten sind wir mehr
Und muessen tragen das Gewehr."

(Thus they succeeded through trickery
To deprive us of our rights
Ah, no longer are we "colonists,"
And must shoulder the musket.")

"Ja, was doch durch den Neid geschieht!
Hat man das Manifest vernichtet!
Wir stammen aus dem Deutschen Reich,
Und jetzt sind wir den Russen gleich!"

(Ah, what trickery can accomplish!
Even the manifest has been annulled!
We are from the German Fatherland,
And now we are forced to be equal to the Russians.)

"Und schliesst man uns in Ketten ein,
Wir wollen sie zerreiben,
Wir wollen keine Russen sein,
Wir wollen Deutsche bleiben."

(And though we are forced into chains,
Yet we will break them.
We do not want to be Russians,
We want to remain Germans.) 12.

When, a few years later, great numbers of the colonists left for America, they again sang:

"Jetzt ist die Zeit und Stunde da,
wir sehen nach Amerika.
Der Wagen steht schon vor der Tuer
Mit Weib und Kind marschieren wir."

(The time and hour has come,
We are ready to leave for America.
The wagon is waiting at the door,
We march ahead with wife and child.) 13.

Schünemann also shows very clearly the Russian influence in the words of the songs, as well as in the

12. Schünemann, Georg, op. cit., p. 2.

13. Ibid. p. 13.

14.

melodies. Note the following stanza.

"Nun steha mir jetzt in dene Lecher,
Wir wolta in den 'Krepos' brecha,
In dem Krepos komma mir nicht,
Schlaga die kanonen firchterlich!"

(We are now standing in the holes,
We wanted to break into the fortifications,
We cannot break into the fortifications
Because the cannons "hit" terribly.)

This stanza is also a very good example of how the German of the colonists had deteriorated. "Nun steha mir jetzt in dene Licher", should be "Nun stehen wir in den Loechern," (We now stand in the holes.)

Pastor Erbes says in the introduction to his booklet, "Volksliede;" "The folk song must help to build a dam ¹⁵ against the threatening danger of Russianizing influences." Thus the German folk song became a strong influence in preserving German culture in the Volga colonies.

"Thus the Volga colonist lived for over 160 years in all simplicity, without knowing much of the comforts and refinements of life; much less could he enjoy them. Telephone, telegraph service, electricity, streetcars, trains, automobiles, daily papers, and running water, all these conveniences and improvements were not known in the German colonies along the Volga as late as 1920". Thus writes Ballensky in his pamphlet: "Volga-Deutsche an ¹⁶ der unteren Wolga und in Nord-Amerika."

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14. Schünemann, Georg, op. cit., p. 18.
15. Ibid, p. 11.
16. Ballensky, J. J., op. cit. p. 18.

Little wonder that Bauer reaches the conclusion:
 "We must admit that in general the German-Russian of the
 Volga region remained on the same level of development
 which had been reached at the time he emigrated to Russia;
 material progress was not only retarded, but actually
 declined."^{17.} Contact with the Fatherland, Germany, had
 been entirely cut off. Contacts with the new neighbors,
 the Russians, were avoided, because the colonist felt
 himself superior. Materially he had progressed much
 faster and much farther than the Russian. There was
 nothing the Russian could teach him.^{18.} So the German-
 Russian stood almost still for 150 years while the world
 about him moved forward at a faster pace than ever before!

17. Bauer, Bottlieb, op. cit., p. 3.

18. Keller, S., op. cit., p. 191.

CHAPTER 13

RUSSIAN INFLUENCES

Adolf Lane, in his book "Deutsche Bauernkolonien in Russland," 1910, says of the colonist on the Volga: "Language and customs characterize the Volga Colonist as essentially German, although considerable Russian influence can be noticed."¹ It will be difficult to find another group of German immigrants who remained as loyal to their German culture as did the Germans in the Volga colonies. The reason for this, as has been mentioned, was that the German simply refused to associate with his Russian neighbor. Friendship between the German colonists and their Russian neighbor was seldom found.² There was very little inter-marriage between the Germans and the Russians. This was chiefly due to the differences in religion. Dr. Williams writes: "A correspondent in the Dakota Freie Presse, September 10, 1912 writes that one of his townsmen has married a Russian lady who taught in the Semstvo school in their village and that the ceremony was performed by the Russian priest in Saratow. 'Sie ist die erste Russin welche hier in Kukkus Einzug gehalten hat. Die alten Deutschen schuettern zwar die Koepfe, aber ...'"³ (She is the first Russian woman who has come to Kukkus. The old Germans shake their heads, but...')

1. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Pohle, Richard, op. cit., p. 89.

3. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 82.

For many decades the dialect as well as the folk song of the colonists remained almost entirely free from Russian influences.^{4.}

However, in later decades, these^{5.} were strongly influenced by Russian culture.

Schünemann writes: "The Germans on the Volga were cut off from every contact with the homeland. The schools were not interested in preserving the folk songs. The peasants sang their songs by memory, and thus they were passed down from generation to generation. In this manner they were influenced more and more by Russian habits. The melodies were changed, and Russian melodies were even adopted. In later years the colonists got together frequently with Russian peasants, teachers, and merchants. Festivals were celebrated together, and there was even some inter-marriage. Most of the men learned to speak some Russian, while the German women seldom picked up a Russian word. Russian has been introduced of late into the village schools, yet I have met a number of soldiers who were able to speak only the few Russian words which they picked up during the years while serving in the army. Otherwise^{6.} these men spoke only the village dialect."

The German language of the Volga Colonist could be classified into three divisions: the dialect; the High German, which made use of many Russian words and expres-

4. Schünemann, Georg, op. cit., p. 10.

5. Ibid. p. 8.

6. Ibid. p. 21.

sions and was used by the "Dorffintelligenz," (the village intelligentsia); and the pure High German, which was spoken by the ministers. Many of the peasants considered the Russian language as the more desirable one. It was a mark of distinction to be able to speak Russian. "Ach, der kann Russisch! (Ah, he can speak Russian!) was a special compliment. In time the German colonist adopted a great number of Russian words into his own dialect. The German-Russian in Northern Colorado speaks either the village dialect or the High German, mixed with many Russian and English words. Very few of the colonists are able to speak a good High German. Many Russian words were used which the colonist believed were German, such as "Samovar" for "Teemaschine," (apparatus for making tea) "arbuse" for watermelon, "ambar" for granary, "schulan" for pantry, "sidelnik" for back-rest, "plotnik" for carpenter, "kriliz" for steps, "bulka" for roll, "staleschnik" for tablecloth, "klabot" for worry, "plenn" for imprisonment, "prowoschait" for accompany, "gulain,"^{7.} to take a walk, and many more. With the same ease he has adopted English words. Yet the old colonist holds most tenaciously to his dialect, even to this day.

The German colonist very largely adopted the German mode of address. Most of the German names were later Russianized.

7. Lane, Adolf, op. cit. p. 19.

Very early the Russian mode of dress was adopted. The men wore the long Russian tunic, the long Russian fur coat, Russian boots, the Russian cap, and the blouses which were buttoned to the top in front.^{8.}

It has been pointed out before that Russian architecture entirely predominated in the German villages, due to the fact that Russians had built the first houses and churches in the colonies.

Life in the colonies was very strongly influenced in all its phases by the adoption of the Russian "mir." It was due to this factor that the peculiar philosophy of life was developed which, even to this day, is so characteristic of the German-Russian colonist. The colonist clings to the past; he honors the old; he opposes all things new. He is an extreme fatalist. He has always had to depend upon the gifts of nature. For many decades he took all nature would give him, with little thoughts of giving anything back to nature.^{9.} His history had trained him only to take, he had not been trained to give. If he received little it was because "God considered it best not to give him more." "God gives everyone as much as he is worth," was his philosophy. Since the congregation which distributed the "dessaitines" every 10 years was acting in the name of God, the colonist must be satisfied even though he received only poor land! If he was exploited and taken advantage of and

8. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 86.

9. Lane, Adolf, op. cit., p. 15.

remained poor throughout his life-time, he did not complain. It was God's will. If his little orchards died, his creeks and rivers dried up, his land did not yield a crop, then it was a "hard year;" and after 1870 these "hard years" came frequently, but there was little or nothing that he could do about it--it was simply "God's will."

