Toward An Understanding of
the Russia Germans

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TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RUSSIA GERMANS (1)

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If it were necessary to state a reason for this discussion at this time, I would direct your attention, first of all, to the United States Census for 1930 which reported a total of 303,532 Russia Germans in the population of the United States. Secondly, I would point to the numerous Lutheran congregations within our district and synod whose membership is solidly of Russia German extraction. Thirdly, I would refer you to the fact that thousands of these people have severed their connection with their mother church and have fallen prey to the allurements of a host of sects. For these reasons it is important that we endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the Russia Germans.

The individual in this group which we are attempting to understand has been variously defined and described. He is supposed to be a psychological problem, an ignorant prodigal, or, even a "filthy and lousy Russian". Racially, of course, he is not a Russian. However, the damaging reports that have been broadcast about him ignorantly in the earlier years have had a telling effect. We know how true it is, as a result of these false reports, that some pastors would only with great reluctance accept a call to a Russia German congregation, and would then terminate the call at the first opportunity. Others, however, came, loved them, stayed on and fulfilled a blessed ministry.

The Russia German element is with us to stay. Today this group constitutes the largest German-speaking group in the state of North Dakota. In 1930 South Dakota had a foreign-born population of 22,617 but in that same year the children of immigrants of Russia German stock numbered 64,455. South Dakota's heaviest Russia German settlements are found in the counties of Walworth, Brown, Edmunds, McPherson, Campbell, Mende, Douglas, Bon Homme, and Hatchison. Reliable data on the distribution of the Russia Germans in North Dakota are not available, but it is certain that the number of them is greater than in South Dakota. The earliest settlements in North Dakota were made at Coldwater, Ashley and Zealand, beginning with the year 1884 and continuing into Western North Dakota until the outbreak of the World War in 1914.

Heaviest North Dakota settlements are found in the counties of McIntosh, Emmons, Logan, Mercer, Sheridan, Grant, Adams, Dickey and Stutsman.

(1) An address delivered to the Western Conference of the Dakota District of the American Lutheran Church.
(2) Mr. Joachim is the pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, in Beulah, N. Dak.
Russia German immigrants, of course, spoke the German language. Their immediate concern was the preservation of the German language, culture and customs. To this end they founded German language newspapers. At one time not less than sixteen German or partly German periodicals were published in North Dakota. Today only five remain, namely, The Staats-Anzeiger, The Dakota Freie Presse, The North Dakota Herald, The Wishek News, and The Ashley Tribune. A survey would probably indicate that only about one-half of the children of Russia German immigrants are able to read the German language.

The Russia German pioneers were farmers by profession, tillers of the soil, but today their children are found in every vocation in American life, thoroughly assimilated into the warp and woof of the nation's fabric.

Educators and statesmen have often expressed regret that no systematic attempts were made earlier to understand these people, their peculiarities, their weaknesses and their strength, and to induce them in a more intelligent and sympathetic manner to enter whole-heartedly into the affairs of their communities and their state.

In our study we shall inquire, first of all, who these people are and where they came from. Having reviewed their history, we shall be the better able, I believe, to arrive at an understanding of them as a group in our American society.

I. HISTORICAL (3)

The Russia Germans migrated to Russia from various German states on the promise of free land, freedom from military service, better living conditions, and other concessions.

Russia had received her government and her name from the Normans, more specifically from Rurik, who after the death of his two brothers became sole regent. From Byzantium Russia received her culture, her art and letters, and Christianity. Greeks exercised a strong influence over Russia and indoctrinated the people with the spirit of their empire. The greatest tragedy ever to befall an empire befell Russia when the Mongols were victorious at Kulik in 1224 A.D., and imposed their rule for two hundred years.

Systematically the wild hordes of the steppes extracted by the root the qualities which are known in the civilized world as honesty, manliness and integrity. We must bear this in mind if we would understand some traits in the Russian character to this day.

This Mongol domination resulted in the separation of Russia for hundreds of years from Western Europe and in her subservience to oriental influence. If she was ever to enter the ranks of civilized nations, if education and vision were to become the general heritage of the common people, it was necessary that the people should have free access to the culture springs of Western Europe.

(3) A selected bibliography is appended to this address.
The great cleft between East and West was already apparent along Russia's Western border, where a tier of provinces had been incorporated into the Russian Empire. The exchange of thought along the border worked like leaven, but the process of leavening was slow.

The wide-awake Russian had tasted Western culture, he liked it and wanted more of it. He looked to the countries that had it—Germany, England, France, and Holland. The common people, not the intelligentsia, from those countries disseminated learning. The common people of the Western countries did more for Russia than the reigning sovereigns because the regents had only political relations with other capitals while the common people lived in the midst of the living processes of social and economic life. They were the leaders in music, art, letters and the sciences.

From time immemorial foreigners had crossed the Russian borders to hunt and to fight, but not until the fifteenth century of our era did it become an established custom for Russia to call upon Western Europe for an infusion of new blood into the state. Ivan III (1462-1505) invited architects, engineers, goldsmiths, miners and doctors from Hungary and Italy. Ivan IV (1533-1584) dispatched an agent to Germany to induce technicians of all professions to come to Russia. A perusal of their vocations reads like an encyclopedia of knowledge.

Tsar Boris Godunow (1598-1605) called upon Germany, Holland and Denmark to assist him in establishing universities. Demetrius I (1605-1606) favored the colonization of Russia from Western Europe. Vassily Schmisky (1606-1610) was inimical to foreigners and even destroyed a suburb of Moscow where foreigners had settled. Michael Fedorovitch Romanow (1613-1615) in a proclamation to all Russia expressed disdain for all Latins and Lutherans, and considered it as his duty to protect the Church of Russia against this enemy. And yet, as soon as order was restored in the empire he called upon the English, French, Danes and Scots with the invitation to settle in his empire. The same procedure was continued under Tsar Alexis Mikhailovitch (1645-1676). Russia needed the Westerners. Nearly every regime of government welcomed them with open arms. However, the Russian Church and the common people considered them a menace, abused them and heaped indignities upon them.

Peter the Great and Catherine.

Colonization was carried on on a much larger scale under the reforms of Peter the Great. He not only sent agents to other countries to induce colonists to come into Russia, but in 1679 he personally brought in more than one thousand technicians and military scientists. Subsequently, men of peace of every known calling came. His immediate successors continued this program.

However, not until the reign of Catherine II, herself a German, was the successful culmination of Peter's great plan reached. She reigned from 1762 to 1796. Her chief interests were education, law, government, and slavery reforms. Native stubbornness did not permit her to achieve results as quickly as she wished. Although a German, Catherine had become thoroughly Russianized. All her lovers were Russians. She was possessed of a tremendous energy which she faithfully used to create a new and greater Russia. She also saw the necessity of bringing immigrants from Western Europe into Russia. As early in her
reign as December 4th, 1762 she issued an invitation to all, except Jews, to come and settle in her kingdom. This invitation was inopportune.

The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) was still undecided. Then, too, Catherine did not guarantee any privileges relative to personal liberty and faith. The response she received was discouraging, but she was not one to be easily disheartened. Therefore, on July 22nd, 1763 she issued a second manifesto and this brought such good results that it came to be regarded as the cornerstone of all colonisation programs. Her second invitation contained a nine-point program and made the following specific guarantees to immigrants:

1. Religious liberty.
2. Tax exemption for ten years.
3. Freedom from military service.
4. A cash grant to be repaid in twenty years.
5. Equal treatment with native Russians.
6. Each family may bring into the country 300 rubles in cash or property duty-free.
7. Professionals and laborers are permitted to join guilds and unions.
8. Each family received thirty desiatine land, after ten years a tax of 15-20 kopeks per desiatine is to be paid annually.
9. Whoever would return must pay all debts owing to the crown and five years real estate taxes.

