

Heinrich Heese
and
Johann Philip Wiebe

Heinrich Heese

by David H. Epp

Johann Philip Wiebe

by Nikolai Regehr

Two Prominent Men
Of South Russia

Historical Series from Echo-Verlags

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English Translation Notes by Tim Flaming

Johann Cornies and Heinrich Heese lived at the same time and interacted together at points. Cornies had come to the attention of Russian authorities early on and was given increasing authority from the government to implement his innovations over the objections of the Mennonite colonists who would have been content to produce just enough to meet the immediate needs of their families and who were resistant to the changes advocated by a few progressive individuals within the colonies such as Cornies and Heese for better education, improved agricultural productivity, etc. Heese, for good portions of his career, had no support for his proposals which were routinely frustrated and thwarted. The contrast between Cornies and Heese is interesting.

I have tried to identify as many of the people mentioned in the book as possible. I made only a cursory effort to update place names and the names of animal breeds.

Page numbering follows exactly that of the original.

Epp's original footnotes marked by asterisks; *) and **). My footnotes are numbered and in blue font.

Cornelius Krahn's Note: Heinrich Heese (1787-1868) died soon after he had written the last lines of this autobiography. A biography based on the original autobiography was published by David H. Epp in the Botschafter, (Epp was the co-publisher of the Botschafter), 1910, entitled Heinrich Heese und seine Zeit."

Here are some of the resources that I used in addition to the document itself:

- 1.) The autobiography is just a few pages compared to the length of this biography which makes one think, along with internal references, that the author seems to have had access to Heese's correspondence and writings. The text of the autobiography can be found at; Heese, Heinrich. "Autobiography." Translated by Cornelius Krahn. *Mennonite Life* XXIV, No. 2 (April 1969): 66-72.
- 2.) There is short biography in gameo.org - [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Heese,_Heinrich_\(1787-1868\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Heese,_Heinrich_(1787-1868))
This is the bibliography from gameo.org, some of which I have not used.
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Heese, Heinrich. "Autobiography." Translated by Cornelius Krahn. *Mennonite Life* XXIV, No. 2 (April 1969): 66-72.
Hege, Christian and Christian Neff. *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, 4 vols. Frankfurt & Weierhof: Hege; Karlsruhe: Schneider, 1913-1967: v. II, 269 f.
Neufeld, A. *Die Chortitzer Zentralschule*. Berdyansk, 1893.
- 3.) P.M. Friesen discusses him at some length in "The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia 1789-1910".

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Heinrich Heese

Heinrich Heese

and His Time

by

David H. Epp¹

First published in the "Botschafter"
in the year 1910

Introduction

Whoever gets to write the history of the Mennonite colonies of Southern Russia, will be unable to overlook Heinrich Heese, who in the first half of the last century was one of the most active leaders of his time, and whose effectiveness as an educator and district secretary was a significant influence on the development of the settlements on the Dnieper and its inhabitants.

The old people in the communities will remember him very well. I only remember him as an old, bent man whom I saw once on the occasion of a visit that my father made to him and where I was present. Incidentally, my father often visited him in Einlage, where the old schoolmaster spent the sunset of his life; after all, Heese had also been his teacher, whom he held in very special regard and esteem. Not many thanked Heese in his old age for using his extensive knowledge and the best of his physical strength in the service of the community. As one throws a broken knife on the rubble heap, so the teacher and writer, was found to be superfluous, was finally put aside and left to his own fate.

Heese was a thoroughly honest and at the same time energetic and independent character, which occasionally manifest itself as obvious self-confidence. And that may have been what the authorities of his time could not forget. If we add to this his intrepid, perhaps sometimes reckless approach when it came to uncovering and fighting grievances in the communities, it becomes completely clear to us when his often petty opponents, wherever they could, resorted to brute force

1.) [David H. Epp, GM#12685, 1861-1934, he was an Aeltester in the Lichtenau-Petershagen Mennonite Church from 1923-1927 and in Chortitza from 1827-1931 and co-publisher and editor of the periodical "Der Botschafter"](#)

to get rid of the irritating admonisher and troublemaker. Heese's story is one of an unbroken chain of struggle and work, hardship and sorrow, which in the end did not bring him his due recognition or well-deserved rewards. His autobiography sometimes sounds like the shrill sound of a broken string or the rumble of dull resignation. But the actual crux of his life remains in spite of everything in his life that he had a quiet trust in God and faithful surrender to the will of the Most High, without whose approval not a hair on our head is turned. This alone makes Heese's biography instructive and worth reading.

