

**TREASURED SCHOOLDAYS:  
THE MENNONITE MÄDCHENSCHULEN IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE,  
1874-1920.**

**BY  
HELENE SARAH FRIESEN**

**A Thesis**

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**in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements**

**for the Degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

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**University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba**

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**Helen Sarah Friesen 1997 (c)**

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## ABSTRACT

Scholarship to date, in detailing women's contributions to the formation of the Russian Mennonite community, has failed to provide a coherent history of Mennonite women. This study makes a modest contribution to that history by examining women's position within their culture and society on the basis of personal narratives about their own experiences and perceptions. A more distinct portrait emerges through the reflections and accounts of former students of private secondary schools for girls in the Mennonite colonies in South Russia.

The study begins with tracing the development of the Mennonite school system. Research into parallel educational systems that possibly influenced the Mennonite institution provides the background from which comparisons can be drawn. Motives for founding Mädchenschulen are examined, as is support for the schools. The descriptive and analytical intent of this study culminates in the chapter where the voices of former students are heard at last.

The Mennonite community's regard for the female segment becomes apparent as the experiences of former students of schools established for them during an era of enlightened reform and increasing prosperity are observed. The so-called insular, cohesive world of the Mennonite colonies was transformed by innovations from outside as the well-travelled and educated, the wealthy and progressive elite conveyed the foreign back to their home communities.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS**

**For sparking my interest in Russian Mennonite History with his personal narrative, my grandfather,**

**Peter David Klassen (1900-1981)**

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**And to Adriane, Blake and Skyler, and other members of my family, and my numerous friends in Winnipeg who supported my project and took it seriously:**

**I would like to express my sincere appreciation.**

## **DEDICATION**

**This thesis is dedicated to the memory of  
my mother and my grandmothers:**

**Katherina (Klassen) Warkentin      (1924-1966)**

**Helena (Bergen) Klassen            (1903-1989)**

**Sarah (Friesen) Warkentin        (1893-1924)**

**and to the subjects of this study:  
the Mädchenschulen students.**

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE ROOTS OF SCHOOLING FOR MENNONITE GIRLS**

The designation "Mennonite" refers to a follower of one leader of a peaceful wing of 16th-century Anabaptists, Menno Simons (1496-1561). Until 1541 a well-educated Catholic priest, Menno Simons accepted the leadership of a Dutch-Westphalian group of Anabaptists, and ministered to them during a time of intense persecution.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-to-late 16th century this fledgling group sought refuge along the shores of northern Europe between Friesland (Netherlands) and Danzig (Gdansk, Poland), eventually finding rest in the Vistula River region.<sup>2</sup> For almost two centuries they made a place for themselves and became an acknowledged economic asset to the structure of West Prussian society, but then pressures combined with opportunities abroad inspired some of them to contemplate relocation. In addition to economic motivation the Prussian Mennonites had a political one: a reactivated encroachment on their beliefs by the government in the 1760s and '70s with its demands for military participation renewed their search for freedom to remain true to their faith.<sup>3</sup>

The tenets of the Mennonite branch of Anabaptists are based on Jesus Christ's directives and example as interpreted by the radical reformers of early 16th-century northern and central Europe and their followers who are currently spread around the world. Principal convictions include a commitment to the call to follow Christ and be part of his living body,

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of Menno Simons, refer to C. Henry Smith, Smith's Story of the Mennonites, 5th ed. (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981), especially Chapter II, 53-74.

<sup>2</sup> The birthplace of Menno Simons was Witmarsum, Friesland, Netherlands, and his burial place was at Wuestenfelde, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. He was a Roman Catholic priest in Pingjum and Witmarsum; as an Anabaptist he found refuge in Gronigen, Emden, Cologne, and Wismar; teaching and preaching from Flanders to the Vistula Delta in northern Europe.

<sup>3</sup> For an account of the history of the Mennonites see Ibid. Chapters I to VI trace their history prior to their Russian experience, which is covered in Chapter VIII.

the church; the baptism of adults as an act of faith and commitment, proclaiming an acceptance of the call; the concept of a 'priesthood of all believers', which does not require an intermediary between God and individuals; the rejection of war and of participation in it; a withdrawal from 'the world' that entailed an exclusion from involvement in politics; a stewardship that includes an awareness of materialism and the responsible use of time, gifts, and resources; and beliefs that the Spirit encourages the continuation of Christ's work in one's community and the world. Practising these beliefs resulted in persecution particularly in the early decades of the 16th century as both Catholic and Protestant Europe rejected Anabaptism. At times, practice has fallen short of the ideals. Renewal of the vision appears to be an inherent component of the living church, as the pattern of recurrent schisms in the Mennonite church over several centuries confirms.<sup>4</sup>

The history of the Mennonite presence on the steppes of South Russia began in 1789 with the arrival of the first caravan of immigrants from the Danzig area of Prussia.<sup>5</sup> Russia had recently acquired the Black Sea's northern shores from the control of the Crimean Tatars--Turkish vassals--with the signing of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in July 1774, which ended

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 22, 23, 111, 116, 132, 155, 236, 376, 507, 509. Smith traces the development of the Mennonite Confession of faith from the earliest Anabaptist confession on record, the 1527 Schleithem Confession, to the generally accepted doctrines that have survived both their migrations and schisms within the Mennonite church. "Essentials of Anabaptism", *Ibid.*, 14-18, is especially helpful. For a specific example of a current statement of faith, see the congregational Covenant of the Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg.

<sup>5</sup> The area of the lower Dnieper River is referred to by different terms. To Imperialist Russia it was New Russia; for the native population of whom the majority were Ukrainians it was Ukraine; the Mennonite settlers called it South Russia, and most obituaries of Mennonites born in the area use this term. Since the main subjects of this study are Mennonites, I will use this term to designate the area which during the era under study was governed by Russia, populated by Ukrainians, and settled by numerous individuals of other ethnic groups.

the Russo-Turkish War. Subsequently, with Russia's annexation of the Crimea in 1783, the Empress Catherine II was intent on strengthening Russia economically and enhancing its power in the region, now freed from Tatar threats and thus open to agricultural development. Catherine and her advisor and administrator, Prince Gregory Potemkin, sought to attract agriculturally adept colonists to settle and farm the rich soils of the southern steppes.<sup>6</sup> Promises of religious freedom, the right to run their own schools, and exemption from military service were included in the privileges offered to prospective settlers. Among the peoples intrigued by such offers of land were Swedes, Hutterites, German Catholics and Lutherans, and Mennonites living in Prussia. Catherine was initially made aware of "the Mennonite peasants and cheese producers of West Prussia" by the Russian commander-in-chief, Count Rumiantsev, who during the Seven Years' War had passed through the Prussian regions settled by Mennonites.<sup>7</sup>

Settlement began when the first of 228 families (1000 people) arrived in the late fall of 1789 at the junction of the Dnieper and Khortitsa rivers.<sup>8</sup> Until the mid 1760s, the area of

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<sup>6</sup> David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, A History of Russia and the Soviet Union (Third Ed.) (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), 295-340.

<sup>7</sup> Horst Gerlach, "From West Prussia to Russia, 1789-1989: Background and Significance of the Mennonite Emigration", translated by Christine Clayton, Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 17, 2 (Summer 1994): 11-12, citing David Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia. A Sketch of its founding and Endurance 1789-1919," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XLVII (1973): 277.

<sup>8</sup> James Urry, "Writing About the 'Russian Mennonites': Concerning People, Places and Identities in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union", Ontario Mennonite Historian, XIV, 1 (March 1996): 3. "Where Mennonites adopted local place names it is probably best to adopt their Slavic forms transliterated according to a consistent system and not their Germanized forms. Thus it should be Molochna or Molochnaia not Molotchna and Khortitsa rather than Chortitza." Urry also insists that "Russian Mennonite" is the appropriate term to describe "the distinctive Mennonite sense of being and belonging which

the lower Dnieper had been occupied by the Zaporozhian Cossacks, who were resettled to the Kuban River region, north of the Caucasus mountains, by tsarist forces in rigorous fashion.<sup>9</sup> The Prussian government initially restricted emigration to the property-less; thus the first contingent of settlers who left Danzig in February 1788 and were followed by families from the Werder area in July, consisted mainly of agricultural labourers and artisans, and included few from the leadership element essential to inaugurating community growth and well-being.<sup>10</sup> Land ownership was one promise from the Russian state that gained status as a prominent value among Mennonites.<sup>11</sup> The first eight villages founded in the fall and winter of 1789 to 1790, the Khortitsa Colony, were on the estate of Count Potemkin, who may have had a personal economic interest in colonizing the area. Seeking isolation from worldly influences, assisted by privileges promised and finally granted by Tsar Paul I in 1801 (and confirmed on 20 February 1804 by Tsar Alexander I), within decades the immigrants prospered and proliferated. The early part of the 19th century saw additional newcomers from Prussia, many of them quite wealthy by the standards at the time. They founded the colony of Molochnaia in 1804 on the river by that name, the Bergthal colony in 1835, and

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emerged in the continual development of a distinctive Mennonite identity in Imperial Russia." Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gerlach, "From Prussia to Russia", JAHSGR, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Gerlach, "From Prussia to Russia", 14. With Prussia's administration resolutely opposed to Mennonite emigration, restrictions were tightened for land or house owners. Due to the scarcity of land in the region inhabited by the Mennonites, and because only eldest sons inherited the farms, the families who registered for emigration consisted of second and third sons of farmers. Their occupations were "carpenters, milk carriers, linen weavers, daily workers, servants, and others".

<sup>11</sup> This value became so prominent that among many rural North American Mennonites it retains a pronounced point in their definition of identity to this day.



especially in the second half of the 19th century, numerous 'daughter colonies' across South Russia and east into Siberia. New colonies were founded and initially supported by either of the first two 'mother colonies' and peopled by those seeking land, for the Khortitsa and Molochnaia colonies no longer had land available for purchase. Eventually, over a period of 130 years (1789-1920), the Mennonites in South Russia achieved a peoplehood with their own distinct dialect (West Prussian Low German) and with ideals perceived to be both unique and maintaining the faith of their Anabaptist ancestors.<sup>12</sup>

In the Russian Empire, the Mennonites believed they were being given the freedom to sustain a lifestyle that could reflect their faith. For decades little interference from state authorities contributed to sustaining this belief. However, state involvement, particularly under russification policies initiated in the second half of the 19th century, instilled an unease and the perception that special privileges granted in the reigns of Catherine II (1764-1796) and Paul I (1796-1801) were being unilaterally abrogated. Nonetheless, state directives contributed to shaping the Mennonites' semi-autonomous institutions, such as schools.

From the time of their Reformation origins, Anabaptist Mennonites have advocated that each member of their church-community be literate, in order that every individual be able to read and perceive the printed message of salvation for themselves. Sixteenth-century

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, Mennonites, 249-356. See Table 1: Mennonite Settlements in Russia Established 1798-1927 (349-352), listing four mother colonies and 52 daughter colonies, as well as estates, acreage and population figures resulting from expansion. A current work-in-progress indicates that villages and estates (*Siedlungen*) to have numbered at least 580. See Dr. Peter Letkemann, report on "The Soviet Inferno: Remembering the Victims of Terror and Repression" project, Winnipeg, Feb. 15, 1997. See also Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982) for the story of the Mennonites leaving their homeland, the conditions of life under Stalin, and their early years in Canada. At the time of the Revolution, Mennonites owned more than three million acres of land in South Russia; Epp, Ibid., 141.

**Anabaptist parents taught their children to read the Scriptures and thereby exceeded the average literacy levels of surrounding populations. Mennonites who accepted the call to colonize the steppes of South Russia brought with them their ancestors' assumption of responsibility for the elementary education of their children (see Chapter I). The issue of gender-based constraints on women's education becomes prominent in the study of the educational system in the Russian Empire (see Chapter II). During their sojourn in Prussia the tradition of providing schools for their children had become entrenched (see Chapter III).**

**The opportunities for advanced education discussed below affected only a small portion of Mennonite women. By observing one specific facet of social synthesis, education of young Mennonite women of that era and their expectations, perceptions and realities in their lives, a clearer and broader understanding of the overall development of the Mennonite presence in the Russian Empire may be found. The scope of educational and career opportunities may also be used to gauge the regard held for the female segment of their religio-ethnic community. Also studied is whether educational reform occupied a more prominent position among the interests of the emerging Mennonite bourgeoisie than in the labourer class of Russian Mennonites (see Chapter IV).**

**One must be aware of the socialization process of the schools which, in addition to family, church, and community, influenced young people to their presumed roles. Some questions worth pursuing are: how closely were secondary schools and post-secondary education presumed to be coupled to career-preparation for women, or was higher education simply intended to be an intellectual-leveller between them and their future, educated spouses? To what extent did the education provided by private secondary Mennonite schools**

for girls, the Mädchenschulen, accommodate their career aspirations, or was graduating from them merely the acknowledged vehicle of social elevation?

It may be worth noting that the Russian Mennonite female identity is seen more prominently in figures of speech (as in 'mother colonies and daughter colonies') in scholarly surveys of Russian Mennonite history than in references to actual Mennonite women as individuals or as a group.

### THESIS STATEMENT

This study proposes both to describe and to analyze. Described is the Russian Mennonite institution of the Mädchenschulen: the position of the community regarding education for their daughters, numerous individual teachers and their students whose perspectives are in print, the curriculum and its stated intentions, and the benefactors and mentors, structure and administration of the schools as they existed in South Russia between 1874 and 1920. The Mennonite girls' schools will be investigated within the context both of Mennonite society in the Russian Empire and of pedagogical influences from German Prussia and from non-Mennonite Russia leading up to and in that era.

The analytical objective will be a discourse of what the Mädchenschulen meant for its students and its male and female staff. In their memoirs and newspaper articles, they reveal their perspectives on their past educational experiences and tell us about their later lives; these writings frequently disclose insights about gender in Russian Mennonite society, about the perceived relevance and significance of the education they acquired as students or disseminated as teachers, and less frequently about their subsequent vocations. Such

chronicles are invaluable for social historians; however, most often social history has concentrated on the social, economic, and political aspects of Mennonite males, all but ignoring and consigning the females to 'the footnotes of history'. This study intends to retrieve Mennonite women from the footnotes and grant them their place in the main text.<sup>13</sup>

This study will reveal details about Mennonite, Russian, and Prussian attitudes in respect to educating women, and about the disparity of perspectives between different social classes in Mennonite society at that time, and will discredit the illusive conviction that Mennonite society was as insular as it aspired--and as it has been presumed--to be. Both complexities within this insularity and to what magnitude the Mennonite community synthesized influences from surrounding society and from their past affiliations, will be observed through the educational system fashioned especially for the daughters of the progressive, economically secure element. Accordingly, the experiences of former students of the Mennonite girls' schools, the *Mädchenschulen* in South Russia, remains the core of this study.

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<sup>13</sup> The words of former *Mädchenschulen* students are meant to comprise the core of attention. However, few people record their lives in diaries or memoirs, and fewer still have these documents archived accessibly. Most of the writers of the memoirs at hand for this study never gained notable public prominence: depositions to history, given by the silent and overlooked, often are not accorded much consideration or validity, a perception-barrier which current social history endeavours to surmount.

## **CHAPTER I            MENNONITE SCHOOLS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE**

**An assessment of the education system Mennonites established for themselves within the Russian Empire will be based on documentation by those affected by and involved in it. Students, teachers, and patrons are among those who have observed and described a system that, in comparison to the schooling available to the surrounding populace, they considered to be superior at the time.<sup>1</sup> Early accounts of the school system generally present situations where advances were influenced by developments in Prussia, their former homeland with which contact continued. Usually straight-forward accounts, they are written by leaders in and chroniclers of community development, such as Johann Cornies (1789-1848) and Jacob Epp (1820-1890); by educators, Jacob A. Klassen (1847-1919), Jacob H. Janzen (1878-1950), Heinrich H. Epp (1873-1937?) and his brother Dietrich H. Epp (1875-1955); and by historians, Heinrich Goerz (1890-1972) and P. M. Friesen (1849-1914).<sup>2</sup> However, the majority of documents relating to the schooling of Mennonite children concentrate on generalities and on the male experience. Early 19th century and later narratives do include a few memoirs from women--former students and teachers, such as Helene Toews (1893-1983) and Anna Sudermann (1893-1982). Such documents convey a sense of the schooling, students, teachers, as well as the educational philos adhered to in the Mennonite colonies. Although relatively scarce, former students' memoirs offer invaluable insight into the**

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<sup>1</sup> When Mennonites referred to Russians, they usually meant Ukrainians, members of the surrounding populace.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the work of each of these men is cited in this study, as is the work of the two women also mentioned by name.

Mennonite Mädchenschule era, the nucleus of this study.

### THE EARLY TRADITIONS

In his study of Mennonites in the Russian Empire, James Urry detailed their initial attitudes to schooling. Despite early pioneer life dominated by arduous toil, the importance of literacy was stressed, as noted earlier, but it was a literacy at a minimal level. Everyone was expected to have "the ability to read the Word of God to enable them to comprehend the Truth of the Way"; as well, men were to have the ability to write, "for all men were expected to hold themselves ready to be called as teachers of the Word which entailed their copying out the sermons of their forefathers".<sup>3</sup> Reading material was confined to the Bible, a catechism, and other works by early Anabaptists. The concept of knowledge was limited to instructions and skills instilled around the home and workplace, and to truths found in the Scriptures revealed through their church elders' instructions. A traditional, pragmatic knowledge to equip themselves for their mundane mortal lives on earth and for the life thereafter was considered appropriate and entirely in accordance with their chosen convictions. In this community which stressed similitude, cooperation, and proficiency in literacy and numeracy, not cleverness, questioning of tradition, or competition, "All other desires to 'know' more than the accepted truths were therefore a desire to acknowledge 'worldly' facts and a denial of the truths, a stand they found supported by specific passages in the Bible".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> James Urry, The Closed and the Open: Social Change Amongst the Mennonites in Russia (1789-1889), Ph.D. diss. Oxford University, 1978; 343.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 345.

Schooling for the children of the colonists was rudimentary. After reaching their destination in South Russia and constructing their dwellings, the pioneers soon found teachers among the village craftsmen (*Handwerker*). Basically what was required of candidates was that they possessed the ability to read to some extent, preferably to write legibly, and to calculate to a degree. In addition, the schoolmaster was required to be able to maintain a good discipline among the pupils. In the early schools almost all learning was based on memorization. Instruction in religion was the basic purpose and main activity, in a co-educational setting, 'although the girls needed less learning than did the boys'.<sup>5</sup> The language of instruction was Low German, the dialect acquired by Mennonites in Prussia, conveyed to the Russian steppes and spoken in their homes and in their daily activities, while the so-called 'civilized language' (*Kultursprache*) was High German, which during their Prussian sojourn replaced Dutch as the language of church and school.<sup>6</sup>

Included in religion was Bible history, the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer, Bible

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<sup>5</sup> Leonhard Froese, "*Schulwesen des Mennonitentum in Rußland*", *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (1967) 4, 109-110. The beginners used the *Fibel*, a basic, illustrated primer; the middle-group used the New Testament; and the senior group studied the full Bible. See also Appendix III, Jacob A. Klassen's account of schooling. It is not clear whether Froese means to imply that girls had less difficulty in acquiring knowledge by rote, or whether they were required to study less material. However, some historians suggest that girls were expected to know less than boys; this expectation is similar to the general social convention held by 19th-century Europe for most girls of that era.

<sup>6</sup> Initially a language barrier complicated interaction between the Mennonites and their neighbours. Urban, industrialist Mennonites early acquired Russian to interact with the native population. Later, especially after the liberation of the serfs in 1861 and the Mennonites' employing more Russian and Ukrainian workers, the language the Mennonites in the villages used to communicate with their Ukrainian employees was a Ukrainian slang. See George K. Epp, "Mennonite-Ukrainian Relations (1789-1945)", *JMS* 7 (1989), 131-142.

verses and songs; in writing, accurate copying, *Schönschreiben* and *Frakturzeichen*,<sup>7</sup> and in arithmetic, simple and compound multiplication. Punishments consisted of kneeling on dried peas, corporal punishment (*Stockstrafe*), or hanging donkey's ears around the culprit's neck. At the opening and the closing of the school day, the class recited a prayer and frequently sang a song together. The community (*Gemeinden*), in the form of church elders, supervised the religious content of the schooling, conducted visits or inspections of the school, and handled negotiations with the teacher. The congregation placed great emphasis on the spirit of religious principles they expected to be nurtured in the school.<sup>8</sup>

Already well-known for his work of improving agricultural practices in the Molochnaia Colony, Johann Cornies demonstrated his vision regarding education. First he painted a bleak picture of the village school in his didactic and satiric description, "The School at X", as part of his effort to improve the Mennonite education system. Written in 1846 for teachers and circulated among them for decades,<sup>9</sup> it depicted a pioneer school conducted by an incompetent, barely literate, severely disciplining craftsman who, being unsuccessful at farming, was given the task of 'teaching' the village children in his poor home, with a curriculum restricted to reading, writing and simple arithmetic, all of which was to be acquired

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<sup>7</sup> *Schönschreiben* was calligraphy; *Fraktur* was the art of beautiful decorative handwriting. Pupils often presented examples of their Fraktur work to their parents, on special occasions such as Christmas, Valentine's Day or birthdays.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 110. The phrase is "religiös-sittlichen Geist".

<sup>9</sup> See P.M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood, 775-776*. Friesen sees it as an exaggeration effectively caricaturing existing conditions in the schools Cornies targeted for reform. His source for Cornies's document is Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschna Mennoniten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben* (Halbstadt: H.J.Braun, 1908), 277-278. Cornies followed this circular with a description, "The School at A", as the ideal, to illustrate the reforms he believed should take place.



primarily by memorization.

A century later, Heinrich Goerz, amateur historian, acknowledged that with his caricature, Cornies had tried to show what a school ought not to be. Goerz added that his grandmother remembered her school days in the 1850s, "how the teacher would sit in front of the class eating hot pancakes which his wife had prepared in the adjoining kitchen while the children watched with longing eyes".<sup>10</sup>

Not every school fitted the above descriptions; there were exceptions even in the early Mennonite experience on the steppes of South Russia. However, what appears today to have been indifference on the part of ministers and deacons, under whose care the school system in the first 40 years of the Molotschna Colony failed to raise its standards, was at that time supported by many colonists. (Khortitsa experienced a similar record of resistance to progress.) As one pioneering farmer expressed his view of education: "My son does not have to know more than I do."<sup>11</sup> There is no similarly overt indication as to the limits of knowledge they wished to impose on their daughters.

## REFORMS IN EDUCATION BEGIN

The roots of apparent resistance to providing their children with more than an elementary education lie in the austere circumstances inherent in pioneering the steppes. Despite their interest in securing a basic level of literacy for their children, in the early years

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<sup>10</sup> Heinrich Goerz, The Molotschna Settlement (Steinbach, Man.: Echo Verlag, 1950-51), trans. by Al Reimer and John B. Toews (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1993) 107.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Goerz, Molotchna, 109.

of settling the colonies of Khortitsa (1789) and Molochnaia (1804)<sup>12</sup>, the attitudes of the majority of Mennonite pioneers in South Russia reflected an "aversion to education, [and] opposition to cultural improvement".<sup>13</sup> For one segment of Mennonites this attitude became firmly entrenched, especially when they observed fellow Mennonites espousing higher education. The Russian Mennonite historian P.M. Friesen observed in some of his fellow colonists the "exaggerated Mennonite fear about the 'too much' of learned knowledge".<sup>14</sup> He drew attention to the polarization which he saw threatening Mennonitism. On one hand there was the

dull 'orthodox' (but not truly believing) obscurantism, hating education; and on the other hand, superficial and pragmatic rationalism and deism, which ascribe to education the be-all and end-all.<sup>15</sup>

If one accepts Friesen's evaluation, one may wonder how and when this polarity developed, and whether the educational system attempted to acknowledge and accommodate interests positioned at various points between the poles. More pertinent still is the question: how was the polarity illustrated in the founding of institutions of higher learning, for girls in particular?

If it appears that the soil for the seeds of interest in formal education was packed, stony, and unreceptive in pioneering farmers' and artisans' fields (as noted above), another constituency was very dynamic and agitated for change. In his sketches of early industrial

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<sup>12</sup> See the maps at the end of this study. William Schroeder and Helmut T. Huebert, Mennonite Historical Atlas (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1990) 13, 16, 17, 21.

<sup>13</sup> P.M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910), trans. by J.B. Toews et al. (Fresno, Cal.: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978) 95.

<sup>14</sup> P.M. Friesen, Mennonite Brotherhood, 715.

<sup>15</sup> P.M. Friesen, Mennonite Brotherhood, 786.

innovators, D. H. Epp refers to an informal reading society, whose members met regularly and sat up late into the night to read and discuss ideas found in the literature they assembled, with "the learning and striving to know the good and the true" as their common bond.<sup>16</sup> Typical of the progressives, and there were a number, was Johann Cornies, referred to above, who emigrated from Prussia to the Molochnaia colony with his parents in 1803. Self-educated and widely read for his time,<sup>17</sup> he was not content with the minimal changes under way in the village schools.<sup>18</sup> In 1817 the Russian government requested the 28-year old Cornies to pick out immigrants from Prussian Germany, because he was not elected by his Mennonite congregation, the young man had to deal with a lot of resistance from his fellow colonists.<sup>19</sup> With a number of other concerned progressive individuals, Cornies founded the Society for Christian Education (*Christlicher Schulverein*) in 1818, which built its first school in 1822 at Orloff, Molochnaia, as a teacher-training institute.<sup>20</sup> What is significant about Cornies' initiative is that until then full responsibility for education had been in the hands of the *Gemeinden*--Mennonite church congregations where most of the decision-making power was in the hands of ministers and elders.

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<sup>16</sup> D.H. Epp, Sketches From the Early Pioneer Years of Industry in the Mennonite Settlement of South Russia (Der Bote, 1938-39), trans. and ed. by J.P. Penner (Leamington: Jacob Penner, 1972) 23.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Quiring, "Johann Cornies--A Great Pioneer. A Centenary Tribute (1848-1948)", Mennonite Life 3, 3 (July 1948): 31.

<sup>18</sup> Goerz, Molotschna, 106-17, says that by that time no longer were "invalids, craftsmen or old mothers" appointed as teachers, and that Fraktur had been introduced.

<sup>19</sup> Froese, "Schulwesen", 111.

<sup>20</sup> Quiring, "Johann Cornies", 34.

Education had not been part of the initial agreement with the Russian government nor of the Privilegeum of 1800. Russian officials began to take an interest in the colonies under Alexander I (1801-1825), and by the 1830s responsibility for education had begun to shift to the *Fuersorgekomitee*,<sup>21</sup> a state-government institution overseeing all colonists in Russia and serving as liaison between Mennonite civil government and the state. In 1843, Russian authorities transferred control of Mennonite schools from the *Gemeinden* to the *Landwirtschaftliche Verein* (Agricultural Union), with an expanded mandate to improve the school system.<sup>22</sup> Whether Cornies operated as a tool of the autocratic tsarist state in implementing these significant changes or whether he toiled as an advocate for and servant of his people continues to be debated.<sup>23</sup>

The continuous flow of settlers from Prussia into the Molotschna for 40 more years contributed to the spirit of regeneration, for they came bearing the educational reforms they had experienced in Prussia (see Chapter III.) Centrally located schools beyond the elementary level--*Zentralschulen*--were founded in the Molochnaia colony: the Ohrloff secondary school in 1822 as noted above, the Halbstadt Zentralschule in 1835, a private school on the

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<sup>21</sup> The full name was *Fürsorge-Komitee für die Kolonisten der südlichen Gebiete Russlands* [the Guardians' Committee for the Foreign Colonists in the Southern Regions of Russia]. With its seat first at Kherson, then Ekaterinoslav, and lastly at Odessa, it was "the agency established by the Russian government in 1818 to succeed other agencies to supervise the foreign settlers in Russia, and be responsible for their progress and administration....In 1871, it was abolished, and the foreign settlers, including the Mennonites, became subject to the provincial and local authorities of their respective settlements and communities." "Fürsorge-Komitee", Mennonite Encyclopedia (1957) Vol. II, 426.

<sup>22</sup> Urry, The Closed and the Open, 348, 351.

<sup>23</sup> See Peter Pauls, Introduction, in Johann Cornies, trans. Peter Pauls (Winnipeg: CMBC and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1995); and my review of the translated edition in Mennonite Quarterly Review 70, 3 (July 1996): 361-363.

Steinbach estate in 1838; and finally in 1842 the first Zentralschule in the Khortitsa colony. The intent was to train teachers for village schools and secretaries for the regional governments, to encourage the teaching of Russian, and on the Steinbach estate, as with other private schools in the colonies, to educate the children of the progressive and wealthy Mennonites of the colony.<sup>24</sup> Children of the labourers and managers on their estates attended as well.

School reforms were encouraged and supported by Cornies, his successors--his son-in-law Philip Wiebe, and others--and by the teachers who were asked to come or arrived on their own initiative from Prussia. Changes made included: roll-call by name; requiring children aged 6 to 14 to go to school; the fining of parents with either money or other punishments for keeping children home from school; allowing the older boys only two weeks away from school, exclusively during seeding time.<sup>25</sup> Outstanding, educated men introduced innovations such as instruction in the Russian language even before it was required by the government in 1870 in both elementary and secondary schools, new modes of singing and *Fraktur*; aspiring young teachers viewed them as role models to be emulated.

Cornies sought educators who would be able to assist in building an educational base to produce model persons who could in turn "return to their settlements as administrators or teachers to instruct the future generations in the new methods...in order to encourage

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<sup>24</sup> Urry, *The Closed*, 350. For decades only males would be trained to teach, females not being considered for such positions until the end of the 19th century.

<sup>25</sup> Froese, "Schulwesen", 111.

progress and change".<sup>26</sup> Among those who responded were Tobias Voth who taught at Ohrloff from 1820 to 1829, Heinrich Heese who succeeded Voth until 1842, and Heinrich Franz who until 1858 was Heese's successor.<sup>27</sup> For thirty years Cornies worked to reform the educational system of his people. In 1846 he drew up a list of 88 rules he wished to be used as guidance for instruction in the Molochnaia school district; it was derived from his informal study of education and included a variety of pedagogical guidelines.<sup>28</sup> He increased teachers' salaries, implemented a wider curriculum (in 1846), and initiated construction of architecturally uniform school buildings.<sup>29</sup> Wiebe (d. 1870) also refined Cornies' initial organizing of school districts and teachers' conferences by scheduling regular monthly, district teacher conferences.<sup>30</sup> Undoubtedly, the efforts of these reformers resulted in a revitalization of the Mennonite school system.

#### THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN MENNONITE EDUCATION

With the Russian government's transfer of the control of the schools to the Agriculture Society, during the period of Cornies's leadership (until the time of his death in 1848) the

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<sup>26</sup> Urry, The Closed, 362, 363.

<sup>27</sup> Goerz, Molotschna, 117-123.

<sup>28</sup> David H. Epp, Johann Cornies [1st edition 1909], trans. Peter Pauls, (Winnipeg: CMBC and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1995) 52-53, translator's note 4: Cornies incorporated "progressive ideas, theories and methods established in European education by Johannes Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and his follower Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). The Pestalozzi-Froebel approach to education was progressive for its time and included such innovations as formal teacher training, emphasis on individual learning, participatory activities such as drawing, writing and singing, and field trips stressing personal observation and logical thinking."

<sup>29</sup> Goerz, Molotschna, 110-115. Goerz, too, states that Cornies was well acquainted with the innovative pedagogical theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel, who stressed creativity and children's individuality rather than mere rote learning, (113n).

<sup>30</sup> Froese, "Schulwesen", 111.