Thus we see considerable Russian influence, especially upon the language and folk songs of the Volga colonists; their mode of dress was influenced by that of their neighbors, as was also the mode of address; German names were Russianized, and the outlook upon life of the German colonist was largely shaped through the adoption of the Russian "mir."

On the other hand, we detect little or no Russian influence upon the religion or the family life of the colonists. The habits and customs remained German throughout their history in Russia. While they did obey the Russian Government, they remained loyal to their old "Fatherland" Germany. They were Russians only because they were born and lived in Russia, but they were Germans because they were of the German race, because they held fast to German habits, customs, and institutions; they were Germans because they loved Germany

PART IV.

THE GERMANS LEAVE RUSSIA

CHAPTER 14

EMIGRATION MOVEMENTS

The Reasons for Emigration

There are four chief reasons why the Germans left Russia. Possibly the most important of these were, first, the very rapid increase in population, and second the decrease in available fertile land. It has been pointed out (page 66) that the population increased from 27,000 persons in 1765 to 126,028 in 1835. According to the last census taken by the Czarist Government just before the World war, there were 202 German villages with 554,828 German inhabitants in the Governments of Samara and Saratow.¹ The number of "dessaitins" per "revision-soul" had been decreased from 30 in the year 1765, to 3.8 in 1850. In a number of colonies the number of "dessaitins" "per revision-soul" later was actually decreased to 1.5. This situation led to very bad economic conditions.

A third factor was that, beginning with November 1874,² the colonists were compelled by the Russian Government to perform military service. Catherine the Second had promised the Germans "freedom from military service for all times." The colonists saw in this move a serious threat to their existence as independent German colonists. "After the freeing of the serfs in Russia

1. Ballensky, J. J., op. cit. p. 9.

2. Bonwetsch, Dr. Gerhard, op. cit., p. 109. According to Pohle there were 750,000 Germans in the Volga District in 1921. page 81.

in 1861, the various reforms which followed, affected the status of the German "colonists." They had gone to Russia under promise that they should have local self-government, retain their own schools and churches, and be free from military service. Now their local self-government was gradually being interfered with; universal military service forced them into the army, and the fear arose that they would in time be denied their German schools and freedom of worship."^{3.}

A fourth important reason for the emigration from the Volga colonies were the opportunities for improvement in other lands. Mexico, South America, and the United States, all offered cheap and good land, and all promised good wages for day laborers. Beginning about 1870, a number of railroads in the United States began to extend into the far West. For this purpose thousands of laborers were needed. Labor agents were sent to Europe, especially to Russia, to contract for laborers."^{4.}

Beginning with the turn of the century, sugar companies in America were also in need of additional laborers. Good wages were promised to anyone who was willing to work. Even transportation to America was provided by these companies. This was just the opportunity the

3. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 2.

4. Ballensky, J. J., op. cit., p. 19.

colonist was waiting for, and so we soon see him leaving Russia in large numbers and coming to America.

One other reason must be mentioned for the German-Russian emigration. During the 1890's, Russia, especially in the Saratow region, was suffering from a series of severe droughts. Crops in the Volga colonies were poorer than ever and many people were actually suffering from hunger.^{5.}

Early Emigration Movements:

We have seen how from 1846 to 1870 the attempt was made to relieve population pressure by organizing new colonies farther in the steppes. We also noted that this movement brought little relief. From 1870 to 1880^{6.} about 5,000 colonists returned to Germany. However, this undertaking was not very successful. Only after many years were these colonists able to fit into German industrial life. In agriculture they were more successful. Even here, however, the first private agricultural undertakings were mostly unfavorable, especially those of the colonists who settled in Silesia and in Pommerania. Only the most undesirable and poorest elements had expressed their willingness to return to Germany. The colonists were all afraid that they would lose their land rights in Russia, and all hoped to be able to return to Russia very

5. Ballensky, J. J. op. cit., p. 2.

6. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit. p. 21.

soon. In Germany the efficiency of those who did return was far inferior to that of the native German workers.

"The colonist did not get along well with his new German neighbor, chiefly because he was always suspicious of him. He was suspicious because he was used to being cheated, and he could not understand that there was more justice in Germany."⁷ Then, also, he quickly tired of the strict discipline and the steady work in Germany.