In Germany wars and drought and depression had laid waste great stretches of land and had robbed many citizens of their livelihood. Karl VI had inaugurate a program of foreign military service. Since Prince Eugene’s victory at Savoy and the Peace of Passarowitz in 1718 gave him large land grants in Hungary, the German population began to move en masse to new and more prosperous territories. The emigration took on such proportions that the various provincial governments of Germany felt themselves compelled to prohibit further emigration. The penalty for violation of this ruling entailed confiscation of property and eternal banishment from the mother country. Notwithstanding all these measures, Russian agents succeeded in the year 1766 in gaining sufficient immigrants to settle fifty villages along the Lower Volga. Subsequently, the German governments permitted the poor, the moral and financial bankrupts to leave the country. Always the Russian agents were at work secretly.

From 1764 to 1767, 27,000 souls left Germany for Russia.

The mode of entry was altogether on a business basis. A contract was executed between each immigrant and the Russian government. A copy of the contract was given to the colonist. A certain sum of money was allotted to each soul for every day until the destination was reached. At the destination the colonist received tools, implements, cooking utensils and other necessaries. Each will receive his own land. Churches and schools will be awaiting them. The colonist must live on the land, and he must not leave his residence without permission. The laws of the crown are to be obeyed. He (the colonist) is to repay all monies advanced him for transportation and materials within ten years. One tenth of the debt is due annually. The colonist promises to pay all debts incurred by the government in his behalf. Should he desire, he may leave the country again.
The colonists travelled by way of Insebeck, Regensburg, Freiburg, Poezlau and other points. They came from France, Holland, Italy, Poland and Sweden, but the great majority came from Germany. The journey required from three to nine months. The first German colony on Russian soil was established June 29, 1764. Others followed in quick succession until 104 colonies were established on either side of the Volga. In 1914 there was a total of 192 colonies, of which 38 were Roman Catholic and 154 Protestant. Such was the outcome of the great colonization program of Catherine the Great.

At the Peace of Jassy in 1792 Turkey ceded to Russia all the territory from Astrakhan to the Dniester. The Tartars living in this region refused to submit to Russian authority, and, consequently, the government looked about for a class of people to hold them in check, to act as a buffer community, a Tartar-tamer. People from the Balkan States were moved into the newly acquired lands but the venture ended in dismal failure. What to do now? Some of those in authority remembered the successful colonies on the lower Volga. Very naturally the hardy qualities of the settlers on the Volga would also serve to great advantage here, even though the colonists brought in under Catherine were of inferior quality. With a little diplomacy superior, dependable and sturdy men could be gotten from Germany.

Accordingly, Alexander I in January of 1804 issued an ukase instructing the ambassador and consuls in Germany to invite selected German farmers to migrate to South Russia. They were to travel in groups and not more than 200 families were to be accepted in one year. The agent was to pay transportation only, and to issue passports only to those who were honest, industrious and possessed not less than 300 rubles in cash or property. Furthermore, these colonists were to be family men.

Thus the second great German emigration was set in motion. It began in 1804 and continued until 1817. These people settled in what are roughly called the Black Sea colonies. I cannot give the names of all the villages, a few will suffice: Grossliebental, Johannestal, Friedenstal, Sarata, Kulm, etc.

This, however, must be borne in mind: of the Volga colonists approximately 1000 men were professional specialists, and the balance diligent bankrupts, but the so-called South Russia Germans were all hand-picked German farmers.

II. EXPERIENCE OF THE COLONISTS IN RUSSIA

The German colonists were deceived the moment they set foot on Russian soil. Russia had a secret and sinister purpose in colonizing the territory along the lower Volga and the Black Sea. I shall speak of the colonists on the Volga first.

The immigrants were led to believe that the land on either side of the Volga was rich farming land. In glowing terms the agent had described the woods, fields and rivers. In imagination the Germans saw a new paradise awaiting them at the end of their journey. What they found was a no-man's land. No sooner had colonies been established than nomadic raiders descended upon the settlers to steal, plunder, rob and burn. Livestock was driven away, women and children murdered, and the men carried away into slavery, some to return, while others never saw their loved ones again. Whole villages were razed, never to arise again.
The newly acquired land was either very light and sandy or it consisted of swampy bogs. It gradually dawned on the stolid Germans that they were to be used to tame the nomadic hordes, to cultivate the virgin soil and to drain the swamps.

Only the most simple arrangements had been made when they arrived at their destination. It was late in the fall of the year. During the first winter most of them were lodged with the natives. The cash allowances which had already been reduced on the way were reduced still further. Food was scarce and unpalatable. Disease thinned their ranks. Spring came as a God-sent gift after months of existence in the window-less, vermin-ridden, stifling homes of the Russians. New hope arose in their downcast hearts, only to be crushed again, for they had no plows to break the virgin soil, no tools or lumber to build their homes, and no seed with which to plant their fields.

Yet this was only the beginning of their tribulations. For the first ten years the colonists harvested no crops. Again and again the government was obliged to extend credit, to supply seed which always came late, and to supply flour which for years was a sour and moldy rye product. Meanwhile the debts mounted, for the colonist was not only responsible for his personal indebtedness to the government, which at the end of ten years amounted to 1,000 rubles—an enormous sum for that time—but he was also held liable for the village debts, even for the debts incurred by the villages totally destroyed by the nomads. Moreover, the men were not permitted to leave their village in quest of work without a passport. Work could probably have been found in the cities or in other parts of the empire, but no colonist could go beyond the limits of the immediate settlement. The immigrant had hoped to come to a land of freedom, actually he had gone from liberty to slavery.

The treatment accorded the settlers of the Black Sea colonies was not any better. Here the newcomers lived in grass huts, ingeniously fashioned. A small clearing was made, then the tops of the tallest reeds were brought together over the clearing and securely fastened, and the outside received a coating of clay. An opening in the wall furnished light and ventilation and provided entrance and exit for the occupants. A one-section harrow served the double purpose of cultivating the land in the spring and acting as a bed in the winter. The undulating steppes were barren of trees, hence kindling, not even the famous "buffalo chips" of the American plains, was not in evidence. Reeds from nearby marshes, twisted into knots, served as fuel for the first years, and for a time even the beloved dead had to be placed into coffins woven from reeds. Religious liberty could be exercised in the villages, but the available pastors who were willing to share the pioneer hardships were few and, as the saying goes, far between.

In the Volga colonies the teachers who had migrated with the settlers were forbidden to teach and prohibited from erecting schools. The second generation grew up wholly illiterate. Only after the colonists had emerged from the depths of poverty could they build their own schools, hire teachers and train the young. The school term was of short duration, beginning during the latter part of November and terminating during the last days of February. The "plant" was a room in a private home. The curriculum offered the four R's—reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion—and the teaching medium was the German language.

Gradually the schools were developed and expanded into grade schools,
high schools and seminaries. By 1880 they had made such rapid progress that the government took cognizance and compelled the colonists to add a Russian language teacher.

**Military Service**

In the year 1848 all of Europe was in the throes of revolution. On one front or another Russia, Turkey, Austria, France and Great Britain were contending for superiority. Russia was temporarily crippled but this condition resulted in a number of wholesome reforms under Alexander II. Among these reforms can be listed the re-codification of the laws of the empire, election of provincial officials, liberation of slaves and universal military service. This last point concerned the German colonists.

Heretofore military service had been optional for the colonists. In the event of war they were required only to house and feed the soldiers in the vicinity of the colony, and if horses, wagons or men were conscripted, the colonists received compensation at the end of the conflict. Hence the inauguration of universal military service was a severe blow to the colonists. All other agreements with them and promises to them made by Catherine the Great and Alexander I had long been broken and revoked, but they had staked all on this last one—freedom from military service. It was more than they could bear. Since 1848 they had seen the handwriting on the wall, but had hoped against hope. Therefore, rather than to submit to the flagrant violation of the last trust, the Russia Germans began to emigrate to other countries, especially to the United States.

Subsequently, the colonists were to experience even more bitter injustice. From the beginning they had been a thorn in the flesh of the native Russians. There was an intense jealousy of the stranger who was wringing a prosperous living from the soil, building substantial homes, and keeping his village scrupulously clean, while the idle native drank his tea and vodka and slept on a clay stove. Friction between the two elements became unbearable. The Russian intelligentsia took note of this situation and wrote about it. In some of this writing misinformation was handed on, hatred instilled, propaganda unleashed and even history was falsified. This vicious propaganda reached its peak during and after the World War.