Mennonites' concept of schools and school-aged children had already undergone a transformation. Schools became distinct architectural structures filled with 'school children', and were now under the control of a secular authority. Different expectations were placed on children in an educational system that derived its progressive methods from Russian and German models. While earlier ideology had stressed unquestioning acceptance of tradition, and pedagogical procedure had implemented rote learning, the emerging educational philosophy on the Molochnaia colony encouraged creativity, individuality, competitiveness and exploring previously-limited frontiers of knowledge and thought. While the majority appeared content to have their children complete village schooling, which had been extended to six or seven years, progressively-minded parents recognized the advantages of further education for their sons, whom they envisioned filling administrative positions, becoming educators, or entering other occupations. What ensued was that despite seemingly dissimilar levels of interest in boys' and girls' schooling, daughter colonies followed Khortitsa and Molochnaia in a wave of founding secondary schools.

Funding of the schools was in the hands of the colonists. At the elementary level it was the responsibility of the village community; secondary education was supported either by private foundations, the generosity of individual benefactors, or the District Office, the Zemstvo, responsible for local civil government.<sup>31</sup> In the 1860s Russian officials urged more instruction of children in the Russian language: a 1866 survey had found less than half of secondary Mennonite-school teachers familiar with the language. In 1869, the Agricultural

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<sup>31</sup> James Urry, "The Cost of Community: The Funding and Economic Management of the Russian Mennonite Commonwealth Before 1914", Journal of Mennonite Studies, 10 (1992): 23, 25, 28.

Association ceased to supervise and administer the educational system when, under the direction of several teachers, the Molochnaia Mennonite Board of Education took over that responsibility for the next fifty years.<sup>32</sup>

Reorganization of schools by the state had begun in earnest in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1870, co-education in the Zentralschulen was ended by the Russian state. In 1876 the government offered a teachers' seminar for the Mennonite, as well as for the German Lutheran and Catholic, colonists. In 1881, the Mennonite high schools came under the authority of the Ministry of Public Education. The following year, the village schools were also inspected by the state school inspectors. Russian became the language of instruction in 1897 to 1899 in the higher schools, except for religion and German language. In 1910 the state decreed that the second teacher in village schools was to be of Russian nationality and of the Greek-Orthodox religion. All teachers were required to pass exams at a Russian teachers' seminar. No books could be purchased for school libraries without previous approval from Russian school authorities.

To prevent the state from completely running their schools, the Mennonites organized a society in 1876 which would continue sponsoring Mennonite teachers' conferences, implementing a uniform curriculum for their schools, and reorganizing their Zentralschulen. In 1878 they founded the Mennonite Pedagogical Institute in the Halbstadt Zentralschule and

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Braun, "The Educational System of the Mennonite Colonies in South Russia", Mennonite Quarterly Review, 3, 3 (1929): 174, 176, 177. Furthermore, in "Education Among Mennonites in Russia", Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. II, 154, Braun adds that the "other Mennonite settlements also appointed school boards similar to the one in the Molotschna" but provides no date as to when this occurred.



sent new teachers to further their education in Germany and Switzerland.<sup>33</sup> In the 1890s the Khortitsa Zentralschule under the direction of Abram Neufeld (1862-1909) became a pedagogical institute.<sup>34</sup>

However, even with reforms implemented in the Mennonite school system by Cornies, the state, and other forces, several first-hand accounts of former students and teachers confirm that changes were neither uniformly accepted nor implemented in the decades following. One account filled with details of Mennonite village schooling comes from the memoirs of Jacob Abramovitch Klassen, born in 1847 in the Bergthal Colony, where his formal education began<sup>35</sup> (see Appendix III). The inclusion of Klassen's account of the education experience is significant in that his own education, his teaching experience, his self-motivated reforms of pedagogical methodology, and his progress through the system as an enlightened educator, represent the course of improvement of the Mennonite education system in Russia. (Additional accounts of schooling in the second half of the century follow in the appendices.)

Thus, it appears that among Mennonites in Russia, from the rudimentary reading, writing, and arithmetic that would enable them to negotiate agricultural transactions adequately, to acquiring higher education at Russian and European universities, the parameters of educating Mennonite young people had widened as a result of the efforts of

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<sup>33</sup> Froese, "Schulwesen", 112.

<sup>34</sup> A. Mauch, "Geschichtliches von den deutschen Zentralschulen in Rußland", Heimatbuch der Ostumsiedler, Kalender 1954 (Stuttgart: Der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler, 1954) 64.

<sup>35</sup> Jakob Abr. Klassen, "Autodidakt. Erinnerungen Aus Meinem Leben." (Undated typescript, Winnipeg, CMBC Library), 5. See also Helene Toews, Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit. Ein Buch fuer Jung und Alt. Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse der ehemaligen Schuelerinnen der Chortitzer Maedchenschule (Virgil, Ontario: Niagara Press, undated [1952?]), 16-21.

numerous educators, benefactors, reformers, and the initiatives of the state. Statistics reveal a burgeoning of the numbers of schools and pupils. On January 1, 1850, there were 3,135 children in 46 village schools in the Moloschnaia. The status of all the Mennonite schools in the Russian Empire after World War I and the 1917 revolutions, when the Mennonite educational system drew to a close, is tabulated by Leonhard Froese. For the eve of the "complete take-over by the state" of the Mennonite existence in Russia, he lists: 450 elementary schools with 16,000 pupils, 570 teachers of whom 70 were women; of these schools, 350 had one classroom with one teacher, 85 had two classrooms and two teachers, 9 had three, and 5 had four. There were 5 city schools--in Ekaterinoslav, Melitopol, Berdjosowka, Dawlekanowo, and Slawgorod. Zentralschulen numbered 23 (including *Handelschulen*), mostly with four classes; of these, two were co-educational, 14 were boys' schools, seven were girls' schools; 2000 students were enrolled, taught by 100 teachers. Halbstadt and Khortitsa each had a teacher seminary with about 60 students.<sup>36</sup> However, after 1920, although (until 1938) there were schools with German as the language of instruction, there were no more Mennonite schools.

The Mennonite school system underwent a noteworthy transformation especially during the Mennonite Commonwealth era (roughly 1880-1917). Russification, plausibly even the 'woman question' debate in Russian circles, increasing contact with European philosophies governing several facets of life, the bourgeois aspirations of wealthy, educated progressive Mennonites for their sons and daughters--all affected change in the structure of the society of the people who once sought isolation from worldly influences.

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<sup>36</sup> Froese, "Schulwesen", 113.

Popular memory, while acknowledging that exceptions did exist, holds fast to the model of Mennonites being a humble, unobtrusive farming folk who generally did not fall prey to the ambitions of pursuing worldly wisdom and wealth. Historical scholarship continues to redefine the Russian Mennonite constituency and to revise popular misconceptions inherent in that image. The traditional Mennonite world, thought to have been cohesive and homogeneous, appears now to have been as layered with dissimilarities as with commonalities. Tensions and contradictions arose as the culture continued to develop into the Mennonite Commonwealth; this created a fascinating final half-century of their history in the Russian Empire.

It is this latter period that witnessed a challenge to Mennonites' traditional expectations of the roles and status of women. One speculates to what extent this transformation might have been a direct result of an accelerated accommodation of higher education for young women, and to what magnitude circumstances beyond their immediate environment were responsible. How influential the Russian educational system and philosophy--and the Ukrainian and Prussian, for that matter--were in the evolution of the Mennonite school system, particularly on the schools for girls and on the educational and career opportunities for Mennonite young women, are issues dealt with in the first two of the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER II: RUSSIA'S EDUCATION FOR GIRLS**

In order to ascertain to what extent educational prospects for young women in the Russian Empire influenced the Mennonite Mädchenschulen and affected their structure, curriculum, staffing and funding, attention is here paid to the national scene. This chapter will sketch the elementary school system as it developed from the pre-Modern Russia era to the time of Catherine II, survey the evolution of secondary schooling for girls under Catherine, profile the elementary school system as it developed into the late 19th century, and examine the expansion of women's educational prospects, including universities, in the latter half of that century. By considering Mennonite women's education as contained within this larger framework, the core point of interest can be focused more sharply, and the degree to which the Mädchenschulen were truly Mennonite entities or a consequence of trends in European or Russian society can be explored.

The development of modern Russia's education system ran a complex course, particularly during the 19th century. Fluctuations in educational policy reflected extremes as periods of relative progress, under Alexander I (1801-1825) and Alexander II (1855-1881), were interspersed with periods of autocratic reaction, under Nicholas I (1825-1855) and Alexander III (1881-1894), until in the final days of Imperialist Russia, after a decade of considerable momentum, progress expired amidst aloofness, hesitation and the contradictory policies of Nicholas II (1894-1917). The reforms proposed and implemented strongly reflected not only the monarchy's philosophy of education but also its concepts of culture and level of concern for the welfare of the empire's multinational population. In addition to the inveterate division-by-class system prevalent throughout the country until at least the end of

the 19th century, the weighty Russian bureaucracy, often headed by obstructionist ministers, was a critical determinant in the implementation of policy and the complexity of the education system. Policies were set and not always implemented before new ones were introduced.

#### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PRIOR TO CATHERINE'S REFORMS

With the exception of Peter the Great, Catherine's predecessors did not make the education of their people one of their goals. The Zemskii Sobor, a consultative group of titled aristocracy and leading clergy convened by Ivan IV,<sup>1</sup> never in its existence (1566-1682) endeavoured to improve educational opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the 15th century, the archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church had recommended that children study in schools, for private instruction for children of the highest nobility was the only schooling available. Even among the clergy, illiteracy was a problem; in its 1551 meeting, the church council, or Stoglav, decreed that "schools be conducted in the homes of the better educated city priests to teach reading, writing and singing as well as the doctrines of the Church".<sup>3</sup> A handful of parish elementary schools were established in a few cities and monasteries; the lower clergy remained resistant to learning.

However, there was an exception of long standing: "[t]he roots of education ran deep in Ukrainian soil."<sup>4</sup> In the 16th century, several schools were established in the region around

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<sup>1</sup> MacKenzie and Curran, A History of Russia, 167.

<sup>2</sup> William H.E. Johnson, Russia's Educational Heritage (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 13, quoting M. Kovalevsky.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>4</sup> David Saunders, The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture 1750-1850 (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1985), 44.

Kiev, long "under the cultural influence of western Europe".<sup>5</sup> David Saunders states that "[t]he Ukrainian educational spectrum was broader than any to be found in the Russian Empire before the widespread introduction of state-run secular schools in the 1780s". In the 1740s, there were "866 schools in seven of the ten regiments of the Hetmanate...in other words, in more than 80 percent of the centres of population in those areas."<sup>6</sup> These schools are described as having been "forward-looking and combative" in the 16th and 17th centuries, and in the 18th, "they continued to produce creative thinkers and to foster local culture."<sup>7</sup> Under the Hetmans the region of Ukraine had a higher degree of literacy than did Muscovite Russia; in the 1760s, the Hetmanate gentry called for universities. In the late 18th century, the Kiev Academy (1615) provided Russian schools with outstanding staff; the academy "stood at the summit of the Ukrainian national order...because it sprang from more cultivated traditions than those...in the north."<sup>8</sup> The Kiev Academy, "the prototype for other Ukrainian seminaries", and the Kharkiv Collegium (1722), ranked as the top two educational institutions of Ukraine into the 19th century.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Mennonite colonists' experience, in regards to education, was actually contained within an anomaly within the wider Russian condition. This situation may not have been recognized by the Mennonite colonists when they themselves expanded their schooling.

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Struggle, 15. In 1667, the half of Ukraine to the east and north of Kiev was annexed to Muscovite Russia.

<sup>6</sup> Saunders, Ukrainian Impact, 44.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 43, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 49.

Moscovite Russia had several types of schools by mid-17th century: three types to educate the classes filling civic and clerical positions; and one to provide literacy in the native language for town and village people, supported by them with little interference from the state.<sup>10</sup> The Moscow Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy was founded in 1687. Concurrently, "Old Believers" schools arose, and in these "people's schools" appeared the first female teachers in Russia.<sup>11</sup> As well, by 1724 there were 46 elementary schools for Russian Orthodox Church novitiates.<sup>12</sup> But the majority of people would have no opportunity to learn to read and write until the 20th century.

#### SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS--THE FOUNDATION

Around the time Russian Mennonites began to voice their own interests in educating their young women, in the latter half of the 19th century, opportunities for education for women in Russia were limited, even though the Empress Catherine II (1762-1796) had taken some initiative in founding schools for girls of the upper classes. The deeply-rooted view of Russian, and the greater part of European, culture held that, in addition to rank and function, gender should determine the quantity and quality of education individuals would receive. Above all, the class-polarization of society dictated that education be status-oriented. Although Catherine II planted the foundation of educational reform,<sup>13</sup> in the Russian Empire no secondary education was available to girls of all classes until the 1850s, and no post-

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<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 15-17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>13</sup> George K. Epp, The Educational Policies of Catherine II (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984).

secondary education for women until the 1870s. Prior to the educational reforms of the 1860s, the two kinds of secondary schools available were accessible only to gentry girls: the government-operated Smolny Institute created in 1764 by Catherine II for "well-born girls", and private boarding schools --chastnyi zhenskii pansion--owned and operated by foreign-born women.<sup>14</sup> "[A]rtificial and remote from everyday life", is Richard Stites's assessment of the education girls received in the two institutions.<sup>15</sup>

Just prior to the beginning of Catherine's reign and the first of her reforms, one of the private institutions that included girls was the school of the Lutheran St. Peter's Church which had functioned in St. Petersburg for many years before it came under the leadership of the pastor of the church, Anton BÜsching from Germany. While in October 1762 the newly reformed school had 50 pupils, the school's new teaching methods appeared so innovative that by the spring of 1763, 300 students of all nationalities and of both genders were enrolled.<sup>16</sup> It was on this school that Catherine II was to model her own reforms. Although a broad range of courses was available to both genders, for young women the emphasis was on instruction in religion, history, and languages, while the young men had more science options. And while the study of Latin and Greek was essential for boys--who were expected to go on to the university--girls were required to learn the art of sewing, embroidery, drawing, and the

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia. Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 43.



skills of music and dance.<sup>17</sup>

In the genesis of education for women in Russia, Catherine's educational, social and political ideologies and the basis for her reforms appear to have been inspired by the "French Movement of Enlightenment".<sup>18</sup> Her extensive reading included the works of Voltaire, whose ideas evidently shaped her personal out-look on life; the ideals of Montesquieu and Beccaria influenced her political, and those of Locke and Rousseau, her educational reforms.<sup>19</sup> Catherine "was a disciple of the philosophes and the Aufklärer and adopted their ideas...and [she] disseminated the ideas of the Enlightenment in Russia", for "Locke's utilitarian moral purpose of education" confirmed for Catherine that Russia could be changed only through education.<sup>20</sup>

An equally strong influence on Catherine's "attempt to build up a national [school] system" were the "class demands of the gentry".<sup>21</sup> The two most difficult problems facing her were serfdom and education.<sup>22</sup> Recognizing the important role of education in elevating the nation to "a higher level of culture" and objecting to the existing elite-oriented system, Catherine realized that "she needed the elite...and therefore she never dreamed of eliminating

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<sup>17</sup> J.L. Black, Citizens For the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth Century Russia (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 154.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Hans, History of Russian Educational Policy (New York: Russell & Russell, 1931, 1964), 17.

<sup>19</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 14-15, 138.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 137, 139.

<sup>21</sup> Hans, Policy, 17.

<sup>22</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 19, 23.

the professional schools, but she intended to shift the priorities of the state's educational efforts".<sup>23</sup> She viewed education as "a social force which could mold the future, produce cultured citizens, form character, and control behaviour";<sup>24</sup> She was to begin her experiment with educational reform "from the most neglected corner--the education of women".<sup>25</sup>

In 1763, Catherine II's critical evaluation of the entire educational policy of Russia began; she initiated educational reform when on 2 March 1764, her "Statute of the Smolny School for Noble Girls" directive established State boarding schools for girls of noble origin. They were to be taught to read and write, and to become proficient in "the domestic arts".<sup>26</sup> A 12-year course for girls, located at the Voskerensky or Smolny monastery in St. Petersburg,<sup>27</sup> it was modeled on the Saint-Cyr school for girls in France, founded in 1686 by Madame de Maintenon.<sup>28</sup> Enrolled at the boarding school initially were daughters of the royal guard and court officials, but eventually those from the upper nobility were attracted as well.<sup>29</sup> Reluctant to part with their daughters at the young age of five or six, parents felt "[t]he idea of education for girls was too revolutionary"; thus, the first class of 50 girls was not filled until 1767.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 39, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 50.

<sup>26</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 50; Hans, Policy, 18; Black, Citizens, 156.

<sup>27</sup> Black, Citizens, 156.

<sup>28</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Black, Citizens, 159-160.

<sup>30</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 51.

As many as 200 pupils were to be admitted to Smolny in groups of fifty every three years, from the age of five or six. The group remained in each of the four classes for three years before proceeding to the next stage. Parents had to provide proof of their daughter's noble birth, assurance of her good health, and a promise not to request her withdrawal during her twelve years at Smolny.<sup>31</sup> Female teachers boarded at the school as well and were expected to be on duty twenty-four hours a day; the headmistress and teachers were expected to assert their guiding presence and influence in a subtle but firm manner.<sup>32</sup> Smolny was partly supported by Catherine and her advisor, Betskoi, from their own funds,<sup>33</sup> for it was not part of the Ministry of Education.

In addition to academic subjects and catechism, ethics, art, household economy, music, and needlework, the curriculum included the "secular virtues [of] courtesy, meekness, temperance, consistency in moral conduct, cleanliness ...and modesty".<sup>34</sup> Classes were conducted in the French language until 1783, when instruction began to be given in Russian.<sup>35</sup>

Opinions of the Smolny Institute and of the pansiony run to the negative side. The girls' schools were seen as "shelters of aristocratic Russian girlhood, [where] enrollments were kept small and select, [and they] graduated an average of seventy girls a year in its first

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<sup>31</sup> Black, Citizens, 157.

<sup>32</sup> Epp, Citizens, 52; Johnson, Heritage, 44.

<sup>33</sup> Black, Citizens, 160.

<sup>34</sup> Black, Citizens, 157, 158.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 44.

century of existence",<sup>36</sup> and as "preserves of the privileged [who] cultivated the social arts deemed most appropriate to future wives and mothers of aristocratic households".<sup>37</sup> Former students criticized Smolny's lack of emphasis on the academic pursuits of reading and scientific knowledge, and its cloistered atmosphere. In her memoirs published in the 1860s, one student recalled her experiences in an unfavourable light, citing "the aridity of instruction, the institutionalized hostility toward enthusiasm for learning...and the absence of meaningful preparation for life." In the public's opinion, "[t]he institutka was a standing joke in Russian society, and the word became a veritable synonym for the light-headed and the ultra-naive female".<sup>38</sup>

Yet earlier in the history of the Smolny school, the memoirs of Glafira Rzhevskaja, one of the girls in the first class to graduate in 1776, abounded with praise for the school and for the Empress who had designed the foundation of education accessible to girls, for she "was very favorably impressed by her experience at one of Catherine's early schools".<sup>39</sup> In its time, Smolny was "one of the most progressive programs in Europe": its first graduation "marked the beginning of a new era in Russian society".<sup>40</sup> Catherine took the unprecedented step of employing her Smolny graduates as headmistress and teachers of the younger boys

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<sup>36</sup> Stites, Liberation, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Christine Johanson, Women's Struggle For Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 3-4. Former students Vera N. Figner and Elizaveta N. Vodovozova were the critics cited.

<sup>38</sup> Stites, Liberation, 5. Parietals, visitation rules in a dormitory for members of the opposite sex, were strictly imposed. Dolgomosteva was the former student whose memoirs Stites quotes.

<sup>39</sup> Cited in Epp, Catherine II, 56-57.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 51, 52.

(aged 5 to 9) enrolled in the Cadet Corpus.<sup>41</sup>

In 1765, the year following the decree establishing the Smolny school, Ivan Betskoi--Catherine's advisor and president of the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg--organized a school for girls of bourgeois background, the Novodevichy Convent Institute.<sup>42</sup> A state-financed school designed to accommodate 240 girls, the Voskresenskii Novodevichii Convent stood as evidence of Catherine's view that education was important for women of all classes.<sup>43</sup> At first she intended that both boys' and girls' schools have identical curricula, but this advanced idea was not implemented.

In 1784, her academic reforms included a new programme of study for students at the Smolny Institute, similar to one she soon was to propose shortly for her national public school system. The curriculum differed little from the initial one.<sup>44</sup> The traditional subjects of needlework, music and dance were retained, with instruction given after regular class time. A transformation of the educational system for girls and women had begun, but the following century would witness even greater changes as the value of educating young women was more widely recognized and accepted.

#### ELEMENTARY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM

In 1770, Catherine assembled the Legislative Commission. Despite opposition from the merchants and nobility against educating peasants, it proposed public schools for rural as

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<sup>41</sup> Johnson, Heritage, p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> Black, Citizens, 160; Hans, Policy, 18-19.

<sup>43</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 54-55.

<sup>44</sup> Black, Citizens, 164.

well as urban children of all classes and both genders.<sup>45</sup> Most policies implemented were based on the Prussian model.<sup>46</sup>

Upon the advice of Iankovich de Mirjevo, a graduate of Vienna University, Catherine's Statute of 1786 called for an imperial public school system intended for both boys and girls from the lower classes,<sup>47</sup> and consisted of educational opportunities to children outside the primary centres. The lack of teachers and public support for universal education hindered her vision of providing education for all Russians. At first the system served only the towns, disregarding the villages where more than 90% of the population dwelt.<sup>48</sup> The plan was for "major" schools to be set up in large towns or cities for every 100 families, and to consist of five grades; for every 100 to 250 families the smaller towns and villages were to receive "minor" schools with their two year-courses providing instruction in reading and writing, religious history and catechism, and the fundamentals of Russian grammar. Drawing was an option only if one of the teachers was qualified to teach it. The major schools' curriculum was similar but more meticulous, with additional, advanced courses.<sup>49</sup> No mention is made of differences in curricula for boys and girls at the elementary level. By 1796, the new public elementary schools had graduated 164,135 boys and 12,595 girls, which may be regarded as

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<sup>45</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 69-70.

<sup>46</sup> Hans, Policy, 21-22. In 1780 at a meeting with Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, his accounts of the success of the Austrian school system impressed her. See Black, Citizens, 6-7, for an opinion that the ideology of Immanuel Kant's philosophy was a factor in the reform of the Prussian educational system in the 18th century, and thus also on the Russian.

<sup>47</sup> Black, Citizens, 170.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Black, Citizens, 142.

"a significant accomplishment" (even if only 7% were female); the figures can be seen as testimony to Catherine's view that elementary education for her people was a "first step toward enlightenment".<sup>50</sup> The foundation for Russia's national public school system was laid by the reforms of the 1780s. Thus, although "there is no doubt that [Catherine's] achievements in the field of education left a profound impression on the substance of Russian learning, and may even have charted some of its subsequent channels",<sup>51</sup> the disparity between higher education for boys and for girls was quite obvious.

#### THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF RUSSIAN WOMEN

One historian documenting educational options available to different classes of Russian children up to the end of Alexander I's reign concludes that "the equality of the sexes did not exist in its proper sense, and it was perhaps only because of the ambiguity of the law that girls were present both in District Schools and Gymnasia".<sup>52</sup> The basis for gender-barriers to education can be discerned in Russian society's entrenched view of the status and role of women. Marriage and maternity were not uniquely Russian 19th-century expectations of women, and neither were the curtailments imposed on them. But in Russia, for example, permission from one's father or husband was required for a passport; this law resulted in "a lack of mobility and [an] absence of rights" for women.<sup>53</sup> Implicit in Byzantine Christianity, and transferred into Slavic Orthodox Christianity, was the medieval "doctrine of the impurity

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<sup>50</sup> Epp, Catherine II, 135, 169.

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 61.

<sup>52</sup> Hans, Policy, 58.

<sup>53</sup> Stites, Liberation, 7; Johanson, Struggle, 4.

of the female sex", the corollary of which was "the universal belief that women were inferior to men". Added to these notions were: the family was the only focus for a woman; her position of least importance within her family, a subordinate role; popular aphorisms which had roots in a Byzantine collection of misogynous judgments; and the gender segregation embodied by the Terem. "From all this flowed the general principle that girls and women should do less, be less, and get less...inheritance...than men or boys".<sup>54</sup>

Within a century after Peter the Great's initial contacts with Western European culture, attitudes toward women had begun to shift: "the isolated and inferior sexual chattel of the boyars was transmuted into the...respected--even exalted--Russian lady".<sup>55</sup> Women's own self-awareness evolved in relation to "the kind, the volume, and the origin of the 'culture' imported into Russia from Europe".<sup>56</sup> By the beginning of the 19th century, among the gentry the image of the ideal Russian woman was being articulated as the dutiful and virtuous exemplifier, the guardian and transmitter of morality and civility. Russian tradition would be challenged by women's demands for higher education. With the gradual transformation of society's views of women, among the privileged classes at least, the realization of the shortcomings and inequalities within the Russian education system had begun to be officially recognized.

#### FURTHER REFORMS, AND RESTRAINTS

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<sup>54</sup> Stites, Liberation, 12, 13. The 12th-century collection was The Bee. The zhenskii terem was the women's tower or female quarter in upper-class homes.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Attitudinal change toward women was far from the only facet of Russian society influenced by European culture.



Paul I's Empress Maria followed Catherine's lead when she opened "a separate school for bourgeoisie in 1797, the Mariansky Institute..."<sup>57</sup> Later, Paul I decreed that both types of schools--`secondary schools'--be put under the direction of his wife.<sup>58</sup> This action appears to have been a rare exception to his reactionary attack on education. By 1825 there were 12 such institutes, known as the "Maria Schools" administered by the Fourth Department, which throughout the 19th century maintained their independence from the state, i.e., from the Ministry of Public Instruction.<sup>59</sup>

By mid century, with boys in the elementary system out-numbering girls by more than eleven to one,<sup>60</sup> the need for reforming girls' education was simultaneously recognized and resisted in Russia. This reawakening of interest in educating young women was partly a result of the long period of reaction under Nicholas I.

Before him, Alexander I had begun his reign with liberal principles, intending to democratize Russian society through education (the Ministry of Public Instruction came into being in 1802); he is regarded as the architect of the Russian national school system with a

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<sup>57</sup> Black, Citizens, 169. At the same time, the Empress Maria opened another separate school for noble girls, the St. Catherine's school.

<sup>58</sup> These institutes were managed under the auspices of the Fourth Department, a section of the Imperial Chancellery, established in the name of the Dowager Empress Mariia Fedorovna. See Johanson, Struggle, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Hans, Policy, 19, 57. The 25 institutes of the Fourth Department signified the most advanced educational facilities open to Russian girls in the mid-19th century; Johanson, Struggle, 3.

<sup>60</sup> In 1856, one-tenth of 1% of the female population of Russia versus 1.3% of the male population attended primary school. See Johanson, Struggle, 3.

framework surviving more than a century of fluctuations of educational policy.<sup>61</sup> Educational policy was strongly influenced by Polish and French educational ideals and practices. Alexander I's Statutes of 1804, which followed the Condorcet's 1792 model in France, laid down as a basis of the Russian educational system the ideas of equality and utility: all children of the nation irrespective of their age, sex or rank were to receive "a complete and useful education".<sup>62</sup>

However, only the clause referring to the parochial schools (the first level, for children aged six to ten) stated that they were open to girls, although there appear to have been no laws forbidding girls to enter secondary schools or universities in Alexander I's reign.<sup>63</sup> The number of girls in the Ministry of Public Instruction schools increased: in 1802, 2007 girls were enrolled, 5,835 in 1824.<sup>64</sup> The figures include those in private schools. If this is the total number of girls above parochial level for the entire population of the Empire, the low numbers are truly appalling. In addition to schools already established by Catherine and by Maria, 19 district schools (the second level, for ages 10 to 14) and Töchterschulen were opened for girls by the end of Alexander I's reign; earlier, in 1808, girls were allowed into the third-level schools, the gymnasia: 20 girls in Vitebsk, 13 in Novgorod, and 7 in Pskov.<sup>65</sup>

The problem of establishing a sufficient number of schools for the population was

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<sup>61</sup> Hans, Policy, 34-35.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 43, 44, 51.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 56, 57.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 56.

closely connected with the failure to emancipate the serfs: a hesitancy to liberate illiterate serfs resulted in the class system of education where the theory of accessibility for all classes was not matched by reality. It would take almost another century, and a revolution (1905), for the state to make a concerted effort to expand the educational opportunities for the peasant ranks. As late as 1897, fewer than 10% of peasant women were literate, compared to 21.1% of the population.<sup>66</sup>

In contrast, Nicholas I resolved to abolish the educational system begun by his predecessor and elder brother; he felt that the Decembrists' movement had been encouraged by Alexander I's democratic measures. His 1826 decree, intended to rebuild the entire educational system, reflected the view of A.S. Shishkov, his Minister of Public Instruction, who was also the appointed president of the Committee for the Reorganization of Schools, that a literate nation was not desirable, and that the mixing of different social groups was not to be tolerated.<sup>67</sup> The restrictive class policies of Nicholas and his ministers aimed at "a total elimination of students of lower origins" from universities.<sup>68</sup> Decrees of 1842 established parochial schools in the State Domains; after some years, girls, and children of other classes, were allowed to enroll.<sup>69</sup> But these schools led only to possible employment in the Zemstva<sup>70</sup>, certainly not to higher education. Cultural benefits and the pursuit of knowledge for itself

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<sup>66</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 61.

<sup>67</sup> Hans, Policy, 65-67.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 77, 90.

<sup>69</sup> Hans, Policy, 84.

<sup>70</sup> Zemstva were created on January 1, 1864, and reformed during Count D.A. Tolstoy's term as Minister of Public Instruction (1866-1880). Instituting and financing elementary schools were

were not among the ideals promoted by Nicholas I.

### **EXPANSION AND UPGRADING OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

With the accession of Alexander II, new liberties were granted to all classes; this led to new measures democratizing education, and the strict class system inherited from Nicholas I was hypothetically abolished.

The concept that patriarchy was an obstacle on the way to a new socio-political identity for Russia as sought under Alexander II, was acknowledged by Russian ethnographers dispatched in 1855 by the Imperial Russian Naval Minister, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, to gather descriptions of rural conditions. These writers had the opportunity "to revise the out-dated ideology, "Official Nationality", with a modern imperial vision".<sup>71</sup> Their work from 1856 to 1862 detailed conditions in the ethnically-diverse and multinational empire that might impede the reform sought in an atmosphere of hope for a moral and social transformation of the Russian Empire. Along with proposing recommendations to accommodate diverse traditions, they also broadened awareness among both leaders and the public of "the implications of patriarchy" for contemporary and future Russia: they understood that women had always filled the role of "culture bearers" and that the empire would suffer if women were not educated.

Clay notes the shift in the approach to educating women when ethnographers moved the rationale "beyond a moral argument to an imperial reform rationale", and advocated "the

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among the responsibilities with which these provincial and district local authorities were entrusted. See Hans, Policy, 131-133.

<sup>71</sup> Catherine Clay, "Russian Ethnographers in the Service of Empire, 1856-1862", Slavic Review 54, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 46.

subjugation by western education of traditional women's cultural authority".<sup>72</sup> In addition, economic pressures brought on by the 1861 emancipation of the serfs made it more difficult for gentry landowners of the privileged class to provide economic security for single female relatives. Abandoning their traditional lifestyle, and obtaining employment to which their intellect could be applied, required advanced courses and training for gentry women with aspirations.<sup>73</sup>

Alexander II ushered in an atmosphere of reform, an era that saw existing social ranks reforming, and serious efforts conveying both the Russian peasantry and more women into the orbit of the educated public.<sup>74</sup> (Progress was not without obstacles: the rise of a powerful conservative wing among state ministers in the 1860s would severely hamper women's academic pursuits.) In an 1857 memorandum, the Minister of Education, Avraam Norov, proposed a system of public schooling for girls accessible to students from other social classes; Alexander II approved.<sup>75</sup>

Conceding that the vast Russian education system was aimed at boys only, Norov expressed the necessity of education for women as being "of the greatest benefit to our country".<sup>76</sup> He proposed setting up girls' day schools in provincial and district towns and large villages. Strenuous and vocal resistance--from the privileged who "resented opening

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 58, 61.

