HISTORICAL FATES OF THE GERMANS OF THE BLACK SEA REGION.

As a result of the Russian victories in a number of Russian-Turkish wars (1676-1791) vast territories of the Northern Black sea region and the Crimea formed a part of Russia. New territorial accessions of Russia in the XVIII century had changed the migratory and demographic settings of the country. An intensive settlement of the southern lands had begun. At the same time two tendencies appeared: free public colonization and resettlement movement stimulated and controlled by the government. The public and governmental colonizations were intertwined and co-existed simultaneously. Each of them had its own aims and solved its own problems.

Foreign colonists gained access to the new possessions of the Russian Empire because of the special governmental measures, which were taken in 1751. Military and strategic reasons were the main reasons for doing so: it had been planned to defend the boarder of a settled regions of Ruthenia and Sloboda Ukraine with the help of foreign settlers. The practice of creating paramilitary settlements did not prove its value in the long run.

An important period of resettlement policy of the Russian government had begun in 1760s, when agricultural development of the new lands came to the foreground instead of military and strategic planning. Catherine II’s Manifesto of December 4, 1762, invited «all the willing foreigners» to move to Russia. It opened a completely new period of the German resettlement movement. Necessity of activation of the resettlement movement, finding ways of increasing its effectiveness enforced the country to refer to international experience: by Catherine’s Manifesto of June 22, 1763 a complex of benefits for the foreign settlers was established and commitments of the government of Russia towards them were proclaimed. The document which had been signed by the Russian empress guaranteed settlers the right to settle in any part of the country, allowance for resettlement and payment of travel expenses; free signing up to merchant class and lower middle classes, allocation of a special status «colonist» , freedom of religion, building of own churches in colonies, customs free.
transportation of their property to Russia, inner self-government of the colonies, liberation from military service, tax benefits and so on.

One of the issues was connected with land. It was reflected in the empress’ decree about free allotment of the resettlers with pieces of land from 30 to 80 dessiatinas of arable land with community ownership and private use; with a right to inherit these allotments but without a right to divide the land. Here in the south Catherine II gave 55 thousand lands in Ekaterinoslavskoy, 263 thousand lands – in Kherson and 214 thousand dessiatinas of land Taurida Governorate to the foreign settlers.

First German colonies in Tchernigovshina area appeared in 1763-1774. In 1787 in the area of Elisavetgrad danzig Lutherans established a colony called Alt-Danzig. In 1789-1791 settlers from Prussia and Wuertenberg (Kronsarten, Josefsthall, Fischersdorf) came to Ekaterinoslav area. In 1789-1796 228 mennonitian families from the west of Prussia settled near Aleksandrovsk (Zaporozhye) (8 colonies: Hortitsa, island Hortitsa, Neuendorf, Rozental, Einlage, Kronsweide, Neuenburg, Schengorgst). In 1804-1819 four big settlement complexes of German colonists arose in Odessa region (Liebentalskiy, Glueckstahlskiy, Kuchurganskiy, Berezanskiy). Simultaneously settlement of Tauria was in process (Molochanskiye mennonitian (1804-1823), prishibskiy (1805-1825), Mariupolstkiy (1823-1848), Berdyanskiye schwaben (1822-1831) and of Bessarabia (Klyastitskiy, Maloyaroslavetskiy and Saratskiy) colonies.

There were 139 settlements in Volhynia by 1871. According to the census of 1897 - 377,8 thousand of Germans lived in Novorossia, which was 3,5% of the population; 171,3 thousand in Volhynia or 5.7% of the region’s population.

The German colonists and the Mennonites, who had come to the Ukrainian lands, were very different in social respect. They had different motives for resettlement and starting positions for colonies’ development were different. Some left their Motherland for religious reasons, others were saving themselves from unfavorable political situation during the Napoleonic wars, the third left their native places as a consequence of agrarian repopulation; the fourth used their emigration as a protest against the existing social relationships in their home country.

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6 Бобылева С.И. Причины миграции немецкого населения на Украину в ХУШ – первой пол. XIX вв. // Вопросы германской истории. Украинско-немецкие связи в новое и
The process of adaptation in the new conditions was difficult. The resettlers found themselves in conditions of a certain socio-economic, ethnic and natural-geographic context, which had very little in common with living conditions on the land of their ancestors. Nevertheless, availability of fertile soils, geographical closeness to the ports of Azov and Black sea, useful governmental benefits, rational usage of land, efficiency, love of order, display of ethnic and confessional peculiarities in production activities and many others areas, made it possible for the colonists to progress in agricultural development. Foreign surroundings of the colonies became a condition of mutual influence of the cultures and mutual enrichment of the peoples. The German colonists and the Mennonites harmonically fit into economical, political and cultural life of the local population. Their hard work turned empty steppes into fertile fields. They planted woodland belts, grew gardens, laid down the foundations of selection of highly productive cattle, agricultural machine construction, they brought new crops and new culture of landownership. All this favored land development and progress of the region. By 1917 more than 40 volosts with German-Mennonite population were established.