Another group of colonists migrated to Siberia as early as 1860,⁸ but no record has been found of their activities there.

To The United States:

The first emigration movement to North America was from 1872 to 1894.⁹ A few German-Russians left Russia for South America in 1871.¹⁰ In time large settlements grew up around Buenos Aires and in Brazil. Many of the people went to South America because they were denied entrance into the United States because of the prevalence of trachoma among them. After a few years in South America they again applied for entrance into the United States and were usually accepted.¹¹ By far the greater number came directly to the United States.

7. Bassler, Theodor, op. cit., p. 26.

8. Ibid., p. 21.

9. Ballensky, J. J. op. cit. p. 20.

10. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit. p. 11.

11. Ibid. p. 2.

Here they settled in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas.

"Lincoln was the distributing center for Nebraska settlers and has since remained the clearing house for this particular immigrant group.¹² The first Russian-German immigrant known to have settled in Lincoln, Nebraska came in 1876." A large number of the first group bought land in Kansas, especially in the neighborhood of Russell, and in Nebraska. A German-Russian settlement was organized near Sutton, Nebr., in 1873, and another¹³ in McCook, Nebr., in 1886.

The second, and by far the larger movement, was from 1893 to 1913. The peak of German-Russian immigration was in 1913, over 1,000 German-Russians entering the United States in that year. Dr. Williams presents data¹⁴ of German-Russians living in Lincoln, Nebr., in 1916.

TABLE VII. GERMAN-RUSSIANS LIVING IN LINCOLN, NEBR. IN 1916 ACCORDING TO PERIOD OF ARRIVAL.

PERIOD ARRIVED IN LINCOLN	PERCENT
Total of all Periods	100.0
Before 1899	12.1
1899 to 1903	17.4
1904 to 1908	27.3
1901 to 1913	43.2

12. Williams, Hattie Plum, p. 2. Williams p. 13. C. F. Naturalization Records of Dist. Court of Lancaster County.

13. Ballensky, J. J. op. cit., p. 20.

14. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 1.

Beginning with the year 1902, many German-Russians were brought into Northern Colorado by the Great Western Sugar Company. Today about 14 percent of the population of the counties of Larimer, Logan, Morgan, and Weld, is of German-Russian descent.

"The Russian German immigration to America is a family movement."¹⁵ Most of the colonists brought their families. Only in cases of extreme necessity were members of the immediate family left behind.

"Many of the German-Russians were 'assisted' immigrants, i.e., aliens who came on tickets bought in this country and sent to them. In 1913, 32 percent of all aliens entering the United States were prepaids, and from 1910 to 1912 the proportion ranged from 25 to 36 percent. (Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration, 1913-18.) Of the Russian-born Germans living in Lincoln in 1914, however, 65 percent had come on prepaid tickets, and only 35 percent had paid their own passage."¹⁶ Thus the Volga Colonist had his "way paid" to Russia. Then he had his "way paid" to the United States. Will he find a permanent home here?

15. Williams, Hattie Plum, op. cit., p. 14.

16. Ibid., P. 15.

CHAPTER 15

SUMMARY

The purpose of this presentation is twofold: to make available in the English language a history of the German-Russians; to point out the important factors in the cultural background of the German-Russian people which influence their social, economic, and personality adjustment in Colorado.

History of the German Russians

On December 4, 1762, and again on July 22, 1763, Catherine the Second, Empress of Russia, issued a most liberal proclamation, inviting the people of Europe to colonize in Russia. This proclamation was the first step in Catherine's state program of expansion. It was important for this program of expansion that the population in the territory of the Middle-Volga be strengthened by desirable elements. Russians could not be persuaded to migrate to this territory, therefore Catherine invited especially the people of Central Europe. Then also this was to be the beginning of a program of "cultural advancement" in Russia. These people from Central Europe were invited to become "culture bearers" in Russia. They were to introduce improved methods of agriculture in Russia.

Catherine's proclamation appealed especially to the Germans because Germany was suffering greatly from the effects of the Seven Years' War.

Due to a widespread unemployment, there was much poverty and little opportunity for economic and industrial advancement. Catherine was a German princess from the House of Anhalt-Zerbst, born in Stettin, Germany. Coming from her, the invitation appealed all the more to the Germans.