<sup>73</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 26.

<sup>74</sup> Clay, "Ethnographers", 53.

<sup>75</sup> Stites, Liberation, 50.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Hans, Policy, 96.

the gates to the lower orders", the taxpayers who "resented the spending entailed", and wary public officials who voiced their objections in hopes of clinging to tradition--was overcome. The changes brought about by the decrees of 1858 and 1860 can be regarded as the government's attempt at social levelling. Secondary schools, made available to women of all social classes, soon flourished.

Because the schools were to be funded by public and private means, only people of modest wealth living in cities found them accessible. The first level, later gymnasium, was a six-year course, while the second, the pro-gymnasium, was a three-year course of study. The curriculum broadened the options for the ten to sixteen year-old students substantially, for--in addition to a curriculum like the private secondary girls' schools--the previously excluded subjects of mathematics and sciences were added. Interestingly, traditional expectations for women were reflected in the schools' stated goal: to provide pupils with "that religious, moral, and mental education which is required of every woman, and especially of future mothers."<sup>77</sup> Still, the ministry's schools did provide education on a more substantial scale for more young women.

While not one secondary school for girls had existed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education in 1856, by 1864 a total of 9000 girls attended the 90 girls' public secondary schools. However, these schools "were not equivalent to the secondary schools for boys".<sup>78</sup> Even though by 1870, 10,000 girls were enrolled in about 150 of these 'non-

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<sup>77</sup> Stites, Liberation, 51.

<sup>78</sup> Hans, Policy, 127.

exclusive' schools, with numbers nearly tripling by the middle of the decade,<sup>79</sup> egalitarian education had not yet been attained.

Minister of Education Count Dimitri Tolstoy (1866-1880), despite impeding women's access to universities and higher academic degrees, recognized the importance of a literate population and dramatically expanded secondary education for both genders. Applying neither class-based enrollment quotas nor prohibitive tuition fees, he attempted to make secondary schools less exclusive. In 1870, a new Statute transformed all existing girls schools of the first rank into Gymnasia and schools of the second rank into Progymnasia. One year was added to the course of the gymnasia, with an additional year of pedagogical training for those who intended to become teachers of up to the four lower classes of the girls' secondary schools.<sup>80</sup> Funding of the schools was partly by private initiative, and subsidized by various levels of government. Thanks to local funding, girls' secondary schools 'burgeoned': "between 1865 and 1893, the gymnasia increased fivefold and the number of progymnasia more than doubled"; over 62,000 girls were enrolled in the 320 Ministry's secondary schools in 1893.<sup>81</sup>

Even the Fourth Department underwent reform. In 1858, "an additional system of day gymnasia for girls" of all classes was established by the existing Administration of the

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<sup>79</sup> Stites, Liberation, 51.

<sup>80</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 30. By making the classical gymnasium the only route to university entrance, Tolstoy's policies discouraged the lower social orders from pursuing advanced education. Graduates of the three-year course of the pro-gymnasia were authorized to teach in elementary schools. See also Ibid., 31, Table 2. For the curriculum of the gymnasia, see Hans, Policy, 127-128.

<sup>81</sup> In 1870 the Ministry of Education awarded both levels a combined annual grant of 150,000 rubles; see also Table I, Johanson, Ibid.

Empress Maria, wife of Alexander II, the so called 'Mariiinskie schools', as noted above.<sup>82</sup> In 1858 the first of these "'Marian' schools" was founded in St. Petersburg. The curriculum of their seven-year courses was identical with that of the public gymnasia, but the Mariiinskie schools did not flourish to the same degree. In 1894, the 30 schools had an enrollment of 17,700.<sup>83</sup> Both the day and the boarding schools continued to be administered independently until the 1917 Revolution.<sup>84</sup>

The system of public secondary schools for girls did have its flaws. Their ever-present financial hardships resulted in a shortage of good teachers and severely curtailed access to the poor; locating the schools in well-populated and prosperous cities and towns ensured their inaccessibility to peasant girls.<sup>85</sup> Johanson refers to them as "terminal institutions that prepared women for the traditional female vocation of teacher of small children".<sup>86</sup> Stites

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<sup>82</sup> James C. McClelland, Autocrats and Academics: Education, Culture, and Society in Tsarist Russia. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 35. Hans refers to these schools as comprising 'the Department of Maria Fedorovna'; Policy, 96. See also Johanson, Struggle, 32: non-exclusive as they were by intention, in practice 53% of enrollment in 1880 were gentry girls. As well, Johnson in Heritage, 64, 146, and particularly fn. 6, pp. 309-310, clarifies the possible confusion about the Maria schools: "The Empress Maria Feodorovna, the German second wife of Tsar Paul, survived not only her husband, but also her eldest son, Tsar Alexander I. When she died in 1828, her younger son, Tsar Nicholas I, created a special department in the Ministry of Public Education to continue the separate supervision of these schools. In 1859 another Empress Maria, also German and wife of Alexander II, took these schools under her own protection."

<sup>83</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 32: the thirtieth and last Mariiinskie school was established in 1864. See also Hans, Policy, 96-97. The 1855 Statute for the Institutes classified boarding schools into three categories--those solely for daughters of the gentry, those which accommodated daughters of merchants and the gentry, and schools open to all classes. Most institutions were transferred into the second class. See also Johanson, Struggle, 3.

<sup>84</sup> McClelland, Autocrats, 35-36.

<sup>85</sup> Stites, Liberation, 51-52; Johanson, Struggle, 29.

<sup>86</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 32.



points out additional imperfections: despite the sounder pedagogical principles of the newly established schools

unimaginative teaching and mindless discipline prevailed right up to the Revolution. For the more ambitious female pupils, these schools were a dead end. A full university education was still denied to women.<sup>87</sup>

The upgrading of girls' secondary education may have occurred largely as a tangent to Tolstoy's revamping of the male gymnasium system. In 1871, he had entrenched the system of classical gymnasia as the prerequisite to university study; but in 1874, Latin and Greek were introduced only as optional subjects in girls' gymnasia.<sup>88</sup> The addition of the classical languages option nevertheless removed the obstacle of women being inadequately prepared academically for university study.

Alexander III's record of achievements in providing education for girls up to the university level is one of, at best, stagnation. Bent on maintaining the status quo, he sought a return to his grandfather's policies. Both his chief advisor, K. Probedonostsev, and his Minister of Public Instruction, T.D. Delyanov, proved themselves to be as reactionary and obstructionist in matters of expanding education for young women as their Tsar. The funding of elementary schools was not increased; by degrees, the less-privileged classes' access to public schools was checked. Girls' gymnasia and progymnasia increased at a declining rate: where 61 existed in 1855, and 259 in 1881 (the span of Alexander II's reign), the number of such schools had risen to only 306 by 1894, the end of Alexander III's reign, during which

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<sup>87</sup> Stites, Liberation, 52.

<sup>88</sup> Johanson, Struggle, 50, 60.

enrollment had increased by less than 9,000 to comprise 55,527 female students.<sup>89</sup> The stagnation of the secondary schools was only surpassed by the retrogression higher education experienced under Alexander III's policies.

The waning years of the Tsarist era saw government action not always meeting the educational hopes of the people.<sup>90</sup> The first decade of Nicholas II's reign has been described as a great period of progress in education. Both Nicholas II's and Alexander II's educational policies encouraged rapid development of elementary and secondary schools; private initiative especially expanded education for young women. In two decades under Nicholas II the number of young women in gymnasia and progymnasia increased more than six-fold to 323,577, while the schools more than tripled in number, to 978.<sup>91</sup> However, while the 1897 national census revealed a higher than the national average rate of literacy in the ten-to-forty age group, disparities in literacy rates for females in this group compared to males were notable--21% versus 45%, the overall average (for ages 4 to 110 and over) was 13.1% for females versus 29.3% for males. Reflecting real differences between classes and across the

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<sup>89</sup> Hans, Policy, 235, Table No. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Samuel D. Kassow, Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 15-16, observes: "By the end of the nineteenth century, education budgets clearly favoured primary and secondary over higher education. In the university sector, the trend was toward less state involvement and greater reliance on student fees and local...money to start new institutions, although the state still provided 60% of total university budgets in 1914."

<sup>91</sup> Hans, Policy, 235. See also Kassow, Students, 15, fn. 2: "Michael Kaser has calculated for every 1,000 primary pupils in 1914 there were 72 secondary and 15 higher-education enrollments. Corresponding figures for secondary and higher-education enrollments in earlier years were 106 and 14 in 1835, 93 and 9 in 1875, and 67 and 10 in 1905 ("Education in Tsarist and Soviet Development," in Chimen Abramsky, ed., Essays in Honor of E.H. Carr [London, 1974], p. 235)."

empire, figures showed that only one-fourth of the 23 million school-age children were literate.<sup>92</sup>

It is a mistaken assumption that the quality of education expanded at a similar rate in the twenty years Nicholas II was given to deal with the problem of illiteracy of his people. Ranking next to last on the national budget, expansion of education was impeded by nationalism and Russification: the education ministry's concessions never met the requirements and needs of the country.<sup>93</sup> Rather than encourage, the Ministry of Education "hampered" and continued to "view with great suspicion" the growth of higher education.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, just prior to World War I, despite adverse conditions, efforts to increase literacy were discernible and commendable, but came too late to diminish the discontent among the masses. The number of schools and enrollment did increase; the ratio of male to female teachers in elementary schools did drop from nearly half to about a third of the total; secondary schools for girls, both public and private, increased to 998, with enrollment totalling over 390,000 young women in 1914.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 173-4.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>94</sup> Count Pavel Nikolaevich Ignatiev, a capable, enlightened man of vision, appointed Minister of Public Education in 1914, quoted in Johnson, Struggle, 198. In the two years before he resigned his post, Ignatiev implemented a new curriculum for secondary schools; ibid., 194. See also Table 39: Secondary School Curriculum under the Plan of the Ministry of Public Education (Ignatiev Plan); ibid., 294-295.

<sup>95</sup> Johnson, Struggle, 195-196. The figures for girls vary slightly from those quoted by Hans, above. It may be interesting to note that the same table in Johnson indicates total enrollment of boys to be lower than that of girls, at 305,000. A great deal of credit for increasing the rate of literacy must go to the *zemstvo*'s interest in and support of education; with taxation as their source of revenue and two-thirds of their budget devoted to education and health, their efforts were valued by the public. See Johnson, 200-205. See also Kassow, Students, 15, fn. 3: "...the

## RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES AND THE MENNONITE CONNECTION

The history of Russian universities begins in the reign of Peter the Great, who concentrated his educational reforms on institutions of higher learning. In 1701 he established the School of Mathematical and Navigation Sciences at Moscow; the curriculum included the English language, and most of the teachers were imported foreigners.<sup>96</sup> In 1715 Peter founded the Naval Academy in his new Russian capital, St. Petersburg. His philosophy of education might be described as 'a narrow pragmatism', or exclusively oriented towards preparing the specialists he required--for his naval interests, the military, and construction projects--for in addition to the two already mentioned, in 1714 he established "cypher schools" "to provide the government with semi-skilled technical workers".<sup>97</sup> Of the 110 secular elementary schools in Russia in 1724 for a population of 13 million, 40 of them were cypher schools.<sup>98</sup> N.V. Chekov suggested an explanation for the dearth of schools at that time: "the matter of instruction in literacy and general instruction was regarded as a private affair...".<sup>99</sup>

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apparent weakness of primary as opposed to secondary and higher education is accentuated by extremely low levels of reported schooling in non-Russian areas. In zemstvo provinces, with their Great-Russian peasant population, a surprisingly high percentage of the children were receiving some form of education. ...[B]y 1915, 78.2 % of the 8-11-year-olds in Tula guberniia were receiving primary schooling....[A]s Michael Kaser ("Education", p. 245) points out, many acquired literacy outside the formal school system. Kaser cites a district in Moscow guberniia in 1883-1884 where only 38% of literate factory workers had studied in formal schools."

<sup>96</sup> Johnson, Heritage, 27-28.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 35.

Organized both as a university and a secondary school, or gymnasium, the Academy of Sciences opened in St. Petersburg in 1725 after Peter's death. What he had envisioned was a long time coming, for the institution was beset with problems immediately both in filling the academic positions and in finding qualified students to attend lectures conducted in Latin. In 1760, the great Russian scholar, Mikhail Lomonsov, became rector of the University and made attempts at reorganizing and invigorating St. Petersburg University; however, until 1782 the number of students enrolled never rose above twenty.<sup>100</sup> Peter I's attempts at progressive reform in economic, ecclesiastical, and civil areas imported western European ideas and influences and increased the higher classes' desire for an organized education program for their offspring.

In the decades following Peter I's death, the Noble Cadet Corps was established in Anne's reign to prepare children of noble families for military and civil offices in St. Petersburg, and private boarding schools were set up by foreigners during Elizabeth's reign. There were 27 of the latter with 6000 pupils enrolled by 1764.<sup>101</sup> Moscow University opened in 1755 with three faculties--philosophy, law, and medicine; the university was obligated to provide lectures to students and to the public. Enrollment ranged from 80 to 100 during the 18th century; two preparatory schools provided students, one from the nobility and the other from the lower ranks. The reason for Moscow University's flourishing, while St. Petersburg University floundered, centres on the social prejudices of the upper class, who perceived that

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 35-37.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 40.

the latter was not an exclusive institution.<sup>102</sup>

Gender-based barriers to university enrollment had been in effect since the establishment of the university system by Peter I and Alexander I's reorganization, and remained in effect until the freer atmosphere under Alexander II encouraged a return to admitting the public to lectures. The first woman to receive permission to attend--but not yet enroll in--a Russian university was Nataliya Korsini, an architect's daughter; other women soon became regular attenders as auditors.<sup>103</sup>

Leadership for the reforms did not come from the very top: the attitudes of Alexander III (1881-1894) and his Empress appear to have been less than sympathetic to university education for girls, for "[t]he Empress did not think it was proper for a woman to study the natural sciences, and she once told a deputation of women that they should stay home and knit."<sup>104</sup> There was some progress: in the 1870s four women's higher courses were established in Moscow, Kazan, Kiev, and St. Petersburg.

And there was regression: in 1886 the Ministries of the Interior and of Education (which among the people had become known as 'the Ministry of Public Ignorance') ordered all courses to stop admitting new students. Only the St. Petersburg Bestushev Courses were not closed by the end of the decade; there the board was staffed by older feminists whose arguments saved the institute.<sup>105</sup> In the erratic advance of women's education, courses for

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>103</sup> Stites, Liberation, 52.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 168. The Bestushev (or Bestuzhev) Institute opened in 1878 to women of all social classes, if they could afford the 50 rubles annual tuition. The three faculties were History-

women were opened up in all the university towns in 1906 (the year in which the ban against co-education was lifted), but after 1908 reactionary ministers again harassed women's attempts for higher education. Nonetheless, when World War I began, 25,000 women were enrolled in women's university courses in ten cities.<sup>106</sup>

Despite an almost total lack of financial support from the government, the fastest rate of growth in all the sectors of higher education in the Russian Empire during the final years of the aristocracy was in institutions for women. Coeducation was considered but rejected. The 1873 special commission's report justified encouraging developing higher education for women: it detected an urgent need for female doctors and teachers. Permanent women's courses were permitted in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev, and Kazan by Alexander II in 1876.

Kassow points out that:

By 1910 the two largest institutions of higher education for women were the Bestushev-Riumin courses in Saint Petersburg, with an enrollment of 5,897 students, and the Moscow women's courses, with 6,477 students. At the Women's Medical Institute in Saint Petersburg 1,525 women were studying medicine, while 2,450 were enrolled in Kiev's women's courses.<sup>107</sup>

Most of the women students came from a mercantile, civil service or professional

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Philology, Law, and Mathematics-Natural Sciences, and provided women with higher education at home, instead of out of Russia, where the Russian state felt radicalism might 'infect' their young women, who then would import it upon their return.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>107</sup> Kassow, Students, 23. See also Ruth A. Dudgeon, "The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872-1917", Russian History, 9, Pt.1 (1982), 1-26. Dudgeon points out that the government's designation of higher courses left their status "undefined" (fn. 3, 1). Dudgeon, "Forgotten", states that by 1915 enrollment of women students had risen to at least 44,000, which was one-third of the total number of students enrolled in Russian institutions of higher learning (2, 8).

background, and most did become doctors or teachers.<sup>108</sup> With the enrollment of women escalating, the government amended its policy of withholding legal and civil rights:

The law of 19 December 1911 gave women graduating from a few state-organized institutions all the legal privileges enjoyed by male graduates except the right to enter the state service and the Table of Ranks.<sup>109</sup>

The two young women included in an incomplete list of Mennonites who attended universities between 1890 and 1917 in the Russian Empire or abroad,<sup>110</sup> were Margarete Isaak and Anna Sudermann, about whom more will be said later. Both former students of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule were enrolled at the Bestushev Academy.

In summary, the complexities of the history of the Russian educational system appear as intricate as the plot and characterization of a Russian novel. From the context of the development of the Russian educational system, the focus now shifts to the other primary influence on the Mennonite educational system: Prussia and the German states.

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<sup>108</sup> Before 1917, close to two-thirds of the women graduates (excluding those from medical faculties) did choose one of the two professions; 67% of Bestuzhev graduates who were employed became teachers. See Dudgeon, "Forgotten", 11.

<sup>109</sup> Kassow, Students, 23-24.

<sup>110</sup> N.J. Klassen, "Mennonite Intelligentsia in Russia", Mennonite Life, 24 (April 1969), 59-60. P.M. Friesen in 1910 reported twice that number but did not list their names (see Brotherhood, 790). Other Mennonite women studied at middle and university-level institutions, such as pedagogical or technical institutions, particularly in Germany and Switzerland.



### **CHAPTER III: INFLUENCES FROM PRUSSIA**

Having already noted the development of the Russian public and secondary educational systems, this chapter will examine other sources which influenced the Mennonite Mädchenschulen. To discern similarities between the educational opportunities available to young women in a region of Europe which engendered both educators and reforms assimilated into the Mennonite educational system in Russia, and the opportunities available to young Mennonite women in Russia, the focus turns to girls' schools in the German states and in the German colonies in Russia; trends in the rest of Europe will be considered briefly.

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE GERMAN STATES**

In the institutionalized education of Reformation Europe, the core of the primary school curriculum was essentially confessional, consisting of catechisms and devotional literature of the different churches.<sup>1</sup>

In West Prussia, Mennonites had maintained their own private schools from the 17th century on, since village schools were run either by the Lutheran or the Catholic churches. Every larger Mennonite farming-village had its own school; some--the ones in Montau and

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<sup>1</sup> R. Po-Chai Hsia, Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750 (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 114. Fortunately for this thesis writer, Hsia makes this point by referring to the curriculum and pedagogy of the Girls' School in Lutheran Göttingen, attended by girls between the ages of 6 and 12. An ordinance drawn up by pastor Theodor Fabricus and the city's clerical council mentions that the primary purpose of the school is to inculcate propriety and to imbue in the students the fear of God. Learning to read and write "their catechism, beautiful psalms, sayings, and other fine Christian and holy songs and little prayers" would confirm the latter goal. Honouring their parents, displaying obedience and "proper talk and gestures", resisting the temptation to steal and lie, and occupying oneself with the fruitful labours of sewing was to ensure that "they are kept busy and forget thereby other frivolities", and thus maintain the propriety expected of them.

Lubin--were founded under Polish rule in the 1600s. The curriculum consisted of reading the scriptures and catechism, writing, arithmetic, and the singing and memorization of spiritual songs. Instruction took place during winter months only, not in summer when pupils were required for fieldwork on their parents' holdings. In Prussian times Mennonite schools on the left bank of the Vistula River also included Lutheran students.<sup>2</sup> None of these schools appear to have enrolled girls exclusively.

In the early phases of the growth of secondary schools for girls, the initial prototype emulated by those that came after, were the girls' schools established just prior to advancing secondary education for German girls. Stimulus for creating girls' schools beyond the elementary level occurred in the 17th century among orders of Catholic nuns, and in the 18th, among Pietist Protestants and the Philanthropists who believed that girls did indeed need formal schooling.<sup>3</sup> As well, beginning in late 18th century, ruling families of the various German states sponsored and supported schools for daughters of nobles and court officials. As early as the first half of the 18th century, private, secondary schools for girls were numerous as boarding schools and religious-community sponsored schools, many of which were maintained, operated or owned by women. Although persuading municipal officials to provide financial support for secondary education for girls often proved a difficult task for provincial governments that advocated the founding of public schools, nevertheless municipal-

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<sup>2</sup> Adalbert Goertz, "Schulwesen der Mennoniten in Deutschland," Mennonitisches Lexikon (1967) Vol. 4, 102.

<sup>3</sup> James C. Albisetti, Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 23-26. Albisetti provides the best available treatment of the topic; other sources merely duplicated information. Consequently, there is great reliance on Albisetti's work in this section.

ities became increasingly involved as the century progressed.<sup>4</sup> Accompanying the involvement of municipalities or German cities in secondary schools for girls was the employment of male directors and teachers; this innovation caused some unease in the minds of parents who had until then entrusted their daughters mainly to female teachers.<sup>5</sup> Concomitant with the evolution of secondary schools for girls was the public debate on the value and quality of education offered at these institutions.

#### NINETEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN AND ENGLISH IDEAL OF WOMANHOOD

An examination of 19th-century secondary and higher education for German girls is not complete without a survey of attitudes towards and expectations placed on girls and women. The philosophy of the nature of education for girls and young women was based on ideals of woman's "proper place in society", that is, being relegated to household duties, her nature complementing that of man, fulfilling her role as mother, was expressed and shared by thinkers and writers in Germany and throughout Western Europe at the time.<sup>6</sup> The notion of separate spheres for men and women emerged among the educated bourgeoisie in Germany in this era: the images of women became codified into models that have remained the universally accepted norm, emphasizing a differentiation of gender work-roles polarized on the basis of reproductive roles; this posture reinforced patriarchal authority, and in contrast

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27-39. Albisetti notes that before 1870, Austria, France, and England also lacked municipal schools, while in Russia similar institutions began to be founded only in the late 1850s.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3-4, 22. See also Chapter II, "Education and the Ideal of Womanhood", in Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Barnes and Noble, 1980).

to pre-industrialization times, imposed new restrictions on women.<sup>7</sup> In order to ensure that women steered toward their 'proper place' in society, male writers of prescriptive literature on female education were convinced that formal preparation was necessary. In the early 19th century, concerns were raised as well that 'miseducation' of women--such that might deflect them from their 'destiny'--would lead to more women scholars, writers and poets.<sup>8</sup> Tensions and disagreements on the availability and content of education for women and girls thus proved to be integral in the initial stage of debate surrounding a gender-inclusive education system in Germany and a decisive factor in its implementation

Nineteenth-century ideals of English womanhood for the whole of society centred on the newly elevated, industrial-age ideal of the home as a retreat and in the "nostalgia for the supposed simplicity of life in former generations":

The ideal woman was to be responsible for organizing the household, bringing up the children, and providing tranquility to which men returned as to a haven of peace from the turbulent world outside....Morally pure and a guardian of the home, the ideal woman was expected to be clever as well.<sup>9</sup>

The upper and middle classes' ideal of "leisured womanhood" was not shared by the lower classes, perhaps less by choice than due to economic necessity; a large number of women continued to support themselves by working (for pay outside the home).<sup>10</sup> Didactic literature

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<sup>7</sup> Albisetti, *Schooling*, 7. Feeling threatened by the possibility of woman's encroachment on the male domain, the 19th-century European middle and upper-class male strove to preserve and maintain the place he considered proper for her--as innocent and ignorant as Eve before 'the fall', and isolated in his home.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Burstyn, *Ideal*, 31, 32, 33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

of 19th-century England, in an attempt to counter Mary Wollstonecraft's promotion of the self-reliant woman, fashioned a picture of women so flawless and exemplary that calls for change were deflected with admonitions that women only needed to live up to the ideals of the past--the role upper-class women were believed to have played decades earlier.<sup>11</sup> It was claimed that because of their natural intuitive powers women did not need education in reasoning as did the less-endowed male sex.<sup>12</sup> In preparation for woman's ideal vocation--marriage--feminine subjects--the domestic arts--were taught, by mothers traditionally or via books on household management written by women. The teaching of moral principles could only be the mission of the mother, upon whom both sons and daughters depended to learn the deeper meaning of life.<sup>13</sup> While parents were expected to take up the intellectual education of their daughters, some were incompetent or refused to. Tutors, governesses, or irregular attendance at girls' schools, which in the first half of the century had poorly educated teachers, were the alternatives of a sort. Resistance to girls' education in the liberal arts was gradually lowered, as changes in boys' schools encouraged more parents to consider educating their daughters' intellects. In the 1870s the feminine ideal came to include an educated dutiful wife whose education could provide her with the fortitude she required to uphold society.<sup>14</sup> By the end of the 19th century, higher education for women was grudgingly accepted, due less to a fundamental shift in society's ideal of womanhood than to the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 37-39.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 40-41.

expansion of the economy, which resulted in new jobs for either sex.<sup>15</sup>

The concept that the education of girls must be distinct from what was available to boys prevailed in the German states, and is illustrated by the terminology used by (male) writers concerned with female education: instead of *Mädchenschulen*, girls' schools were often referred to as *Töchterschulen* (daughters' schools) while boys' schools carried the name of *Knabenschulen*, never *Söhneschulen* (sons' schools).<sup>16</sup> Implied was a link to the family and home, but only in reference to girls. Considerations for "feminine thinking" and what was deemed appropriate for girls guided curriculum development into separate streams. For example, boys studied mathematics and sciences, whereas in this area girls were restricted to practical arithmetic and superficial instruction in the sciences, botany and astronomy as opposed to the "properly mathematical". These views, from opponents of new educational opportunities for women, were based on their arguments that women should not master certain subjects because of their expected place in society: the domestic sphere.<sup>17</sup> The German thinkers' notions of women's *Bestimmung* (destiny, vocation) were indistinguishable from those of British writers, French conservatives, and to a degree from attitudes in Russia--where with virtually no middle class in the early 19th century, the nobility and gentry ideal of

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-172. But the struggle to break down opposition to higher education for women was arduous: the root of men's sense of superiority lay in their contempt for women's opinions, abilities, intellectual capacity--in short, in the male's under-valuing the feminine.

<sup>16</sup> Elisabeth Blochmann, Das "Frauenzimmer" und die "Gelehrsamkeit": Eine Studie über die Anfänge des Mädchenschulwesens in Deutschland (Heidelberg, 1966), 103 as cited in Albisetti, *Schooling*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Albisetti, *Schooling*, 20-21.

womanhood prevailed.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the partiality as outlined above, by the eve of the Great War (despite a growing perception that the educational needs of the majority of adolescents would be better met with their elementary education succeeded by continuation school), "in England as in Germany, secondary education was still perceived as being reserved for the few."<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly this was also the case in the rest of Europe.

### WOMEN AS TEACHERS

Women had been teachers for centuries in Germany, as nuns in Catholic schools, as governesses in wealthy or noble families, and as private tutors in their little *Winkelschulen* (schools in corners). Early in the 19th century, women's teaching was perceived as a socially sanctioned means of support for unmarried women and widows of the middle class, and because it was believed that each sex could best be taught by their own, they were needed to teach girls.<sup>20</sup> Seminars for women teachers were first founded in 1803, when a training facility was opened by a woman in Berlin; after it closed, a successor, the Luisenstiftung, was opened in 1811. Small groups of eighteen to twenty-four year old women enrolled in the three-year course; no tuition was charged.<sup>21</sup> Other training centres for women teachers continued to be established in various German states. With government officials interested in gaining some rein over the quality of women's teaching in girls' schools, the Prussian

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. See also Burstyn, "Ideal", 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Sherrington, English Education, Social Change and War 1911-20 (Manchester University Press, 1981), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Albisetti, Schooling, 58-59.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Ministry of Education introduced certification examinations in Brandenburg in 1837.<sup>22</sup> In the wave of reforms of higher girls' schools in the 1870s, seminars proliferated, as more schools were established and a shortage of male teachers resulted in the hiring of more women teachers.<sup>23</sup> However, during this period, with few exemptions married women were banned from teaching; in Prussia, this ban relaxed only after the turn of the century.<sup>24</sup> Salaries for women teachers were a fraction of men's salaries; however, this was not unique to Germany.<sup>25</sup> Statistics on women in the teaching profession indicate that between 1861 and 1891 the total number of women elementary teachers in Prussia nearly doubled; it is estimated that in 1899 of all women teachers in the German states, 47% taught in elementary schools, 8% in public secondary schools, 19% in private schools, and 26% in family homes.<sup>26</sup> However, despite their high rate of participation in the initial phases of girls' schooling, women faced

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 67. For example, by 1881 out of the 1,490 public elementary teachers in Berlin, 461 were women.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 70. Compare similar bans in Russia and Austria, but more acceptance in England and France. See above, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Sherington, *English Education*, 41: A 1913 proposal by the National Union of Teachers suggested the following wage scale:

	Men	Women
Provincial head teachers	£150 (minimum)	£120 (minimum)
Provincial class teachers	£ 90 (minimum)	£ 80 (minimum)
	£200 (maximum)	£160 (maximum)
Metropolitan class teachers	£100 (minimum)	£ 90 (minimum)
	£250 (maximum)	£200 (maximum)

For an example of a similar condition in Germany see Albisetti, *Schooling*, 82: in Düsseldorf city school salaries ranged from 3,000 Marks for university graduates to 2,000 for male seminar graduates to 1,400 for women in 1876; in 1885 Prussia recommended that women's salaries be 75 to 80 % of men's.

<sup>26</sup> Albisetti, *Schooling*, 83-84.



discrimination as their society could not fully accept or justify employing women in the public schools. The leadership of public institutions continued to exclude women. Opportunities for training, certification and employment were similarly restricted for women teachers throughout Europe in the 19th century.<sup>27</sup>

### COMPARISONS OF ENROLLMENT AND OF WOMEN TEACHERS

Although statistics are incomplete, a comparison of women's education in Germany with that in other Western countries in the early years of the 20th century reveals that enrollment figures for Prussia were notable. In 1901 Prussia had a total of 126,490 pupils in higher girls' schools, out of which 53,558 were in the 213 public and 72,932 in the 656 private schools. Statistics for 1904 indicate at least 60,000 more female secondary students in the other states. It is estimated that for Germany as a whole in 1911 a total of 220,000 girls were enrolled at recognized secondary schools. France's population was two-thirds that of Germany's at that time; only 33,000 enrolled in the public lycées and colleges for girls in 1913, but this number does not include the plausibly larger number in convent schools. With a population of only 60% of Germany's in 1913-14, England and Wales had an enrollment of 96,578 pupils in 630 girls' schools and secondary co-educational above the primary grades. In 1914 with twice the population of Germany, Russia had an enrollment of 324,000 girls in its public and private secondary schools.<sup>28</sup> However, the percentage of adolescents enrolled in education at the end of the War was still a small proportion; for example, in 1917 only three percent of England's adolescents were secondary school students, and in Germany, only

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 293-294.

ten percent.<sup>29</sup> These statistics do not present a complete overview of the universality of higher education for girls in Europe; without statistics for the total population of school-age girls and of boys, percentages of girls who partook of education opportunities cannot be determined.