The might of the colonists’ farm was firstly conditioned by the presence of both allotments and lands which were bought by them later. The area of allotments in the south of Russia covered over 650 thousand dessiatinas. By the beginning of World War I, 2.022.035 dessiatinas of arable land belonged to the colonists in that region. On average every German farm had three times more land than the typical Ukrainian peasant’s farm. But there were also the landless among the colonists. In Kherson Governorate 36% of the total number of the colonists did not have any land to work on.

By the beginning of World War I the majority of the colonists’ farms represented small and medium farms of the American type, which specialized mostly in growing grain crops. The colonists also took part in agricultural industry development. By 1912, twenty five enterprises producing ploughs, threshing machines and winnowers belonged to the Mennonites. They produced output with the total cost of twenty three million rubles per year.

The significance of the colonists in agricultural machine building was great. In 1911, 68 out of 220 Russian produced steam threshing machines, were produced by the two enterprises «Lepp and Walmann» and «The Klassen Brothers». The influence of the colonists on the development of flour-milling industry was very important. Contribution of the colonists to the development of establishments which produced construction materials was important as well. In Melitopol Uyezd of Taurida Governorate alone 17 out of 22 existing there brick-tile factories belonged to the German colonists.

In Berdyansk Uyezd of the same governorate the Mennonites owned 12 out of 37 factories of this type.\(^7\)

Economic welfare of the colonists made it possible to create their own multi-level system of education. Having gone through a long and difficult period of transformation, schools alongside with churches became centers of spiritual life for the colonists. Practically every colony had its own elementary school. If we take into consideration the fact that by that time there were 835 colonies in the southern regions, the scope of the local system of elementary education becomes obvious.

Moreover, by 1914 there were 21 “central schools” (educational institutions of the middle level) with a total number of students 2219. Besides this, the colonists established nine four-year women’s colleges, a pro-gymnasium, women’s gymnasium, two commercial colleges, two trade schools, six-year college, three colleges for deaf-and-dumb students, all of which were funded by the colonists’ money.\(^8\)

Being thriftful masters, the colonists nevertheless spent big sums on maintenance and development of their educational system. This can be explained by the tradition of general compulsory education, which is connected with religious demands of the German society (schools must prepare children for the confirmation).\(^9\) On the other hand, this approach was dictated by the needs of the rapidly changing socio-economic situation in the southern regions of the country. Processes of capitalization of the society which were developing very intensively got the colonists involved into the sphere of new socio-economic relationships, which demanded competent manufacturers.\(^10\)

In confessional respect by the beginning of the XX century the German population of the South of Russia was divided into followers of Catholic and


\(^8\) Линдеман, К.Э. Законы 2-го февраля и 13-го декабря 1915 г. (Об ограничении немецкого землевладения в России) и их влияние на экономическое состояние Южной России / К. Э. Линдеман. – М.: Типография К. Л. Меньшова, 1916. –105-107, 407-414.


Protestant faith. There were about 23% of Catholics and 37% of Protestants.

Catholic communities of the Black Sea Region were a part of the Diocese of Tiraspol (superior up to 1902 - bishop A. Tserr, and since 1904 - I. A. Kessler) with its center in town Saratov. They formed its Berdyansk (15 parishes, 42 branches), Ekaterinoslavsk (10 parishes, 38 branches), Nikolaevsk (16 parishes, 23 branches) and Odessa (18 parishes, 14 branches) deaneries. The number of German Catholics was more than 90 thousand people.

The largest Protestant church was the Evangelic-Lutheran one. Altogether there were more than 350 thousand people. South Russian Lutheran parishes were part of St. Petersburg consistorial district of the Evangelical-Lutheran church in Russia.

Second largest in number protestant confession were the Mennonites. In their turn they were represented by the communities of ecclesiastical and fraternal Mennonites, total number of which by 1917 was about 100 thousand people. Although the Mennonite communities were self-reliant and independent of each other, their problems in religious sphere and relationship with the government were solved with the help of special coordinating center (1851-1871 – The Church Convents of Hortitsky and Molochansky settlements; 1872-1910 – General conferences of the Mennonites' communities of individual confessions; 1910 – 1912 – the Mennonites’ general Commission on religious affairs; 1912-1929 – Commission on church affairs), the deliberative body, which was entered by representatives of their communities, selected by the general conferences.