The promise of free land in a most favorable environment and under the most favorable conditions, and the invitation to become "culture bearers" in a land whose Empress was German, persuaded many Germans to leave Germany for Russia. From 1763 to 1776, when the flow of emigration was largely stopped by the various German Provinces, about 8,000 families numbering about 27,000 persons emigrated from various provinces in Germany to the territory along the Middle-Volga, between Tsaritzin in the South and Astrakhan in the North.

The first years in Russia were years of extreme hardships. Very few preparations had been made by the Russian Government for the coming of the colonists. They were simply taken from Saratow or Katharinenstadt and placed on the steppes, there to till the soil, as nearly all were forced to become farmers. Crop failures were experienced again and again, until the colonists had learned to till the soil. Then, also, the colonists were attacked again and again by the half-civilized Asiatic hordes who resented being driven from their lands. Disease also took a heavy toll.

All the colonists lived in little villages chiefly

that they might be better able to protect themselves against the enemy. This developed a method of "strip-farming," with complete village-or community ownership. The village, not the individual, owned the land. However, each household was given a narrow strip of land to farm, running east and west from the Volga River. The proceeds from this land belonged to the individual household, but the land itself remained property of the community. This arrangement was very unsatisfactory, since some colonists received only good land while others received only poor. Also, with the rapid growth of population, some families were actually suffering want from lack of sufficient land. Very soon the Russian system of collective ownership of land, known as the "mir", was instituted. Under this system, also, all the property belonged to the village, but it had the advantage that each male head of a household was temporarily entitled to a share of the whole area; after a period of 10 years an exchange of plots was made. At the end of 10 years each village received a plot of new land. All the land was then again apportioned among the households, but a proportionately larger share was given to those households in which male members had become of age in the meantime.

From the first a number of colonies suffered from scarcity of land. As the population grew this situation grew steadily worse. While at first each "revision-soul" was to receive 30 "dessaitines" of land, after 50 years

this share had been reduced to 10.4 "dessaitines" per "revision-soul." In order to relieve this situation, a number of new colonies were organized in the Kirghiz steppes in the district of Nowo-Usen, and along the rivers Nachoi, Karaman, and Jeruslan. Even this did not relieve the situation greatly.

The agrarian program of the colonists can be considered fairly successful. The barren steppes were transformed into fruitful farm lands. However, the colonists did not succeed in influencing the Russian methods of agriculture greatly.

Being required to support an ever-growing population within a limited area, the colonists were forced to develop industry. Cloth-weaving became the chief industry of the people on the "hill-side," the west side, of the Volga, which was suffering from scarcity of land even more than the "Plains-side."

The progress of the Volga Colonists was influenced considerable through the arrival of the Mennonites after 1787.

Although some progress was made, the history of the Germans in Russia from 1784 to 1872, at which time they began to emigrate to America, is called a "history of retrogression" by various observers such as Bauer, Bassler, Bonwetsch, Pohle, and others. The colonist was almost completely isolated. His interests were confined to farming and some industry. His schools and churches

were not developed. Only an absolute minimum of literature was produced.

After 1872, an emigration movement began, at first only in small numbers but increasing in importance, until finally in 1912 it reached its peak, when it was ended by the World War. The reasons for this emigration were the rapid increase in the population of the Volga colonies; the scarcity of available fertile land; the enforcement of military service among the colonists; and the opportunities offered in other lands.

About 5,000 colonists returned to Germany. Others emigrated to South America, chiefly to Argentine and Brazil. Some went to old Mexico, but most of these went there as a result of the exploitation of unscrupulous agents who landed them in Old Mexico rather than in the United States, where they wanted to go. The greatest number of the colonists emigrated to Canada and to the United States. In the United States they can be found in almost every state in the Union, but a large number of them live in the states of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Oregon, California, Michigan, Washington, and the Dakotas. 14.05 percent of the population of the counties of Weld, Logan, Larimer, and Morgan in Northern Colorado, is of German-Russian descent.

Important Factors in the Cultural Background
of the German-Russians which Influence their Social
Economic, and Personality Adjustment in Colorado.