Throughout Western Europe the inclusion of women teachers in girls' education appears not to have matched the numbers of men teachers. At the turn of the century, in France the lycées for girls were staffed mainly by women but male teachers dominated in the private courses that led to university entrance. In England, girls in secondary schools continued to be taught by women teachers and headmistresses, but not in many of the coeducational schools established after 1902. In Austria, only at the turn of the century did women gain the right to teach more than the non-academic subjects of music, drawing and sewing in the upper grades of girls' Lyzeen. Russia allowed women access to teaching in the upper grades of girls' schools in 1903. With a shortage of male teachers, formal approval of women teaching in the lower grades in boys' schools came in 1903; in the upper grades, in 1906.<sup>30</sup>

### REFORMING GIRLS' EDUCATION

Developments in education which expanded educational opportunities for Russian and Mennonite girls beyond the elementary level in the course of the 19th century were paralleled for German girls. The first concerted effort occurred during a period of German history full of momentous military and political events that resulted in the establishment of the Prussian-

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<sup>29</sup> H.A.L. Fisher as cited in Sherington, English, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Albisetti, Schooling., 296-297.

dominated Second Reich. The evolution of female education was more affected by the impact of long-term economic and social developments, such as the "culmination of liberal reforms that removed age-old restrictions on individual freedoms", which led to calls "for the extension of these new personal freedoms to women" in the late 1860s and early 1870s.<sup>31</sup>

At this time, the 1870s, female education in Germany still had not achieved a high value. Supervision of the girls' schools was in the hands of state officials responsible not for boys' secondary schools but for the elementary school system; a girls' school curriculum was not mandatory nor standardized; and secondary education for girls--which was three years less than boys' and did not offer Latin, Greek, and the maths and sciences taught to boys--did not prepare them for university.<sup>32</sup> Instead, the curriculum for girls had initially consisted of emphasizing the domestic arts, of which, for example in the schools run by philanthropists in the early part of the century, half of the classroom time was taken up with needlework.<sup>33</sup>

Advocates for improving and expanding education for women had argued that girls should be educated past the elementary school level at recognized secondary schools. Four major themes articulated by proponents of reform centred on: equal rights for women and essentially the same educational opportunities for both sexes; better education for their destiny of motherhood; practical training for single women to ensure decent jobs; and the upgrading of higher girls' schools' curriculum and administration. Most male directors hoped

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 47. The number of hours per week devoted to needlework ranged from 6 to 14 in the various denominational schools in the first decades of the 19th century.

to make clear distinctions between the higher and the middle girls' schools by adding to the curriculum and placing the former under the same administration as were the secondary schools for boys, all the while maintaining the girls' schools' emphasis on femininity. In 1872 in Weimar, male directors of girls' schools organized a conference for fellow directors and teachers with recommendations that rejected a humanist education based on Latin and Greek and instead urged that the core of this schooling not be maths and sciences but modern languages and literature.<sup>34</sup> Another concern was addressed when the Association of Women Teachers and Governesses in 1873 called for better training for women teachers and more opportunities to teach the upper grades of the girls' schools, positions until then filled mainly with university-educated men.<sup>35</sup> After calling a conference on girls' education in 1873 and conducting a series of inspection tours, the Minister of Education, Adalbert Falk, issued a new set of regulations for certifying women teachers in all of Prussia in 1874.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere reforms made inroads slowly. In 1876 Saxony recognized those secondary schools with ten-year courses and university-trained teachers on staff; the 1885 curriculum added seven years of French and four of English. In 1874 Württemberg created the first seminary for female secondary teachers and in 1877 placed the girls' schools under a different authority than the elementary school inspectors. Baden in 1877 stipulated a seven-year course to follow three of elementary schooling.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 94-95, 99-100, 102, 107-109.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 112-113. Further plans for reform and regulation of girls' schools were abrogated with Falk's resignation in 1879.

Most German states responded to the demands raised at the Weimar conference during this first wave of reform. The number of schools proliferated, financial support from city and state governments increased, teaching staffs improved in quality. Gradually more academic subjects were introduced and new courses were added in secondary girls' schools. Time taken up with sewing projects was reduced to three hours per week; new academic courses were additional languages, history of art and literature, and mythology. A survey conducted in the early 1870s revealed that in higher girls' schools German language and literature took up 20% of class hours; French 13%; arithmetic and sewing, 11% each; religion, 9%; and the rest--English, history, geography, science, drawing, writing, singing, and gymnastics--4 to 6% each.<sup>37</sup> Still, even after several waves of reforms, at the end of the century the curriculum revealed the belief that content of education should differ for girls and boys: instruction in arithmetic in higher girls' schools required only two hours per week in the last three grades, with problems related to middle-class domestic situations; while their brothers in their Gymnasien concentrated on the politics, diplomacy, and warfare aspects of history, girls were offered cultural and social history; boys devoted less time to religion and more to science than their sisters had opportunity for; and it was only the girls who had two hours of needlework per week as part of their recommended curriculum.<sup>38</sup> With many girls leaving before age sixteen, the brevity of the girls' stay in school in comparison to that of boys led one writer to suggest that 'higher' referred much less to the advanced education past the

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, 53-54.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 165. The details on curriculum are based on the decrees of 1894 in Prussia.

elementary level offered than to the social origins of the pupils.<sup>39</sup>

Notions of women's 'Bestimmung' changed very little in the early years of reform. Reflecting the views of the male directors, who numbered two-thirds of the delegates at the Weimar Conference in 1872, was one of the concluding statements adopted--and one that rankled feminists the most:

**It is desirable to make possible for the woman an education equivalent in its breadth of interest [but not in its subject matter or its length] to the intellectual cultivation of the man, so that the German husband will not be bored at his hearth or crippled in his devotion to higher interests through the spiritual shortsightedness and narrow-mindedness of his wife.<sup>40</sup>**

This declaration appeared to reassert the traditional concept of educating girls for their defined 'place' later in life and failed to advocate or even recognize the merits of moving toward an egalitarianism between the genders. After more than a century of debate over a woman's 'proper place' and the type of education considered appropriate for girls, in 1906 the Minister of Education in Prussia, Konrad von Studt, expressed the aim of his Ministry to be to continue to provide for

**the average girl of the educated classes such educational opportunities...as will enable her to become a sympathetic companion of an educated man, a healthy mother, and an insightful teacher of her children.<sup>41</sup>**

One can only wonder how much headway had really been gained in the expectations placed on women in Germany in that century. Among women themselves, at least among the reformers who organized campaigns around 1890, opinions were antithetical, for as Helene

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<sup>39</sup> Cited in Albisetti, Schooling, 50-51.

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in Albisetti, Schooling, 109.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Albisetti, Schooling, 268. (Emphasis added.)

Lange argued in the pamphlet she wrote to accompany the first major campaign, "girls should be educated for their own sakes, not for their husbands'."<sup>42</sup>

While Prussia appears the fount of reforms in Russian Mennonite schools, it was in the southern Germanies that reforms of girls' schools were first introduced in a second wave of reforms. In 1905 Baden instituted the first mandatory curriculum for higher girls' schools, with a ten-year course that included "more rigorous mathematics and language instruction"; in 1903 Württemberg regulated its curriculum for girls' schools with the inclusion of geometry and algebra and increased instruction in French and English; at the same time the girls' schools joined the boys' schools under one administration. Both regions allowed some girls' enrollment in boys' secondary schools as an experiment, one not followed in Prussia.<sup>43</sup> First taken into serious consideration in 1899, reforms in Prussia's girls' schools remained in the proposal stage, under constant revision, until a reform package was announced in 1908. Renamed Lyzeum, the secondary girls' schools' 1894 curriculum was upgraded (see above); the course was extended to ten years and in addition to the Gymnasium, Realgymnasium (or Oberrealschule for boys), with an additional three years' study at the Oberlyzeum (the seminar for women secondary teachers) in 1909, it became the "fourth way to the universities".<sup>44</sup> Allowing private schools to have only female teachers if no males were available, the decree attempted to address the discord in the debate on the male monopoly of teaching positions

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<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Albisetti, *Schooling*, 152. Helene Lange was instrumental in Germany's implementing reforms at various levels of higher education for girls and women.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 256-257. The citation does not indicate definitively the years this experiment was implemented, but it appears to have taken place in the first decade of the 20th century, according to footnote 52, which refers readers to the discussion on coeducation in Chapter 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 252-253, 257-270, 276.

in boys' schools versus the lack of such in girls' schools, by regulating the gender-balance: not more than two-thirds of public and of private school teachers were to be of the same sex.<sup>45</sup>

As an alternative form of continuing education, other than seminars for teachers or the Oberlyzeum, graduates of the higher schools could enroll in the Frauenschulen established in 1900 and of which Prussia had more than 120 by 1911. Their goals varied in Germany, but in Prussia the one- or two-year programs consisted of a combination of academic, pedagogical and home economics courses. Attached to higher girls' schools, they generally failed to attract high enrollments of teenaged girls, for whom they were designed. One specific goal for some girls was offered when in 1911 the Prussian Ministry of Education created an examination for certifying kindergarten teachers. They differed from the group of 'social Frauenschulen', which provided training in social work for young women aspiring to careers. One of the most prominent examples of this latter type was the Pestalozzi-Froebel House in Berlin established by Henriette Breyman in the 1870s.<sup>46</sup>

#### GERMAN WOMEN ATTEND UNIVERSITY

As has been suggested already, women's expectations of university matriculation as regular students took form before mid-century and rose to a high point in the 1890s. Initial efforts and results were modest. With the objective of providing further education for "young women not interested in practical career training", the first lecture series for women opened

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 271. This decree did nothing to quiet the protests of women teachers as they encountered discrimination and prejudices in their profession, protests triggered since men first began to be directors of girls' schools as municipalities took responsibility for female education (33-41).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 97, 103-104, 277-278. Friedrich Froebel was the founder of the kindergarten movement. Henriette Schrader-Breyman was his grand-niece who offered classes in Froebel's methods in her home until 1866.



in the private Victoria Lyceum in Berlin, in January 1869.<sup>47</sup> The first cycle had seventy women signed up for a total of two hundred courses, which included modern history, German literature, French literature and art history, to which were added music, English literature, physics and geology in the fall of 1869. Courses in chemistry, botany, philosophy, and pedagogy were introduced in the ensuing years. The Victoria Lyceum attracted many prominent professors from the University of Berlin.<sup>48</sup> Requiring no prerequisites and placing no demands on its students, the intellectual value of the courses was questioned. In 1874 a set of instructional courses for employed teachers and governesses offered "more rigorous instruction and examinations" with a curriculum that included Latin grammar and mathematics; in 1879-80 more than 200 teachers were enrolled.<sup>49</sup> At approximately the same time other European countries established similar lecture series for young women. Not unexpectedly, women began attending lectures at German universities as auditors in the late 1860s, with study focusing primarily on the medical faculties. Admission and matriculation of women to universities (and into the medical profession) was strongly resisted, especially in the 1870s in Prussia. The one exception was the German-language University of Zurich in Switzerland which became a major centre of study for German and Russian women beginning in the 1860s; at the same time several enrolled in American universities and obtained dental or medical degrees.<sup>50</sup> Marking the end of the first wave of reform in

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<sup>47</sup> Albisetti, Schooling, 117.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 118. Instrumental in establishing the first lyceum were two English women and crown-princess Victoria. By the ninth year, more than 900 women were attending.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 123-125.

secondary and higher education for German young women on a nullifying note, the practice of allowing female auditors was ended in Leipzig in 1879. For a decade no one entered. Comparing the records of other European countries on the admission-of-women-to-universities front, by refusing women entrance Germany positioned itself among the least progressive.

Placing their hopes in Crown Princess Victoria's advocating her own view on education for girls and women, a group of women initiated a second wave of reform of female education with petition campaigns around 1887. Negative responses from male teachers, directors of schools, and Karl Schneider (who oversaw the girls' schools), at first ensured the petition's failure. Lange did help to establish the Realkurse for women in October 1889, which offered preparatory courses for the examination required for admission to Swiss universities.<sup>51</sup> Officials resisted suggestions to introduce reform, but positive responses began in Baden in 1891 when the legislature supported access for women to university study. During the 1890s women confirmed their capability of participating in the academic world. More German women continued to pursue higher education abroad, obtaining doctoral degrees in dentistry, medicine and in law, French and history;<sup>52</sup> conversely, American women, some already holding advanced degrees, surreptitiously audited and studied at German universities.<sup>53</sup> More Abiture courses were opened, the first in Berlin, Karlsruhe and Leipzig in 1893-94. Gradually, at first on an isolated, individual basis, German women were again

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 151-158.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 225.

allowed to audit courses and to receive doctorates from Heidelberg and Berlin (in 1894), Munich (1896), Erlangen, Bavaria, and Halle (1897), Strassbourg (1899), Giessen (1900), and Jena (1902), even while entrance to these and other German universities continued to be denied at the discretion of university rectors.<sup>54</sup> Despite women university students being viewed as anomalies by most men in authority, the German states' restructuring of girls' schooling between the 1890s and 1909 would ensure that objection to and the limiting of the matriculation of women was steadily overcome.

Statistics for university matriculation appear not to compare Germany as favourably with other European countries as did the figures for secondary students. However, Germany did finally open up all of its higher institutions of education in 1909, a practice not matched elsewhere. Oxford and Cambridge in England did not grant degrees to women until 1920 and 1921, and not until 1948 did Cambridge allow women full membership.<sup>55</sup> In France, although women had had access to some faculties since the 1860s, they could not enter the *grandes écoles* until 1910 nor could they enroll in the special classes in boys' *lycées* in Paris which prepared them for the entrance examinations to the *grandes écoles* until 1923. Women were barred from the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium until 1920. In Austria, women could enter the philosophical faculties as of 1897 and the medical faculties as of 1900, but the law faculties opened to women only in 1919. The mathematical-scientific and the philological-historical sections at the University of Basel in Switzerland were closed to

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 227-231.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 297. See also Burstyn, *Ideal*, 101, 164. Burstyn supplies 1925 and 1947 as the years that Oxford and Cambridge, respectively, "voted for women's admission to the full privilege of the university."

women until 1907 and 1908, respectively. Until 1914, women could not matriculate at men's universities in Russia.

When comparing enrollments of women in universities, again as in the figures available on secondary education for European girls in this era, the lack of accurate statistics skew comparisons and for both situations "can distort perceptions of how open to higher education for women these countries were."<sup>56</sup> However, the picture just drawn does provide a basis for comparisons between the educational opportunities for women in the wider European scene and the small number of young women in the relative isolation of the Mennonite colonies in Russia.

To close this section on education for girls and women in Germany, the conclusion can be drawn that the development in Germany closely paralleled the advances in Russia, and were emulated in the Mennonite colonies. Regarding higher education for females and its objective, European views were clearly revealed to be obstructionist. Several revolutions would accelerate changes in the 20th century.

#### EDUCATION IN THE GERMAN COLONIES IN RUSSIA

Another component that had some bearing on the development of the Mennonite educational system was the Lutheran and Catholic German colonists' presence in Russia. In response to Catherine's 1763 invitation to settle in her realm, thousands of discontented, often persecuted, people from war-torn Europe migrated. Catherine proposed to fill the vast stretches of arable land to the south and east of Moscow, underpopulated and undeveloped, with industrious German peasants, who would import western culture and serve as models

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<sup>56</sup> Albisetti, Schooling, 297-298.

as part of a modernizing and europeanizing effort.

Beginning in 1764 foreign settlers were receptive to generous promises of freedoms and opportunity.<sup>57</sup> In four years about 27,000 immigrants came, with the mainstream settling in the Volga River region, around Saratov and Tsaritsin (Stalingrad). Other settlement areas for the Germans were near St. Petersburg, in the Veronezh region on the upper Don, south-east of Riga in Livonia, and east of Chernihiv in South Russia.<sup>58</sup> Numbering more than seven thousand families, besides rural peasants the first wave included "the nobility, retired officers, professional men, artisans, merchants, etc."<sup>59</sup> Overwhelming hardships of pioneering in alien and hostile surroundings were, if not entirely surmounted, at least endured and adjusted to, so that gradually a degree of agrarian prosperity was achieved. The 1789 to 1791 immigration added thousands of Germans and some Swedes to the Black Sea region, in the province of Volhynia, and into the South Caucasus. Alexander I encouraged immigration as aggressively as Catherine had, and in the period between 1803 and 1810, an influx of mostly Germans settled the areas around Odessa, to the west (the Liebenthal group), to the north (the Kutschurgan group) and later farther northwest (the Glückstal group) and northeast (in the Berasan valley); in the Crimea; west of the Molochnaia Mennonites (the Prischib group); and near Berislav on the Dnieper. In the years 1814 to 1815 hundreds more came to settle the Bessarabian steppes, and between 1816 and 1818, the Black Sea area and the Tiflis area

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<sup>57</sup> For details of Catherine's manifesto, which were identical to that promised Mennonites 25 years later, see Introduction.

<sup>58</sup> Adam Giesinger, From Catherine to Khrushchev: The Story of Russia's Germans (Lincoln, Nebraska: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1974), 1-13.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 10, 16.

of the South Caucasus. German immigrants continued to flow into the Black Sea region until around 1824. Although the 1830s and the 1860s saw sudden increases in immigration (to Volhynia and north of Samara), further expansion occurred more in the form of founding new colonies drawing from natural population growth than on organized immigration.<sup>60</sup> These Catholic and Lutheran Germans imported and cultivated their own language, religion, and culture as had the Mennonites, whom they considered to be their German co-colonists.

Educating their children was important to the German settlers near the Volga River, the *Volgadeutschen*. An early 20th-century writer refers to parental awareness of the benefits of literacy: their children are to be educated in the interests of comparatively improved opportunities.<sup>61</sup> However, in their first few decades in Russia, these immigrants' educational progress did not parallel their economic progress. At first, qualified teachers from among the immigrants took on the task of teaching, but only in the winter months, in their own homes and then in school houses, in addition to farming their portions of land as the government expected them to. When they died out, graduates of the village schools took over since no teacher-training centres were founded despite attempts by Ignatius Fessler, a Lutheran church

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 33-45, 165.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Sinner, Der Deutsche im Volgalande für die Jugend zusammengestellt (Berlin, Leipzig: Verlag von Julius Beltz in Langensalza, no date [post-1926]), 54. Sinner was a teacher or lecturer: "Dozent an der Deutsche Normalschule in Saratow a. d. Volga." Page 54 also features a sketch of a *Volgadeutschen* village school, circa 1800: girls wearing kerchiefs on their heads are shown sitting in benches and also standing beside a wooden railing reading books, while boys are shown standing and kneeling around the teacher's desk, reading or perhaps reciting to the teacher, who is sitting at his desk with pointer in hand. The text reads: "Lernen sollten sie, meinten die Alten, daß es ihnen einmal besser ginge, als ihren Vätern und Müttern." (They shall study, the elders indicated, so that life's circumstances will be less difficult for them than it was for their fathers and mothers.)

leader, in the 1820s in the Saratov region.<sup>62</sup> The first teacher-training endeavour came from the Russian government in 1834, when it established two Russian schools in the Volga colonies. Designed to teach boys for four years, with a program that was directed at preparing them to teach Russian in the village schools, the plan failed to accomplish its purpose and was abolished in the reign of Alexander II. The Volga colonists took the initiative and founded their own teacher training schools in 1859 and in 1866; due to lack of support from colonists who opposed innovations and to state pressure, the schools lost their independence and reverted to state-run schools in a few years. The situation in the Volga region remained deficient, with difficulties that included a too short school year and a scarcity of adequately paid, trained and equipped teachers. Finally toward the end of the 19th century, the state financed the Volga schools, which were almost thoroughly russified in the first decade of the 20th century.<sup>63</sup>

The Black Sea colonies had similar problems in their first half century in Russia. In 1830 another leader in the Lutheran church opened the Odesser Lehrerschule, which for its thirteen years of existence usually had forty students enrolled.<sup>64</sup> The Werner school founded in 1844 in Bessarabia was the only teacher- training centre until the 1870s. Government

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<sup>62</sup> Giesinger, Germans, 163-165. On p. 206 Giesinger more than implies that the Polish, clerical leadership of the Catholic Germans in the Volga region apparently took little interest in the German schools, leaving that up to "incompetent schoolmasters from the ranks of the colonists" and thus causing the Catholic villages to lag behind the Protestant, both culturally and economically.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 169-171.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 177. See also A. Mauch, "Geschichtliches von den deutschen Zentralschulen in Rußland", in Heimatbuch der Ostumsiedler (Stuttgart: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostumsiedler, 1954), 62-63. The founder was Probst (Karl Friedrich Wilhelm) Fletnitzer.

efforts beginning in the 1860s that greatly increased elementary schooling for Russian children affected developments in the German colonies. In 1866, at a conference of colony leaders in Odessa, agreement was reached on establishing teacher-training centres in each of the Black Sea colony-groups. These centrally located secondary schools (hence *Zentralschulen*) spread from the first opened in 1869 in Grossliebental to all over the Black Sea region in the next decade, and by the 1880s were training a good supply of teachers. Russification measures hampered their development, as mentioned, but between 1905 and 1914, these schools thrived again as German colonists' schools.<sup>65</sup> Earlier in the century, after completing his education in a *Lehrerseminar* in Bavaria, Kaspar Jäger relocated to Landau in the Beresan colony where he was hired to teach. He also established a private school where many sons of the well-to-do received their secondary education; apparently a man of great industry and ability he remained the lecturer there until his death in 1861 at the age of 69.<sup>66</sup> In Landau, attempts were begun in 1866 to establish a *Zentralschule*; it finally opened in 1906. Alexander III's russification policies inhibited the colonists' relative independence in educating their children, especially after 1892 when the state imposed the jurisdiction of Russian school inspectors on colony schools. Aiming to make the schools as Russian as possible, inspectors chose the teachers and enforced the program of study; with the majority of instruction in the Russian language, the effect was that the graduates of the secondary schools were no longer able to instruct the

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<sup>65</sup> Giesinger, *German*, 177-179. In this Protestant-Catholic effort, where the *Zentralschulen* were located in Protestant colonies and controlled by Protestant boards, religious tensions ran high. In contrast, the seminary in Saratov in the Volga region, opened in 1857, provided an additional two or three years' study for Catholic boys who could return to their home colonies to teach or become priests; Giesinger, 212-217.

<sup>66</sup> Mauch, "Geschichtliches", 66.



essential subjects of religion and German in their language in village schools. Having no voice in the operation of the schools while still required to finance them, colonists lost interest until the revolution of 1905.<sup>67</sup>

As mentioned above, beginning in 1905, the *Freiheitsjahr*, many schools with ten-year courses were established, including girls' schools, as an outcome of German cultural growth.<sup>68</sup> Initiated with high hopes, new schools for girls included a gymnasium in Tarutino, Bessarbia, and progymnasia in Grossliebental and Landau, and for boys a *Zentralschule*, a progymnasium, an agricultural school and a business school in the Black Sea region. The Volga Germans were apparently more russified and thus had an inadequate number of higher education institutions to teach in their own language the half a million Germans in the region prior to World War I.<sup>69</sup> In 1918 the new government issued decrees that abrogated the close connections between church and state, and within a few years, further Soviet directives "completely destroyed the character of the village schools."<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately without details on curriculum, educators, and students, further

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<sup>67</sup> Giesinger, Germans, 231.

<sup>68</sup> Mauch, "Geschichtliches", 66-67. Unfortunately these are his only words on girls' schools other than lists of names of schools, dates they opened, and their location (69-69), followed by photos of the various secondary schools for Germans and Mennonites of both sexes, as well as the "St. Petri-Paul-Mädchenschule in Moskau" (70-71). Not a word on curriculum or names of teachers.

<sup>69</sup> Giesinger, Germans, 241. Unfortunately few comparisons with Mennonite schools can be made, for Giesinger, too, provides no reference to curriculum, female teachers, enrollment statistics, etc. in the schools for girls in the Lutheran and Catholic colonies.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 293-294. It is not until 1957 that official state policy allowed for instruction in "the mother tongue for children and adults of German nationality." Implementation of the policy was sluggish. See Giesinger, 325-328. Included under this policy were the Mennonites scattered across the USSR.

comparisons cannot be made other than on the basis of speculation. All sources consulted are devoid of these details, and therefore a close correlation between the Mennonite and the German educational experience cannot begin. It is not impossible that considerable interaction between Mennonite and German colonists occurred: one possible point of connection may well have been annual teacher conferences organized by either group. A hypothesis may be admissible: it is plausible that close parallels would be perceived in the two systems, their curricula, and the philosophy which resulted in the founding of girls' schools in both sectors. However, at this stage it is difficult to ascertain in which direction the stronger influence flowed.

## **CHAPTER IV "DIE NOTWENDIGKEIT"<sup>1</sup>**

The two previous chapters presented the history of advanced education for women in the two cultures most influential on the Mennonites in South Russia when they established their own institutions. We now direct our attention to the involved endeavours of proponents--those who saw the urgencies in providing advanced education for girls. A description of the trials involved in organizing the schools, their funding, their supporters, and the motivation behind the campaign follows a survey of what the Mennonite woman's community required of her.

### **SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS ON MENNONITE WOMEN**

Any analysis of the expansion of educational opportunities offered to young Mennonite women in Russia must acknowledge their place and status in their community. In compiling observations of Mennonite young women comparable to their Russian and Prussian-German counterparts, some of the expectations placed on young women by their Mennonite community are outlined first.

The traditional expected role of Russian Mennonite women is surveyed in the context of the relative isolation of the 19th-century Mennonite colonies, where social relationships were dictated by a patriarchy that found support in what was considered by the Mennonite religious understanding to be the definitive authority, God's word as found in the Bible. Clearly, and projected both candidly and obliquely, the pervasive expectations were that Mennonite women be daughters who could be relied upon to contribute to the economic needs of their family of birth and marriage, on

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<sup>1</sup> The full phrase is quoted and translated on p. 88 below.

the family farm, in the family business, or, before they married, employed as maids in homes of more affluent Mennonites. With few exceptions, they married Mennonite men and became mothers of large families. Beyond working on their parents' or husband's farms or in the family businesses there was no place for them in the economic sphere of the colonies, certainly not in the power base of the community. Of course, the more affluent families put much less emphasis on labour; instead, their young women mostly embodied the leisured class, filling the time between the completion of their formal education and marriage with cultural activities such as involvement in travel, music, fine needlework, and reading circles. The business of running the churches and the local government, as well as maintaining ties with the state, was conducted by men. As Urry observes, women were as marginalized as the less fortunate:

Community institutions were dominated by a small, educated Mennonite elite consisting of leading congregational officials, teachers of the senior schools...and the [male] secretaries of local government offices, wealthy landowners and industrialists....The poor, the young, and women had as little say in the larger decisions of the community as they did at the local, village level.<sup>2</sup>

In the economic realm, then, women were seen in terms of modes of production and as helpmeets, playing a supporting role to men.

Concomitantly, for their sons the progressive element sought wives who would have attained a comparable level of education and possess the social aptitude considered appropriate to their position in their society. This meant girls acquiring

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<sup>2</sup> James Urry, "Prolegomena to the Study of Mennonite Society in Russia, 1880-1914", Journal of Mennonite Studies, 8 (1990): 70.

a higher education as closely analogous to boys' as was available to them at that time. However, in the desire to improve one's offspring's place in life, the one avenue available seemingly only to women was that outlined within the following passage, which initially alludes to an anomaly within the wider community:

Many estate owners were also apprehensive about the effects of higher education on their sons, who after attending university might be unwilling to return to estate life. Daughters could marry teachers, village administrators and ministers....but sons were usually discouraged from entering other careers or professions.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, greatly increased career opportunities for men and the possibility of social mobility for both genders were the fruits of higher education. In actual terms, among the conservative element--the humble farm-folk, the *Anwohner*, and artisans--but to a lesser degree among the progressives--the industrialists, the educated, and the *Gutsbesitzer*--this applied to boys only. Most colonists sought a secure future for their children: for boys it meant a farm or profession; for girls--a good marriage.<sup>4</sup> Among

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<sup>3</sup> Al Reimer, "Peasant Aristocracy: The Mennonite Gutsbesitzertum in Russia", *JMS*, 8 (1990), 85. (Emphasis added.) As reforms in education were under way, a divergence of parental expectations appeared among a small elite, the wealthy land-owning *Gutsbesitzertum*, sparked by their concern about inheritance, as is brought to light in the quotation. This aim deviated from families who wanted 'a better life for their children' and who recognized the benefits that higher education afforded their sons, and their daughters. However, although one sector was intent on educating and then retaining their young men within the social sphere into which they were born, while allowing their daughters the freedom to marry out or 'up', most parents' aspirations for their sons were based on providing the education that would ensure them careers other than farming. One point in the *Privilegium* (1801) stated that, in compliance with Russian law, only the eldest son was allowed to inherit his parents' farm, which was not to be subdivided. Younger sons became either labourers, artisans, merchants, or professionals in the colonies.

<sup>4</sup> James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Menno-nite Life in Russia, 1789-1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989), 239.

the majority of colonists, the farmers, "daughters were to become farmers' wives and required less learning".<sup>5</sup> The attitude of the educated and more well-to-do, the notion that their daughters might marry into wealth, reflected their compliance, perhaps complicity, with the phenomena that had developed in marriage patterns:

Marriage alliances tended to follow the patterns of inequality based upon wealth, occupation and education....Like married like,...the wealthy married the wealthy;...teachers married teachers or educated spouses; the poor married the poor.<sup>6</sup>

The point of concern here, to be dealt with below, is whether upward mobility through strategic unions with wealth and influence would possibly have motivated providing advanced education for girls.

One role allotted to women was responsibility for the instruction and transference of religious principles: they were made to feel that theirs was the burden of ensuring that the message of salvation was understood and heeded by their families: mothers were entrusted with the safekeeping of their children's souls.<sup>7</sup> It

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 240. This goal may have been especially prevalent among the landless families, who were growing in numbers prior to the founding of daughter colonies. With the acquisition of large tracts of communally owned acreage, the new colonies opened opportunities for more families to become property owners.

<sup>6</sup> Urry, "Prolegomena", 64.

<sup>7</sup> "*Deutsches Frauenleben in Südrußland um 1880. Briefe von Sara Fröse in Altona bei Halbstadt, Rußland, an Marie Epp, geb. Kauenhofen, in Tiegenhof, Westpreußen*", *Mitarbeiter* 7, 5 (October 1941), 141. The letter is dated 12 June 1880, and is written to a Mennonite woman living in West Prussia: of particular note is that the concept of woman's role as moral guide and upholder of society's virtues surmised to belong to the 'weaker, fairer' sex is emanating from the colonies and not from the geographical source of the philosophy, the German states. Until I noted this seemingly reverse direction, I wondered if perhaps this role might have been accommodated for and by women in a transference of 19th-century middle- and upper-class Western European ideals. (Whether Sunday sermons delivered by

is fair to conjecture that, entrusted with this enormous and grave responsibility, the majority of women perceived and responded diligently.

Toward the end of the era of Mennonite prosperity (which ended with outbreak of the Russian Civil War, 1917-1921), with more Mennonite women receiving "better education than in the past", changes had occurred. For one thing, on the social level their status improved; some women have even been acknowledged to be part of the intelligentsia (at least by today's historians if not by their contemporaries).<sup>8</sup> However, outside the elite sphere of those caught up in the trend toward modernity little changed. Especially among the older conservative element, "women were expected to know their place: subordinated to men."<sup>9</sup> The ideal of patriarchal authority so apparent in Mennonite community structures served to reinforce restrictions imposed on women.

Consideration must be given to the level of influence on the Mennonite colonies in Russia of German Classicist literature, which at the end of the 18th century "began to codify the images of women...into 'universally valid' models for

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ministers ever included directly stated mandates is a query yet to be pursued.) Relying on the letter at hand, one may conjecture that women in both the colonies and the Germanies were very conscious of what was exacted of them.

<sup>8</sup> James Urry, "Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth and the Mennonite Experience in Imperial Russia", *JMS*, 3 (1985): 21. See also Harry Loewen, "Intellectual Developments Among the Mennonites of Russia: 1880-1917", *JMS* 8 (1990): 89. Despite the detail he enters into in his study on the topic, Richard Stites simply asks if there was a female intelligentsia in Russia; he does not provide a conclusive answer. Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978) 177.