A small group of German colonists (mainly coming from the Mennonites milieu) confessed Adventism. The German Baptists also lived on this territory, they made about 3% of the German population. The Separatists were a special group, they had centers (parishes) in the communities in colonies Sarata (Bessarabia), Neuhooffnung (Taurida Governorate), Rohrbach and Worms (Kherson Governorate).

We can not but mention the fact that reforms of the 70-es of the XIX century, which changed the social status of the colonists and deprived them of a number of benefits, caused the first wave of massive emigration, mainly to Canada and the USA.

The First World War became a tragedy for the whole Russian society. For the German population it resulted in passing of draconian Liquidation laws of 1915, which prohibited using their mother tongue, became the reason of deportation to

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the eastern regions of Russia, particularly to Siberia and Volga region, of colonists living in front-line area.

Revolutionary perturbations of 1917 became a dividing line in the history of Germans of Ukraine. The colonists faced the downfall of the monarchy and the accession to power of the Provisional government hoping for abolition of liquidation laws and other discriminatory acts of the tsarist government. Indeed, this government suspended implementation of liquidation laws, abolished the Special Committee on fighting the excessive German influence, but it could not control the overall situation in the country. Meanwhile radical-revolutionary groups were being formed on the territory of the present-day Ukraine. Revolutionary committees were formed in the Ukrainian villages, this committees implemented requisition of lands and big landowners’ property. Colonists often underwent this kind of confiscations. Period of peaceful development of the political processes in Russia came to an end.

The events of October 1917 were accompanied not only by the overthrow of the Provisional Government but also by proclamation of establishment of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UNR). It declared the land a property of all the labor people. Expropriations of large land property begun. This process affected the property of the German colonists, too. On the 9th of February 1918 the Central Rada in Brest-Litovsk signed a peace treaty with Germany and its allies, hoping to get help from them in fighting against advancing Bolsheviks’ troops. An additional treaty concerning the Ukrainian Germans, was signed. According to this treaty they got a right of direct contact with representative offices of Germany, a right to leave the territory of Ukraine without any obstacles, a right to liquidate their properties and to export the money which they got for it in the course of 10 years.

Bringing of the German and Austrian troops to the territory of Ukraine began on the 18th of February, 1918 and was perceived as deliverance from burdens and deprivations of the period of revolutionary anarchy. At the request of

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the Volost Assemblies Germans and Austrians began to arrest people who actively took part in violence and looting. Part of them was sentenced to death (by shooting) by the field court martials. Punitive raids intensified revolutionary moods of the Ukrainian peasantry.

On the 29th of April, 1918 as a result of coup d'état which was conducted by the German and Austrian upper echelon which was dissatisfied with the internal policy of the Central Rada, hetman P. P. Skoropadskyi came to power. The German colonists hoped that the laws which infringed upon their economical interests would be abolished and order and discipline would be established. The new authority restored the right of private property and abolished all the previous laws of the Ukrainian Central Rada. But Ukrainian peasantry did not want to give back the land, which they got during the period of reign of the Central Rada. Quite the contrary the colonists wanted to get the land and the stock back, not without a reason hoping for the help of Germane-Austrian troops in this situation. In the beginning of summer of 1918 the colonists began forming self-defense squads in order to protect their settlements against attacks of radical elements from among Ukrainian peasants.

Meanwhile the territory of Ukraine became an arena of struggle between the armies of Denikin, Wrangel, Makhno, and the Red Army. Germans and the Mennonites tried to emphasize the neutral position at the level of official declarations. Combat operations and the presence of armies resulted in great

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losses. The Mennonitian colonies of Hortitskaya and Nicolausfeld volosts’ suffered most of all.

Makhno’s squads caused enormous damage to the population and economics of this region. In October 1919 the population of Eichenfeld (Dubovki) was destroyed – 84 people were killed. Mass robberies and murders took place on November 29 - December 1, 1919 in mennonitian Kochubeevskaya (Orlovskaia) and German Vysokopolskaya (Kronauskaya) volosts of the Kherson Governorate. The Muensterberg colony was burnt down, and it 97 inhabitants (20 children aged up to 7 years old, 20 children aged 7-14 years old, 25 men and 32 women) were brutally killed. In Nikolaytailskaya volost 16% of male population was killed by the makhnovists. In Hortitskaya volost during the period between October 7 and December 25, 1919 the makhnovists took away 2 thousand horses, 1,400 cows, 199 thousand poods of grain. In Nikolaypolskaya volost the number of draught horses reduced from 1,400 to 108 in the course of the 9-day-long stay of the makhnovists there. Typhus which was brought there by the armies killed horses in winter of 1919-1920. Over one thousand people died in Hortitskaya volost.

