Leonard G. Friesen, editor. *Minority Report: Mennonite Identities in Imperial Russia and Soviet Ukraine Reconsidered, 1789-1945*. U of Toronto P, 2018. Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite Studies, edited by Harvey L. Dyck. xii, 340 pp. Tables. Appendix. Index. $75.00, cloth.

This book is the product of joint co-operation between a cohort of experts from Canada, United States, Ukraine, and Russia. Their diverse academic expertise, research interests, and backgrounds have helped make this publication a significant contribution to the study of both Mennonite migration and the life of Mennonite migrants in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Ukraine. The questions of the social, economic, and cultural adaptation of Mennonite migrants and their interactions with local culture are addressed in various chapters of the volume. The appendix (319-32) presents information on the questions of the preservation of Mennonite heritage and the development of Mennonite studies in Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro universities in Ukraine.

In chapter 1 (25-60), Svetlana Bobyleva discusses how inter-ethnic relations in the Tsarist empire and, later, Soviet Ukraine shifted the identity landscape of the Mennonite group and transformed the surrounding environment of local cultures as well. Bobyleva focuses on long-term identity changes and societal and economic interactions in the context of the smaller settlement in the village of Borozenko, contrasting them with the processes occurring in the mother colonies of Khortytsia and Molochna. The author comments that the long years of physical and political violence during World War I; the Bolshevik revolution; civil war; and Stalinist repressions did not damage the "neighbourly goodwill across ethnic lines" between German Mennonites and local Ukrainians and that during World War II, the sympathy between them was mutual (55). In chapter 2 (61-81), John R. Staples describes the complexity of relations in the Mennonite community and the existence of tensions between conservative religious leaders and the agents of the "state's modernizing agenda" (62). Using the example of the Molochna Mennonite settlement, Staples explains how agrarian reforms and industrial progress resulted in partial divisions among the Mennonites in the 1840s. Under the influence of economic changes, the emerging secular identity of the "'prophet of progress'" (Johann Cornies) and traditional conservative religious leaders (Jakob Warkentin) clashed over Mennonite community values. Staples reasons that Cornies's progressive reforms, which were aimed at moving from "'backwardness'" to "prosperity," were based not on secular views but on a pietist vision of the Christian community as a "'city upon a hill'" (62). Cornies's effort to bring about economic modernization and administrative reforms resulted in a partial undermining of traditional

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Volume VI, No. 2 (2019) DOI: https://doi.org/10.21226/ewjus546

Mennonite culture, but it also led to "'new, tasteful design'" and the construction of buildings made of brick (73).

However, clashes between the conservative religious identity and the progressive secular identity resulted in Mennonite influence not only on culture and architecture but on the system of education as well. Irina (Janzen) Cherkazianova comments (in chapter 3 [85-109]) that education played a vital role in the life of Mennonite colonies and constituted an area of interaction between Mennonites, local Ukrainian communities, the Orthodox Church, and the Tsarist state. In the Molochna Mennonite settlement in the 1830s, eighty percent of school-aged children attended school, and there was a better teacher/pupil ratio there than even in Prussian schools—1:46 in Molochna versus 1:75 in Prussia. In relation to the situation in the Tsarist state, Mennonite schools were focused on education on the secondary level while the majority of Orthodox schools only offered programs on the primary level. As Cherkazianova comments, the manner in which the school system was organized in Mennonite communities and how it changed during various periods reflected the process of the transformation of the community itself, especially in relation to religion, culture, and community values. As Oksana Beznosova comments (in chapter 4 [110-41]), religious affiliation played a significant role in relations between the Mennonites and the autocratic state. The continuous change in state policies toward the Mennonites—from their being given full religious freedom to their barely being tolerated at all—indicated the decadence of the empire and signalled the deterioration of geopolitical relations with Prussia. The Tsarist government positively appraised Mennonites for their high moral and ethical standards and their ability to apply new technologies but still treated them with distrust owing to Mennonite affiliations with the world outside of the Tsarist state. The success of Mennonite communities in entrepreneurial activities did not go unnoticed by Russian nationalists, whose ideas gained strength in the late 1800s. Nataliya Venger mentions (in chapter 5 [142-78]) that Mennonite entrepreneurs were constantly threatened with new, increased sanctions. State decisions to modernize the empire and reinforce Russian Orthodox nationalism were confronted by the economic prosperity of Mennonite entrepreneurs. The Mennonite labour ethic was found to threaten the state's reforms regarding the promotion of Russian Orthodox nationalism (which, in general, did not favour foreign entrepreneurship). The hostile attitude of the Tsarist state toward all non-Russian settlers, including Mennonites, resulted in the development of a phobic attitude with regard to colonists in the early 1900s. By 1915, various Russian nationalistic politicians called on the public to act (in illegal ways as well) against all German settlers, accusing those settlers of "espionage through industry" (155). Russian nationalists

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pointed to all of the successful ethnic minority groups, including the Mennonites, in answer to "the eternal Russian question 'Who is to blame?'" (167).