According to the principal agitators, the German colonies had been strategically planned by Germany. It was represented that the idea of settling Russia with German colonists was conceived by Germany and not by Russia. It was pointed out that in this way Germany intended to establish a military route to Asia, then when the time was ripe, the imperial government of Germany could easily seize Eastern Europe and Asia.

Why Russian and English historians should be victimized by such a fantastic idea, when the archives of Russia and Germany could have furnished them with the true record, is a mystery. But the implication is plain—the German colonists had fulfilled their purpose.
They had tamed the nomadic herdes of the Asiatic steppes, they had cultivated the barren fields, drained the swamps, fought Russia's economic battles, planted the orchards and taught the natives the ways of industry and thrift. Now they could return whence they came. They were to go out as shameless beggars and undesirables.

After the last war there were two million Germans in Russia, citizens who had sacrificed their property, their life and their blood for the country of their birth. Now they were disowned as aliens, jailed as revolutionists and sent to concentration camps in Siberia as traitors. Two million Germans, whose blood was more German than that of millions in Germany will ever be, but entirely forgotten and forsaken by Germany! A people whose forefathers had fought the battles of German princes had pioneered for Russia and were now without a country! Heroes they were, unknown and unsung—but deceived on every side.

III. GOVERNMENT OF THE GERMAN COLONIES

The Russia German colonists were not directly governed by the crown, but by a department specially created and known as the Office of Colonial Guardian (Tutel-Kanzlei). The duties imposed upon this office were manifold. It had to furnish plans and sites for appropriate settlements, supply the colonists upon their arrival with all necessities, have homes ready for them, advise the mayors and governors on practical plans for the equal treatment of all, keep an accurate record of all property brought in by the colonists, induce the colonists to settle in sparsely populated regions, and aid them in obtaining machinery, live stock, seed and building materials. Each group had an army officer with them as a guide; he remained with them and later became the chief officer of the colony.

A group of colonies was governed by a territorial commissioner. For the first years a colony would be governed by the accepted unwritten customs of the home land. The territorial office at St. Petersburg was too far removed from the colonies to direct internal affairs in a practical manner, making it necessary to establish sub-offices (Kontor) in nearby larger cities, directly responsible to the administration office at St. Petersburg. This sub-office had the following personnel: one chief justice appointed by the crown, two aides, one secretary, one bookkeeper, one interpreter, one surveyor, and two doctors, the latter all appointed by the chief justice with the consent of the crown. All district commissioners were appointed by and were responsible to the same chief justice. It can be said that this man, the chief justice, was virtually a Tsar in his own right.

All these officers constituted the supreme court for the colonists and from their decisions there was no appeal, save in certain criminal cases and lawsuits involving a colonist and a Russian. These were referred to a federal district court.
The language of the court was Russian. It was an arbitrary body—a child of the times: unjust, tyrannical and open to every form of bribery. It made of the colonists what they later came to be. They protested and the crown listened and investigated. The crown saw the evils of the colonial supreme court (Kontor) and placed the colonists under the direct supervision of the government at St. Petersburg. This arrangement was in force for only a few years when it was reversed and the same unhappy conditions prevailed again.

Once more the colonists protested and asked for self-government. They received what they asked for, but the old system of robbing continued. In one investigation the Russian officer was removed for cause and replaced by a German, apparently an honest man. Nevertheless he, too, soon learned the art of robbery and, becoming a cog in the system, did not hesitate to extract all the money he could from the settlers. A common saying of the time had it that the officers had more silver rubles than the farmers had potatoes.

If the farmers complained against the practices of the officers there was always evidence found against them (the farmers) for some neglect of duty which drained the colonists' purses still more in the form of fines. Some of this evidence was of the following type: if a mud puddle was found in his front yard after a rain, if his young people smoked in the presence of an officer, if the young people were "boisterous" until late hours of the night (late hours meant nine o'clock), in all these cases the "offender" was fined—but the fine really was for the unwise of complaining against his superior officers.

With few exceptions, every officer's administration was marked by brutal force and with no sympathy or feeling for the slaving colonists. This was the situation on the lower Volga.

The Germans of South Russia were originally governed by a committee of three, of whom the chief magistrate had his appointment from the crown. Each village had its own mayor directly responsible to the chief magistrate. Every wedding, birth, death, illness, building program and journey had to be reported to the chief magistrate for recording and every wedding, burial, building program and journey had to receive his permission. Later this arrangement became the model for every colony. However, it came too late. The damage done over past years could not be rectified.

It was difficult to persuade an honest German to accept the post of police magistrate or to induce him to carry a lawsuit to a lawyer. To him the offices of government were synonymous with graft, theft, lying and sharp practice. He would not descend to this level. Moreover, the colonists found peaceable ways in which to adjust their differences when they arose. A court of law in Russia, in their opinion, would only relieve the purse of many hard-earned rubles, but would not alleviate the grief or reconcile the differing parties. To this day Russia Germans generally will bring their grievances into court only when every other method has failed.
IV. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Russia Germans exercised self-government in their own colonies. To be sure, these privileges came not in the first or in the second year after colonization, but gradually, as the Russian government realized that the strangers had grown to "maturity" and in a general way had learned the duties they were expected to perform. So we shall take a typical colony and trace briefly its political, social, and religious life. It must be borne in mind, however, that although one colony was nearly the duplicate of the other, no matter whether the people were Catholic or Protestant, Swiss or German, they all differed somewhat in the traditional customs to which they clung.

A colony consisted of from thirty to fifty families. The head of the family received sixty deszjatine land. In addition, land could be rented from noblemen or from the crown. The village was laid out much on the order of an American village. Houses were built of rock, clay, or wood, and were divided into several rooms, with an upstairs. The floor was of dirt, the roof of cane. In the rear of the lot were found the barn, the granary, the feed lots, haystack and strawstack. A village had several wells, but if water was found at a depth not too great, each family had its own well. This was dug by hand and was lined with rock.

The most prominent place in the colony was occupied by the Church, the school and the court-house, and in the larger colonies by the market square. When a colony became too large, the mother colony would establish a new one on land acquired from the crown or from wealthy noblemen.

A colony was often a melting pot of many German dialects. It is preposterous to believe that when Swabians immigrated, they settled in one colony, Saxons in another, and Prussians in still another. That was true in some colonies, but it was the exception rather than the rule. Take as an illustration the colony of Glueckstal, in the government of Cherson. Glueckstal had 125 families, and of these 67 came from Wurttemberg, 27 from Hungary, 10 from Alsace, 9 from Baden, 3 from the Palatinate, 3 from Saxony, 2 from Hessa, 2 from Prussia, 1 from Galicia, and 1 from Italy.

A family record was kept of each family in the colony, stating how much property they brought with them, how much land they received, whether they were of the Lutheran or of the Catholic faith, how many children in the family, to whom they were married, in what home they lived, and what occupation they followed. These records were placed in the village archives for safe keeping. Most of them were destroyed during the late Russian revolution, save in those instances where a wide-awake village recorder had copies made and sent across the border, or in instances where the colonists lived in a territory ceded to other countries by the Peace Conference in 1919. This latter was true of Bessarabia which is now a part of Roumania.
These records are of great value and through them Russia Germans of the seventh and eighth generation can trace their family history back to the origin. Only a few years ago, I had a transcript made of my family record as it is on file in the archives of Friedenstal, in Bessarabia. I received much more information than I had even hoped for. I learned that my paternal grandfather was born in Konto, Poland, in 1819, and my paternal grandmother the same year in Hanweiler, Germany. They were married in 1842 in Bessarabia and the number of their residence was 70. Today six families reside on the plot of ground originally given to this young couple.

**Discipline.**

Village laws were strictly enforced and the offenders speedily punished. The penalty was measured by the seriousness of the crime committed and consisted of cash fines, suspended fines, jail sentences or corporal punishment. A habitual offender would have the rod or lash applied to the bare seat. A thief would be compelled to walk the streets with a placard hung about his neck on which was written the nature of his offense.