The end of the Civil war was accompanied by the land management campaign (in the course of which the colonists of 12 German and mennonitian volosts lost from 38.5% up to 50% of their lands) and terrible hunger of 1921-1922.

At the most critical moment food supply from foreign organizations (ARA - American, American mennonitian, Dutch help, German catholic organizations of American National Lutheran Council, Swedish Red Cross, The Mission of Nansen) began to arrive to the colonies. As a result, lives of thousands of Germans colonists and Mennonites were saved. During the same period The Central Bureau of German sections of the Central Committee of the Labor Communist Party of the Ukraine (ЦК РКП(б)У?) criticized the government of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialistic Republic for establishing contacts with foreign organizations. Moreover, struggle with «counterrevolutionary activity of foreign organizations of help» was developed.

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20 Остащева, Н. В. На переломе эпох... Мennonитское сообщество Украины в 1914-1931 гг. / Н. В. Остащева. – М., Готика, 1998. – С.62-82.


22 Безносов А.І. «Союз граждан голландского происхождения» и менонитское общество Юга Украины периода первой половины 20-х годов ХХ века // Вопросы германской истории. Міжвузівський збірник наукових праць.– Дніпропетровськ, 1995.– С.52-64.
The policy of «military communism» was replaced by the policy of NEP (1921). The population began to hope for the new birth of their households and further free economic development. But confiscation of 350 thousand dessiatinas of land from the colonist communities, liquidation of cooperative and credit organizations, destruction of the educational system, ignoring of national and cultural needs of the Germans and the Mennonites became the reason of rising of emigration spirits among people. In 1922-1924 more than 20 thousand families filed an application for departure, only 8 thousand managed to leave the Ukrainian Soviet Socialistic Republic: 3 thousands of Germans and 5,048 of the Mennonites left for Canada. During the period of 1923-1929, 12 thousand Mennonites had left Ukraine; in 1931 – 2, 5 thousand Germans. Before the beginning of 1931 the emigrating German population headed to Brazil (1200 people), Paraguay (1700 people), and Canada. The country prohibited further departure. A number of steps was made for solving the problem of the Germans and the Mennonites:

1) The work of German sections in government bodies at all levels was activated;
2) Seven national districts were formed: Visokopolskiy (The Kherson okrug), Gross-Liebentalskiy (The Odessa okrug), Luxemburg (The Mariupol okrug), Molchanskiy and Prishibskiy (of the Metopolskiy okrug), Karl-Liebknechtovskiy (of the Nikolaevskiy okrug), Friedrich-Engelsofskiy (of the Odessa okrug).

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26 Осташиев, Н. В. На переломе эпох... С.155-163.

3) The resolution of 1926 «About the land use of the German colonies», which partially solved the problem with land was adopted; 4) rural councils were established (by 1930 there were 254 councils); 5) newspapers in the German language were published: „Das Neue Dorf“, „Hammer und Pflug“, „Der Pflug“, „Die Neue Zeit“; magazines: „Die Trompeter“, „Das Neuland“, „Zur neue Schule“.

b) resolution «About schools of the ethnic minorities» was implemented – the educational system was reorganized (in the German language). By 1926 there were 625 German schools.

At the same time practically since the 1920s negative traits of the country’s policy were becoming apparent: struggle with the church began, school teachers underwent political re-attestation. The clergy and well-off people were deprived of their voting rights. In March 1923 the decision about expert imposition of the prosperous proprietors was made. NEP was over and the authorities proceeded with the open attack. Collectivization followed.

Cruel and violent measures towards the prosperous segment of the population were just a part of large-scale campaign of radical re-organization of agriculture. Practice of prodrazvyorstka, searches, prohibition of selling food, and forced collectivization were in full process.

Absence of real political and socio-economical perspectives for the Germans of Ukraine in the new conditions resulted in intensification of emigration spirits. By the end of summer 1929 they were massive. But out of 13 thousand people that came to Moscow from different regions of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and were waiting for exit permit to Germany and Canada only 5 thousand people got it. The others were forced to return to places where they previously lived.