1. The Germans who accepted the invitation of Catherine left Germany for Russia with the understanding that they were to become "culture bearers" in Russia. From the beginning they maintained an attitude of superiority toward their Russian neighbors. They refused to associate with them, because they considered the Russians much beneath themselves. At all times they considered their own culture as being much superior. For this reason they opposed to the extreme the introduction of the Russian language into their schools.

2. Chiefly as a protection against enemies, they lived in compact villages. They were cut off, not only from the homeland, Germany, which paid no attention to them once they had left Germany, but also from other peoples in Russia. This developed a spirit of clannishness. Even the people in the various villages developed their own dialect, since there was little or no contact between the various villages. Inter-marriage between people of different villages was the exception. Not only did they look down upon their Russian neighbors, but even each village considered itself superior to the next. Suspicion became a characteristic of the Volga colonists. They became suspicious of their Russian neighbors, who looked with envious eyes upon the strangers and were

always attempting to take advantage of them. They were suspicious of their German neighbors, who were always trying to get some of their land. They looked with suspicion upon the ministers and the school teachers "who did little work" and yet were drawing the best wages in the village. They also looked with suspicion upon the village officials, who were always attempting to exploit the colonist.

3. Their development was greatly retarded through the adoption of the Russian "mir." This method of ownership has never led to development, but rather has retarded progress. It has this effect upon life in the colonies: it led to exploitation of the soil and other natural resources. There were only very few community undertakings. At the end of every 10 year period there was a definite decline in developments of any kind. Why improve anything, if after a short time it would be in the hands of another man?

All this had the tendency to develop the philosophy of looking only at the present. The colonist became interested in living only for today. It became impossible to interest him in any long-time program or project.

4. This system of land distribution developed a strong patriarchal type of family pattern. The larger the household, the more "dessaitines" it would receive. The son who left the household lost his landrights.

Lack of any other opportunities forced him to remain in the "Great Family."

This system led to lack of independence and initiative in the younger generation. The father of the household was the only one who had a vote in the meetings of the congregation. Thus little or no responsibility was placed upon the younger generation. They were given no opportunities to make decisions. All this led to a spirit of dependency.

5. Church and school conditions were deplorably bad. In the early history of the colonists it was impossible to get a sufficient number of good ministers and school teachers. Later on the colonist was no longer interested in procuring them. He was able to make a living with a minimum of education; why should he develop his schools? His church offered him everything he wanted; why should he want to make any changes here? He was satisfied with the past. He looked back with great satisfaction to Germany. He had everything in the new land that he had possessed in the old country. There was nothing that the new country could teach him. As a result, he became strongly opposed to all new things, to all improvements, whether in his farming or in his church and his school. The schoolbooks he had brought along from Germany became a sacred heritage. New books were provided simply by reprinting the old. The school population increased rapidly with the growing population.

However, the number of school teachers was increased only in a few instances, while the school equipment steadily deteriorated. The only interest the colonist had in his schools was the perpetuation of the German dialect he had brought along from Germany, the memorizing of the Catechism, and the learning of a number of Bible stories. Why should he be greatly interested in learning to write well? The only ones who needed to write were the pastor, the schoolmaster, and the village secretary. What chance did the average colonist have of ever becoming a pastor, a schoolmaster, or a village secretary?

6. The Volga colonist had no opportunity for literary advancement. The only books he ever got to read were his Bible, possibly a devotional book or a sermon book, and his schoolbooks. Only very rarely did he get to see a newspaper. He did not need them. He was self-satisfied in his environment. He was not interested in the affairs of the world round about him. This avenue of progress also was shut off for him.

7. Russia was only the temporary residence of the Volga colonist. Germany always remained his "Fatherland." He resented all things Russian. He never became an integrated part of Russia. He always remained a stranger in a strange land. Therefore, when Russia deprived him of his privileges, when it demanded of him the same allegiance that it demanded of its native sons, the colonist left. Never would he remain in the land if

he were forced to become a Russian. He left Russia in great numbers, and today we find him in almost every country on the face of the earth. North and South America have largely become the abode of his choice.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

**A HISTORICAL STUDY OF
THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE GERMAN-RUSSIANS
FROM THE VOLGA DISTRICT IN RUSSIA
LIVING IN NORTHERN COLORADO**

**Submitted by
Conrad H. Becker**

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

By

Conrad H. Becker

A Historical Study of the Social Background of the
German-Russians from the Volga District in Russia
living in Northern Colorado.