These colonists were no "softies". They did not believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. From the earliest youth of the child, parents, teachers, pastors, and officers deemed it their holy duty to instill into the young respect for law and order. The boys were required not only to touch their hats on meeting an officer or a superior, but they had to doff it completely and use the form of greeting customary for that time of day. "Gruess Gott!" and "Helf Gott!" were always in place. In addressing an older person the honor forms of "Sie" and "Ihr" were in use; parents were always addressed with "Ihr". Children knew better than to question parental authority, and if any child forgot itself, the punishment meted out was most severe. Parents would rather have a dead son than a disobedient one. If any ego was left in a child, it could only live in slavery. "You must" was always the last word of authority.

Cursing and swearing was never tolerated. The village officer would not shirk his duty when some one had to be disciplined for using God's name in vain. The offender would often rather flee the country or his district rather than take his medicine on this score.

Since 1812 the government permitted a colony to have a saloon if the majority of the inhabitants so desired. It was under strict government supervision, and the revenue therefrom flowed into the state treasury. Wine and vodka were the chief liquors dispensed. Vodka was drunk on many occasions: in the morning, when you wished someone well, at baptisms, weddings, or other gatherings of joyous mirth. In later years saloons added beer to their repertoire of drinks. Beginning with 1860 when grape-raising became an important industry, the German population used wine almost exclusively. Often, only too often, it became the home and heart breaker of the colonists. Both men and women imbibed.
Amusements

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy was a saying not forgotten by the otherwise stern and hard-working colonists. They held their folk festivals, just as Germany had held them for hundreds of years. These festivals had once brought joy to the old people in their youth and thus were dear to them and they wished that they might be preserved for their children.

After the hot, long summer months, with their unceasing toil in the fields, when hay had to be made, wheat fields harvested, and the golden grain flailed and threshed and carried from the threshing floor to be stored in bins, there came a lull, a break in the monotony of daily routine. The festival of Kerwa was held, lasting all the way from three days to a week. A favorite ditty said it in this manner:

"Haut isch Kerwa,
Morge isch Kerwa,
B is am Mittwoch Obers,
Wonn ich zu mein Schatzel Kum,
Sag ioch: Guten Obers,
Guten Obers, Lizbeth,
Zeig mir mol dein Hochziehbett,
Hinterm Of in der Ward
Wo der Knecht sei Hose langt."

Before spring work began, the young people celebrated Fasenacht. This came Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. In addition there was Christmas and New Year's Eve. Each holiday had its own type of entertainment; dancing, begging, eating and drinking seemed always in season. Music was furnished with an accordion or mouth organ. As a rule, these holidays were observed most faithfully according to the old European customs in the Catholic colonies. The Protestant people were opposed to their children taking part in many of the activities associated with the festival days. If dancing was indulged in, it was done outside the village limits, in a secluded and secret rendezvous known only to the young people, usually a dirt floor hidden deeply in the woods.

In the fall of the year there were husking bees, and during the winter mill games, story-telling and just gossip.

We must not forget that there were whole colonies in which not one newspaper was read. Sometimes, a newspaper would be subscribed to jointly by several men. That one paper would make the rounds of the entire village and what was read provoked discussion among young and old. Every word of the paper was gospel truth in their estimation, for "there it was, black on white". The more devout people read the Bible, the hymn book, or Miller's devotional works. Later, organizations of every description found their way into the colonies, such as German language societies, choirs, Turn-Vereine, play groups and orchestras. The leader was a gifted layman or the teacher or pastor.
Marriage Customs

Came the time when the young man desired to bring the girl of his choice to the marriage altar and thus establish a home of his own. Engagements as we know them today were not in vogue. The young man had been seen to go with a girl or he had called at her home. More than that was not known of his intentions by others. He could not speak to his father of so delicate a matter, so he confided in his mother. She, in turn, would take the message to the head of the house and await his reactions. If they were favorable, the father would find a match-maker, usually a relative, and he would arrange to see the future parents-in-law and the bride. In the event the parents had no objections, the blossoming Rebecca was called in and the matter laid before her. As soon as she consented, money was given to bind the contract, and the arrangements were made for the wedding. The banns were published in the Church on the three Sundays preceding the ceremony. Always, if at all possible, the wedding took place in the Church. This was followed by a celebration lasting from one to three days to which relatives from far and near had been invited.

Invitations were extended personally by either the bride and groom or by his best man and the bride's maid. With a cane in their hand to which a ribbon had been tied they would go from house to house reciting:

"Bauer und Bauerin lassen euch laden
Zu Schinken und Braten, zu Schnaps und Wein,
Morgen früh sollt ihr im Hochzeitshaus sein."

The invitation included the whole household. The housefather would accept the invitation by tying a ribbon onto the cane. The bride was either rich, middle class or poor. She married young as a rule, for she knew at the age of twenty she was considered an old maid. Her parents would share the wedding expenses with those of the groom. For a middle class wedding the requirements were: one hundred pails of wine, one pail of whiskey, ten pud flour, one pud sugar, and one beef. A prosperous farmer would give his daughter a wedding dowry of 190 rubles in cash, one wedding dress, seven day dresses, four shawls, eight Sunday aprons, one jacket, one pair Sunday stockings, three shirts, one pair of shoes, one pair of boots, another pair of house shoes, every-day clothes, and a prayer book.

Inter-marriages with other nationals were not only frowned upon, they were most definitely not tolerated. If son or daughter so far forgot this principle as to have an affair with a Russian that son or daughter was promptly ostracized by the family and the relatives. An unwritten law that no German enter into marriage union with others was well heeded. When a boy committed suicide because his parents would not give their consent to his marriage to a Russian girl, the father stoically remarked: "It is better so." Rarely did it happen that a boy would marry out of his class. The rich would marry the rich, and the poor the poor. Large families were the rule in the colonies.
Daily Life in the Colonies

The personal appearance of the Russia German was tidy and neat. He was clean-shaven until the time when military service became compulsory. From that time on it became customary to have a mustache or a beard. The clothes even when not in style, were always clean. Honesty was proverbial, money was loaned on verbal agreement; notes, mortgages and liens were unknown. The colonist was ever obedient to the government, although often he did not understand what it was all about. On the Lord's Day he appeared in his Sunday clothes. He smoked or used snuff, the patriarch smoked his pipe. Our modern girls have re-introduced what the grandmothers in the colonies did a hundred years ago. They raised their own tobacco and smoked and snuffed it.

The colonists were farmers, they were compelled to farm. A great part of the food for the Russian empire was produced by the German tiller of the soil. However, he practiced diversified farming and raised horses, goats, sheep, hogs, cattle, and poultry. The soil produced wheat, oats, corn, barley, millet, flax and wine; the orchards yielded garden truck, honey, wax and fruit.

Conservative to the core, the colonist would not trust the income from his produce to speculators or to banks. He would rather lend this money to his neighbor, buy more land with it, or keep it in his home in a strong box. Despite all handicaps, the colonist rose rapidly in influence and in material possessions. He was progressive, but he practiced it with caution. Never in the forefront, nevertheless anxious to try something new in order to increase his holdings, he pioneered in a number of ways. He experimented with cooperative fire insurance, orphan treasuries, real estate, building material, markets, stores, creameries, oil, and flour mills and a common granary. Thus the suspected German, once deeply indebted to the Russian government, had within the span of a hundred years become the prosperous Kulak.

Health

Among the original settlers there were few pharmacists and doctors. There were some men with a good knowledge of human ailments, and not a few midwives. Since all were tillers of the soil, however, they could not devote much time to the sick. Nearly one hundred years after the first colony was established did the government finally take sufficient interest in the health of the new citizens to appoint physicians.