A decision that collectivization in Ukraine was to end during the period starting in fall 1931 till spring 1932 was made by the Center. But Ukrainian leadership headed by S. Kosior wanted to shorten this term. They headed for realization of collectivization using the methods of forceful non-economic compulsion. Mass dekulakization which both middle-class and poor farmers went through was in progress. In the most of German settlements of Ukraine collectivization began in January-February 1930. (In Spartakovskiy district by the 3rd of February in 98%
of the households were in the kolkhozs; in Visokopolskiy by February 19 - 91.2%; in Molochanskiy by March 26 - 95% of households). According to incomplete data by summer 1931, 32.5 thousands of German and Mennonitian families were de-kulaked (150 thousand people). About 65 thousand people were deported to the northern regions of the USSR.

Difficulties of kolkhoz building: 1) mechanical integration of households, they couldn’t be effective for a long time and 2) on the eve of collectivization many got rid of «spare » cattle. So, population of cows in 1932 in comparison with 1926 in Luxemburg district decreased by 48.8%; 3) “Twenty-five-thousanders” (townspeople-communists) ran kolkhozs, lack of skill shown. The bread procurement campaign was a real calamity, it caused the crisis which in its turn caused the famine of 1932-1933. As a result of striving to implement a plan at any cost and being guided by «class war aggravation» principle in villages (November 1932 - January 1933) 6682 people had been arrested. Exiles and shootings followed. Meanwhile in 1933 in Ukraine 1.7 thousands of Germans starved to death, in villages the number reached 12 thousand people. The officials tried to save the children: in 4 villages day-nurseries were opened for 445 starving children. In one month 400 grams of cereal, 80 grams of sugar, 300 grams of sunflower-seed oil, 2.7 kg of flour were given to one child. 1,027 children were buried at meal stations. Foreign help from Germany, Canada, the USA and the Vatican totaled 487,821 rubles in gold. The supply of provision which was bought with this money saved lives of hundred thousands of starving Germans. Undoubtedly, having gone through the difficulties, the German kolkhozs took their honorable place in Ukraine. The Germans and the Mennonites together with the population of the republic went through all the tragedies of its history. These were arrests of the clergymen, arrests of the peasants who got « foreign help » and were accused of contacts with fascists in 1933, reorganization and liquidation of national districts and rural councils (April 1939), liquidation of the German national educational system (1938), mass repressions of 1937-1938, when the people in detention got political brand of «connection with fascist organizations», « spies», « saboteurs», « counter-revolutionaries ». The guillotine of repressions destroyed the German population in villages and cities.  

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32 Ченцов, B. V. Трагические судьбы. Политические репрессий против немецкого населения Украины в 1920 – 1930-е годы / B. V. Ченцов. – М.: Готика, 1998; Ченцов, B. V. Документы советских органов государственной безопасности как источник по изучению
members, teachers, professors and lecturers, engineers, white-collar workers, political emigrants, German communists, leaders of the German communist party which were saving themselves from Ukrainian fascists were victims of repressions. Waves of lawlessness and death one by one rolled by the blissful land of Ukraine. The scale of the tragic events can be only approximately estimated according to the following information. Only in 3 months in 1937 in the German districts of Odessa region (Spartakovskiy, Zeltskiy and Karl-Leibknechtskiy) 60-70% of adult German population was arrested. In Donbas in the process of «the German operation» 3,608 (84,6 %) out of 4,265 arrested Germans were executed by shooting. In Dnepropetrovsk region 30 thousand people were arrested. 7,857 of them were German, so they rook second place after the Ukrainians according to the number of repressed.

With the beginning of World War II 75,700 Germans were exported to the East. Those who were in occupation in 1943 were exported to Germany. From Germany they were sent to the North and Siberia.

According to the census of 1959 there were no Germans in Ukraine at all.

According to the census of 1926 in the cities of Ukraine there were 33,302 Germans. 44.8% of them were Catholic, 26% Lutherans, a small part which professed orthodoxy and 15% were not attached to any religious confession. 37% attended the church regularly. The number of homogenous marriages (ethnically similar) was 39.6%. 40.5% of Germans had higher and incomplete higher education. 24.8 % got secondary and specialized secondary education

The workers of Institute for German-Ukrainian Studies believe that their main goal is to reconstitute historically trustworthy description of lives of the Ukrainian Germans, who were an integral part of both tsarist Russia and USSR. Using the abundant information that is kept in the archives of Ukraine, it is necessary to write a history of the Germans of Ukraine, to publish collections about religious, cultural and economical life of this ethnos, to lead an examination of those former German colonies which had never been a subject of research and to write history of these colonies, to publish the Encyclopedia of «Germans of Ukraine », moreover a huge amount of this work has already been done.

The justice must be restored towards this nationality.