No less interesting and instructive are the insights that the old man lets fall regarding his time and generation. And it was a peculiar time and a peculiar community, of which he has left us news. It is not always pleasant things that one gets to see and hear. But if we are to learn something good for us from the errors of our ancestors, we must not shy away from examining them more closely. There is so much that excuses that time: above all, the lack of education and of knowledge of the eternally true and good; consequently, the low level of general morality, the lack of spiritually mature leadership and of any noble stimulation. All this could not be changed in a moment. From this point of view, the old exile in Einlage judged his opponents and enemies and finally forgave them, so that at the end of his life he could think back to the sufferings and struggles of his existence without resentment.

He began writing his autobiography in the year 1867, one year before his death, he writes: "Already full sixty years I dwell in Kedar, Psalm 120, 5, 'I must dwell among the huts of Kedar', expresses the pain of the pious, who feels so strange among ungodly people. (After Büchner). I have suffered much, during the day in sultry heat, at night in bitter cold, in the fight with Amelek, in the snare of Balaam; if the angel of the covenant had not held his saving hand over me, I would have been defeated. But my faithful leader did not let go of me, in spite of my lack of courage. He comforted my despondent spirit, his manna satisfied my hunger, his rock my thirst. He poured oil into my wounds, he tore the net of Balaam from under me, he led me to the Jordan, to the borders of heavenly Canaan. Now I stand weary, looking over, longing for the entrance to the tabernacles of peace of the blessed church of Jesus, where I will give thanks with all my heart".

* * *

Young Heese in Prussia

Heinrich Heese¹ was born of Lutheran parents in Pommerndorf, Prussia, on October 14, 1787. In his youth he received a strict Christian education, the beneficial fruit of which later became apparent everywhere in his eventful life. Especially the Christian teachings of his beloved teacher Doering, as well as the heartfelt sermons of the old preacher in Pommerndorf, whom he highly admired, made a deep impression on his soft and unspoiled mind. He was so imbued with the true Christian faith that he could not keep silent, even in front of his peers, about what made his inner being overflow with blessed joy. He had also enjoyed good elementary instruction from the old Doering, which later enabled him to successfully continue his education independently.

Still quite young, he entered the service of a farmer in Dirschau as a stable boy. Here he had to share the sleeping quarters with some older comrades, who were as ignorant as they were raw and who might not infrequently have poured out their ridicule on the young lad, who did not want to join in when they let their ungodly talk and wild desires run wild. At first, the young Heese boldly opposed the scoffers with his confessional courage, but in time the youthful wings of faith flagged. The evil example finally fell like a harmful mildew on the young plant of God and threatened to spoil it. In addition to that, just now the God-denying writings of a certain Bart came into his hands. He read them at first with a thorn in his conscience, but soon with increasing interest, and since he was far away from his fatherly friend Doering, as well as from the mature wisdom of the believing pastor in Pommerndorf, and also had no one else in his vicinity who could refute the statements of the God-denier, he was finally unable to escape the baleful influence of the same. The little flame of faith gradually burned weaker and weaker, and even if it did not go out completely, it was put under a bushel for some time, so that it was no longer allowed to spread its warm, invigorating glow. And there it wanted to become dark in the young heart.

Deprived of a better leader, Heese now left himself to the guidance of his comrades, whose life and doings no longer seemed to him to be as unacceptable as they had been in the beginning. These were rather sad prospects, and who knows what would have happened to the deplorable youth if the prayers of his loved ones had not surrounded him, and if the eye of the merciful God had not been open over him day and night.

Under such protection, the lost son could not be lost. And when the right time came, his Pauline hour also struck.

1.) [Heinrich Heese, GM#199356, 1787-1868.](#)

Once, when he was busily playing cards with several of his comrades in a cheerful mood, one of them was suddenly struck by a blow and fell to the ground dead. This made such a deep and shattering impression on young Heese that he not only threw the playing cards away with a shudder, but also awoke anew to a Christian life. All his carelessness of the last time pressed like a mountain on his soul. His religious doubts, however, vanished before the terrible reality of God's intervening hand. Even all the human subtleties with which one tried to cover his unbelief melted away at the moment, like the mist before the sun, when he looked so unexpectedly into the hollow eye of his cold death, which had not yet come so close to him. Others might think of the incident what they wanted, for him it was God's finger that wrote his Mene Tekel¹ on the wall. Thus, the sudden death of his partner at the card game became for him the turning point in his spiritual life.