The doctor received a salary from the government and the medicine he used was also furnished gratis. Still when the doctor's services were required he collected another fee. The colonists resented this. The illiterate midwives were also replaced by women trained in this profession by the government. The fee for a confinement case was ten rubles, exorbitant in the judgment of the old Germans. So they called on the village grandmother who charged only five rubles and washed the diapers besides. Itinerant doctors of a sort would make the rounds of the colonies, sell books, pass on information, give prescriptions and instruct in the proper mixtures of roots, powders and flowers for various ailments, for the simple fee of a night's lodging and a meal.
It must be remembered that the pioneer was a hardy individual who would rarely seek a doctor's advice; abrasions and scratches received in the field would receive a fresh application of earth and would be forgotten. But it must also be borne in mind that in the days before the people became acclimated in Russia hundreds of children died. Sometimes an epidemic of contagious disease would snatch away the entire child population of a village before it had run its course. The colonists not only had no confidence in a doctor, but they were also very superstitious and, it must be said, very miserly. They trusted in God, knew nothing about germs, suspected the doctor, and consoled themselves with the fact that no doctor can hinder what God has ordained. (To this day there are some Russia German homes where the chief reliance in illness is placed on home remedies and on grandmother. In Russia, however, the old quack has long been displaced by modern hospitals, doctors and nurses.)

**Education**

The first thing to occupy the mind of the settler, after he had established his home and found ways and means of sustenance, was the school. A commodious dwelling served as a school house. The term was only of a few months duration. A capable farmer would serve as teacher. Reading, writing, arithmetic, dictation, geography, the catechism, Bible history and hymns made up the course of study. It was also obligatory for all children under eighteen years of age to attend Bible classes every Sunday afternoon at the Church.

Discipline was always severe. If the father learned that his child had been spanked in school that child would most surely receive another spanking at home. Such were the simple and inadequate beginnings of the colonists in education.

However, as the people prospered, each village erected its own school plant, a home for the teacher, a home for the pastor and a Church. The compensation was quite adequate. For a clearer picture of educational progress let me state it thus: In 1826 the territory of Bessarabia had 14 pastors, 235 teachers and pastors' assistants. Each colony possessed a common graded school. In addition, the territory owned a high school for boys at Tarutin with a staff of thirteen teachers, a high school for girls with a faculty of fifteen teachers, and the Werner seminary at Sarata with ten instructors. These figures exclude the more sparsely settled region of Dobruscha and the German Baptist colonies.

More and more as the colonists became independent, outside help was unnecessary. The children of the immigrant returned from school to take their places in all walks of life. Each farmer labored and prospered in his own home, isolated from the rest of the world, and clinging tenaciously to the heritage of the fathers as to that which was tried and proven. Thousands were born and died again who had never travelled beyond the borders of their own fields and village.

This is the individual who has come to the United States and whom we know as the Russia German.
V. SOME TRAITS OF THE RUSSIA GERMAN

How may we best approach the Russian German in order to understand his mind and his soul? First of all, I wish to express my profound admiration for this man who for nearly 200 years was a stranger in a strange land, a man who had severed all connections with his fatherland and who was prohibited from returning home, a man who was very poor in things material. I admire him because, although literally bound in chains of steel, he arose by sheer will power, perseverance and patience to influence, power and wealth against titanic odds. He retained an unswerving tradition and custom, and purity of race and blood. Forgotten and despised by his old fatherland, cursed and defamed by his own blood when he travelled through Germany on his way to America, he was yet more German than the German. He adored everything made in Germany and worshipped at the shrines of their wisdom in spite of all rebukes. What of it? Let the older brother who stayed at home rebuke this stranger in a far country. Nevertheless, the Russian German has a legitimate right to be proud of his record and achievements. He kept the faith, he remained loyal to the heritage he received from the fathers. A word of recognition and encouragement from this angle is not amiss. Therefore, I express my sincere admiration of him.

The Forgotten Man

For his pioneering work in Russia the colonist received no word of praise, no public or private recognition. No lord or prince remembered him as he stood upon the steppes behind the scythe or plow, clad in naked poverty. No officer remembered him in his clay hut or wept a tear over his home-made coffin. It was not his lot to be applauded but to labor. He was the forgotten man of the last century. The native Russian hated him bitterly from the beginning. The government granted him no special favors.

When he landed on our shores, America appointed no committee to welcome him. If he found a home in the city he was predestined for work which was beyond the dignity of "smart Yankees". The adjectives employed to describe him on the plains are too uncouth for polished language. Pastors spoke of their faithfulness in church attendance, frowned on their pietistic leanings and feared to give them due praise lest they become a proud and ungovernable race. In the quiet of their studies pastors sighed over the imagined wilfulness of their parishioners, poured out their souls in complaint to their brethren at conference meetings and prayed for guidance in their work. And yet there was confusion and every evil work. Words cannot tell the hardships it wrought of the trusting souls of these Russia Germans, once more in a strange land. Here were German pastors who wished a pious, God-fearing flock, and yet they could not understand the deep longings of these simple newcomers. Souls became confused, joyless and cold under such shepherding. It is not strange, then, under the circumstances that many of these people followed the voice of that shepherd who according to their standards at least tried to understand them. Thus they were victimized in America by many strange and, to them, unfamiliar cults and sects.
A Russia German resents the appellation "Russian". Rightly so. He resided in Russia, to be sure, but apart of his favorite dish—"Borsch", the delectable drink—"vodka", and the comfortable footwear—"Galoschen", he declined to adopt Russian methods, customs and ideas. He isolated himself from his environment and instead cultivated and preserved the 17th and 18th century German usage. Maybe he is right when he questions whether the German nationals gained anything worth gaining by adopting the styles of Paris and the court etiquette of decadent and voluptuous centers. Conformity is never a safe standard by which to judge the moral and cultural values of a people. The Russia German clung with every fibre of his being to the conservative ways of his fathers. The blood coursing in his veins was rarely mixed, indeed were mixed marriages. If you would subject him to a blood test, he would rate a higher percentage of "Aryan" strain than the rulers and princes of Germany! The Russia German is a German. To understand him and to gain his confidence you must approach him with this in mind.

The Hunger for Land

Russia Germans are social "materialists". He went to Russia on the promise of free land. He came to America in search of land. His conception of roles, honor, prestige and wealth is based on large land holdings. The Russian government compelled him, against his will, to till the soil and trained him in the thoughts of materialism. Engineers, miners, doctors, artisans who came to Russia to practice their profession were forced to put their hands to the plow. "How much land have you?", he inquired of his neighbor. Education, the law, arts and sciences may be valuable and necessary assets, but to the Russia German land was the only tangible value.

The size of the family would determine his hunger for land. Every son, when he became of age, had to have his own home and farm. If there was a son who was physically unfit for the strenuous labor required of a farmer, he was schooled for a position in which his defects would not handicap him. But a "white-collar" man was a pitiable creature because he was unable to dig, to spade and to plow. If you would tickle the vanity of the Russia German let him tell you in the privacy of his own home about his land. His eyes sparkle and his heart overflows as he tells you of his land, his crops, his livestock and his assets. Completely he will bare his "materialistic" soul. He fairly cleaves to the land, he cannot separate himself from it. Before he dies he must pass it on to his children, all of it, tax-free, debt-free. He could not bequeath it to his Church, to his daughters or to his sons who are childless—some they will get to be sure—but the large holdings will go to the boys with the large family, to the heirs with the same name. An approach to the understanding of the Russia German is here.

The New Freedom

At a recent Church convention I heard an officer remark, "I am surprised that the Russia German delegates take such an active part in the discussions."
Many pastors who serve a Russia German constituency have made the experience that it is difficult to get an expression of opinion from them. This is especially true of the first and second generation. They would not talk. Questions of Church policy were decided behind the Church or in the privacy of their own homes. To "crack down" on them only aggravated matters. In stolid silence they could take a severe rebuke. But the rebuke would lead nowhere. There is a reason for this.

For more than a century these people were ruled by brutal force. If there was any ego within them it was crushed, forced down into oblivion. The parent in the home said, "You must!"; the village mayor demanded, "You must!"; the district magistrate enforced his authority with a "You must!"; the government spoke its "You must!" "You must!" was the first and last word of authority from which there was no appeal. Theirs was not to reason why, theirs but to do and die. To those in authority this was a very convenient form of government, but it killed every spark of initiative. Under the flag of the free and the brave this ego arose from the dead. It is our duty to train its re-awakening with forbearance and care, otherwise the pendulum will swing to the other extremes in obedience to neither government or Church.