<sup>9</sup> Urry, "Through the Eye of a Needle", 21.

female behaviour that have remained normative until this day"; during this era the differentiation of sex roles polarized, and only the woman's role came to be defined by the family.<sup>10</sup> How the education system was accommodated to women, and what its role was in the metamorphosis of the role of women in the Mennonite colonies in view of this polarity, will become more apparent in the following investigation into the burgeoning of schools and opportunities.

### THE FIRST MÄDCHENSCHULEN

The founding of schools specifically for girls was an initiative taken on behalf of the less prominent members of the Mennonite community by the elite and powerful. Impetus actually originated in the male power structure--wealthy landowners and industrialists, the ministerial sector, and educators, with continued support from individual women and women's groups.

One major catalyst for furnishing greater educational opportunities for Mennonite women was the 1870 declaration by the Russian government banning co-education in the Mennonite central schools. According to Braun, the reasoning behind the founding of separate schools for girls in the Mennonite colonies was "that [co-education] was dangerous from a moral point of view, but more probably, because it was not customary in Russia".<sup>11</sup> Hence the necessity for separate secondary schools for girls. Originally the secondary schools, like the village schools,

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<sup>10</sup> Susan Cocalis, Kay Goodman, and Karin Hausen, as cited in Albisetti, Schooling, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Braun, "The Educational System of the Mennonite Colonies in Russia", trans. Amy E Enss. MQR, 3, 3 (1929), 179.



were co-educational; for the 1840s no gender differentiation in attendance is evident.<sup>12</sup> That the secondary schools had a similar ratio is doubtful: their aim was to train people for positions which were rarely open to Mennonite women; and the government stipulated that the Halbstadt and Khortitsa Zentralschulen admit annually "six boys of poor families as wards of the colony".<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after the ban on co-education in secondary schools was imposed, the Molochnaia colony began to look after educating their daughters. In 1874, Andreas Voth, former village school teacher and dedicated member and president of the recently formed Molochnaia Mennonite School Board, opened the first Mädchenschule in his own home in Halbstadt, Molochnaia.<sup>14</sup> In the 1880s the school was reorganized and a separate building was set aside for it. With the construction of a larger building in 1905 and its development into a girls' Gymnasium with eight

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<sup>12</sup> Urry, None But Saints, 157. See also Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Education in Russia", in John Friesen, ed., Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988. Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz (Winnipeg: CMBC, 1989), 83, citing Peter Braun, "Education Among", 179: "the central schools originally, like the village school, were co-educational institutions." It may be interesting to note that if scholarship predating that of the late 20th century refers at all to this convention in any detail other than the brief references made by H.H. Epp and Braun, it awaits discovery.

<sup>13</sup> Ens, "Mennonite Education", in Mennonites in Russia, 80. The first career opportunity was teaching in the village elementary school, followed by positions in the exiguous Mennonite girls' schools.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Braun, "Education Among the Mennonites in Russia", ME, Vol. II, 1956 ed., 154, 155. The board was organized by teachers and from 1869 to 1920 it was, as Braun says, "the leader and protector of the Mennonite educational system." The reason for Voth opening his home as a school for girls is not given: perhaps he had daughters of his own who had wished to advance their education, or perhaps he wished to level the apparent disparities between the genders in regards to educational opportunities, and unilaterally initiated further schooling for girls despite the lack of adequate support, both financial and moral, from the community.

classes, the Halbstadt School on the Molochnaia Colony became more than just the equivalent of state-run secondary schools for females; it eventually became a fully-accredited female teacher-training institute.

The founding of the Khortitsa Mädchenschulen, our other principle school, has been detailed in Toews's anthology. Entrance into the Zentralschulen had been allowed girls for some time.<sup>15</sup> As the practice of co-education in secondary schools had been forbidden by the colonial administration (*Kolonialverwaltung*) in 1870, and attempts to remove the ban had brought no favourable results, the *Fuersorgekomitee* (Guardians Committee) took up the matter of higher education for girls and in April 1870 made the proposal to the Khortitsa district administration to found a separate school for girls.

Furthering the education of adolescent girls had been advocated by people with foresight in Khortitsa (*einsichtsvolle Leute*) since the middle of the 19th century. But in the initial period the idea of such a school encountered much hostility and malicious slander among the Mennonite colonists, for there were people who failed to comprehend the value of educating girls, nor did they wish to.<sup>16</sup> The concept was attacked from the constituency who raised such concerns as: were the women not good enough anymore; if more highly educated, would they not become proud. The idea that there had always been "heaven-inspired" wives and mothers (*"es hat immer*

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<sup>15</sup> This statement by H.H. Epp, "Die Chortitzer Maedchenschule", in Toews, 4, is confirmed by Peter Braun in "The Educational System ", *MQR*, as cited in n20.

<sup>16</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 6.

*wunderbare gottbegnaedigte Frauen und Muetter gegeben*") was expressed.<sup>17</sup> (This may have been an indication of the link some elements within Mennonite society made between their expectations of mothers as the stewards of values and mores and the notion that worldly knowledge might taint their purity.)

In the 1870s when support from the congregations was not yet evident, the Guardians Committee proposed that the district administration find the necessary means for a girls' school, which they felt should not be a difficult task, for the colonists were considered to be rather prosperous. (See the account of the intricacies of funding the school in the following section.) Unfortunately, the district administration protracted the matter and the unfortunate young girls for a long time lost the opportunity to continue their education in a suitable, qualified school.<sup>18</sup>

Despite support for the idea from educators in the colony, the impetus to found a school for girls did not materialize until A.A. Neufeld became the head of the Khortitsa Zentralschule. Long a proponent of a Mädchenschule for the district, in 1892 he strongly and publicly advocated the concept of a society being formed in order for the plans to be realized. Sympathy for the school grew. The first decisive initiative to commence the work came from the Mennonites in Ekaterinoslav, in the middle of January 1895, in the business office of the J. Thiessen firm. The proprietor, J. Thiessen Jr., and David Epp, teacher at the local village school, discussed the concept of the girls' school. David Epp wrote to A.A. Neufeld,

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<sup>17</sup> Katarina Thiessen, "Die Lehrer", in Toews, 17.

<sup>18</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 4.

Khortitsa, requesting that he call a meeting of 'friends of the Mädchenschule'; though sceptical, Neufeld followed through. Others members of the Khortitsa congregation were of the opinion that there was no better time than the present to found a Mädchenschule in Khortitsa. Neufeld, after consulting with the *Oberschulzen*, arranged for a meeting in the Khortitsa district hall for 11 February 1895. Just two days prior to the meeting, the Ekaterinoslav Mennonites invited David Epp to meet with them in order that the congregation might deliberate on "the necessity of instruction for the fairer sex" (*die Notwendigkeit der weiblichen Ausbildung*). That group recorded a resolution indicating support for establishing a colony school for furthering girls' education, announced themselves as founders (or promoters) of the society, and donated the sum of 600 rubles.<sup>19</sup>

Those who assembled at the February 1895 meeting expressed a cordial interest in the work ahead. The necessity of founding a girls' school was agreed upon by all, but the when, where and how remained under discussion. To carry out the work, an advisory committee was voted in, and thus began a series of committee meetings.

Interest in the school came not only from the male sector. Indeed, a few girls had been prepared to report as students earlier, in 1889. And even while the school was still in the initial conceptual stage, individual wives of the members of the school society did not tire of "spurring on" their husbands to renewed activity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 6-8.

<sup>20</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 5, 6.

That same month drafts of the statutes were presented for confirmation. However, the authorities returned the statutes, with the recommendation for revision toward a society supporting indigent students. This was not the goal of the supporters, who as a committee decided not to wait for confirmation, but to obtain permission to found the school with a different approach. They turned to the state guardian of education of the Odessa *gubernia*, who advised them to establish the school under a private name, for then the plans would receive confirmation and no hindrance. Rosental resident Peter Dyck provided the security to guarantee a school. Consequently, on 28 August 1895 permission came from the government for the inception of the school. After decades of applying for permission, approval from state authorities for the establishment of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule, as a private institution, had finally been actualized.<sup>21</sup>

On the long road to securing authorization much paper work had been undertaken and many a personal intercession was needed to finally achieve the goal. Of particular note were A. Neufeld's journeys to St. Petersburg, where in the Ministry of Public Education his personal connections with the assistant to the minister, Swerjew (who had been Neufeld's classmate at the University of Berlin), helped to expedite the matter at hand.<sup>22</sup>

The confirmation of the society's school statutes was issued on 12 August 1900

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<sup>21</sup> H.H. Epp in Toews, 7; Ens, "Mennonite Education", 83. See also Braun, "Education Among", 156: It was under the guidance of Neufeld from 1890 to 1905 that the Khortitsa Zentralschule "enjoyed an excellent education".

<sup>22</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 7.

by the Ministry of Public Education and in February 1901 from the Ministry of the Interior. On 1 November 1902 the society, on the basis of an ordinance of the ministers' committee, was withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry and placed under the authority of the Ministry of Public Education. According to the Ministry of Public Education's statutes, the objective of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule was to provide the opportunity for Mennonite girls to advance their education. The school was to be included in the category of the two-class public schools (see Chapter II Russia's Education For Girls) and was administered according to the model of both the 7 June 1875 statute governing instruction for such schools and the provision of its society's statute. The course was to be of three years' duration, but supplemental courses could be added with the approval of the director of public schools. Obligatory subjects of instruction were to be religion, Russian language, German language, arithmetic and geometry, history, geography and natural history, drawing, penmanship (*Schoenschreiben*), singing and needlework. The range of instruction and the number of hours of instruction for the individual subjects were established in a prospectus presented to the guardianship of the Odessa educational district: girls were accepted upon their completion of the village school course of study; school fees were set at 20 rubles per year; and the teaching staff was to consist of one male teacher and two female teachers, one of whom was to be the head-mistress.<sup>23</sup>

Initially the society's monetary means were too small to provide for the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

procurement of a larger site and the construction of a building on a large scale. In 1895 a site with some buildings on it was purchased in the village of Rosental. With renovations and additions the former dwelling was converted into a humble three-room school. It was to be merely a temporary expedient and at the society's meetings the question of new construction was constantly discussed. As enrollment in the three classes rose to 71 by 1903 and the inadequacy of the site became more evident, the question of new construction gained prominence. The site was sold with the understanding that instruction would continue there until the new school was available for instruction in September 1904. A larger site was purchased on adjacent property--in the village of Khortitsa--and in March 1904 construction began on a stately building with four large, bright classrooms and a high spacious recreation hall, with long, wide corridors and a large vestibule, rooms for teachers, bathrooms and teachers' quarters. This was a building which fulfilled to satisfaction all the demands of school hygiene and through its imposing exterior symbolized the honour of the village.<sup>24</sup> It was realized that the new building had an inadequacy: a heated lavatory was needed, and after much discussion on the subject, even this alteration was made.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, two buildings present on the site were refurbished into teachers' residences. Eventually the Khortitsa girls' school was able to generate support from wider circles and the school became an accepted cultural component

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<sup>24</sup> The stately building of the Mädchenschule continued to be used as a secondary co-educational school for local Russian-Ukrainian children until 1995. My own visit in May 1990 found classrooms filled with junior-high students whose behaviour demonstrated that they were no less high-spirited than their Canadian peers.

<sup>25</sup> H.H. Epp in Toews, 8-9.

of the church congregation.

### OTHER SCHOOLS WERE ESTABLISHED

In some of the more remote villages, a few homes had been providing private secondary schooling for small groups of girls for several years. But the political thaw of 1905 encouraged aspirations to increase opportunities for greater numbers of Mennonite students, in close parallel to the contemporary Russian trend. For example, the aspiration to educate well not only their sons but also their daughters had become more tangible among the villagers of Ohrloff and Tiege.<sup>26</sup> The year 1907 saw the establishment of four more schools for girls, each supported financially by the individual societies founding them: the Ohrloff Mädchenschule in the Taurien district of Molochnaia, one at Gnadenfeld in the same colony, the New York Mädchenschule in Ignatjevo, and one in Karrassan in the Crimea. With the state no longer prohibiting co-education at the secondary level after 1905, new schools at Spat in the Crimea and at Davlekanovo in the Ufa settlement saw both genders enrolling, as did the trade school (*Handelschule*) at Alexanderkrone, Molochnaia, and possibly other Mennonite special schools.<sup>27</sup>

One account of the founding of the Ohrloff Mädchenschule lists the names of men, "respected in the community", who directed the school society; all three were ministers: Peter Unruh and H. Günther of Ohrloff, and Jacob Reimer from Rückenau. Their objective, and the society's, was not that their daughters grow up

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<sup>26</sup> Anna Schmidt (Hamm), "Auch die ehemaligen Ohrloffter Mädchenschülerinnen kamen zusammen", Der Bote, 4 September 1962, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Peter Braun, "Education Among", ME, 156-157.



to be 'supercilious bluestockings', but that their [Mennonite] people required capable wives and educators and for which specific training was essential.<sup>28</sup>

Pedagogical institutes had been established in the Halbstadt Zentralschule in 1878 and Khortitsa Zentralschule in 1890 and were open to male graduates of the secondary schools who intended to become teachers or to advance to university level courses. The Halbstadt *Realschule* (1908), a Mennonite-run equivalent of the Russian prerequisite to entrance to Russian universities, provided a continuation of the Zentralschulen. The Halbstadt Mädchenschule provided corresponding education for girls when it developed into a full eight-year Gymnasium; the completion of the course qualified students for Russian universities.<sup>29</sup> In 1909 a three-year nursing course at the Morija deaconess home in Neu-Halbstadt offered opportunities for Mennonite girls to train for work as nurses in the colonies' three hospitals, in the psychiatric Institution at Alt-Kronsweide, and in the homes for the aged in Rueckenau and in the Halbstadt region.<sup>30</sup>

#### FUNDING MÄDCHENSCHULEN

The Khortitsa Mädchenschule was to be a congregation-supported school;

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<sup>28</sup> Anna Schmidt (Harms), "Auch", 12. The writer's words, as already translated: "Das Ziel dieser, wie auch der Zweck des ganzen Vereins war nicht, daß ihre Töchter drei Jahren in einen schönen Bau zu "hochnaßigen Blaustrümpfen" heranwachsen sollten, sondern unser Volk brauchte tüchtige Frauen und Erzieherinnen, und diese brauchten eine spezielle Vorbildung."

<sup>29</sup> Peter Braun, "Education Among", ME, 156-157. In regard to the Halbstadt Mädchenschule, unfortunately Braun does not indicate the date of its developing into a full girls' Gymnasium, although he adds that in 1920 "its enrollment was about 150".

<sup>30</sup> Friesen, Brotherhood, (page reference lost).

however, at first support from the colony congregation was not obtainable. At that time, the colony's church-membership was not sufficiently concerned about education, and were not willing to provide the finances required: furthermore, voluntary contributions were unpredictable. The district administration therefore turned down the April 1870 proposal.<sup>31</sup>

Private initiative and private funding were seen to be the only recourse in founding a school for girls. In the late 1880s this concept, promoted by teachers David Epp and Jakob Klassen, found ever more favourable ground. In 1889 the Khortitsa industrialist A.A. Wallmann forwarded 500 rubles to David Epp in support, should he find it appropriate to begin with establishing a school. At their February 1895 meeting with David Epp, the Ekaterinoslav group donated the sum of 600 rubles.<sup>32</sup> Among the names of members of the school society and who formed the backbone of support for the school are those of industrialists A. and J. Koop, J. Niebuhr, Joh. Lepp, P.Thiessen, and A. Wallmann Jr.; J. Klassen, secretary; P. Dyck, retired senior overseer in the civic administration; J. Esau; J.J. Thiessen from Ekaterinoslav, for whom the school became a favourite charity; A.A. Wallmann, treasurer of the society and the school's enthusiastic promoter; A.A. Neufeld, founder of the school and the one who suffused life into the idea and their unnamed wives.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 4.

<sup>32</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 5-8.

<sup>33</sup> H.H. Epp in Toews, 5, 10-11. The J. Esau mentioned was either the doctor Jacob or the engineer Johann, both residing in Jekaterinoslav.

In her anthology of memoirs, Helene Toews singles out one benefactor: the contributor of 10,000 rubles in 1904 for the construction of the stately-looking Mädchenschule building in Khortitsa, and for scholarships for financially disadvantaged girls, was Mrs. Katherina Wallmann, widow of a well-known Khortitsa industrialist. Toews also applauds the Khortitsa women's sewing circle (*Nähverein*) for its annual generous financial support of the school.<sup>34</sup>

The Khortitsa Mädchenschule can stand as an example of how altruistically a small group of people could achieve prodigious results; the school society consisted of scarcely 100 members. The committee had consisted of twelve members and over the years had varied little in its formation; after their terms expired, members were usually re-elected. Later, due to the war, regular classes could not be held, financial support became scarce and uncertain, and it became increasingly difficult to hold meetings of the school society. Its structure disintegrated, with some members dying, replacements not being elected, and others having fled the encroachment of the Civil War. In the end, D.H. Epp alone, as secretary, was left to represent the society.<sup>35</sup>

In the next chapter of this study, the focus shifts to a reconstruction of the

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<sup>34</sup> Helene Toews, ed., Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit (Virgil, Ontario: Niagara Press, n.d., [1952?]), 1, 2, 11; see also H.H. Epp in Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>35</sup> Dietrich H. Epp, "Nachtrag zur Geschichte der Chortitzer Maedchenschule", in Toews, 13, lists the men who were long-term members of the committee in charge of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule: "Johann J. Thiessen..., A.A. Neufeld, David H. Epp, A.A. Wallmann; P.J. Thiessen; A.A. Koop; J.H. Niebuhr; J.J. Klassen; H.H. Epp, D.H. Epp; P.P. Priess; J.G. Lepp; P.A. Koop; P.W. Peters." The fact that J.J. Thiessen was the only person to ever hold the position of chairman could be construed in terms of his retaining control over the project, or possibly because he was the major fiscal supporter, or both.

past by those most directly involved in the Mädchenschulen--former students--which will complement the evidence of the established accounts of peripherals and scholarly treatments to date. As Paul Thompson asserts in The Voice of the Past: Oral History, "Since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority,...once the life experiences of people of all kinds can be used as raw material, a new dimension is given to history."<sup>36</sup> Thus, the rich and vibrant view of the Mädchenschulen, from the inside, "provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past".<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Paul Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral history (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER V            PERSONAL EXPERIENCES: ANTICIPATIONS**

We reach the core of this study: the Mennonite Mädchenschulen in South Russia between 1874, the year the first one was founded in Halbstadt, Molochnaia, and 1920, the year private schools were closed as such by the new Soviet regime. Girls who had completed their village elementary school education enrolled in these secondary girls' schools (Mädchenschulen) at the age of 11 or 12 for three or four years. Outnumbered by boys' schools twenty-nine to six, the girls' schools were a Mennonite response to the state's ban on co-education at the secondary level between 1870 and 1905, and also reflected colonists' revitalised interest in education.<sup>1</sup> Intended to offer an educational equivalent to the centrally-located boys' schools (Zentralschulen), both were parallel to our junior-high schools today; however, the Mädchenschulen were regarded differently from the Zentralschulen, as will be seen.

Developments in three of the six Mädchenschulen can be described in some detail; extant material is more scarce for the later, smaller schools than for the first two, the Halbstadt and the Khortitsa schools, with the latter, in a published memoir, most richly preserved of all.<sup>2</sup>

The narratives and the personal experiences of students enrolled in private

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Education", in Mennonites in Russia, 84-87. See the tables listing names of Zentral- and Mädchenschulen on 86 and 87.

<sup>2</sup> After utilizing the narratives of former students of the Khortitsa, Ohrloff and New York Mädchenschulen, and secondary material on the one in Halbstadt, we leave the Gnadenfeld and Karassan schools with no attestants in this study.

girls' schools in the Russian Mennonite colonies that this study is based on, provide a depiction of a unique world of short duration from a distinct, but not naive, perspective. Current research in advanced education for young Mennonite women can be expedited from two main kinds of sources: first, as the previous chapter relied on, statements of 'the facts', as put forth by scholars in their studies of related topics and by peripherals, persons who provide the perspective of 'outsiders';<sup>3</sup> second, more to the point, information from the personal accounts of former students by way of memoirs, letters and articles in newspapers linking the widely-dispersed post-Russian Civil War Mennonite community.

Reunions of former students of Mennonite schools and of former residents of villages in south Russia were reported on quite regularly in Der Bote from the 1940s into the 1970s. These reports often contain informative snippets of life and people from that era.

In Helene Toews's anthology,<sup>4</sup> two articles which detail the school's creation by men are written by men, without whose organized efforts the girls' schools possibly would never have taken form. Both H.H. Epp and Dietrich H. Epp were highly regarded community leaders in Russia, whose prestige followed them to and endured

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<sup>3</sup> By peripherals I mean those who wrote about the schools but were never students there; this would include both male and female teachers, founders, board members, and other supporters of the schools.

<sup>4</sup> Helene Toews, ed., Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit. Ein Buch fuer Jung und Alt. Erinnerungen und Erlebnisse der Ehemaligen Schuelerinnen der Chortitzer Maedchenschule (Virgil, Ontario: Niagara Press, undated [1952?], 111 p.

in Canada.<sup>5</sup> Their perspectives provide details of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule that students may not have been aware of, for few of them address the same issues.

The memories in print of the few former students who did record their life narratives provide most significant accounts of first-hand experiences at the Mennonite Mädchenschulen. Because the writers were aware that their impressions would be read by others, both acquaintances and strangers, for many their student experiences were such that they would have constructed their narratives less cautiously, had they not felt that their essence as inheritors and bequeathers of a specific representation of the Mennonite elite would be exposed.<sup>6</sup> Evidence that they were aware of expectations their community still placed on them are abundant, though most often apparent in an implied, subtle sense. Depicting the world of the Mädchenschulen, from the scant sources available, are observations and fragments of the lives of a fraction of those girls able to advance their education in the institutions here under examination.

What will follow is first the narrative story of one former student, an individual who articulated her observations and insights gained as a constituent of the privileged world of the economically-secure progressives of the ephemeral

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<sup>5</sup> This point is taken from noting that H.H. Epp and D. H. Epp were included in this Canadian 1940s anthology about women's education. A sense of substantiation and credibility may have been sought in documentation from the male leadership.

<sup>6</sup> How differently, is the question. Did they write only what they felt they could afford to divulge and still maintain their privacy? Would they have shared more of their disappointments in life if they knew they would not be found out? Were they striving to maintain a specific image of themselves as the educated elite? The answer, I would hazard, is affirmative to all of these questions.

**'Mennonite Commonwealth' era. The chapter will conclude with an account of one family's daughters' educations and career experiences. In between, the curriculum and high points of the year, and the effects the schools had on its students over time will constitute the majority of this chapter. Teachers will be highlighted--more men than women, for men's teaching careers lasted decades whereas women taught for only a year or two. A follow-up ought to include observations of how the realities of their later lives conformed with their youthful dreams; however, the disruptions and hardships of the Civil War and the Stalin years interfered with the opportunities of so many Mennonites in South Russia to fulfil their aspirations. Not only were the life ambitions of many young women never realized, but many of the people's fates ended in labour camps or on the difficult trek out or as refugees from the war in Europe or in exile in Siberia, or took them across oceans, that only a few women's lives can be celebrated comprehensively.**

#### **ANNA SUDERMANN: ONE WOMAN'S PERSONAL LANDSCAPE**

**The memoirs of Anna Sudermann contain valuable information of life in the Russian Mennonite colonies during the Mennonite Commonwealth era, from the perspective of an educated member of the upper social class.<sup>7</sup>**

**Anna Sudermann set her memoirs to paper between 1951 and 1970. In**

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<sup>7</sup> **Anna Sudermann, Lebenserinnerungen von Anna Sudermann, 1893-1970. (unpublished typescript, 390 pp. plus Appendix 18 pp. Vol. 3770, Mennonite Heritage Archives, CMBC, Winnipeg). The number in parentheses in the text of this study stand for the page number of her narrative in her manuscript. Readers will hear her "family chronicle" in a narrative, chronological flow, with interpretive insights that are mostly hers. Anna Sudermann's 400-page manuscript contains many striking and revealing details.**



coming to terms with Canadian life after she had immigrated in 1948, she felt that she and her siblings had been able to manifest a more liberal perspective and to live a more progressive lifestyle than had her fellow Canadian Mennonites (page 2 of her unpublished memoir).

Anna describes her childhood in southern Russia fondly but not sentimentally.<sup>8</sup> Her parents resided on Alexjewka, formerly her maternal grandparents' estate, located north of Nikopol and southwest of Zaporozhia. The second youngest of ten siblings (six survived infancy), Anna came from a well-known and respected family. Her father, David Sudermann, died in 1902 at the age of 49 when Anna was nine years old (11). Her father's father, Johann Sudermann, from an artisan family in the dyer's trade in Prussia, immigrated in the 1830s or '40s and acquired a large holding of 1000 desiatins. Her mother, Maria Heese, appears to have been a calm, strong person: Anna never once saw her cry, not even in her bereavement (13); Maria was the granddaughter of Heinrich Heese, who had emigrated from Prussia in 1808 as a teacher and taught at the Ohrloff Zentralschule and who, by overcoming resistance from Mennonite attitudes toward advanced education, is credited with establishing the Khortitsa Zentralschule in 1842 (23). Heinrich Heese II, Maria's father, married a daughter (Maria) of the flour-mill-owning Thiessen family in Ekaterinoslav, and by the 1880s had become a prosperous mill-owner himself. Anna's maternal uncles, Peter and Jacob Heese, went on to

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<sup>8</sup> Like most Mennonites from Russia or the USSR, Sudermann refers to her former home as Russia or *Südrussland*. The locale of the colonies would more accurately be called southern Ukraine, and the majority of its inhabitants, Ukrainians.

university studies; several of her cousins studied at technical schools in Germany and Switzerland (23).

Anna observes that while it was a foregone conclusion that sons would be highly educated, it was considered unnecessary and unwarranted that daughters proceed further than a village-school education (24). Just as revealing of the conceivable motivation in the minds of advocates of advanced education for girls is Anna's commentary on the extent of influence that city life bore on Mennonite cultural aspirations. Even though Mennonite families in the Russian city of Ekaterinoslaw cultivated an exclusive community, keeping themselves apart from the life of the city, the urban experience still exerted an edifying influence on the Mennonite woman, who desired no longer to be left out of the cultural offerings of theatres, concerts, and the like. The ladies from the city considered themselves of a higher class when comparing themselves to their cousins in the colonies (24).<sup>9</sup>

Anna's early schooling took place in her parents' modest, vacated, first home on the estate, under the direction of teachers, most of whom had received their education at the Khortitsa Zentralschule and the pedagogical classes. Her brother Jacob had a good teacher, Peter Dyck, who inspired his pupil's interest in the natural sciences. For two years, Anna's cousin Agnes Klassen was her teacher. (She later taught at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule, married Zentralschule teacher Heinrich H. Epp and, as a widow, immigrated to Rosthern, Sask.) Anna's brother Nikolai was

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<sup>9</sup> For a study of urban Mennonites, see George K. Epp, "Urban Mennonites in Russia", in Mennonites in Russia 1788-1988, ed. John J. Friesen (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 239-259.

taught by Aron Toews, who later became their brother-in-law. A Russian woman taught Anna and her sisters Maria and Katharina the piano and the Russian language. Attending this school with the Sudermann children were the estate's Russian (Ukrainian) and German employees' children, who became their playmates.

Just prior to the war years, the school acquired status equal to an official school in Russia, and its graduates received the same certificate as pupils who completed the village elementary schools. During the winter months their teacher also taught singing to the Sudermann children and their nearby cousins, the Martens children, according to the *Ziffern* method (19). Her family routinely socialized with their neighbours from the Mennonite villages and with their Russian neighbours on adjacent estates and in the village of Scholochowo, especially with the "Greek-Orthodox" priest and his family. Anna declares that her family came to know and love the Russian language, the Russian religion, and the Russian mentality. Yet she sensed a distance, a barrier standing between them. She acknowledges that through their Mennonite relatives and their school years in Khortitsa, her family maintained contact with their Mennonite world and, via books and periodicals, did not lose the influence of "our German culture" (21).

Anna enrolled in the Khortitsa Mädhenschule at age eleven in 1904 and stayed until 1907, boarding with her father's sister and brother-in-law, Agnes (Sudermann) and Jacob A. Klassen in the village (59). Her entrance exam, which she describes as being a short formality, consisted of being tested in reading, writing (*Schreiben*), arithmetic, German, and Russian. Her uncle taught German and religion

and, with an additional three female teachers, instructed some ninety students. They filled four classes in buildings adjacent to the new school building under construction on the yard of the proprietor of a bookstore, Hermann Borm. She describes the new school building, an impressive architectural accomplishment completed in 1905 by a Mennonite architect, a Mr. Peters.

In accordance with the statutes of the school, both the administrator of the school and the person teaching Russian language and history were Russian. In later years, until the closure of the school in 1920, the administrative position was filled by Agnes Klassen after she had graduated from a Gymnasium in Charkow, passed the teachers' exams, and was certified by the education ministry. Agnes Klassen taught mathematics, natural science, physics, and drawing. Despite the high turnover in the female teaching staff at the Khortitsa Mädschenschule during her three student years, Anna most clearly recalls one unique, impressive individual, the administrator Maria Dmitrijewna Bojkowsaja. Her bearing and her very self-assured demeanour complemented her outward appearance: an erect posture, piercing brown eyes, and black hair cut short--at that time an anomaly. She was very direct in her expressions, often to point of insult, spoke a very good German, and was revolutionarily minded, as were most of the university students at that time. To what extent she was capable pedagogically, Anna could not judge at the time; nevertheless, Bojkowsaja was very strict, had high expectations, and was feared especially by those students who inadequately mastered the Russian language. She interested her students in her lessons, introducing new material with fervour. Anna declares that she herself never

was in conflict with her teacher, for she spoke Russian well, and that her teacher helped her practise, and had expressed satisfaction with her presentation of, a memorized Russian poem (60). Anna describes Jacob Klassen less deferentially than other students did: she mentions his displeasure with colleagues not as punctual nor as conscientious as himself, his recurring migraines that impinged upon his teaching, and owing to his age, his weariness. She lists her other teachers, describes them briefly, and treats her favourites approvingly (61).

A typical schoolday is outlined: the day began at 8:00; the morning consisted of three classes interspersed with two ten-minute recesses; lunch-time (for which all students went home) ended at one o'clock; and after two more classes the school day was over, giving the girls enough hours to complete their assignments, play, and pursue other amusements (63). In those days students from the girls' school and the adjacent boys' school were directed not to be seen walking along the village street in the company of the other gender and were to avoid associating with each other. The more audacious among the girls and boys did succeed in arranging to meet somewhere in the village. This, however, involved risk-taking, and those who were found out were liable to be reprimanded (66-67).

Funding for the school was derived mostly from private sources, very little from the local civil administration. In contrast, the *Zentralschule* was supported by the colony's church congregations; it also included the pedagogical institute for the colony's teachers. The prevalent attitude, Anna tells us, was that the girls' school was viewed as only a continuation school and was still considered by most farmers to be

an unnecessary luxury. Industrialists Wallmann, Koop, Lepp, Niebuhr from Khortitsa, others from Schönwiese, and Thiessen from Ekaterinoslav comprised the school committee and provided funding. As well, every girl paid twenty rubles per year. A school fund-raiser was held annually with an evening of entertainment and sale of the girls' hand-crafted items (69).

Anna reports that the Mennonite students "fortunately" tolerated those of other confessions. Her class included several Lutheran and four Russian girls whose parents resided in Khortitsa. They all got along amicably and teachers treated students equally. Because few Mennonite students spoke Russian fluently enough, one day a directive from the Russian language teacher announced the girls were to speak only Russian during their recesses, and for every German word spoken a fine of ten kopecks would be levied. Rather than practise the language in this way, some girls chose not to speak at all during recess. Soon the decree was rescinded and the collected fine-money purchased a birthday gift for the teacher (72).