In Danger of Being Conscripted into Napoleon's Army

In 1808 a new event came into his life, which was to decide his whole future. Napoleon, the great and unstoppable conqueror of peoples and nations, whose iron fist lay particularly heavily on small, trampled Prussia, was searching here, as everywhere in the defeated countries, for young recruits fit for military service in order to increase his victorious army with them.

As is well known, the insatiable man had long since turned his attention to Russia, and to help conquer this huge bastion of Europe, he coveted every healthy young Prussian man. Since most of them, however, did not want to follow the imperious lord voluntarily, coercion was exercised and those who did not want to surrender willingly were conscripted by force.

The sleuths of the French recruiters had finally discovered young Heese, who, in their opinion, would have been a splendid fit for a soldier of the great Napoleon, especially since, in addition to his physical stateliness, he possessed far more education than most young men of his class. However, Heese learned of the enemy's evil intentions in time, and since he was not at all willing to serve as cannon fodder for the hated Corsican, and had even less desire to help increase his fame and power, he did everything in his power to avoid conscription. He was also reluctant to fight against a people and a country in which he saw an open refuge for all the oppressed. After all, large numbers of impoverished Prussian subjects had recently

1.) [Daniel 5:25](#)

emigrated to Russia and had found a welcoming new home.

Heese himself had already had the opportunity in his young life to express his Russian sympathies by saving a Russian soldier, who had escaped from French captivity, from certain death at the risk of his own life. A bloodthirsty Frenchman pursued the Russian, who was tired to the point of collapse. Heese saw this and his heart immediately went out to the pursued man. With calm deliberation he used the moment to hide the fugitive in the straw and set the Frenchman on a wrong track, then he fed the rescued man and under the shadow of the next night he led him on a long detour to a cobbler he knew, who immediately took the Russian in. Strangely enough, the rescued Russian was also a shoemaker by trade, so he stayed with his friendly landlords, worked as a journeyman in the workshop at first, but in time established himself, took a wife and became a respected and happy family man.

Flight to Russia

But back to our young friend. In order to escape the tentacles of the French, Heese decided to emigrate to Russia as well since escaping to America via Danzig seemed to be hopeless in view of the strict control of the French guards. His heart was also drawn far more to the nearer East than to the far West so he soon made the decision to leave for Russia where so many had already found protection and refuge.

He wanted to set out immediately, but it was impossible for him to leave without saying goodbye to his parents and siblings. He was also wanted to once again shake hands with his old teacher and friend Doering, whose fatherly teachings and admonitions had reawakened his heart where buds were opening which soon would become a life characterized by the fruits of the Spirit.

So Heese traveled first to Pommerndorf. Heese's relatives did not object to his plans, since emigration to Russia as a free man was far preferable to a forced march under the command of the greedy Corsican. So, on Saturday the hour of departure approached. It was a Saturday. On the following day, Heese wanted to visit the old local pastor, who had invited them, together with teacher Doering, and then start his long journey on Monday. But things turned out differently. In the night from Saturday

to Sunday, Heese was seized by a strange restlessness. This robbed him of all sleep. He tossed and turned restlessly on his bed for some time. Evil suspicions of an imminent danger finally tormented him so much that he quickly and resolutely left his bed in order to set out immediately. After a brief fond farewell to his family, he hurried to the schoolhouse. Teacher Doering was still asleep but was awakened. Hastily and excitedly, Heese informed him of his decision, cutting off all of his old friend's objections. The ground seemed to be burning under his feet. For him, there was no turning back. An iron forward drive drove him out into the unknown. The old man objected that he hoped to be able to visit with his young friend on this beautiful Sunday afternoon. But when Heese had told him all his fears, the teacher embraced his departing pupil with the words: "Now then, do not delay, the angel of God guides you and bless you." With this Heese swung himself on his horse and blasted off into the early morning.

And it had indeed been high time that he had left his father's house; for only two hours later the father was presented with the imperial conscription order for his son. But this time, to his greatest annoyance, the officer of the great Napoleon had arrived too late. Through his brother Jakob¹, Heese learned of the events in his parent's home. Of course, now all efforts would be made to stop the fugitive before he reached the Polish border and then to court-martial him as a deserter. Therefore, double haste and double caution applied to him now. A Mennonite youth of a very timid nature, who also had reason to cross the Russian border and was personally particularly close to Heese, joined him.

From Marienburg the two traveled to Graudenz. Here they stumbled across two rather neglected Mennonites from the Russian Michelin, who had come to Prussia for a visit and now wanted to go home. Our young emigrants could hardly find a better transportation, so they soon came to an agreement with the two Germans from Russia and boarded their vehicle as passengers.