So much damage has already been done to the first and second generations of Russia Germans in this respect here in America that it can no more be righted in this world. Again and again some have tried to rule them with an iron fist only to find that such methods have no place in democratic America, no, not among Russia Germans. The shrine of their soul has been violated to the breaking point. Approaching the Russia German with this in mind will lead to helpful and interesting understanding.

The Russia German as a Churchman

The Russia German has been trained to hold his superiors in respect and to accord them every courtesy. An imposing, forceful, fearless and honest individual is his ideal. A devout grandparent, a faithful and capable pastor, a fearless official is greatly admired and his memory held sacred long after he has departed this life or passed on to other communities. A pastor or teacher who breaks down this wall of respect and makes himself common with them will soon enough learn to his regret: "Wer sich unter die Kleie mischt, den fressen die Seene auf". The pastor who wishes to work successfully among these people should know that their ideal of a pastor is someone not of the common herd, one standing out and above them, tending to his own affairs, a fluent and forceful speaker. A pastor does well not to lower this standard, but to approach the people with courtesy and tact, unruffled, sure of his position, not overbearing, a man among men.

The Russia German is a Churchman. The Church was the center of his life in Russia. His home had scarcely emerged from the grass-hut stage when the Church was established as a necessity. The Lord's Day was a holy day. On Saturday evening the Sunday clothes were laid out, the body bathed, the face shaved, and then one could sleep an hour longer in the morning. Mother and sister put the home into holiday dress and even prepared a special meal for the holiday dinner. Come Sunday morning and an invitation from the bell in the steeple for all to attend and worship. If the pastor could not be present,
either the school teacher or a lay reader would read the sermon. The Church was used for Sunday afternoon instruction of the young, and it was used for baptisms, marriages and funerals. An efficient Church council maintained order and decorum. Mothers and their daughters sat to the left, men and boys to the right.

As a rule, a pastor's call was for life. He was a lord in his domain, lived in his own home surrounded by servants, enjoyed a substantial salary in addition to the rentals from the parish land and the special honorariums connected with his office. In the parish there might be a group of men of sectarian leanings. They were permitted to hold their meetings in private homes unmolested. Church meetings of the "evangelistic" type were conducted only when the pastor was of the same mind. Reformed and Lutheran people were served by the same pastor and communed at the same altar. The confessions were not so sharply divided. If the Lutherans were in the majority, their viewpoint would be the dominating one; in the neighboring village the Reformed people might be in the lead.

Even today, in his American setting, we find the Russia German a faithful attendant at Church service, a good singer, a good listener, entering wholeheartedly into the spirit of the service, but like in many other customs he would love to hold fast to delivered liturgical usage. Many, many of them were driven from their Church because a new pastor could not or would not use the form of worship to which they were accustomed. In general, it might be said that he should partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion more frequently. That he does not is, no doubt, grounded in the fact that unworthiness was stressed more by his teachers in Russia than the blessing to be gained.

Then, too, he would like to worship in the German language. To him the Lutheran Church is a German institution. His fathers managed to keep it so for over a century under severe pressure. Shall he show himself weaker than his forebears and break with the traditions of his fathers? His American neighbors have given him the impression that to be an "American" means to be a churchless and godless fellow, and he fears that once his Church becomes "Americanized" it will pass out of useful existence.

For his children he desires a thorough course of religious instruction. It is indeed strange that the Russia German who was so deeply convinced of the value of the parochial school did not succeed in establishing it in America. I believe that in some Russia German settlements the people could still be induced to restore it. The older people have not yet been won over to the merits of the American public school; they are still Church-school minded. Bring the conversation to the subject of religious training and you will always find an open mind.
Illustrating Their "Gemuet": Language and Humor

The Russia German has a mind and psychology all his own. His "Gemuet" is different. His understanding of words, stories, sermons and jokes is markedly at variance with the point of view of the American or the native Western European. A Russia German will understand a Russia German and should be more successful in working with him for he has the same mental make-up. To illustrate my point, consider how uniquely understood and loved by the Russia Germans is such literature as Brestberger's sermons, Hiller's Andachtsbuch, Starche's Gebetbuch, together with a large number of their favorite hymns.

Then listen to these words: Hutsch (colt), Strudel (rolls), Hammel (calf), Guak (loch), Bastan (watermelon patch), Wicker (bull), Kapur (dead), Klabbott (trouble), Kiefer Kerne (sunflower), Vich Harmon (cattle pen), Schabhla (beans), Grumblere (potatoes), Boggerla (turkey poult), Schines (dead animal), Gruenes (garden truck). Who but a Russia German could put all the meaning into these words that they imply?

The same holds true of their jokes. We cannot see anything funny, and they "die laughing". Let me give you a few examples:

"A farmer was one day driving through a neighboring village on his way to the forest, and he lost a part of his lunch—a home-made head cheese. Later some natives saw it lying in the street and ran over to view it closely. They were afraid to touch it, considering it a dangerous animal unknown to them. While some stood guard others ran to inform the village police of the discovery. The mayor, hearing of the matter, quickly called a meeting of the village elders to consider ways and means for disposing of the monster. It was decided to despatch a squad of sharpshooters to the scene. The meeting was adjourned and the entire populace marched in a body to the street in question. Surrounding the head cheese the officer gave the signal to fire. At his command the shots rang out and the head cheese flew into all directions. Officially the "animal" was declared to be dead. Thereupon everybody went home happy. And for many weeks following the topic of conversation was still the head cheese which was killed before it could reproduce itself and fill the whole community with its descendants."

"There was a dearth of food for the livestock. The problem became acute. Fields were bare, herds had been greatly reduced, and still the drought continued. The colony owned a bull cooperatively and what to do with it under existing conditions became a burning question. Came a day when the question had to be settled in a village meeting expressly called for this purpose. Somebody hit upon the happy idea, that since grass was still growing on the Church roof it was the duty of the people to lift the bull to the roof and let him graze off the grass thereon. Unanimously the motion carried, and the whole congregation brought the bull to the Church. Several men climbed to the roof with ropes. The lower ends of the rope were fastened to the bull, one about his neck and the other about his body. The mayor shouted commands and the bull was lifted skyward. "See!" yelled a member of the crowd, "how anxious he is to eat the grass, he is already sticking his tongue out". At last he was on the roof, but he refused to stand on his legs. And he refused to eat. The men on the roof had to call
to the mayor for advice. His order was shouted back promptly, "Set him on his legs, shake his legs, if they are limber he is dead." And back came the dead bull into the street again. However, this was cooperative property. The mayor had to make the most of it. So it was decided to skin the animal and have a rug made of his hide for the mayor's office in the court house."

Stories of this sort circulate among the Russia Germans by the hundreds in all kinds of variations. They are loved and heard over and over again. Who but a Russia German finds these tales interesting or funny? It is my contention that these people have a mind all their own. It is a happy, care-free and humorous mind, and you must know it if you would understand the Russia German.

The Russia Germans created their own language. I say this deliberately. Originally, they spoke the German dialect current in the province of their origin in Germany. Some were of pure Swabian tongue, others spoke Low German of one type or other, and still others spoke the High German of the time. People of all these differing tongues settled in one colony. In time these tongues were fused into one. New words came into use, new meaning was put into old words, words were combined and adapted, and some became obsolete. The result was the language of the Russia German. To a modern language student this result may seem like a concoction of German, Russian, Turkish and Roumanian—a kind of horror language. It is not a "horror language", but rather a medium of elegance and beauty, full and expressive and adequate. It may lack the polish and precision of the literary language of Germany—but it is the living language of several millions of people.

Listen to the soft, rolling, musical tongue of the man from Sarata. Give ear to the slow, sure-rounded ending of every word uttered at Rohrbach. Let the broad, accented words of the colonist from Arcis fall upon your ears. In each case it sounds like a greeting from home—different from anything you have heard before.