The May field-trip was the high-light of the school year. (Other students describe their May expeditions below.) Final exams at the end of May were especially arduous for the third class (and later, after it was added, the fourth), for whom these proficiency exams ended their school lessons. She confides that she did not become exceptionally nervous nor did she take the exams too seriously (75).

In her childhood she always wished to have been a boy, for she enjoyed romping outdoors and numerous sports much more than playing with dolls or cooking (76); she whole-heartedly played games resembling hockey with the boys in

winter (124). An incident that illustrates her character took place one summer day, when she and four male cousins carried their canoe a good distance, from the stream running across the estate to the dam on the river; the whole experience of canoeing proved challenging but very enjoyable. She delighted immensely in swimming; she describes how they organized swimming parties, for that time it was the custom to swim in separate gender groups (77).

Unlike the Russian-estate daughters who did not do similar house-and-yard work but conducted themselves like gentlewomen (17), she and her siblings had always been expected to help in the seasonal chores involved in running her mother's household and garden on the family estate. Still, plenty of leisure time allowed for entertaining her Esau cousins, and the outdoor activities that she loved (96-98).

After graduating from the *Mädchenschule*, Sudermann enrolled in a *Kommerzschule* in Ekaterinoslav for four years before she went on to study science at the Bestuzhev Academy (the women's university in St. Petersburg), taught in the Khortitsa school for nine years under Soviet authorities and again during the German occupation, and managed to get out in 1943, first to Germany and then to Canada in 1948. Her memoirs relate the story of life for the Mennonites in Soviet Russia up to 1943.

#### MÄDCHENSCHULEN STUDENTS: ENROLLMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Even prior to establishing the girls' schools, fears had been raised from several constituents that the schools would not be feasible due to lack of enrollment. However, in the first 18 years of the Khortitsa *Mädchenschule's* existence for which

statistics are available, the number of students gradually rose. The table below shows annual enrollments at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule in the left-hand column from the 1914 source, while the right-hand column has the enrollment at the Khortitsa boys' Zentralschule, as found in the 1905 source:<sup>10</sup>

TABLE I

Mädchenschule	Zentralschule
1895-6: 17 girls;	110 boys;
1896-7: 27	115
1897-8: 38	122
1898-9: 46	137
1899-1900: 54	171
1900-1: 38	183
1901-2: 48	204
1902-3: 52	187
1903-4: 71	179
1904-5: 68	(data unavailable)
1905-6: 79	"
1906-7: 93	"
1907-8: 98	"
1908-9: 102	"
1909-10: 93	"
1910-11: 94	"
1911-12: 80	"
1912-13: 89	"

The decline in enrollment at the Zentralschule after 1901-2 is explained by the fact that because of over-enrollment fewer students from out of the district were admitted.

While enrollment data show that fewer girls than boys entered secondary

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<sup>10</sup> See, H. Epp, "Die Chortitzer Mädchenschule", Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1913, 10 (1914), 98, and D. Epp, "Die Chortitzer Zentralschule" in MJ 1903 1 (1905), [ed.(?) Heinrich Dirks (Groß-Tokmak: H. Lenzmann, 1905)], 62.



schools, the formers' numbers seem to have increased at a much sharper rate than the boys'. For example, in 1895/96 while more than 100 boys attended the Khortitsa Zentralschule, only 17 girls were enrolled in the Khortitsa Mädchenschule; in 1902/03, 187 boys and 52 girls were secondary students; and in 1913/14 there were over 200 boys and 92 girls in the secondary schools of the colony.<sup>11</sup>

To put the enrollment figures for the Mennonite secondary schools into greater perspective, statistics compiled in the local news and devotional paper, Die Friedensstimme, just prior to the surge of new schools opening, reveal that in 1904 the 310 village schools had 11,496 students, and the nine intermediate educational institutions--including the two Mädchenschulen--had 566 male and 128 female students enrolled.<sup>12</sup> A decade later, the Mennonite population of 104,000 had 16,000 pupils attending 450 elementary schools taught by 570 teachers, including 70 women; 2000 students were enrolled in 25 secondary schools taught by a staff of 100. In 1910 the 200 Mennonites studying at middle and university level schools in Russia included several female students.<sup>13</sup>

According to their religious affiliations, most of the students were Mennonite

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<sup>11</sup> Urry, "Prolegema", 63.

<sup>12</sup> T.D. Regehr and J.I. Regehr, For Everything a Season. A History of the Alexanderkrone Zentralschule (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1988) 11.

<sup>13</sup> Harry Loewen, "Intellectual Developments Among the Mennonites of Russia: 1880-1917", JMS 8 (1990) 90-91, 93. See especially the list of names of Mennonites in Russia who received a university education between 1890 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, either in Russia or abroad in N.J. Klassen, "Mennonite Intelligentsia in Russia", ML, 24, 59-60. Of the 96, two are women. See also the memoirs of Anna Sudermann, who lists the names of five Mennonite women, her classmates at Bestuzhev.

with several being Lutheran from adjacent German colonies. Over the years, girls of Jewish and Greek-Orthodox confessions enrolled as well.<sup>14</sup>

The girls' social or family-occupation backgrounds varied. Parents were tradespeople, manufacturers, artisans, estate owners, civic administrators, ministers, teachers, or farmers. An encouraging indication was the consistent increase of the number of farmers' children attending. With these findings, Epp concludes, the charge that the school was meant only for daughters of the well-to-do is refuted. In order to facilitate the enrollment of the less well-off, the society annually paid the tuition of a number of these girls, while the daughters of the teacher and the minister were able to enroll free of charge.<sup>15</sup>

In an interview at the age of 87, one former Khortitsa Mädchenschule student (1901-1904) related how her intense aspirations to continue her education beyond the village school led her to enroll in the Mädchenschule for three years--this, despite the general opinion that while it was fine for boys to proceed with their studies, it was not considered necessary or acceptable for girls. Fortunately for her, her father did

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<sup>14</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 9. It does seem unlikely that Russian-Orthodox students would enroll, but Epp reports that other-than-Mennonite girls attended: "doch hat die Schule im Laufe der Jahre auch eine ziemliche Anzahl von Schuelerinnen lutherischer griechisch-orthodoxer Konfessionen aufnehmen koennen." It remains open to speculation whether Epp was referring to members of the Russian-Orthodox Church (which seems unlikely considering the government's directive that Mennonite colonists refrain from proselytizing among the surrounding Russian population who belonged to this confession), or more specifically to students from a Greek ethnic background.

<sup>15</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 9-10.

value the importance of education for his daughters.<sup>16</sup> With nine other girls, she boarded in a home across the street from the school in Rosental.<sup>17</sup>

We can rely on Helene Toews for a description of the commonplace, the daily life of a student at the private girls' school in Khortitsa. In her articles we read of the uniforms the girls wore: light blue-grey dresses for spring and fall, for winter a darker plaid; during the week they wore black pinafores (*Schuerzen*) and capes (*Pelerienen*), while on Sundays and special days (*Festtagen*) they wore white ones. In this way, she says, the difference between poor and rich was effaced.<sup>18</sup> Toews records her own anxiety upon entering the Khortitsa Mädchenschule as a twelve-year-old for the first time on September 1, 1905, and how her bashfulness dissipated as her gaining familiarity with daily school routine enabled her to feel more at home; her initial trepidation evolved shortly into a real enjoyment that endured for the rest of her years at the school.

Mentioned quite frequently by former students is the adjacent *Zentralschule*, where, on their way home from school after the three o'clock dismissal, the boys pursued them hot on their heels.<sup>19</sup> Quite a number of boys and girls were billeted

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Paetkau, "Maria Siemens: a lady worth knowing," *Mennonite Mirror*, May 1975. Maria Siemens (1888-1977) later became an avid writer in Canadian Mennonite periodicals.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Siemens, "Erinnerungen aus der Ch. M. von M.S. 1901-1904; Beim schoenen Brunnen", in Toews, 32. She describes her house-mother Mrs. Braun warmly, as one who understood the girls and was loved by them in return.

<sup>18</sup> Helene Toews, "Wie sucht ihr mich Heim, ihr Bilder, die laengst ich vergessen geglaubt! Chamisso", in Toews, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Penner, "Die neue Maedchenschule", in Toews, 36.

in Khortitsa and Rosental village homes for the nine-month school year. Students purchased their books and school supplies at either the Hermann Born bookstore in Rosental or from Peter Enns in Khortitsa. After-school hours were spent doing homework. Often they would go out to choir-practice or for walks along the streets of the village, although their parents did not allow them to walk a great distance without the company of an older brother. The first chance many of the out-of-town students had to return to their homes and families was for the Christmas holidays, for which they prepared gifts during their animated sewing classes, the *Handarbeitsstunden*. The seasonal school-related activities of the girls seemed all to be related to continuing to come in contact with the Zentralschule students.<sup>20</sup>

One example of gender integration can be found in a school established after the 1905 revoking of the ban on secondary co-education, but where initially only boys enrolled. Not until three years after the founding of the Alexanderkrone school were girls also enrolled in it; the first was Tina Regier, the daughter of a teacher, in 1909. The genders were strictly separated at school, this practice reflecting attitudes toward co-education that were not vanquished overnight. In little more than one generation since the separation of the sexes in secondary education, most Mennonites had come to accept it as the standard. Parents raised concerns regarding the mixing of students of different genders; at times teachers of the Zentral- and Mädchenschulen had to explain and justify joint cultural programmes.<sup>21</sup> This type of parental apprehension

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<sup>20</sup> Maria Penner, in Toews, 37-39.

<sup>21</sup> Loewen, "Intellectual Developments", 100. Regehr and Regehr, Everything, 62-63, 76, 84-86, 91.

may have influenced enrollment in the special schools. School photos in the Regier book show there were 14 female students in 1922, 15 girls and 54 boys in 1924, 17 girls and 40 boys in 1925, and 14 girls and 40 boys in 1926. It was not until 1925, in the Soviet era, that the first female teacher for this school, Maria Petrovna Dick (or Dueck) was hired.<sup>22</sup>

### THE SCHOOL DAY AND CURRICULUM

The typical Mädchenschule school day began with an assembly of the student body for the morning service, which consisted of singing a German chorale or hymn, and reciting a prayer by the religion teacher, and concluded with a Russian chorale before dismissal into their individual classrooms, where the day's work began. The library was an important element of their schooling; twice a week students were allowed to borrow books from it, which the editor of the Glueckliche memoirs wrote they did eagerly. Among former students' most vivid memories are those of their performance evenings (*Literaturabenden*), for which they practiced their roles to perfection. Physical exercise took place either in the large hall, or out-of-doors in the school yard, where many precious friendships began.<sup>23</sup>

As indicated in the accounts written by contributors to Toews's anthology, it would appear that the Khortitsa Mädchenschule curriculum, among other factors, is comparable to that of their Russian peers with one exception: dancing. However, the

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<sup>22</sup> Regehr and Regehr, Ibid. Of course, post-1920 statistics surpass both the era of limited Mennonite control in educating their youth, and the parameters of this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> Helene Toews, in Toews, 40-42.

Mennonite school-girl had opportunity to join in the dance when groups of teens gathered for evenings of fun and the folk-dances they had enjoyed for generations, with additional folk-dances and games also being conveyed to their home villages by young Mennonites returning from their studies abroad in Switzerland and Germany. In their memorial booklet, Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit (happy, sunny school-days), it is significant that the editor and all of the thirty-five former students who contributed articles looked back some thirty to forty years and wrote with obvious and heartfelt fondness and nostalgia.

Students were expected to memorize a great deal, including songs from the *Gesangbuch*; one student maintained she could still recite all twelve verses of *Befiel du deine Wege*. Some students found the stories in the biblical history course taught by J.A. Klassen to be very interesting; they also enjoyed the German poetry they discussed and memorized. Teachers attached great importance to students' penmanship (*Schoenschreiben*). The subjects of natural history, physics, history, geography, and art fascinated one student more than did mathematics, with which she seemed to have a modicum of difficulty (she tells of not obtaining the full grade of 5 or 5+; instead she frequently received only a 4- for her math work). Most girls apparently enjoyed the instruction of their teacher Kornelia Petrowna Thiessen in needlework in all its variety--knitting, crocheting, sewing and fancy needlework--and under her close supervision were expected to produce beautiful items for their mothers for Christmas. They also had frequent opportunities to practice their singing

at school.<sup>24</sup>

The Khortitsa Mädchenschule had the opportunity to offer courses for older girls. In 1899, upon the request of seven students, a refresher course was offered (for those who had not managed to enter school at the appropriate time in their young adolescence), but it had to be closed after only one year, since the number of prospective students for the next year was too low. This class was offered again in 1902 and was continued thereafter. In 1913, (and since 1906), the Khortitsa Mädchenschule was offering four basic classes, with the entire program of studies largely similar to that of the Zentralschule.<sup>25</sup> Upon their completion of the four-year course, a number of the students chose to become teachers, although the school did not offer special pedagogical preparatory training; thus, the question of adding a separate pedagogical class to the four basic classes arose.<sup>26</sup>

Due to the dearth of funds, the intention to add a pedagogical course to the school's program could not be realized. In order to provide a pedagogical education for the graduating girls, permission was sought from the government to permit them to attend the pedagogical classes at the Khortitsa Zentralschule --the authorization for pedagogical courses in the Zentralschulen had been sought and granted earlier-- but it was a step that the Russian government chose not to understand nor to

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> For a list of subjects studied and the state school authorities' officially endorsed number of hours per week for each class of the Khortitza Zentralschule, see Braun, "Educational System", 177-178.

<sup>26</sup> H.H. Epp in Toews, 6-8. It is doubtful that a pedagogical course was ever offered at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule: no sources mention one.

approve. Co-educational schools did not exist; they were not safe, stated the authorities emphatically: morals could be imperiled. Moreover, this opinion also persisted within Mennonite circles. Thus, young Mennonite women who wanted to become teachers had to take their teacher certification in Russian gymnasiums. When after the fall of the tsarist government (1917) the pedagogical courses at the Khortitsa Zentralschule were reorganized into an independent teacher-training college, the pedagogical board of the college accepted graduates of the girls' school as well, and did not regret this decision. The young women, as teacher Dietrich H. Epp concludes, were not only efficient workers but also were good influences on their male comrades, whom they spurred on in competition and who became more courteous.<sup>27</sup>

### TEACHERS AT THE MÄDCHENSCHULEN

The first Halbstadt Mädchenschule teacher and principal in 1874 was Sophie Schlenker, a Moravian woman from Koenigsfelden, Germany. In a 1910 list of names of teachers, the history of the school's hiring tendency is typified: five were women, including the principal, Elizabeth A. Griskovskaia, a Lutheran; the only male was the teacher of religion.<sup>28</sup>

During the eighteen years from 1895/96 to 1913/14, seventeen female and one male held teaching positions at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule. The minority were

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<sup>27</sup> D. H. Epp, "Nachtrag zur Geschichte der Chortitzer Maedchenschule.", in Toews, 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Friesen, Brotherhood, 770-771, 802; Ens, "Mennonite Education", 83-87. For a detailed yet brief study written by a former educator see Peter Braun, "Education Among", ME, 153-157.



Mennonite. Russian, Greek, and German names out-number them twelve to five (or, if another account by Epp is consulted, thirteen to seven).<sup>29</sup> The first *'Lehrerin'* and principal until at least 1913 was a Russian woman, Rosalie Nikanorowna Gurskaja, who appears to have possessed the ability and the nature to garner genuine affection from her students for a revered and beloved educator, and through her example and guidance exerted an enduring, pedagogical influence on her pupils. At the same time, Jakob A. Klassen was hired to teach religion and the German language. He had been one of the innovators of the idea of advanced education for girls, and when the Khortitsa Mädchenschule opened, given his eclectic experience in education, he devoted himself wholly to the service of the school. (For Klassen's own account see Appendix III.)

One student speaks for her classmates when she says they revered, adored and placed their trust in their teacher J. A. Klassen. Siemens extols their teacher's considerable positive qualities from which they benefitted, and his indulgence for

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<sup>29</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 10, lists the names of the teachers as: "Rosalie N. Gurskaja, Alexandra N. Schreider, A.W. Theodoridi, Sophie W. Miloschewitsch, Katharin[a] W. Ossoskowa, Sophja P. Poletajewa, Katharina J. Strasding, Marja D. Bajkowskaja, Anna J. Janzen, Maria Th. Betcher, Elena R. Spala, Agnes J. Klassen, Wera N. Serpinskaya, Kornelia P. Thiessen, Margareta A. Penner, Helena H. Heese, Marja D. Thomson, und Jacob A. Klassen." In his article in the 1913 Mennonitisches Jahrbuch, three more names are included in the list on page 99: "S[ara].P. Ediger, N.N. Limonowa,...und Lehrer Peter P. Neufeld."

Note that in authentic adherence to the Russian tradition, the middle initial in each name above refers to the father's given name; this can undoubtedly be considered as another indication of the extent of Russification among the Mennonite intelligentsia. Also, it appears that the willingness to hire Mennonite women as teachers at the secondary level had not yet gained momentum.

their innocent pranks.<sup>30</sup> During his many years teaching in elementary schools and eight years at the Khortitsa Zentralschule teaching Russian language, Jacob A. Klassen fostered the concept of providing an advanced education for girls. He clearly saw the need for it and even proposed to teach at the school without salary. Despite obstacles, the school became reality. It was at this last school where he would teach that Klassen had most enjoyed working, a point he himself stated repeatedly.<sup>31</sup> He instilled ideals in the girls with his gentle lecturing; he cultivated courtesy and discouraged haughtiness and indolence in his students; he passed on his appreciation for art. Many of his good qualities were not lost on his students, nor were his exemplary ideals forgotten.<sup>32</sup>

The enthusiastically begun work of the newly appointed director of the school (after Gurskaya), Agnes J. Klassen, was of short duration: after only one year, the First World War broke out and disrupted activities at the school. New teachers could not always be found when one withdrew, and the teacher of religion, Peter P. Neufeld, was drafted as a medical orderly.<sup>33</sup> As well, when for whatever reason there

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<sup>30</sup> Maria Siemens, "Jacow Abramowitsch Klassen" in Toews, 18. Her words are: "Wenn ich den Namen unseres geliebten und verehrten Lehrers geschrieben habe, so ist damit unsere Maedchenschule repraesentiert...Wir hatten Vertrauen zum Lehrer...": When I write the name of our beloved and venerated teacher, our girls' school is represented thereby....We had confidence in our teacher....

<sup>31</sup> Katarina Thiessen, "Jacob Abram Klassen", in Toews, 16-18.

<sup>32</sup> Helene Toews, "Mein Amt ist Wegbereiter", in Toews, 25-26.

<sup>33</sup> Dietrich H. Epp, in Toews, 12, lists the names of teachers in the schools' final years: "Agnes J. Klassen (jetzt Frau H.H. Epp), Sara P. Ediger, Wera Ananjewa, Helena J. Froese, Katherine J. Willms, Nadeshda N. Limonowa, Kornelia P. Thiessen, Sophie K. Thiessen, und Peter Neufeld."

was a shortage of teachers, the Zentralschule teachers P.J. Penner, H.J. Dyck, and D.H. Epp helped out. In addition, the staff included two music teachers: Ella Hirsch and Elfrieda Gloeckle.<sup>34</sup>

Ekaterina Wassiljewna Ossokowa, mathematics and science teacher, is sketched briefly. Her love for animals was well known. She was never a strict teacher; perhaps for this reason, Penner writes, she stayed for only one year. Similarly brief are references to Sofia Wasilljewna Miloschewitsch and Maria Hottmann. The former came from St. Petersburg, where she had graduated from the highest women's courses, to the girls' school, where she won all their hearts. Her techniques, encouraging her students, teaching history so that the girls were enraptured, stood her in good stead. Hottmann writes about herself: after her village schooling she studied for eight years in the Alexandrowsk Gymnasium and one year in the advanced course in St. Petersburg. In 1905 to 1906 she taught at the girls' school, and married Dr. Th. Hottmann in the summer. They survived the turmoil of the next decades, but in 1937 her husband was 'taken' and in 1938 died in the Zaporoshye prison. In 1943 she fled to Germany, from where she emigrated to Vancouver in 1949 with her daughter and found work as a domestic.<sup>35</sup>

Anna Ediger herself makes observations on her year of teaching, 1917 to 1918. Sara Ediger also taught at the school. The sisters' work was not protected by the new regime and thus there was no more living in peace; rather, fear and uneasiness

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> No author given, "Sofia Wasilljewna Miloschewitsch", and Maria Hottmann, "Frau Maria Hottmann geb. Betcher" in Toews, 22-23.

descended on the villagers and estate owners, and on the staff and students. Anna lost track of her sister; all she knows of Sara, she wrote, she learned via a letter from a relative in her old homeland, that "Sara was teaching somewhere" in the USSR.<sup>36</sup>

In Ohrloff in the autumn of 1906 a group of teachers and their families agreed to hire a teacher, Helene Willms of Halbstadt, to teach the first group of eight girls. In the fall of 1907 Johann H. Janzen, a teacher in the Ohrloff Zentralschule, organized a school society and a second teacher was hired. Bernhard Wiens from Tiede, a church minister, was to teach religion and German language. Two classes were in place for the 1907/08 year, in the so-called "silk house beside the tall fir tree". Students came from not only Tiede and Ohrloff but from more distant villages. In 1908, Jacob H. Janzen replaced Wiens, and Alexandra R[omanowna] Lemsakowa was hired as the third teacher. The 1908-09 school year was the first with three classes, the lower two classes were conducted in the silk-house, and the upper class, in a near-by room rented from Jacob Fr. Goßen. In the fall of 1908 the school society began to plan to construct a new school building, which opened in the late fall of 1909. A music teacher was hired, Luise H. Friesen from Berdjansk, and later two more teachers, Ewgenia Semenowna and Marja W[asiljewna] Titowa.<sup>37</sup>

In 1908 the New-York Mädchenschule consisted of two classes conducted in

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<sup>36</sup> Anna Ediger, "Anna Petrowna Ediger", in Toews, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Schmidt (Hamm), "Auch", Der Bote, 8, 12. A silk house was the building which would have housed the silk-worm industry in it, on the village property of the unnamed family renting space for the girls' school. While advocating agrarian improvements in the region, Johann Cornies had introduced the silk-worm cottage-industry into the Molochnaia colony.

two rooms in the home of the family of Abram Unrau, an elder in the Mennonite church. A new school building was constructed in 1909 or 1910. Teachers were Johann Bärig from New York; Elisaweta Petrowna Ediger from Berdjansk; and Agatha Rempel, hired to teach needlework, from Bachmut. Later, Herta Alexandrowna Leonhard and, as head-mistress of the school, Elizaweta Dimitriewna Eram, were also hired. In 1912 (?) a fourth class was added to the girls' school.<sup>38</sup>

Comparing the attitudes toward teachers revealed in the early 19th-century accounts of schooling in the Mennonite colonies (see Chapter I) to what their former students wrote of them in the 20th, it appears that over the course of a century attitudes toward educators in the colonies underwent a remarkable transformation.

#### SPECIAL OCCASIONS: MAY DAY, THE ORCHESTRA, BATHS, AND CELEBRATIONS

On special days, like those commemorating the Russian crown, all of the students from the schools in Khortitsa and Rosental assembled in the church, and after a short religious service the students were let out of school for the day. Other days were spent not in classrooms but in the surrounding countryside. Every spring the girls would wander in the nearby valleys around the village in search of various flowers, out of which they brought home the most beautiful bouquets. In spring when the Dnieper rose and flooded, the canoe-parties they organized gave opportunities for singing and hearing the echo bounce off the high, stone-walled

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<sup>38</sup> Katja (Dyck) Janzen, "Die New Yorker Mädchenschule", Der Bote, 10 July 1946, 5, 6.

riverbanks. Students of the Mädchenschule took frequent advantage of winter ice for skating, and made good use of these occasions for striking up friendships with students from the Zentralschule.

The annual May festival was a special time: an excursion on a canvas-covered wagon filled with hay, together with their teachers. Students headed for the valley containing the brick-works or into the picturesque Dnieper valley. For the girls and likely the teachers as well, this annual picnic was a highlight of the school year, a significant change from the daily monotony of school (*Eintönigkeit*), a wonderful carefree lark in the shady meadows of the Dnieper valley.<sup>39</sup> On the river they canoed and sometimes ran into trouble, falling overboard but being rescued successfully.<sup>40</sup>

Anna Martens, student from 1909 to 1913, includes details on the organizing of an orchestra conducted and instructed by Leo Borisowitsch. Sixteen girls played instruments such as the mandolin, balalaika, the *Mondolo*, the piccolo, the small and big *Bass*, and piano. Classes took place twice a week after school hours with an additional many hours of practice. The orchestra performed frequently at their *Literaturabenden*. Their piano-music teacher, Miss Hirsch, seemed to radiate and sustain a sunny disposition.

One activity, available to the girls every two weeks through the generosity of the local industrialist Wallmann, was the use of the bath house next to his factory. On Fridays after the close of school hours, the girls walked to the bath-house and

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<sup>39</sup> Helene Toews in Toews, 41-42.

<sup>40</sup> Anna Zacharias Martens, "Erinnerung aus der Schulzeit", in Toews, 46-48.

took pleasure showering and bathing using great volumes of water. One may wonder whether the bath house was also available to the Zentralschule students, and on which day.

All celebrations were well-anticipated events: the three-hundredth anniversary of Romanov rule in 1913, the fiftieth anniversary of freeing the serfs [in 1911], and the retirement of their teacher J.A. Klassen were special occasions. For one such festive occasion a supporter of the school, "Iwan Iwanovitsch Thiessen" of Ekaterinoslav, forwarded a large sum of money to buy sweets and dainties for the girls. Thus, the school years passed, with many distractions for the girls from their daily routine.<sup>41</sup>

At the time, D.H. Epp viewed the 1913 celebration of J.A. Klassen's retirement as the high point of the school's history. He saw the ceremony having deeper implications: the bond between the school and its former students was strengthened further, for they perceived more lucidly what the school had meant to them; they gained awareness that it was their moral obligation to support the school in order for it to endure. Many were active members of the school's society; this would assure older members that support would continue.<sup>42</sup> Again we see an onus placed on women: to ensure that they, as former students, would sustain the school and perpetuate what it embodied.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Dietrich H. Epp, in Toews, 12.

## IMPACT OF THE MÄDCHENSCHULEN ON THE STUDENTS

What the Mädchenschulen prepared the students for, how they may have been shaped as revealed by how they embraced the vicissitudes of life, are only two of the questions that could be asked at this point in the study. Definitive answers may be difficult to secure. The following survey of examples of some of their accomplishments will reveal a diversity of experience and a surmounting of adversity in many of their lives.

Up to 1913 a total of 1187 girls had been students of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule, most of them completing their courses. Many a girl upon completion of the course entered a higher educational institution, and many acquired certificates from girls' gymnasiums; others passed the teachers' exams and devoted themselves to teaching for varying lengths of time.<sup>43</sup>

One graduate who taught was Helene Heese Toews (1893-1983) who has entered this study as the narrator of her own student years and as the editor of a collection of others' memories. Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit was collected in the 1940s and published probably in 1952, after waiting until a number of former classmates had immigrated from post-war Europe to Canada. Born in the village of Khortitsa, from the age of twelve she was a student at the girls' school for three

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<sup>43</sup> H.H. Epp, in Toews, 9-10. See also D. Epp, "Die Chortitzer Mädchenschule", MJ 1 (1903), 62: up to 1903, the number of young women graduates of the school who became teachers were nine. Compare these numbers with that of graduates of the Khortitsa Zentralschule: from 1891 to 1903, 90 young men had taken up teaching (D. Epp, Ibid.)



years, 1905-08; for her these had been the best years of her life.<sup>44</sup> After graduating, aged fifteen, Helene Heese enrolled in the fifth class and studied for four years at the Ekaterinoslav Gymnasium pedagogical class. Over the Christmas holidays while in the seventh class, her class filled a train car on an excursion to Moscow and St. Petersburg, chaperoned by one male and two female teachers; the group toured the Kremlin, the museum, the royal palaces of former Tsars, the illustrious art galleries, and many renowned churches. In St. Petersburg the group of students received permission to tour the palace. Moscow's sites and sights impressed them deeply. The two-week journey cost each student eight rubles. However, none of the Jewish students at the gymnasium were able to participate, for no one from their ethnic group was allowed to spend more than twenty-four hours in the capital without special permission. (A sense of sympathy can be discerned in the writer's account.) In the summer of the same year, for twelve rubles each, the students travelled to the southeastern region of Crimea, where they toured all the sights on the Black Sea.<sup>45</sup>

At the age of nineteen our writer-editor graduated from the eighth pedagogical class, qualified to teach--which she began to do in September of that year (1912?). Teaching for only one year at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule, she is described by a former student as having treated her students as her equals.<sup>46</sup> In 1913 she married Bernhard Toews, and in 1927 the couple and their two sons emigrated

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<sup>44</sup> Obituary of Helene Toews, Der Bote, Aug. 24, 1983. See also her article "Woher? Wohin?", in Toews, 105-108.

<sup>45</sup> Helene Toews, in Toews, 105-106.

<sup>46</sup> Anna Zacharias Martens, in Toews, 47.

to Canada, eventually settling in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. In Canada her involvement in community included many years as Sunday-school teacher, German-school teacher, and as secretary of the women's society of her church. In 1947 she was elected president of the Ontario Mennonite Conference women's society. Her obituary emphasizes her being one of the very first to journey to "Russia" after the war: in 1960 her brother Peter Heese and his wife travelled from Alma Ata and met her in Odessa.<sup>47</sup>

Readers can regard Helene Toews's volume of memoirs as a monument which acknowledged her dedication to preserve more than the memories of 35 of her former classmates. In it, her articles provide direction and a framework within which the rest of the articles find their place. The material in the volume is, in fact, the impetus and the basis for this study.

One graduate who did not go on to further study after graduating from the Khortitsa Mädchenschule, but stayed at home to help her mother and to fill her hope chest, was Maria Siemens. In Canada she maintained a level of participation in community and church befitting the better educated. As a young widowed mother of two, she established a kindergarten class in the village of Gnadenthal from 1928 to 1930. She remarried, and held the elected position of president of the Women's Auxiliary of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba for nine years. She distinguished herself in writing numerous articles reflecting on the Mennonite past along the Dnieper River and the Island of Khortitsa. She believed in sustaining an

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<sup>47</sup> Obituary of Helene Toews, Der Bote, Aug. 24, 1983.

awareness of Mennonite history, theology and the arts.<sup>48</sup>

In the collected memoirs of Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit, Maria Siemens is listed as one of the three women who in April 1945, at a reunion of former Khortitsa Mädchenschule students following a conference of Mennonites in Canada, in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of their former school, decided to gather memoirs of former students in booklet form as a commemoration. One may wonder if her enthusiasm for and the extent of her involvement in community as volunteer might have been generated during her schooling, or imbibed from her parents' ideals, and whether if her education had ended in the village school classroom would she have become the leader she was.

Maria (Lehn) Penner, born in Rosental, was a Khortitsa Mädchenschule student from 1903 to 1906, and the third member of the trio of former students credited with initiating the Glueckliche project. In it, Penner describes the physical appearance and layout of the girls' school: the arched doorways opening to the large, pillared hall on the second floor often used for morning assemblies, literary evenings and concerts.<sup>49</sup> Later, living in Luseland, Sask., she became a writer of children's stories described in an article on Mennonite literature as "beautiful fairy tales [which]

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<sup>48</sup> Paetkau, "Maria Siemens: a lady worth knowing". The article mentions that one son became a professor (Victor Peters), the other a doctor. See her Obituary in Mennonitische Rundschau, 5 Oct. 1977, 11-12. In the part of the obituary she herself wrote, she acknowledges her gratitude to her parents, for the opportunities they granted her. Mentioned in it is also the tragedy that struck her young married life when on the night of 5 November 1919 her husband, his father, and his grandfather were shot and killed in the unrest of the Civil War.