The young fugitives already thought they were out of danger, when they were noticed by the henchmen at the last moment. Heese and his companions were having coffee in Pastwa, not far from the border, when suddenly a French officer entered and asked for Heese. Good friends (?) had betrayed him and put the French on his trail. At first, all seemed lost. But strangely enough, the officer was deceived by Heese's unwavering calm and cold-bloodedness, and when he later realized his mistake, the four of them were over the hill.

1.) [Jacob Heese, GM#917106, 1783-?](#) Apparently, his older brother remained behind in Prussia with his last child being born in 1821.

Crossing the Border

Without any accident they now reached the Polish border. The papers were found to be in order by the Polish border officials and the immigrants were allowed into the country without further delay. They were not visible to the Prussian guardhouse, from where they might still have been in danger. A terrible tumult, like a raging mutiny, came from the guardhouse to the ears of the anxious travelers. But too preoccupied with their own affairs, none of the raging mob paid any attention to the travelers as they crossed the border. So, they were safe from the French when a new incident threatened to prevent Heese's onward journey.

The chief of the Russian Cossack guards at the border had his eye on Heese and wanted to retain him for his office staff. The gentleman became so insistent with his demands that Heese finally threatened to write a letter of complaint to the Czar if he was not allowed to leave immediately. This strategy worked, but almost five days passed before he was given a pass to Ekaterinoslav. Now they could have continued on their way calmly and comfortably, if only the two waggoners had not been such pathetically coarse, drunken fellows, who could not keep peace with anyone on the way. In particular, however, they had it in for the Jewish innkeepers in Poland. They stopped at every tavern along the way. Behind every tavern table was a Jewish server and they immediately started a quarrel and made all kinds of commotion. This finally outraged young Heese so much that he decided to put an end to their unacceptable behavior. When they did not want to listen to his suggestions and warnings and even began fighting, his patience finally broke and he gave them such a beating that they fell to their knees howling like beaten poodles.

Michelin

Now they traveled in the much better harmony to Michelin, where the two waggoners lived and Heese and his comrade were also received warm welcomes. Michelin was not an enclosed village but was laid out in the manner of American farms, where the home of each owner sits somewhere in the middle of his property. Consequently, the homes are quite far from each other, and each neighbor is always a good distance to the next neighbor. Usually this may be quite convenient, but when unexpected danger comes, everyone is on his own.

This circumstance was used a few years later by a gang of robbers who had been doing their mischief in the area for some time. One night, a detachment of them forced their way into the home of the wealthy Goerz, and since the old man was unable to resist the robbers, they stole everything that could be taken. And as if that were not enough, they tortured the poor old man in such a cruel way that he died the next morning as a result of the maltreatment he had suffered.

Out into the Winter Steppe

For two weeks Heese and his comrade stayed in Michelin, then they continued on the road to Ekaterinoslav. Provided with plenty of food, two sturdy Ukrainian horses pulling the wagon, which was fastened to sledge runners because of all the snow, they drove cheerfully into the Russian steppe despite 26 degrees of frost¹, towards an unknown future in a foreign country.

In nine days they covered the distance from Berditshev to Ekaterinoslav - 600 versts² - safely, but not entirely without adventure and discomfort. Heese would have preferred to stay in Berditshev, where he had already made an agreement with the owner of the Breslau Hotel, an elderly matron, to join her as manager. The granddaughter and former heiress of this lady had also turned her sympathies to the young German, so that, as Heese writes, "The little eyes of Fräulein Lina moistened when I took leave of her. But his sense of duty was stronger than his young love. He had promised his young traveling companion that he would accompany him as far as Ekaterinoslav, and he intended to keep his word, especially since the route ahead would not be entirely without danger.

Adventure on the Road

Already in Michelin, there were rumors of a widespread band of robbers making the road to Ekaterinoslav unsafe, and that this was not just idle talk, the two had to learn all too soon. It was in the evening of the fourth day of their journey, when they were suddenly surrounded in the inn on the main road by a number of rogues, who undoubtedly also belonged to the gang that killed Music Director Fliege on his journey from Ekaterinoslav to Berlin several years later. No doubt this gang also strangled the well-known five Molotschna merchants on their journey to Poltava. Enough, it was already quite late when Heese and his comrade drove into the yard. The owners of the farm were everywhere, Jews, suspicious guys with the mark of Cain burning on their foreheads. Our friends therefore decided to spend the whole night on their wagon with the lanterns burning

1.) -33°C or -27°F

2.) 640 km or 398 mi.

to remain on guard. But what resistance could two unarmed young men put up against a pack of armed robbers? In no time they were surrounded by the impudent rascals, whose deadly faces shone eerily in the red reflection of the torches, and without further ado the greedy mob was about to make off with the easily won loot, when suddenly, a large, closed sleigh, drawn by four magnificent horses, roared into the drive-up courtyard to the sound of jingling bells. And as if swallowed by the earth, the rabble had disappeared. The rest of the night passed without a disturbance.