Evidence seems to indicate that both as a cultural group and as individuals the German-Russian people in Northern Colorado are maladjusted. Factors which seem to indicate such maladjustment are the large proportion of the German-Russian population in Northern Colorado dependent upon public assistance; their low occupational status; the small percentage of children continuing in school beyond the eighth grade; and the persistent clinging to various cultural traits which appears to have the effect of making the German-Russians misunderstood and socially isolated.

The whole problem is of vital concern to the welfare of Northern Colorado since the German-Russian population constitutes 14.05 percent of the total population of the counties of Larimer, Logan, Morgan and Weld.

An understanding of the adjustment problem involved and a solution of these problems can be reached only through a knowledge of the social back ground leading up to the present situation.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine

the important factors in the social background of the German-Russians living in Northern Colorado which may be of importance for his social, economic and personality adjustment in Colorado.

A second purpose of this study is to make available in the English language a history of the social background of the German-Russians who came to Colorado from the Volga District of Russia in order to create a better understanding of the German-Russian immigrant and of his peculiar social problems.

On December 4, 1762, and again on July 22, 1763, Catherine the Second, Empress of Russia, issued a proclamation, inviting the people of Europe to colonize in Russia. The people from Central Europe were especially invited to become "culture bearers" in Russia. Catherine's proclamation appealed to the German people because Germany was suffering from the effects of the Seven Years' War.

The promise of free land in a most favorable environment and under the most favorable conditions, and the invitation to become "culture bearers" in a land whose Empress was German, persuaded many Germans to leave Germany for Russia. From 1763 to 1776 about 8,000 families numbering about 27,000 persons emigrated from various provinces in Germany to the territory along the Middle-Volga, between Tsaritzin in the South and Astrakhan in the North.

The first years in Russia were years of extreme hardships. Very few preparations had been made by the Russian Government for the coming of the colonists. They were simply taken from Saratow or Katharinenstadt and placed on the steppes, there to till the soil, as nearly all were forced to become farmers. Again and again the colonists were attacked by the half-civilized Asiatic hordes who resented being driven from their lands.

All the colonists lived in the little villages, chiefly so that they might be better able to protect themselves against the enemy. Because of this method of living, strip-farming was developed with complete village or community ownership. This arrangement was very unsatisfactory, since some colonists received only good land while others received only poor. Also, with the rapid growth of population, some families were actually suffering want from lack of sufficient land. Very soon the Russian system of collective ownership of land, known as the "mir", was instituted. Under this system, also, all the property belonged to the village, but it had the advantage that each male head of the household was temporarily entitled to a share of the whole area; after a period of 10 years an exchange of plots was made. At the end of 10 years each village received a plot of new land. All the land was then again apportioned among the households, but a proportionately larger share was given to those households in which male members had become of age in the

meantime.

From the time of the first settlement in Russia a number of colonies suffered from scarcity of land. As the population grew this situation grew steadily worse. While at first each "revision soul" was to receive 30 "dessaitines" of land, after 50 years this share had been reduced to 10.4 "dessaitines" of land per "revision soul." In order to relieve this condition, a number of new colonies were organized in the Kirghiz steppes, in the district of Nowo-Uzen.

The agrarian program of the colonists can be considered fairly successful. However, the colonists did not succeed in greatly influencing the Russian methods of agriculture.

Being required to support an ever-growing population within a limited area, the colonists were forced to develop industry.

Although some progress was made, the history of the German in Russia, from 1764 to 1872, at which time they began to emigrate to America, is called a "history of retrogression" by various observers, such as Bauer, Baseler, Bonwetsch, Pohle, and others. The colonist was almost completely isolated. His interests were confined to farming and some industry. His schools and churches were not developed. Only an absolute minimum of literature was produced.

After 1872 an emigration movement began, at first

only in small numbers but increasing in importance, until finally in 1913, it reached its peak, when it was ended by the World War. The reasons for this emigration were the rapid increase in the population of the Volga colonies; the scarcity of available fertile land; the enforcement of military service among the colonists; and the opportunities offered in other lands.