<sup>49</sup> Maria Penner, in Toews, 35-39.

may perhaps find friends beyond the boundaries of Mennonitism".<sup>50</sup> Of the sixteen writers mentioned in the article (fifteen are male), she is the only one awarded a task: the writer of the article hopes that Penner will continue to tell of what she observes and hears, for "if we do not accept writings such as these, we will lose our young people".<sup>51</sup> Penner also contributed to her community by writing Sunday school curriculum material for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC).

Helene Epp (1897-1979), enrolled at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule from 1910 to 1914. She recounts her work from 1933 as Matron of the Eben-Ezer Mädchenheim (girls' home) in Winnipeg, funded by the CMC. She never married but dedicated her life's work to providing over 2000 young Mennonite girls from surrounding rural areas a much-needed home away from home, until it closed in 1959. Working mostly as domestics in Winnipeg in order to help out their recently-immigrated families financially, young Mennonite girls found a place to stay for a few days while seeking employment in a strange city, and a place to gather on their Thursday afternoons off for socializing and spiritual direction.

As matron, Epp filled a great need, which was not wholly recognized by the church leadership in the Winnipeg churches: she was the girls' nexus to urban Mennonites, and a surrogate mother to many girls who needed an advocate as they,

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<sup>50</sup> J.H. Janzen, "The Literature of the Russo-Canadian Mennonites", Mennonite Life, 1, 1 (January 1946) 25. The entire article addresses the Mennonite belles-lettres among the 1920s immigrants; its inclusion in the periodical's initial issue is an indication of a growing interest in what for so long had not been an acceptable form of reading material.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

vulnerable amid perils, stepped into a strange and lonely world and sought employment, far removed from their rural homes and families.<sup>52</sup> The importance of Helene Epp's work was perceived, however, by its direct beneficiaries, the girls themselves. One wrote of how the Home filled the empty spaces in her life as a bewildered newcomer to the city:

...the "Home" to me is a place where I may go in and out as a gladly-seen sister. Here we find friends for life....Here every girl is a "personality", and not merely a maid for all things....[H]ere I may shake off all bonds and show myself as I am.<sup>53</sup>

Tributes to the significance of Epp's role in the Mennonite immigrant story are exceedingly rare when compared to the scholarship on male spiritual leaders of the transplanted Mennonite community in Canada. However, confirmation exists, as in the letter above. Helene Epp is one more example of graduates of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule who contributed to their Mennonite community in an immense, if relatively unrecognized, capacity.

Not surprisingly, there is indication that marital unions occurred between Mädchenschulen and Zentralschulen students. One reunion report raised the question of why not allow the former Ohrloff Zentralschulen students to attend the reunion of former Ohrloff Mädchenschulen students, since the former chauffeured

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<sup>52</sup> See Marlene Epp, "The Mennonite Girls' Home in Winnipeg", in JMS, 6 (1988), 100-114; see also Hilda Matsuo, "Helen Epp and the "Maedchenheim"", Mennonite Mirror, April 1974, 7-9; as well as Frieda Esau, "The Mennonite Girl's Homes--New Research", in Mennonite Historian, XIII, 2, (June 1987) 3. Two of these articles also relate the story of the other matron supported by the Mennonite Brethern conference, Anna Thiessen of the Maria-Martha Home of Winnipeg.

<sup>53</sup> Liese Klassen, "What Does The Home Mean To Me", The Mennonite, 52, 1 (January 5, 1937), 8, 12.

the latter there anyway. The afternoon ended with the resolution that they certainly would bring their former-Zentralschüler husbands to the next reunion in a more inclusive capacity.<sup>54</sup>

### DREAMS EVAPORATED

Dietrich H. Epp wrote of the final days of the Khortitsa girls' school. In 1920, the year the school ought to have been celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, it was closed because the Soviet government decided not to permit schools meant specifically for girls. The students were directed into the Zentralschule. Despite its brief existence, Epp concludes, the Khortitsa Mädchenschule yielded many benefits that live on in the hearts of former students, whether they be in Canada, Europe, or in South America. Then he concludes with a statement it is doubtful he would have made had the subject been male Mennonite students: God grant that these blessings also be bequeathed to former students' children and grandchildren.<sup>55</sup>

Former teacher and administrator of the girls' school, Agnes Epp, the daughter of Jacob A. Klassen, provides a perspective from a more prolonged stay in the USSR than the 1920s immigrants. She was in the first class of seventeen girls in 1895 in the village of Rosental (the school was relocated into a new building on an adjacent lot in Khortitsa ten years later).<sup>56</sup> Her years at the school both as student

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<sup>54</sup> Lena Rempel (Wölke), "Späte Nachklänge vom Treffen der Schülerinnen der Ohrloffter Mädchenschule", Der Bote, 25 June 1958, 3-4.

<sup>55</sup> Dietrich H. Epp, in Toews, 13.

<sup>56</sup> To envision just how adjacent the villages actually were, examine the map from page 17 of Schroeder and Huebert, at the end of this study.

and instructor appear to have been well-insulated from cares until 1914, for, she says, they did not envision war, the civil war, the 1920-22 famine, banishments, abductions and deportations to prisons and Siberia, flight from enemies, persecution and the horrors following the war. Instead, they revelled in their beautiful Dnieper valley, innocent, unaware of awaiting heart-ache and loss. Able to live their religious beliefs undeterred, no spiritual conflicts were imposed on them. These words are written to contrast this time with the ensuing Soviet years, for then, Epp emphasized, the class struggle, group indoctrination classes, *Leninismus*, and communist party ideology were the main subjects. People were pressured to expunge all religious beliefs, and children's beliefs were wafted back and forth, between what their school directed and the ideals their parents sought to sustain. What was especially intimidating for older students was the constant espionage: no student or teacher was able to trust the other, for no one knew who was an informant for the N.K.V.D., the secret police. Great care had to be taken of every word spoken; one careless word was enough to target someone to be seized and "sent away" to jail or to labour camps, and often permanent obscurity.

Epp reflects on her earlier time as teacher at the girls' school as a memorable period of her life; she loved her work and regarded her students and school with affection. She was very distressed to witness the closure of the private girls' school as such after the change of government. In 1920, twenty-five years after it opened, the school was closed down. Epp ends by encouraging her former associates to cherish the memory of all the knowledge, the good, the illuminating and the beautiful

they assimilated at the Mädchenschule.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, we see that graduates entered the profession open to them: teaching at two levels, the elementary and secondary girls' schools. None of the graduates mention goals of becoming village secretaries or teaching in the boys' schools. In fact, none of their memoirs refer at all to any dreams or ambitions they may have had. Nevertheless, had the political turmoil not disrupted the trend of an increasing number of young women advancing their education even beyond the Mädchenschulen, it is possible that more women would have chosen other careers than the conventional roles as teachers or nurses until they married and raised their families. Evidence can be found in the following story of individuals overcoming obstacles even after immigration to Canada, although they too chose traditional careers options.

#### ONE FAMILY'S DAUGHTERS AND THEIR SCHOOLING

Exceptions to the plans and dreams of the Mennonite women under study not being fulfilled can be found. Even within one family, for example, the Vogts of Steinbach and Winnipeg, opportunities to formulate career choices were not equally available.

Briefly: Aganetha and Andreas Vogt were farmers and also operated a dry-goods business in Schoenwiese, Khortitsa. The father was, as well, a Mennonite

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<sup>57</sup> Agnes Epp, "Ein kleiner Rueckblick", in Toews, 14-15. Hints in other memoirs in the volume point to the unstated: Agnes Epp was only able to emigrate in the 1940s; she writes from Rosthern. Her words about the school closing forever are not to be taken literally. After 1920, it became a coeducational public school under the Soviet system.



church minister who, as tradition dictated, received no remuneration. From a family of ten, three of their five sons became teachers and two entered commerce. Of their five daughters, born between 1879 and 1894, only Aganetha, the eldest, did not continue schooling beyond the village level; she was the only one unable to emigrate with the rest of the family in 1923.

The four other sisters entered the Khortitsa Mädchenschule. Helena and Katherine both also enrolled in the girls' gymnasium in Alexandrovsk and became teachers in elementary schools. Helena did not continue in the teaching profession when she married or came to Canada; Katherine continued teaching after her marriage (to Arnold Dyck, the writer) but not in Canada. Maria studied nursing in Germany for four years and returned to work in the Bethania mental institute, the military hospital in Khortitsa, and then in the railway hospital during the First World War years. In the 1920s in Canada with the support of her brother Abraham Vogt, Maria opened the first hospital in Steinbach, Manitoba, established a personal care home there in 1938, and in 1946 became the director of Bethania, a personal care home just north of Winnipeg, where she worked until the last day of her life. She lived to be 80. Anna trained to be a kindergarten teacher in Germany, at the Froebel Institute in Berlin. Hired first as tutor for the children of estate owner J.J. Thiessen, she then established a kindergarten in Nieder-Chortitza. In Canada she organized a private German kindergarten in Steinbach. In 1937 Anna set up a similar kindergarten in Winnipeg, which she maintained until 1966, teaching a total

of 2000 three- to five-year olds.<sup>58</sup>

The five Vogt sisters represent the range of the formally educated female experience.

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<sup>58</sup> Roy Vogt et al. A Vogt Family History: The Descendants of Andreas Vogt (1854-1914) and Aganetha (Block) Vogt (1857-1930) (Mennonite Genealogy Incorporated: Winnipeg, 1994), 37-63. I conjecture that while founding a hospital and a care home, a "male front" was required: hence, Maria's reliance on her brother to solicit financial and other support. See yearbooks of the annual Conference of Mennonites in Canada, especially the late 1930s and the 1940s, wherein her brother Abraham Vogt is asked to report to the assembly on the work of the care institutions, and Maria Vogt is not even named.

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **THE BASIS OF THE MÄDCHENSCHULEN**

One major incentive for ensuring advanced educational opportunities for Mennonite women was the 1870 state decree prohibiting co-education beyond the elementary schools. With research into the enrolment history of secondary schools being limited by the scarcity of statistics, we have no basis for assuming an egalitarian enrolment. However, noting the prevalent attitudes towards education in the colonies, it does seem unlikely that in the decades prior to the ban on co-education more than a small percentage of students were girls. Based on the words of educators and reformers noted in previous chapters, one can presume that the girls in the Zentralschulen would have been their own daughters, with few from farming backgrounds. One estimate is that 5 to 8% of Mennonite youth attended secondary schools; a breakdown in terms of gender is not available.<sup>59</sup> Of these, boys would probably have comprised three-quarters and girls, at most, one quarter. What seems to have kept the other girls at home after completing elementary school in the early part of the century was a combination of lower expectations for them and the lack of career choices available to women.

On the other hand, evidence that an interest in advancing girls' education did flourish and was passed from one generation to the next within families is found in

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<sup>59</sup> N.J. Klassen, "Mennonite Intelligentsia in Russia", *ML*, 24 (April 1969), 52. Unfortunately, Klassen does not place this statistic within a time frame.

Katja (Dyck) Janzen's letter to Der Bote.<sup>60</sup> She mentions a photograph in her possession; the subjects are a group of young girls, her mother among them, and their teacher. The school was conducted from her grandparents' house in Pordenau, with her mother's half-sister, Kornelia Dyck, as the teacher. A few non-resident students boarded at her grandparents' home. She estimates that the photo was taken in 1886.

Two decades elapsed between when the Molochnaia and then the Khortitsa colonies established their Mädchenschulen. In the interval many young women were denied what was available to their male counterparts. The reasons given for the protracted discussions which finally led to the original colony establishing the Khortitsa Mädchenschule do not provide a definitive explanation, if one considers the ease with which the Halbstadt Mädchenschule was begun. Were there simply no Andreas Voth types in Khortitsa? Or were they more daunted by the resistance of the majority to educating girls?

One hypothesis this study proposes centres on Khortitsa's preoccupation with establishing daughter colonies in the last half of the 19th century to alleviate the landless problem. The energy of the administration, the attention of colonists themselves, and the economic resources of the colony were preoccupied with supporting these new offspring, leaving scant resources for educational enterprises.

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<sup>60</sup> Katja (Dyck) Janzen, "Die New Yorker Mädchenschule", Der Bote, 10 July 1946, 5, 6.

Secondly, Johann Cornies.<sup>61</sup> His long-standing influence in the Molochnaia persevered for decades after his passing, via men he had directly influenced and inspired both to carry out reforms and to take advantage of advances in education in their colony. The fact that since its founding, the Molochnaia Colony had been more secure financially is probably, in the long term, another factor. There is no extant proof that obstructionist attitudes prevalent among the majority of Mennonite colonists in Khortitsa were either lacking or differed at all in Molochnaia. It is interesting to note, though, that resistance came mainly from the agrarian and labour class, although few sources state this directly. Sources do point out that staunch financial and other support came from members of the professions and industrialist element.

The influence of urban Mennonites must be taken into account. Although financial support from wealthy benefactors appears to have been substantial, their numbers and power-base may have been too inconsequential to have influenced a more rapid and wider founding process. However, the initiatives taken by industrialists such as J.J. Thiessen of Ekaterinoslav and the Wallmanns of Khortitsa, were significant during the initial planning stages of the Khortitsa Mädchenschule. These philanthropists had the funds and the interwoven power in and respect of the community to implement ideas not wholly supported by the agrarian majority. Although direct evidence is lacking, it may be presumed that the affluent and

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<sup>61</sup> See Urry, None, 137: Urry calls Cornies "an anomaly in Mennonite brotherhood".

cultivated, more urban Mennonites must certainly be acknowledged for their involvement and the thrust they provided.<sup>62</sup>

Interaction with Russian clergy, civic authorities, and teachers, Jewish merchants and in one case a rabbi, their Lutheran and Catholic German co-colonists, and Europeans encountered on their excursions abroad occurred frequently enough to allow one to surmise an influence on Mennonites socially and politically, including on their educational institutions. Early in and throughout the 19th century, it was a number of widely-travelled and widely-read Mennonites such as Johann Cornies and Jacob A. Klassen who had provided the impetus for the reform of the educational system for children of Mennonite colonists. In business since the age of sixteen, Cornies was self-taught and his reading extensive; the content and source of his readings are not known but clearly provided the basis of his ideas on education and his innovations. His reforms in various areas were at times at the behest of the Russian government but others were the outcome of his own initiative. Klassen accompanied his sister and brother-in-law, the Schroeders, to central Europe for the better part of a year; while teaching in Ekaterinoslav, he took the opportunity to utilize its library, and proceeded to obtain more pedagogical guides from Prussia. J.H. Janzen and the David and Maria Sudermann family socialized with near-by Russian-Orthodox priests and their families. Farmers, estate owners, and

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<sup>62</sup> See Urry, None, 238: Urry notes that "in spite of increasing social distance from the majority of the colonists the rich and wealthy maintained close connections with the colonies [and] also contributed considerable sums towards the running of [secondary] schools".

**industrialists hired Ukrainian workers alongside Mennonite labourers. It is also quite likely that Mennonite colonists associated with the Germans colonists settled near the borders of Mennonite colonies.**

**This study has revealed several indicators that could demonstrate a Russian influence that helped shape the Mennonite girls' schools. The major sources of possible influences were the Russian Empire's educational system and the reforms in pedagogy in the Mennonites' previous homeland, Prussia. Much less the distinctly Mennonite institution they may have been portrayed as being, the Mädchenschulen in the Mennonite colonies in South Russia, the secondary girls' schools in the Russian Empire, and those in Prussia shared numerous similarities. The curriculum was probably the most clearly analogous factor connecting all three. Attitudes towards women, in general, and educating women, in particular, in all three societies were, not surprisingly, similar, as well.**

**Most obvious was the practice of Mennonite schools being staffed with Russian teachers appointed by Russian school officials, particularly during the intensive Russianization program of 1890 to 1905. Each elementary school was to employ at least one teacher of Russian nationality and of the Russian-Orthodox faith; secondary girls' schools were to have Russian women as their administrators. Teaching in Russian in the elementary schools had been encouraged in the elementary schools since mid-19th century, but became compulsory in 1891. Since their founding, the secondary schools had included teaching the Russian language, and Russian had become the language of instruction in the 1880s for all but the**

religion and German courses.<sup>63</sup> As well, after 1881, it was Russian school inspectors who supervised the Mennonite school system.

Prussian influences appear to have been more substantial. Braun indicates that in the 1820s and '30s a constant stream of educators from Prussia (Tobias Voth, Heinrich Heese, Heinrich Franz, and others) incorporated pedagogical reforms into the Mennonite school system. After 1870 students from South Russia were sent to universities in Germany and Switzerland for advanced education (Heinrich Franz II, P.M. Friesen and many others) and returned with school reform ideas and implemented them. Consistent correspondence between the Mennonites and their former homeland surely contained word of innovations transpiring in the Germanies which subsequently were appropriated by the colonists. Between 1900 and World War I the German pedagogical influence became predominant over the Russian: most major German school reform ideas were assiduously read and "found imitators with more or less skill among the Mennonite teachers."<sup>64</sup> A number of these educators rose in status and influence, taking up leadership roles in the colonies.

#### THE LEGACY OF THE MÄDCHENSCHULEN

This study has attempted to address several considerations: What was the result of advanced education for young Mennonite women living in Imperialist Russia and during the ensuing decades of the disruption of the Mennonite world? Had real

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<sup>63</sup> For an example of an 1884 detailed schedule of instruction in the Mennonite central secondary schools, including a division of languages of instruction in hours, see Braun, "The Education System of the Mennonite Colonies in South Russia", 177. The ratio of German to Russian was 1 to 2.

<sup>64</sup> Braun, "Education Among The Mennonites in Russia", 155.



vocational opportunities opened up for educated Mennonite women? Could they have proceeded beyond tradition-maintained boundaries of mother, nurse, or teacher? Unfortunately, because of the political disruptions mentioned previously, and the dearth of follow-up material available on the thousands of girls who actually attended the six Mennonite Mädchenschulen, it is doubtful whether any conclusive judgment can ever be made in answering those questions.

Those who immigrated to Canada in the 1920s were rarely able to continue in their careers as the teachers or nurses they had trained to be. Lack of proficiency in the English language, one's marital status in a time when married middle- and upper- class women were not expected to work outside the home, and the economic realities of the Great Depression were barriers.

Often, however, they did move into positions of responsibility on an informal, unpaid basis, taking on leadership roles of women's groups (Helene Toews, Maria Siemens). Their children also benefitted, for values transcended generations; teachers encouraged their own children to further their education. Former Mädchenschule students speak of their children taking on professions (Maria Siemens). Edification of children was a goal (Maria Penner).

Those women who did move into careers, or work, and stayed there remained single (Helene Epp, Anna Vogt, Maria Vogt), or had been widowed (Maria Hottmann). And their career choices were the traditional ones--teachers, nurses, matrons, or maids.

Upper-class Mennonites in Russia, the educated and economically secure,

were reluctant to see their daughters and wives employed outside the home, reflecting a bourgeois view of leisure common to the era in Europe. However, after the Soviet regime's social-levelling procedures, young women whose families' estates or industries were confiscated often were left as the sole bread-winners of their extended families.<sup>65</sup> How this latter attitude survived or was transformed after transportation across the ocean to Canada may have been partially answered in two studies on the girls' homes (Mädchenheim) set up in Western Canadian capitals in the 1920s and '30s.

#### LOOKING BACK

Students often perceived their Mädchenschulen years, upon reflection a lifetime later, as an exceedingly happy time. Impressions and recollections found in letters and in memoirs, of which only a few have been detailed in this study, tell of individuals who came through the Mädchenschulen and either took the traditional route of raising families, or invested their energies in a life of independent work, or at some time combined the two. Rare were the instances where both paths were pursued concurrently.

Helene Toews closed her memoirs with a wistful observation: as students, they had enjoyed their carefree, joyful student years thoroughly and took everything in their lives then so much for granted. The contrast in their lives since, rife with loss, brings to heart their youth as having been comparatively paradisiacal. Toews ends

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<sup>65</sup> See Anna Sudermann's memoirs. This was her own experience and was a frequent occurrence among the people she wrote about.

by voicing her gratitude for the sacrifices of mothers and fathers that enabled the girls to generate enduring treasures that neither moths nor rust could later corrupt.<sup>66</sup>

The majority of articles in Glueckliche were written by women who had emigrated to Canada in the 1920s before they felt the full impact of Stalin's hard-line Soviet regime. In contrast, the perspectives of those who were able to join the Great Trek of 1943 westward out of the USSR manifest a distinctive nature: a more sombre tone, evidence of witnessing stark outrages during difficult fateful years, that affected their outlooks on life at the time of writing.

A description of the strong ties former students felt to their past and to their former classmates comes from a former teacher. In an address given at an Ohrloff reunion held on 2 January 1938, J.H. Janzen essentially articulated that the origins of the vibrant force that compels former Ohrloff students to assemble repeatedly, is the love they share for their past and for each other. Thus, he said, the spirit of their old school is also a spirit of love. In the light of this affinity, he encouraged them to visualize their long school building in Tiege on the Kuruschan River from time to time. They will sense the spirit of times passed.<sup>67</sup> As well, the volume of letters

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<sup>66</sup> Toews, "Wie sucht ihr mich heim, ihr Bilder, die laengst ich vergessen geglaubt! Chamisso." in Toews, 40-42. Considering both her upbringing and her later avocation, it is of course germane that Toews would end her account by alluding to a biblical metaphor.

<sup>67</sup> Jacob H. Janzen in Anna Schmidt (Harms), "Auch", 12. With these words Janzen brings up the opportunity to clarify the location of the Ohrloff Mädchenschule in the Molochnaia colony. In Mennonite Historical Atlas (Winnipeg: Springfield Publisher, 1990), maps by William Schroeder, text by Helmut T. Huebert, we find that Tiege and Ohrloff (settled in 1805 and home of Johann Cornies) were adjoining villages on the south bank of the river referred to by Janzen. The Ohrloff Girls' School was in fact located in the east end of Tiege (25), between a store and

received by the reunion committee attests to the spirit of communion between former classmates, which was still conspicuous to a tangible degree, and particularly evident in their genuine concern with the fates of their former comrades who remain in the USSR or live in exile in Siberia.<sup>68</sup>

The memoirs found in Glueckliche, Sonnige Schulzeit revealed a variety of fates for former students but in no way invalidate the lives and choices of those who did not or could not avail themselves of higher education. One reads of contentment and gratitude for where life has led them, and of suffering which in the end still elicited insights and serenity. After graduating from the Mädchenschulen, a number worked at home alongside their mothers until they married; a good portion became teachers in their former village schools or in the Mädchenschulen for a brief period, again prior to marriage; and an atypical few continued their careers, as single women. Reports of reunions of survivors overflow with nostalgia for both a remembered, cherished past and an equally-cherished sustained friendship and camaraderie with those whom the passing of time transformed into more than former classmates.

#### ONE WOMAN REMEMBERS

To conclude the history of the Mennonite Mädchenschulen from the accounts of those directly involved, let us hear from one more former student of her school

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the doctor's office. Tiege was also the location of the School for the Deaf and Dumb (*Marien-Taubstummschule*), established in 1885. Little wonder that survivors of the girls' school felt scattered: in September 1941 the entire population of Tiege (484 people) and surrounding villages was evacuated by the retreating Soviet army as the German army approached. Few returned (95).

<sup>68</sup> Anna Schmidt (Harms), "Auch", 12.

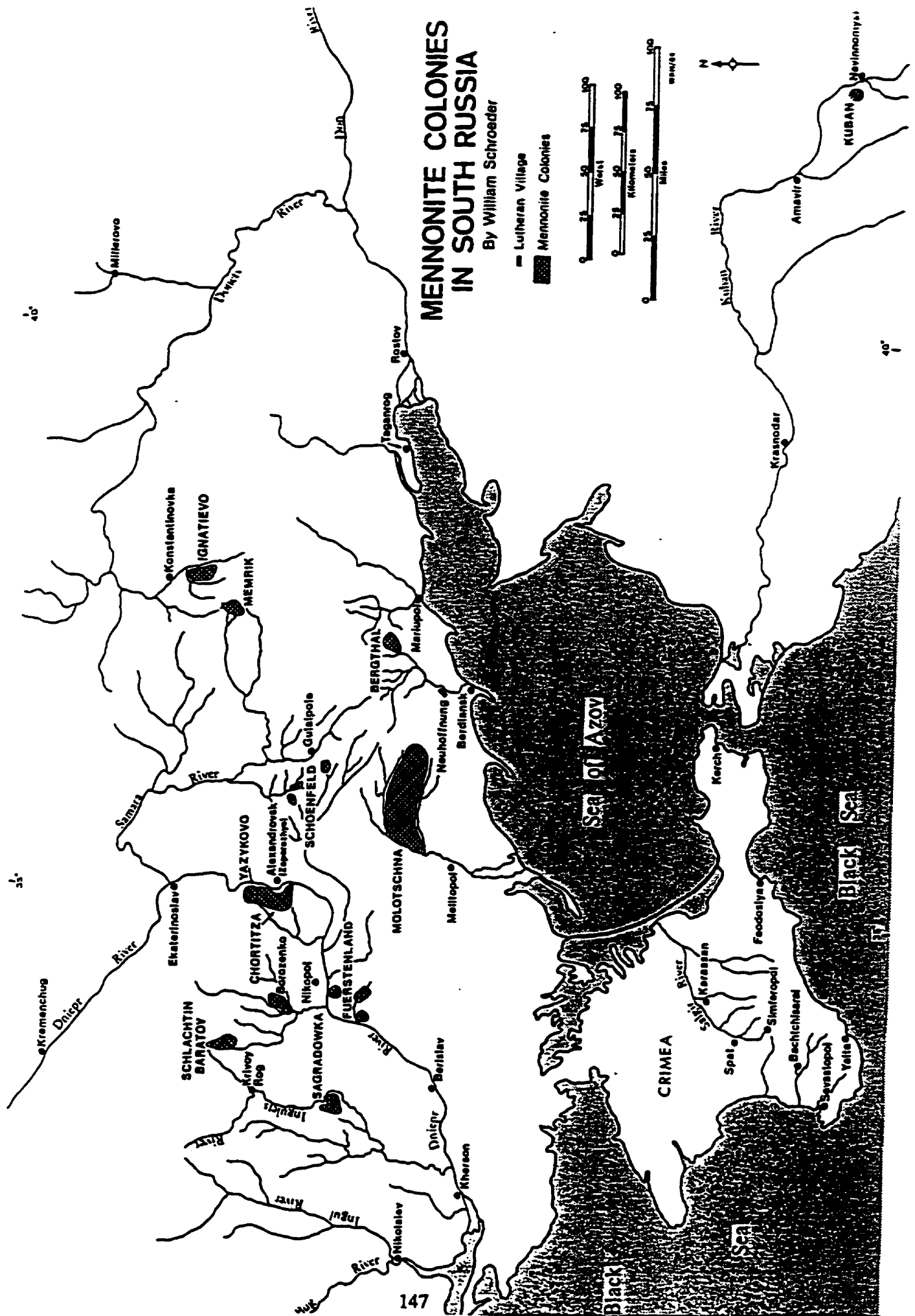
experience. At her request her name is withheld.<sup>69</sup> An indication of the subject's social background is that her family owned and resided on a very large estate. The family had numerous servants, including a maid to do the cooking, another to do the laundry, and one to do the cleaning. Every summer she accompanied her mother, who had a kidney ailment, to the Alexanderbatt *Heilenanstalt* (a sanatorium) on the Dnieper River. Born in 1900, she attended the Ohrloff school for three years, 1913 to 1915, years which she declared had been the best years of her life. Her sister also attended the Ohrloff girls' school, while her three brothers attended the *Zentralschule*. She had several very good teachers: J.H. Janzen especially was their icon, a strict teacher, but also their friend who was devoted to his students; her cousin Helene Willms taught mathematics; a Russian lady taught science. Willms belonged to the family who founded the Concordia Hospital in Ohrloff. The three classes held twelve to fifteen students each. When Janzen was called into the *Forsteidienst* during World War I, his students were extremely grieved to see him leave. One day in May shortly thereafter, twenty girls, arriving atop a farm wagon, including the subject of the interview, came to visit their teacher. His fellow *Forstei* comrades, mostly young men, were astounded to see these girls. It was a very happy visit for all; they sang and laughed and picnicked in the forest, but their departure was a tearful time for the girls.

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<sup>69</sup> Interview July 26, 1996, Autumnhouse, Winnipeg. This was the only interview with a former *Mädchenschule* student conducted for this study. Other leads proved fruitless: names provided by helpful people led mainly to women who would have been too young to attend before the closure of the schools.