Two days later, at about four o'clock in the evening, just as the two immigrants had moved into their night quarters, a German boy dressed in rags suddenly came up to them and urged them in an insistent voice not to go into the next forest at night, because it was very unsafe in there. Just as suddenly as the boy had come, he had disappeared again. Of course, they did not think of continuing their journey before the next morning. Soon after meeting the boy, a stately lady arrived in an elegant sleigh. A bearded coachman in fox fur guided a spirited brown steed. The lady greeted the two young travelers in German, like two old friends, and urgently invited them to spend the night under her roof, where German hospitality awaited them. However, when our friends gratefully declined the offer, the lady went on to explain that she lived in good circumstances and could accommodate German compatriots very well. She owed her prosperity to the art of discovering hidden treasures in the earth, which brought her great profit.

This argument, however, did not help to dispel the young men's mistrust of the mysterious stranger, and they persisted all the more resolutely in their refusal. The lady regretted this in a very animated manner, but finally said goodbye to them. A nice bundle of hay, however, which she sent them later, was accepted with silent thanks.

Heese tried in vain to find out from the owner of the inn, a Jewess, who the strange lady was. However, contrary to her gossipy nature, she did not give this out, and with unsatisfied curiosity, Heese finally sought out his camp, which he had made for himself a bed on the fragrant hay. Late in the evening, the stranger came again in the company of her husband, but Heese was asleep and could not be awakened.

The next morning Heese and his comrade continued on their way. As soon as day broke, they were surrounded by the gloomy forest, the horrors of which they had been so forcefully warned. Scouting right and left for danger, they did not pay the necessary attention to the horses until they suddenly jumped to the side with such force that the wagon almost overturned. A quick look sideways taught them the cause: to the right of the road

they saw a large spot in the snow, totally trampled and splattered with blood. From here, a bleeding body had apparently been dragged across the path into the thicket. It was undoubtedly the scene of a murder that had just been carried out. Frightened by the smell of blood, the horses took off with all their might, and at a full gallop the wagon roared through the forest. Only in the distant town of Uman did the terribly frightened men bring the haggard animals under control and allow themselves to recover from the horrors they had seen. There is no doubt that the murder in the forest of Uman was another outrage of those robbers who made the whole area unsafe at that time. It was not until 1826 that the government succeeded in putting an end to the gang and handing them over to the well-deserved punishment of the law. However, there were so many of them that the captured men filled the whole prison in Kremenchug.

On the way from Uman, at 12 o'clock at night, in bright moonlight, Heese and his comrade unexpectedly came across a band of gypsies who wanted to take the horses away from them. Only a quick escape could save them. In a gallop they stormed along the country road, followed by the rapacious Asians, who did not want to let them take their good booty without a fight. The great ride lasted until four o'clock in the morning, with interruptions where the animals had to catch their breath on both sides. Finally, at a tavern along the way, the pursuing party came across a larger bunch of Czumaks, who were enjoying a night's rest here, but instead of sleeping, were engaged in wild carousing. This saved our friends and the gypsies turned back. The carousing Russians received the two strangers in a friendly manner. But when a priest, who was with them, saw that the Germans were eating cheese, even though it was the holiday season, he jumped on Heese shouting "Antichrist" and hit him on the head with a bottle of brandy. Fortunately, his own head had already become heavy, and the latter pulled him to the ground before he could execute the punishment on the sinful German.

About sixty versts¹ from Ekaterinoslav, the two would soon have drowned as they passed a river on a ferry, and only by a miracle did they escape the impending danger.

Ekaterinoslav

At last, the houses of Ekaterinoslav appeared before them. With feelings of gratitude and joy they welcomed the foreign city, where they hoped to find the first Germans and a friendly welcome. And they were not mistaken. It was already dark when they stopped at the gate of the Mennonite Heinrich Thiessen², undecided whether they should go up or not. Then they saw a man standing by the grist mill, no doubt

1.) 64 km or 40 miles.