The greatest number of the colonists emigrated to Canada and to the United States. The migration to the United States, including to Northern Colorado, reached a peak in 1913. In the United States they can be found in almost every state in the Union.

The writer believes the following to be the most important factors in the cultural background of the German-Russians which influence their social, economic, and personality adjustment in Colorado.

The Germans who accepted the invitation of Catherine left Germany for Russia with the understanding that they were to become "culture bearers" in Russia. From the beginning they maintained an attitude of superiority toward their Russian neighbors. They refused to associate with them, because they considered their own culture as being much superior.

Chiefly as a protection against enemies, they lived in compact villages. They were cut off, not only from the homeland Germany, which paid no attention to

them but also from other peoples in Russia. This developed a spirit of clannishness. Even the people in the various villages developed their own dialects, since there was little or no contact between the various villages. Intermarriage between the people of different villages was an exception. Not only did they look down upon their Russian neighbors, but even each village considered itself superior to the next.

Suspicion became a characteristic of the Volga colonists. They became suspicious of their Russian neighbors, who looked with envious eyes upon the strangers and were always attempting to take advantage of them. They were suspicious of their German neighbors, who were always trying to get some of their land. They looked with suspicion upon the ministers and the school teachers, "who did little work" and yet were drawing the best wages in the village. They also looked with suspicion upon the village officials, who were always attempting to exploit the colonist.

Their development was greatly retarded through the adoption of the Russian "mir". This method of ownership has never led to development, but rather has retarded progress. It had this effect upon life in the colonies; it led to exploitation of the soil and other natural resources. There were only very few community undertakings. At the end of every 10 years period there was a definite decline in developments of every kind. The

The attitude was: Why improve anything, if after a short time it would be in the hands of another man?

All this had the tendency to develop the philosophy of looking only at the present. The colonist became interested in living only for today. It became impossible to interest him in any long-time program or project.

This system of land distribution developed a strong patriarchal type of family pattern. The larger the household, the more "Dessaitines" it would receive. The son who left the household lost his landrights. Lack of any other opportunity forced him to remain in the "Great Family." This system led to lack of independence and initiative in the younger generation. The father of the household was the only one who had a vote in the meetings of the congregation. Thus little or no responsibility was placed upon the younger generation. They were given no opportunities to make decisions. All this led to a spirit of dependency.

Church and school conditions were deplorably bad. In the early history of the colonists it was impossible to get a sufficient number of good ministers and school teachers. Later on the colonist was no longer interested in procuring them. He was able to make a living with a minimum of education; therefore he was little interested in developing his schools. His church offered him everything he wanted, so he was not interested in making any changes here. He was satisfied with the

past. He looked back with great satisfaction to Germany. He had everything in the new land that he had possessed in the old country. There was nothing that the new country could teach him. As a result, he became strongly opposed to all new things, to all improvements, whether in his farming or in his church and in his school. The schoolbooks he had brought along from Germany became a sacred heritage. New books were provided simply by re-printing the old. The school population increased rapidly with the growing population. However, the number of school teachers was increased only in a few instances, while the school equipment steadily deteriorated. The only interests the colonist had in his schools, were the perpetuation of the German dialect he had brought along from Germany, the memorizing of the Catechism and the learning of a number of Bible stories, so he was not greatly interested in learning to write well. The only ones who needed to write were the pastor, the schoolmaster, and the village secretary. Little chance did the average colonist have of ever becoming a pastor, a schoolmaster, or a village secretary.

The Volga colonist had no opportunity for literary advancement. The only books he ever got to read were his Bible, possibly a devotional book or a sermon book, and his schoolbooks. Only very rarely did he get to see a newspaper. He did not need them. He was self-

satisfied in his environment. He was not interested in the affairs of the world round about him.

Russia was only the temporary residence of the Volga colonist. Germany always remained his "Fatherland". He resented all things Russian. He never became an integrated part of Russia. He always remained a stranger in a strange land. Therefore, when Russia deprived him of his privileges, when it demanded of him the same allegiance that it demanded of its native sons, the colonist left. He would not remain in the land if he were forced to become a Russian. He left Russia in great numbers, and today we find him in almost every country on the face of the earth. North and South America have largely become the abode of his choice.