Let me give you a few samples of words from their vocabulary: Krebsla, Kratila, Wackla, Netzler, Goeckler, Kaladetz, Schubas, Rabusa, Lafka, Atlas, Ostrak, Bataloanna, Bobschei, Schmajets, Quadulerle, Viech, Gatsche. To be sure, some of the words are of Russian or Turkish origin, but is borrowing not the way of language-building among all peoples?

Their Proverbs. (4)

When we study the proverbs current among them, we are tempted to say that no language is so rich in pithy sayings as the Russia German. In these

(4) A selection of these proverbs is given in the Appendix to this paper.
proverbs more than in anything else we find presented the key to the Russia German soul. Each proverb is a sermon in itself.

The Russia German had little time or opportunity to read and to study, and no prompting to write lengthy treatises. Time was money. He made his language to conform to his needs. He wanted short, clear-cut sentences, with much substance in them. As he walked behind his plow, he wanted something that he could hold and ponder and study. Beautiful, flowery and long dissertations are for the man of letters, not for him. Incidentally, this may be the reason why many fine articles in the official Church journals remain unread by him, and why some of the sermons that to us seem greatest make little impression. He must be approached in terms of his own language level. Then he will lead a willing ear and an alert mind. Then he will understand and be lifted up.

The Man of Emotions

Much has been said about the emotionalism of the Russia German. Apparently this characteristic strikes the German national with greater force than does any other nationality. I have yet to hear an American refer to the Russia German as emotional. German pastors, as far as I know, were the first to make this observation.

The truth is that the Russia German is an emotional individual. Why should he not be? For centuries he and his children were trodden in the winepresses of the world’s cruelty. At home there was no room for him. Out of him princes made a noble experiment. As we have seen, instead of the better lot he had hoped for, he found servitude, raw pioneer work, drought, disease, war and famine in Russia. Sorrow and tears were his daily bread. Tribulation is woven deeply into every fibre of his being.

It is when you touch upon the experiences of his past sorrows that he becomes filled with emotion. It would be strange if the contrary were true. It would be strange of any people under similar conditions. Let me illustrate. Here is an indigent Church janitor. In his native colony he received 50 rubles annual salary. On this income he reared a large family. He heard of greater opportunities in Siberia, so he emigrated to Omak only to find himself out of the frying pan and into the fire. Enough money was finally saved to return home once more. Then the relatives in the United States beckoned and he sold his story. Today, at a ripe old age, living with his children in comfortable circumstances, he looks back upon the long years of homesickness, back-breaking labor and pilgrimages, and he confesses that God has been very gracious and kind to him. Why should not his heart beat faster and his eyes become filled with tears, as he gives thanks to God for these unnumbered blessings?

All Russia Germans have experienced similar protection and guidance. Let them become emotional, let them weep when they give a daughter in marriage, or when they bury their beloved dead. Let them weep when a pastor must take leave of the congregation, for it means that that pastor has played upon the strongest strings of their hearts. It means that the pastor has understood
and has stirred their souls, and they have become attached to him as to their very own. It is more divine if they weep for sorrow rather than for joy at your going. Sometimes, indeed, this emotion manifests itself in not too complimentary a fashion at the leaving of a pastor, teacher, or official.

The Man of Work

The Russian German made his greatest contribution to society in the form of manual labor. By profession he is a tiller of the soil, a farmer, a producer of food. It fell to his lot to receive land in the semi-arid regions of Russia, Siberia, the Americas and Canada. He built a granary out of the steppes and the prairies. He did not shout that fact to the world. A real farmer lives too close to the ground and too near to God to become a braggart. He stays humble. The dust of the earth and the smell of new-mown hay does not blur his vision.

What the National Geographic Magazine, in its August 1937 issue, has to say about the Russian German beet farmers is true of all their farming. Not only the State of Nebraska, but every state in the union in which these people have settled can write a very creditable chapter of their efficiency. They will move into a territory which other nationals have abandoned and will conquer it through thrift, industry, and sheer love of work. "Arbeit, komm her, ich friess dich satt" (5) has become proverbial with them.

Work keeps them and their children out of mischief. A very small percentage of them has contact with the courts of law or is found in the country's prisons. Morally, they rate with the best. They are too busy in the ways of soliciting prosperity to be good students in the devil's workshop.

Russia Germans will be found in other professions than farming. Some are merchants, millers, teachers, bankers, mechanics, lawyers and clergymen, but by far the largest number of them have stuck to the old "last". One who has a genuine interest in the farm can readily approach them along this line.

The Home

Russia Germans have the reputation of being blessed with all the house plagues that were once visited upon Egypt in the days of Moses. Nothing is farther from the truth. Lice, Bugs, cockroaches, and filth are no friends of theirs. I will, however, concede that no people in the world have destroyed more of these pests than the Russian Germans. As renters, or as buyers of homes from others who blandly sang their own praises they unknowingly inherited millions of bugs from other nationals. After sleeping for the first time in

(5) "Come, work, I shall devour you."

such a newly-acquired home and finding in infested with vermin, mother and sisters wept bitter tears, tears because these pests were thrown in free in a land deal, and tears because they knew the ingenuity and labor that would be required to get rid of these hated pests.

Do not speak of Russia Germans as filthy, for you will only reveal flagrant ignorance and stupidity. Their homes are as clean and refined and hospitable as any homes on this side of Kingdom Come.

As a rule, the Russia Germans have large families. Their children are dearer to them than anything else in the world. Gain the confidence of the child and you have won the heart of the parent. Since he is a very emotional individual, you would expect him to lavish caresses and affection on his offspring, yet, strangely, this is rarely the case. Parents will kiss the baby and remember it with little gifts of love on special days. Seldom will you find a Russia German home, however, where the children have an over-supply of books and playthings. That is looked upon as the privilege of the rich. Training and discipline begin early. In nearly every home you will find a leather strap, conspicuously displayed. Its significance is obvious. When a child has become self-conscious of his surroundings it is not kissed or embraced any more. Parents will not tell the child in words, "I love you." That is for the babies and not for grownups. Some mothers will forget not to clean and feed the baby in full view of all present, but this is not the general rule. Instead of generalizing the one case you may have observed, it would be fairer to remember the hundreds of instances when the mother was careful and modest in the care of the baby.

Early the child is off to school with the admonition ringing in his ears, "If you are spanked in school, you will receive another spanking at home." This class of parent always puts more credence in what the teacher or neighbor says about the conduct of the child than what the child says about himself. The mother desires to raise her daughter to be chaste, womanly, efficient, and clean. The son should be reared in the best of tradition, honest, upright, and conscientious. The parents do not wish that he should spend his time on games, checkers, and cards, but rather that he sing, play an instrument, read or learn the trade efficiently for which he is qualifying himself. When the time comes for the son to marry, father and mother hope that he will find a girl of his own class and nationality. A girl of another nationality is to most parents a calamity. However, if she is willing to work and willing to learn the German language, she will yet be adopted into the family. The father will outfit the son or daughter completely with whatever they need to begin a new home, when they are ready to establish it.

Need we comment on the magnanimous hospitality of the Russia Germans. To their credit let it be said that even the poorest is willing to share his bread and his home with you. His home is generally one of the simplest type; he remembers when he was glad to have a roof over his head. With better years, the sod shanty gave way to modern establishments. Compared with the homes of his fathers, he is blessed with conveniences and luxuries beyond his wildest dreams.
If the pastor calls, even during the busiest season, there is always time to exchange a word with him. On Sundays guests from far and near are entertained and dined. It would offend the good housewife if one should leave before partaking of the evening meal. How often in years gone by have the children seen the floor covered with strangers when no other sleeping space could be found and the barn was filled with animals of the guests eating from the same hay as the horse of the host. Beggars, peddlers and wanderers are never sent away without a gift, a meal, or a drink of water. Mother had impressed upon the children, "Never send a beggar away without giving him something, lest haply you may have failed to entertain an angel." You are welcomed to the table. The frugal housewife may not be prepared to fill the board with delicacies, but there is plenty of good, clean, and nourishing food. Those Russian Germans who fail in this trait of hospitality are by far in the minority. Be grateful for the welcome they extend and you will always have a standing invitation to come again when you come their way.