The hostility from the side of the Tsarist state contributed to the development of a partial isolationist stance among the Mennonites. As John B. Toews comments (in chapter 6 [181-208]), some Mennonites identified themselves explicitly as Germanic and became alienated within the local culture by 1914. The political turmoil of 1917 brought even further violence against the Mennonites; now persecution came from two sides: the Whites saw them as representatives of the Germanic world, and the Reds saw them as wealthy entrepreneurs. In 1918, the Congress of Germanic Colonists started to explore the possibility of emigration to Germany and the Baltic countries and dispatched missions to seek out destinations for emigration. Toews, using the example of Abraham A. Friesen, paints a picture of the journey in search of a new culture and emigration and adaptation to the new environment. During Abraham Friesen's extensive travels throughout Europe and North America, he was confronted with the identity question, How can one be Mennonite while not being Slavic or Germanic? This journey of searching for a place to emigrate from Ukraine contributed to the creation of the identity *Slavic/Ukrainian Mennonites*. By the 1920s, various groups of Mennonites from Ukraine had settled in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, and the United States.

Mennonite groups that did not leave Ukraine were forced to readjust to the realities of the Soviet Union. Colin F. Neufeldt, using the example of the Khortytsia and Molochna communities, discusses the role of the Mennonites in collectivization and their fate in dekulakization (see chapter 7 [211-59]). In this chapter, the author embarks on the topic of how ethno-religious minority groups experienced the agrarian reforms of the early Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Mennonites were forced to forsake their economic, political, religious, and social practices and traditions. Under pressure from the Soviet terror, Mennonite farmers and entrepreneurs became Soviet workers and kolkhoz members; the new Soviet ideology system gave them no other options.

The years of Soviet politics that followed, in the 1930s, left a dramatic impact on the history of Ukraine. Alexander Beznosov focuses on the events of the Holodomor of 1932-33 and their influence on the fate of the ethno-religious minority groups in Ukraine (see chapter 8 [260-86]). Collectivization and Soviet agrarian reforms did not bring any positive changes to Mennonite communities, and the Holodomor events of 1932-33 were perceived as apocalyptic: "'The future is very black. Dark would be sufficient for me. Storage loft empty, money gone'" (262). Mennonites, who

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were regarded by Bolsheviks as kulaks, Christians, and Germans, went through the tragic events alongside the Ukrainians. As the geopolitical situation in Europe deteriorated even further, Ukrainian Mennonites found themselves in the middle of a massive military invasion. Viktor K. Klets mentions (in chapter 9 [287-317]) that in case of Anna Schmidt, it happened to be "the largest military invasion in world history" (288). The Soviet secret police (NKVD) gathered Mennonites in an open field near the Stulnevo station to wait for a train to take them to Siberia. While waiting for a few days, the Mennonites found themselves in the middle of fire exchange between the retreating NKVD guards and advancing German troops. Klets comments on the complexity of the Mennonite position amid the turmoil of World War II, mentioning that Mennonites were simply a people caught in the middle: Soviets thought of them as German and religious and as kulaks, and the Nazis thought of them simply as German. And this identity paradox did not leave any room for other options—for a feeling of connection with the local Ukrainian culture, for example.

The book *Minority Report* provides new perspectives on the Mennonites, their migration, and the complexity of their life in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Ukraine. And it challenges the previous historiography, which was based on studies of the Cold War period, when the Iron Curtain divided research between East and West. This book is one of the first comprehensive studies on the subject; it unites experts from Canada, United States, Ukraine, and Russia and makes it possible to benefit from previously unresearched or unavailable materials and resources. Thus, this publication is unique in its content and in its contribution to the field of Mennonite studies, and it is a pleasure to read. It occupies a well-deserved place on the list of "must-read" books.

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