**Her last years in Russia must have been a terrible time. One day when she and her sister returned to their home after an outing, they learned that their mother had been murdered the day before, by Nestor Makhno and his bandits. The family made their escape from their estate in the dark of night.**

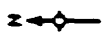
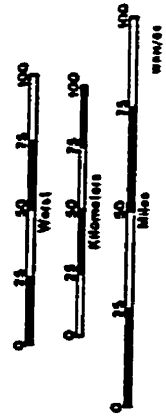
**In the early 1920s, she and her husband emigrated to Canada as newly-weds. Settling near Winnipeg, where she raised her three children, she and her husband first farmed and then operated a gas station. During those years, she contributed to the life of her community through church service as a Sunday school teacher and a member of the women's organization. Widowed twice, she eventually retired to Winnipeg. Her memories of the Mädchenschule which she frequently shared with her grandchildren, were always with her.**



# MENNONITE COLONIES IN SOUTH RUSSIA

By William Schroeder

- Lutheran Village
- Mennonite Colonies







40°

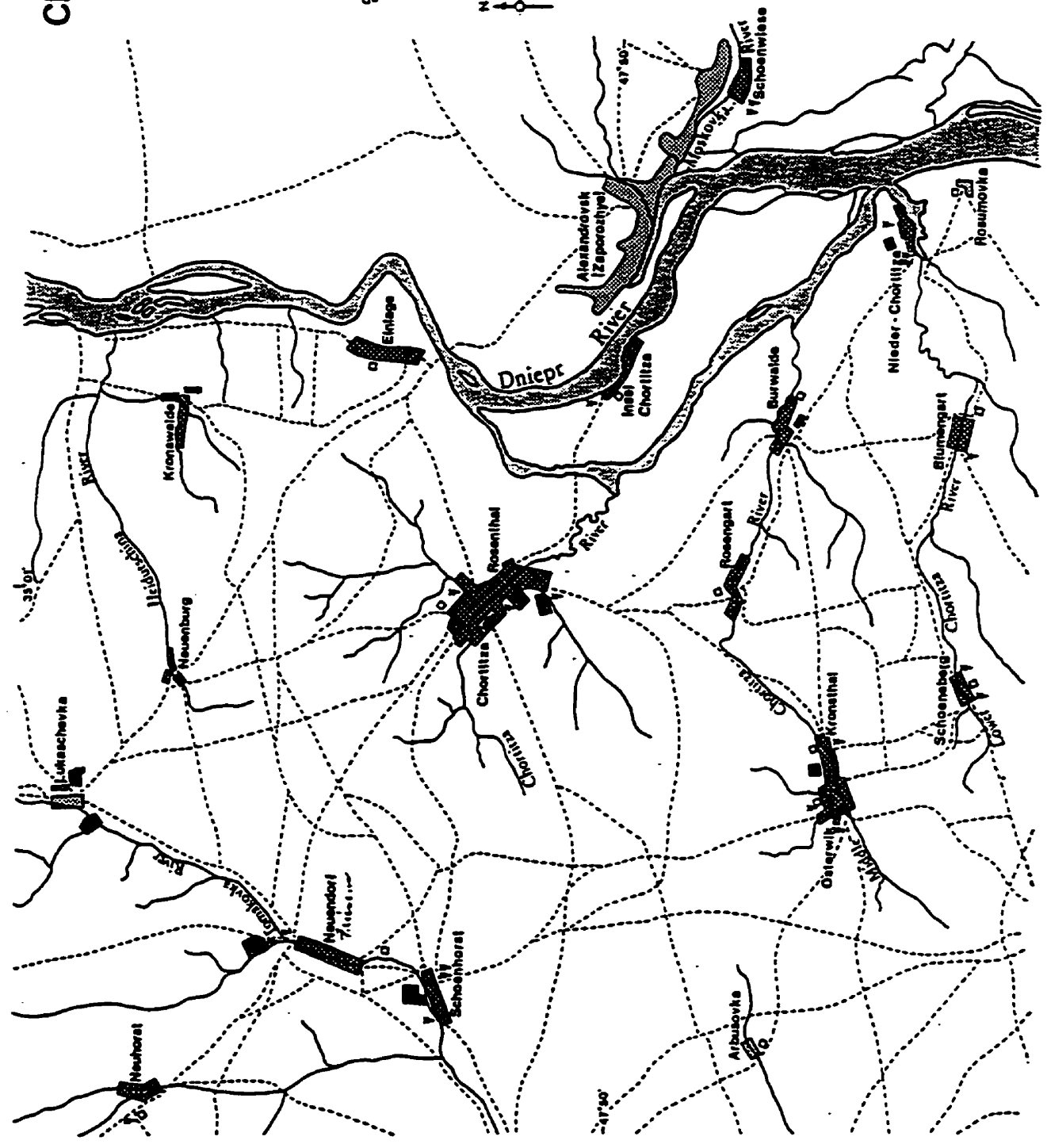
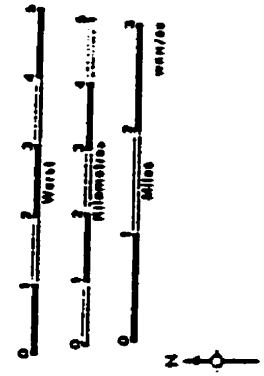
35°

40°

# CHORTITZA COLONY in 1865

By William Schroeder

-  Mennonite Village
-  Russian Village
-  Tree Plantation
-  Trail
-  Windmill
-  Cemetery





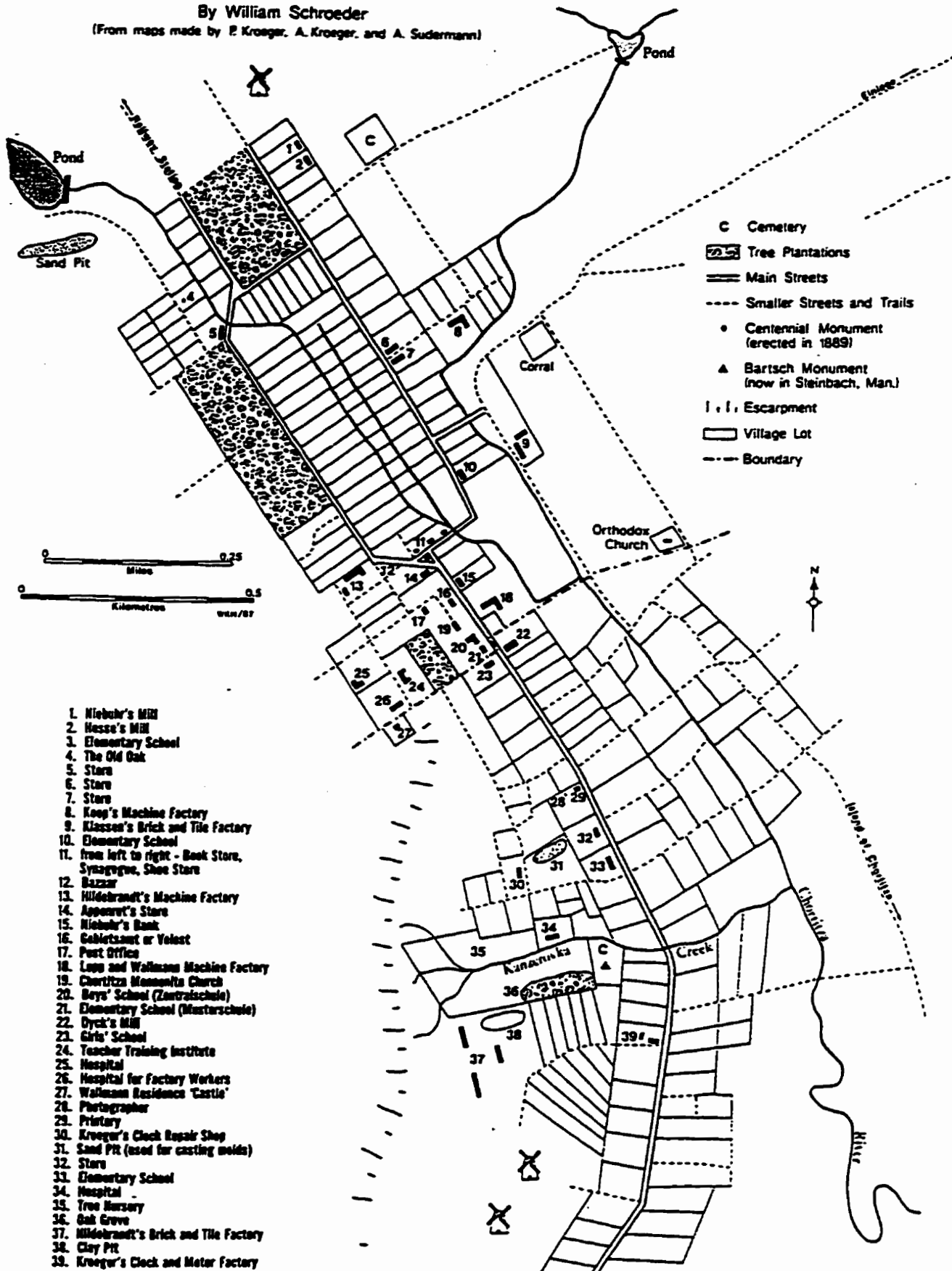


# CHORTITZA - ROSENTHAL

in 1915

By William Schroeder

(From maps made by P. Kroeger, A. Kroeger, and A. Sudermann)



1. Niebuhr's Mill
2. Hesse's Mill
3. Elementary School
4. The Old Oak
5. Store
6. Store
7. Store
8. Koop's Machine Factory
9. Klassen's Brick and Tile Factory
10. Elementary School
11. from left to right - Book Store, Synagogue, Shoe Store
12. Bazaar
13. Hildebrandt's Machine Factory
14. Appenert's Store
15. Niebuhr's Bank
16. Gabeltsant or Vestel
17. Post Office
18. Lupp and Walkmann Machine Factory
19. Chortitza Women's Church
20. Boys' School (Zentralschule)
21. Elementary School (Musterschule)
22. Dyck's Mill
23. Girls' School
24. Teacher Training Institute
25. Hospital
26. Hospital for Factory Workers
27. Walkmann Residence 'Castle'
28. Photographer
29. Primary
30. Kroeger's Clock Repair Shop
31. Sand Pit (used for casting molds)
32. Store
33. Elementary School
34. Hospital
35. Tree Nursery
36. Oak Grove
37. Hildebrandt's Brick and Tile Factory
38. Clay Pit
39. Kroeger's Clock and Motor Factory

## APPENDIX I

### LIST OF NAMES OF FORMER KHORTITSA MÄDCHENSCHULE STUDENTS <sup>1</sup>

Andres Ida (Abe. H.) Wieler	1900 [1912-14]
Appenrodt Mariechen (Heinrich) Friesen	1881
Bartel Tina (Heinrich) Hildebrand	1900 [1914-15]
Braun Anna (Peter Abr.) Braun	1904 [1915-20]
Braun Anna (Wilhelm) Teichroeb	1900 [1913-14]
Braun Elizabeth (Dietrich) Loewen	1899 [1912-16]
Dick Mieka (Franz) Heese	[1913- ]
Dueck Anna (Johann Peter) Klassen	1893 [1905-08]
Dyck Anna (Jacob) Martens	[1910-14]
Dyck Mariechen {P.}	[1915-17]
Elias Agatha (J.J.) Warkentin	1901 [1912-16]
Elias Anna (Gerhard) Toews	[1906-10]
Ens Lena	1902 [1914-18]
Epp Anna (Abram Jakob) Wiebe	[1902- ]
Epp Elizabeth (Abram) Vogt	[1912-16]
Epp Helene {Heinrich}	1897 [1910-14]
Epp Helene (Peter) Wallmann	1891 [1902-05]
Froese Helene (David J.) Quapp	1899 [1912-14]
Froese Mariechen (Wilhelm G.) Pauls	1901 [1914-17]
Froese Tina (Hans) Rempel	
Heese Helene (Bernhard) Toews	1893 [1905-08]
Heese Maria {Heinrich}	1899 [1911-15] I
Heese Maria (Jakob Dav.) Derksen	1893 [1905-09] I
Heinrichs Mariechen	
Hildebrand Anna (J.A.) Dyck	1902 [1914-19] I?
Hildebrand Anna (Albert) Janke	1898 [1912-15]
Isaak Margareta (David) Derksen	1889 [1903-06]
Janzen Katja (Johann G.) Penner	[1913-17]
Janzen Maria (Johann P.) Dyck	[1908-11]
Klassen Agnes (Heinrich H.) Epp	[1895- ]
Klassen Anna (Abr.) Warkentin	1901
Klassen Katarina Thiessen	

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<sup>1</sup> Helene Toews, "Namenliste und Daten", in *Glueckliche*, 109-111. Only a partial list, sixty names are from Toews's list, the rest are gleaned from the articles in the book. In the list above, the first surname represents the student's maiden name, followed by her given name, her father's name in curved brackets if she remained single, her husband's given name or initials in parentheses and his surname if she married; the first column of dates refers to date of birth, and the dates in brackets to years at the girls' school. The initials G or I indicate the background former students' families: G for *Gutsbesitzer*, or estate owners; I for industrialist--as indicated to me in a conversation with Professor James Urry at the Mennonite Heritage Archives, CMBC, Winnipeg, in August 1994.

Klassen Katarina (Wil.) Friesen (Gerhard) Lehn	1891 [1905-06]
Klassen Margareta (Johann W.) Sawatzky	1905 [1919- ]
Klassen Mariechen (Hans) Dueck	[1903-07] G
Koop Katarina (Abr.) Klassen	1898 [1912-16] I
Koop Margaret (Franz) Peters	1901 [1913-15] I
Krahn Liese	[1913-16]
Krahn Margareta (H.) Rogalsky	1892 [1905-09]
Kroeger Agathe (Kornelius) Peters	[1898-1902]
Kroeger Margarete (Abr.) Regier	
Lehn Katja (Kornelius Martin) Janzen	1896 [1908-12] G
Lehn Maria (Peter) Penner	[1903-06] G
Lepp Katja {Johann}	I
Martens Justina (Corny) Isaak	[1913-16]
Martens Katharina (Jakob D.) Hamm	1902 [1914-16]
Martens Susanna (Jakob) Wiens	1889 [1901-04]
Martens Tina (Johann H.) Loewen	1893 [1905-08]
Neustaedter Susa (Dietrich) Hein	1904 [1915-17]
Neustaedter (Isaak G.) Zacharias	[1913-14] G
Niebuhr Justina (Julius) von Campen	1891 [1903-07] I
Paetkau Sara (J.A.) Dyck	1900 [1912-15]
Pauls Katharina (Heinrich A.) Koop (Johann Korn.) Epp	1884 [1898-1901]
Penner Susanna (Johann) Berg	[1905-09]
Peters Aganetha (Heinrich) Quiering	1910 G?
Peters Anna (Jakob) Enns	
Peters Elizabeth (J.) Siemens (Peter) Isaak	1885 [1898-99] G
Peters Mariechen (Peter) Berg	1887 [1900-04] G I
Rempel Anna (P.) Willms	
Rempel Maria {J.}	1896 [1910- ]
Rempel Margaret (P.) Klassen	1887 [1900-04]
Rempel Tina (Jacob) Froese	1889
Rempel Tina {Peter}	
Riediger Justina (J.) Rempel	1882
Schroeder Lena (Isaak) Enns	[1912-15]
Schroeder Margareta (Erhard)	1904 [1915-18]
Schroeder Mariechen (Abr. D.) Kroeger	1893 [1905-08]
Siemens Helena Peters	
Siemens Maria (Johann J.) Peters (Jakob) Siemens	1888 [1901-04]
Sudermann Sonja/Sophie (Jakob) Rempel	1896 [1910-14] G
Thiessen Bertha (Johann) Schmidt	[1918-22]
Thiessen Irene	1905 [1916-20]
Thiessen Katharina (B.) Friesen	[1895-98]
Unger Anna (Nikolai P.) Isaak	[1912- ] I
Winter Tina (Jakob) Penner	1893 [1913-17]
Zacharias Anna (Hans Korn.) Martens	[1909-13] G

Zacharias	Katarina (Julius N.) Martens	[1918- ] G
Zacharias	Lena (Peter K.) Martens	[1909-11] G
Zacharias	Mariechen (Heinrich) Koop	1900 [1912-16] G
Zacharias	Kaetie (Jakob) Epp	

## APPENDIX II

### LIST OF NAMES OF FORMER OHRLOFF MÄDCHENSCHULE STUDENTS <sup>1</sup>

Becker Anna Koop	Neufeld Katja Klassen
Boschmann Agatha Willms	Peters Elise Penner
Bräul Maria	Regehr Susa Wagenknecht
Cornies Käthe Schroeder	Reimer Olga Fast
Cornies Liese Unruh	Rempel Olga
Dick Käthe	Riediger Susa Hamm
Dick Manja	Sudermann Liese Martens
Dick Njuta	Teichröb Liese Linke
Goßen Liese Martens	Teichröb M. Cornies
Hamm Anna Schmidt	Unruh Erna Schröder
Hildebrand Justina	Unruh Hedwig Dick
Hildebrand Justine Hübert	Unruh Helene Penner
Janzen Erna Wiens	Unruh Olga Janzen
Janzen Schura Neufeld	Warkentin Susa Kröger
Klassen Agnes Martynes	Wiebe Lena
Klassen Liese Günther	Wiens Marie Goßen
Klassen Maria Tiessen	Wiens Mika Janzen
Krüger Anna Löwen	Willms Margarethe Rempel
Matthies Anna	Wölke Lena Rempel
Neufeld Agatha	
Neufeld Alice	

These forty names surely represent only a fraction of an unknown total of former Ohrloff Mädchenschule students in its approximately fifteen-year history as a private Mennonite school for girls.

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<sup>1</sup> The names are referred to in reunion reports in Der Bote, 28 May 1947, p. 3; 16 April 1958, 6; 23 April 1958, 4-5; 25 June 1958, 3-4; 26 June 1962, 12; 4 September 1962, 12; 2 October 1962, 4-5. The first surname is the woman's maiden name, the last surname her married name if she married--as indicated (but not always explicitly) in the sources above.

### APPENDIX III

#### AN ACCOUNT OF SCHOOLING IN THE BERGTHAL AND KHORTITSA COLONIES

The following account is included in order for readers to gain a perception of what village schools were like in the middle of the previous century, and also to depict the progress of a leading educator in the Khortitsa region. What follows is a translation of Klassen's own report.

Jacob Abramovitch Klassen (1847-1919) was born in the village of Bergthal on the Bergthal Colony. His father, Abraham Klassen, served as the village secretary. His older brother Peter was taken out of school at age 12 by his parents because, according to them, he had become more learned than his teacher who was unable to teach him further.<sup>1</sup>

Klassen described a day in the life of village school students in the mid-1850s. The school room was furnished only with the teacher's desk and chair and the students' desks and benches; the walls were bare. Girls were assigned to sit to the left of the teacher, with the boys to his right; between them stood the backless bench for the beginners, for whom no desks were furnished. Their teacher was a farmer, as were all other families in the village. The school day opened with singing one verse of a morning song (einem Morgenliede). The teacher then addressed his students with "Nun, Kinder, jetzt lernt" (Well, children, now learn)! Students were divided into groups: the first group studied the Bible; the second, the New Testament; the senior group, the Mennonite Catechism; while the very youngest, the beginners, had the Fibel, basically the alphabet and phonetics, and the multiplication table.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Abr. Klassen, Autodidakt. Erinnerungen Aus Meinem Leben. Undated. (Typescript, Winnipeg, CMBC Library; 5. The practice may have been a common one, since the village schools provided, at best, some six years of schooling at the time.

Instructions from the teacher were non-existent.<sup>2</sup> The teacher then filled his pipe, sat back and smoked while reading the Zuschauer from Riga, the newspaper circulating in the Bergthal Colony.

After the children had worked silently for a time, the teacher called on them to read aloud. The 'Bible' class came forward and each read one verse during this hasty procedure, in which the teacher offered neither question nor remark to enhance the reader's perception. The next two groups read mechanically, stumbling and not reflecting any understanding of the material. The 'Fibel' group printed the short piece they had learned to print at the teacher's desk, and the youngest recited which of the letters they had learned to identify--most probably in their own homes, Klassen interjects. If they had not 'learned,' the teacher assisted; if they had, he rewarded them with a kopek piece stuck into their book, envied by the 'hardheads' who had not caught on to their 'lesson'.

Klassen claimed that any real learning students achieved occurred at home with family members; the teacher had absolutely no role in their learning to read: "Der Lehrer trug absolut gar nichts dazu bei."<sup>3</sup> Klassen himself learned to write before he entered school by observing his father at his work as village secretary and by having him teach him to write the alphabet and a few words.

After a brief recess, the students were set to work at copying their reading material while the teacher returned to his pipe, remaining a spectator (ein Zuschauer). By lunch-time dismissal he had not yet asked one question of his students. School work in the afternoons

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 6. As Klassen relates: "Also die Kinder hatten jetzt alle ein Buch in den Haenden, um zu 'lernen', d.h. um still fuer sich zu lesen, zu buchstabieren oder sich mit dem Aussehen der Buchstaben bekanntzumachen." Translated: Therefore, the children all had a book in their hands, to 'learn', that is, to read silently, to spell, or by looking, to familiarize themselves with the alphabet.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 7.



was like the morning except that after recess they concentrated on arithmetic. Students came to the teacher's desk and, of the four examples of arithmetic problems he had written on paper, each chose one to solve after some dispute among the pupils. Only at the close of the week was the *Katechismus* recited and a song from the *Gesangbuch* recited (*aufgesagt*).<sup>4</sup> The role of the teacher appeared to consist of merely maintaining order, and in this he was assisted by a rather sturdy strap hanging on the wall. Classes began late in the fall and ended in March as soon as the first lark was heard, so that children could help with the plowing, and herding sheep and lambs on parents' farms.

Klassen spent only one year in the Bergthal school. He maintains that by the 1860s and '70s the Bergthal Colony's educational system lagged far behind that of other colonies; the colony authorities arranged that young people could be selected to continue their education in the Khortitsa Colony to study Russian. The few who took advantage of the offer, upon completion of their secondary education and return to Bergthal, were unable to find positions of employment there. The "almighty" Elder Gerh. Wiebe's reply to their applications for employment with the colony's administration, was that one was not to allow 'higher learning' to intrude, for it did not promote humility.<sup>5</sup>

In 1855, when Klassen was 8, the family moved to Khortitsa. At the school there he found he lagged behind his classmates academically, but he soon caught up. His brother Peter returned to school and also caught up with classmates.<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1864, at the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 10. Having gained an awareness of the education of the children of the first Bergthal immigrants to the Prairies, one is entitled to speculate that this attitude was transported to Canada in the 1870s immigration.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 16.

age of 17, Klassen took on his first teaching position on the Gut Hochfeld, an estate owned by the Thiessen family, teaching 12 to 15 children including the children of renters.<sup>7</sup> For eight years he held the position; he lamented the lack of an adequate supply of reading material, especially pedagogic, and the absence of colleagues. He then travelled in Europe with his sister and brother-in-law (Schroeders) for the greater part of 1872. For some months he tutored his two Schroeder nephews.<sup>8</sup> In 1873, with various job offers, he took a teaching position in Ekaterinoslav and after 10 years of teaching, in March 1875, he wrote his teacher examination, Lehrerpruefung.<sup>9</sup>

Klassen appears to have been an enlightened teacher: in the Ekaterinoslav library he found and read a guide to teaching in elementary schools by Dr. Kehr, the Director of the Halberstadt Seminary in Germany, and ordered more books by Kehr. He embraced this new influence with enthusiasm, speaking of a new beginning: "ein neues Leben begann in meiner Schule". He followed Kehr's guide to geometry, Schlimmbach's Fibel, J. Crueger's science, and more. He seems to have vastly improved his teaching methods and broadened the range of teaching material.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 21. His father died in August 1864, when Klassen was 18 years old; his older brother Peter took their father's position as secretary (*Gebietsamte Schriftsteller*). See also J.A. Klassen, "Kurze schlichte Angaben ueber ein Lehrerleben.", in Toews, *Glueckliche*, 10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 21. Peter Schroeder became one of the few Mennonites to be elected to the Duma in St Petersburg. Klassen's manuscript includes 50 pages of the journal he kept during his travels in Europe.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 80. He recalls that during this time only four teachers had passed exams (*gepruefte Lehrer*) in the Khortitsa Colony: H. Epp, W. Penner, P. Riediger and himself (81). He also mentions his enduring friendship with P.H.[Peter Heese] (maternal uncle of Anna Sudermann), and tells of his marriage in 1875 to Agnes Sudermann (paternal aunt of Anna Sudermann) (78-79).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 80. His assessment: "Im ganzen genommen ging es vorwaerts in der Schule, und mehrere der besserer Schueller traten ohne besondere Schwierigkeit in die dritte Klasse der Realschule resp. das Gymnasiums ein...".

Other changes were in the wind: on June 19, 1881, notice was received of a decree that the Ministry of Public Instruction, would henceforth oversee the colony schools.<sup>11</sup> Klassen began teaching at the Khortitsa Zentralschule in 1881,<sup>12</sup> which by that time consisted of two teachers, each instructing two classes. By 1890 the school had expanded into a four-class institution with one teacher per class. Courses taught were religion, German, mathematics, natural science, Russian language, history, geography, penmanship, drawing, and singing. In the fall of 1881 the school inspector Netschiporenko declared he was satisfied with the school for the time being. In June of 1882 Netschiporenko returned with Director Malewinski who presided over the three-day final exams for the students and also proclaimed his approval.

From 1890 to 1892 Klassen took a break from teaching: the heavy workload was taking a toll on his health; he felt the stress of teaching was the cause of his frequent, severe headaches.<sup>13</sup> After a year or so, he returned to teaching, first for a year at the Rosental village school, then in 1893, he returned to the Khortitsa Zentralschule; it had expanded to 200 students with six teachers by then, under the leadership of Abraham Neufeld.<sup>14</sup>

On September 11, 1895, a private school for girls opened in Rosental; here, and after the school's relocation to Khortitsa, Klassen taught religion and German until the summer

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<sup>11</sup> Klassen, Autodidakt, 82.

<sup>12</sup> Klassen, "Kurze", in Toews, Glueckliche, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Katarina Thiessen, "Jacob Abram Klassen", in Toews, Glueckliche, 17. Klassen's daughter Katarina (Klassen) Thiessen writes that her father's health was fragile due to migraine headaches. To lessen his stress, for a year or so he worked as the accountant at a wool-spinning factory in nearby Einlage.

<sup>14</sup> Klassen, Autodidakt, 82-88.

of 1913 when, after 46 years, he retired from teaching.<sup>15</sup> He was one of the many who died in the typhoid epidemic, in December 1919.

An epilogue to Klassen's memoirs is an eight-page tribute by H.H. Epp, headmaster at the Khortitsa Zentralschule, held in March 1920 as a tribute to the teachers and students who died in the 1918 to 1919 typhoid epidemic that swept across South Russia. In it Epp outlines Klassen's 46-year career in education, which included eleven in the Zentralschule and the last 18 instructing religion and German at the Khortitsa Mädchenschule.<sup>16</sup> Klassen's son Peter, who retrieved his father's handwritten manuscript and typed it, reproduced it, and made it available, provides an epilogue. He is puzzled as to why his father ended his memoirs in 1913, a recollection of sixty years; no other reference to Klassen's retirement years has been found.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> H.H. Epp, "Die Chortitzer Maedchenschule", in Toews, Glueckliche, 8, 11. The book contains a number of tributes to Klassen from his former students and his colleagues, as well as a photograph of students and teachers in 1913 at the celebration of his many years of service in Khortitsa. The school relocated into a larger new building in Khortitsa in 1903-04.

<sup>16</sup> H.H. Epp, "Epilogue", in Klassen, Autodidakt, 5. Epp eulogizes thus: In our late colleague, at the end of his teaching career, we had a treasure of pedagogical understanding and practice in that he was able to instill in each young beginner a desire for special education.

<sup>17</sup> See Peter Klassen, in Klassen, Autodidakt, 92-93.

## APPENDIX IV

### SEVEN DECADES OF EDUCATION IN A MOLOCHNAIA VILLAGE

A study of a Mennonite village in the last half of the century, Hierschau on the Molochnaia Colony, provides some detail of schooling and the status teachers they eventually held in a Mennonite village. In Hierschau, founded in 1848, the majority of the teachers were men, and until the establishment of the *Mädchenschulen*, teacher training for women was available only outside of Mennonite centres. After World War I when the *Lehrer Seminar* (Teachers College) became co-educational, there were some female teachers in the village schools, but the majority were still men.<sup>1</sup> In its initial settlement period, the high numbers of children (25% of the population) created high enrollment in the village school: 97 pupils in 1857, possibly with only one teacher.<sup>2</sup> At first the position of the teacher was not considered to be very prestigious; however, "With increasing emphasis on school reform...[teachers] became respected, influential members of society."<sup>3</sup> The establishment of the pedagogical institute in Halbstadt in 1878 seems to have ended the era of the underqualified teacher. The first teacher in Hierschau who took official teacher training in Halbstadt, was Isaak Peters, who began teaching in the village in 1899.

Teachers were often elected as secretary or *Schulze* (mayor) of their village, and even more frequently they also became ministers in Mennonite churches; thus the influence of the well-educated was further broadened. Efforts to continue upgrading the quality of instruction in the Molochnaia included organizing summer Bible schools, as in 1902 on the David Dick

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut T. Huebert, *Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1986), 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

family estate at Apanlee, and the 1905 founding of the Molochnaia Mennonite Teachers Society, which held conferences, provided lesson guides, and established libraries. The Volost appointed school inspectors who regularly made the rounds of the schools in its jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup>

The end of the Mennonite era came in the 1920s, when the Soviet regime abolished private control of educational institutions and appropriated school buildings to further a curriculum which manifested a philosophy absolutely contrasted to Mennonite ideals.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 186-188.

## APPENDIX V

### ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE MOTHER COLONIES

On the periphery of the main colonies, that is, in the daughter colonies established to deal with the landless problem among prolific Mennonites, signs of progress were visible but not uniformly. Jakob Epp was requested to oversee the Judenplan, a state program where Mennonite farmers were to intermingle with surrounding ethnic groups, in this case Jewish, in order to model their agricultural practices, regarded as superior by the government. His responsibilities included inspecting the schools in the villages populated by both Mennonites and Jewish people, in a small area located approximately forty kilometres southwest of the Khortitsa Colony and on the southern boundary of the Schlachtin-Baratov colony (established 1872-74). In his diary of February 1860, Jacob Epp notes that in the school in Islutschistaia, the students wrote neatly, but their reading level was only average, their mathematical skills were poor, and there was no religious instruction in the school. In the next village, Novopodolsk, where his brother Abraham taught, the situation was more progressive. Epp noted that the children had made "significant progress in writing, reading, and arithmetic, and in the other subjects" since his previous visit.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob Epp, whose detailed narrative adds to our impression of life in south Russia at the end of the 19th century, was a simple, humbly-educated man who took up his responsibilities somewhat reluctantly but dutifully; after his death his widow and offspring emigrated to Saskatchewan, Canada in the 1890s.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey L. Dyck, trans. and ed. A Mennonite in Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp 1851-1880 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991), 139-140 . Abraham Epp was a graduate of the Khortitsa Zentralschule and appeared to have a promising career ahead of him. He died suddenly just months later. Jacob Epp's diary depicts Mennonite life in the Judenplan with details, both mundane and novel.

## APPENDIX VI

### OHRLOFF MÄDCHENSCHULE TEACHER JACOB H. JANZEN

(1878-1950)

With high accolades so effusively directed at Janzen by his former students, a brief overview of the Ohrloff Mädchenschule teacher, minister, bishop of the Mennonite church in Waterloo, and writer and poet is in order.

After his death in Waterloo, Ontario, an article by his son Heinz Janzen appeared in Mennonite Life, which detailed the implementation of some of his ideals. Readers may take into consideration the hagiographic portrayal of a respected member of Mennonite society, as composed by a son who likely chose to maintain his father's polished image.

His son calls him "progressive" and for his time he probably was.<sup>1</sup> In Russia, Janzen "through his intimate associations with the Jews became well-versed in Jewish history and thought. He also associated much with Russian priests" (35-36). This would partly explain why his library grew rapidly; as well, his affiliations were an indication of more than tolerance: a sincere interest in people of diverse backgrounds. He had respect for Russia and its people: his son writes, "If we behaved arrogantly toward our Russian servants we were severely punished" (36).

As well, Janzen's "tolerance and broad-mindedness continued to manifest itself [during the Russian Civil War]...Father's sympathy for people in their need led him to place himself in dangerous situations and even risk his life" (36). The example given is of when, in 1918, Janzen and Philipp Cornies interceded on behalf of eleven Red Army soldiers about to be shot by soldiers of the German army. Despite the precariousness of the situation, they

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<sup>1</sup> Heinz Janzen, "Jacob H. Janzen--At Home", Mennonite Life, Vol. VI, No. 3 (July 1951), 35-37, 43.



made a successful appeal for the soldiers' freedom.

While an educator in Tiege, Janzen at times initiated endeavours considered controversial by parents of his students: "In spite of great opposition he often gathered the students of the Zentralschule and the Mädchenschule for folk games. The opinion seemed to prevail that boys and girls should be kept separate until they were of marriageable age. Father thought it more wholesome if they would associate and play together" (36).

Later, after emigrating to Canada in 1924, Janzen authored and self-published a pamphlet in two editions, 1941 and 1946, titled "*Das Sexuelle Problem*", which expressed what today might be judged as reactionary, didactic cautions aimed at curtailing and suppressing 'natural' physical inclinations in the sexual sense in young adolescents, boys being singled out. He made the pamphlets available for distribution at the annually-held conventions of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.<sup>2</sup>

Born in Steinbach, Molochnaia, he was educated in the Zentralschule in Gnadenfeld. He received his teaching certificates in Melitopol and Kharkov, and continued his studies, in philosophy and natural sciences, at the Universities of Jena and Greifswald, Germany. After teaching in village schools, he was head teacher at the girls' school at Tiege from 1908 to 1921. Ordained to the ministry in 1906, Janzen was compelled to give up his teaching position in 1921. In 1924 he immigrated to Waterloo, where he lived for the rest of his life, except for the years 1935 to 1937 when he was the head of the Vancouver girls' home. In Ontario, he "gathered and organized new immigrants from Russia from 1924 on, into the Kitchener-Waterloo Mennonite congregation." He had 38 writings published; he occasionally

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<sup>2</sup> Jacob H. Janzen, *Das Sexuelle Problem* (Vineland(?): Self-published, 1941), 22 pp. For an early memoir of Janzen's life see his *Aus Meinem Leben. Erinnerungen von J.H. Janzen* (Rosthern, Saskatchewan: *Der Bote*, 1929), 89 pp. Filled with tender recollections and insights, he wrote it shortly after coming to Canada, in Prince Albert, Sask.

lectured at Bethel College, Kansas, which awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1944.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Jacob Heinrich Janzen", Mennonite Encyclopedia (1957) Vol. III, 95-96.

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