A Man Of Character

The German in Russia was as honest as the day is long. His parents and teachers were ignorant of the methods prevalent in the world of education, but they knew a few age-old principles. These they inculcated into the minds of the young. One of these principles was honesty. A man was to be as good as his word.

In business dealings mortgages, notes, and liens were not executed. If the buyer was not to be trusted, there was no transaction. He bought when he could make payment in cash. To illustrate this trait of honesty, the following anecdote may suffice. A man once bought a horse and agreed on time payments. He had heard that in instances of this sort, the buyer was supposed to give a note. So he gave his note to the seller. The seller returned the note to him with the remark, "You have the horse, you may as well have the note also." Later the man came to pay, bringing the note with him. "Now," he said as he paid the money, "you have the money and you may as well have the note also." For the Russian German it was a disgrace to ask for credit. Debts were a continual worry. When he bought he could bargain and drive it sharply, but the price he agreed to pay was paid. If a mistake was made in the transaction in his favor he returned what he was not entitled to, often going far out of his way to do so.

He gave honest labor, time, and goods. Merchants and employers were eager to get his trade. He was under the impression that in America all men were honest. What a body-blow was delivered to his faithful and child-like soul when neighbor, banker and realtor deceived him and defrauded him out of his hard-earned dollar. Under the circumstances we would expect him to turn thief also. Some did; they paid dearly for their education in the university of life. They learned fast. They became the children of the times.
Of the second and third generation many are as shrewd in the ways of the world as the world that educated them. But by far the greatest majority of them still abide by the policy that honesty still pays. Unforgettable are the lessons instilled by parents and teachers: "Ungerecht Gut gedeiht selton gut. Ein ehrlicher Groschen richtet mehr aus als 99 Ungerechte."

A Russia German is rarely found in public office in America. He would love to be somebody, and in many cases he is fully competent to hold public office. Many are found on school boards, in county offices, and occasionally in state offices, but beyond this he seems to be unable to climb. There are good reasons for this situation. In the first place, he has been "under dog" so long that he has lost confidence in himself. He cannot put on a bold front and wax oratorical over trifles. If somebody tells him that he is an ignorant and incapable "Russian", he is whipped. The dust of the fields is on his shoes. He knows this and cannot shake it off. Then in the second place, in the old country public office, in his mind, was synonymous with bribery and corruption. A bribe always accomplished miracles. He himself paid many bribes, although the practice was an abomination to the Germans. He feared that the same condition was true in American offices, and so he steered away from personal candidacy. He just did not have the time to learn the language or to attend school. He did not come to America for that purpose; he came here to make money with which to buy land. Let those run for office who are qualified to hold it. He is satisfied, if left alone. He will go with the crowd and vote for the man who can promise him most, and when that is done he returns to the farm again to feed the hogs and to grease the plow.

Thus we conclude this study. Several methods of an approach to an understanding of the Russia Germans have been suggested. These people deserve closer and more sympathetic study. They are as anxious to know us as we should be eager to know them. They are patient individuals, and if we are patient with them, we shall succeed in exploring their souls.
APPENDIX

A. THE NAME—RUSSIA GERMANS.

It will be noted that in this paper the designation, "Russia Germans" is consistently used. We believe that designation to be the most correct. It is careless usage of terms to refer to these people as "Russians" or to use any term that would imply racial identity with the native peoples of Russia.

In the interests of accuracy we need to remember that the colonists are Germans racially, and that they struggled against odds to keep that blood-relationship with the Germans of Western Europe unaffected by their domicile in Russia.

They refer to themselves as "Russland Deutsche" and "Deutsche Russlandler." In both cases the term "Russia" denotes the territory in which they resided, never racial or blood relationship.

B. SOME STATISTICS

In his studies of the Russia Germans, D. Stumpp estimates the 1938 distribution of these people as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Land holdings are estimated by Stumpp as follows:

RUSSIA:

- Volga colonies 1914: 2,500,000 deszhatine
- Black Sea colonies 1914: 4,209,280 deszhatine

UNITED STATES:

- 1848: 640 acres
- 1938: 2,000,000 acres
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D. SOME PROVERBS.

Spitzen schmissen.
Die Kirche ist kei Grot, sie hopft nit fort.
Reisz der Grot Hor raus, wenn sie keine hat.
Ueberall ists gut, daheim am besten.
Du bist das fuenfte Rad am Wagen.
Du siebstaugiger Deufel.
Fang die Katz und setz sie vor die Loocher.
Jedem Kuppler ein Patz Schuh, und dann dem Teufel dazu.
Tanz er nit, dann guckt er zu, verreisst kei Struempf noch Schuh.
Ein Wolf verliert die Hor, aber nit die Nauba.
Zugut ist ein Stueck Liederlichkeit.
In der Nacht sind alle Katzen schwarz.
Wer's Guech hat, fuehrt die Braut heim.
Freund hin und Freund her, aber Freund bleib mir von meinem Kirschenbaum.
Wo nichts ist hat der Kaiser das Recht verloren.
Wenn der Bettler aufs Rosz kommt, reitet er schaerfer denn der Edelmann.
Mit dem ist nicht gut Kirschen essen, der spuckt einem die Steine ins Gesicht.
Nichts haben ist ein ruhiges Leben.
Bettelsteine haben es gut, es bricht ihnen kein Ohrs kein Horn, und friest ihnen auch kein Maus kein Korn, Bettelsteine haben es gut.
Man kann den Ochsen mir zum Wasser führen, saufen muss er selbst.
Wer den Kopf gewaschen haben will, der muss selber dabei sein.
Wenn auf die Große ankaeme, dann könnt man mit den Hieben auch Hasen fangen.
Der hat lieber einen leeren Darm als einen muden Arm.
Der schlägt ja rein wie der Blinde in den Käse.
Lieber eine Laus im Kraut wie gar kein Fleisch.
Der pfeift aus dem letzten Loch.
Gekauft und gemessen, ist bald gefressen.
Wenn der Hund gewohnt ist hinter dem Wagen nachspringen, dann springt er auch nichts raus nehmen.
Wenn der Bauer nichts kriegt, und der Jude nicht betrügt, dann haben beide nichts.
Schulden sind keine Hasen, die laufen nicht fort.
Der wurde ein Auge dran geben, wenn der andere eins verlieren wuerde.
Was metz es mich, wenn dissen der Teufel holt, und ich muss den Fuhrlohn bezahlen.
Der hat den Laufpass bekommen.
Hier gibts kein Maulspitzen, hier muss gepfiffen werden.
Es gibt kein Fleisch ohne Knochen.
Lügen ist leichter als Garben dreschen.
Wo der Teufel nichts mehr ausrichtet, da schickt er eine alte Frau hin.
Ein Esel nennt den anderen Langschn.
Wenn es auf den Muh-hirten ankaeme, dann gabe es keine Kuhne mehr.
Der hat ihm den Nabel geheilt.
Mit der Gabel essen ist eine Ehr, aber mit der Hand kriegt man mehr.
Der verdreht die Augen wie ein geschossener Stier.
Tritt den Hund nicht auf den Schwanz, er beisst dich.
Mehl warm und Ofen warm macht den reichsten Bauer arm.
Morgenstund hat Geld im Mund, aber auch Blei im Rücken.
Einem geschenkten Gaul guckt man nicht ins Maul.
Viel Rutschen macht bloede Hosen.
Wer sich nicht nach der Decke streckt, dem bleiben die Füße unbedeckt.
Der ist nicht so krumm wie er klappt.
Weib' sterben macht dem Bauer kein Verderben, aber Pferde verrecken macht ihm Schrecken.
Bei dem ist Schmalhans Machermeister.
Ein Handwerk hat einen goldenen Boden, wenns nicht regnet dann trollost.
Wem der Mantel passt, der ziehe ihn an.
Wer kein Knoblauch gefressen hat, der stinkt nicht.
Einerlei in welchem Finger du dich schneidest, es blutet und schmerzt.
Wer Hunger faengt die Katze keine Mäuse, sondern weil es ihre Natur ist.
Wenn man den Hund auf die Jagd tragen muss, faengt er keine Hasen.

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