2.) Heinrich Thiessen, GM#77576 (1755-1838) or his son Heinrich GM#77580 (1794-1859).

the owner of the farm. Heese's traveling companion, who had become seriously ill in the last few days, dragged himself with difficulty to the unknown man, who was in fact the old Heinrich Thiessen and owner of the farm. Of course, there was no need for a long plea for admission there, where hospitality and compassion for others in need resided.

"Na foahrt man opp!^{1,2}" called old Thiessen to Heese, who was still waiting at the gate, and the latter joyfully spurred on his tired animals, which had already scented the full manger and strode toward the stable door at a quickened pace. "These first German sounds in Prussian dialect, which we heard in the foreign Russian city, sounded like music to my ears, and I would not have given them away for 100 rubles," Heese later recounted when talking about his first entry into the city of Ekaterinoslav.

Now, at last, the long journey with its trouble and discomfort, which Heese's travel companion had significantly increased due to his cluelessness, awkwardness and illness, was happily over. In the Thiessen family they felt as if they were in Abraham's bosom. They themselves and their horses were cared for in the best possible way. Heese tried to show his appreciation in his part by telling all kinds of news and stories from the French rule in Prussia. It caused a special murmur from his listeners when he described in his own lively manner how the cousin of his landlord in Dirschau fell under the bayonet thrusts of the marauding Poles.

The immigrants stayed in Ekaterinoslav for four days, until the sick man, under the careful care of Mother Thiessen, was sufficiently recovered for them to make the final journey to the Chortitza colonies. Grateful, like children from their father's home, they left the dear people of the city. Here relationships were established that were never to be dissolved. Of course, the young, then still unmarried Heese had no idea that his former companion would one day marry a granddaughter of the Thiessen family. All this was still hidden in the dark bosom of the future. Now he was heartily glad to have found dear people and good friends immediately in Russia.

Arrival at the Chortitza Colony

After a last day's journey, they finally arrived happily in the village of Schönhorst, in the Chortitza Colony. Now they saw themselves in the midst of Germans. They had arrived where they wanted to go. And the hardships and dangers of the journey were forgotten. But they also forgot the tears in the eyes of the rich heiress in faraway Berdichev. The eternal providence of God had prescribed other ways for Heese. An excellent instrument in the hands of the Most High, he was to be a lasting blessing to the German settlements on the Dnieper, and partly also on the Molotschna.

1.) "Come on up!"

2.) [Heinrich Thiessen, #77576, 1755-1838.](#)

Tutor with a Russian Nobleman

It is not clear from his records where Heese stayed during the first months of his stay in Russia. However, in January of the next year, i.e., 1809, he entered the service of a Russian nobleman as a tutor, whose only son he was to teach German, while he himself wished to be introduced to the Russian language by his pupil. Heese displayed great diligence and rare perseverance in both teaching and learning, and such factors eventually overcome all obstacles. He was very successful as a tutor. Soon his first pupil was joined by a second, brought to him from out of town, and eventually followed by two others. Heese himself, however, who did not miss any opportunity to speak Russian and to acquire new expressions and idioms. He did not hesitate to use his fractured Russian even when guests were present, of course always to the great amusement of those present.

While the gentlemen usually sat at the card table, the young tutor's place was with the ladies, whom he knew how to entertain with all kinds of stories, anecdotes and jokes. His sparkling sense of humor was already rousing in itself, but the general merriment was usually pushed to the highest point by his Russian, which appealed to all the laughing muscles. Once he told them that he had shod his horse with a General rather than with a horseshoe (Podkowa - Polkownik), which of course aroused such hysterical laughter among the ladies that even the gentlemen got up from their game and came into the other room to investigate the cause of the excessive merriment. However, people could laugh at his language as much as they wanted, but that did not make them like him any less. He himself, however, was getting better and better at Russian. And to master it as far as possible was the goal of his striving, the reward of his ambition.

A. Neufeld writes in his booklet "Die Chortitzer Centralschule": "It is not enough to credit Heese, who was not born in Russia, but came over as an adult, with learning the Russian language in a then unusual perfection, especially as far as the lexical side is concerned, as Heese's students were sometimes jokingly called 'walking encyclopedia'".

On February 2, 1810, Heese married, having shortly before converted to Mennonitism and become a member of the Chortitza congregation. The intended of his heart was a certain Katharina Penner¹, who came from Prussia in the winter of the same year and, like her future spouse, first of all stayed in the hospitable

1.) [GM#199357](#).

Thiessen's house in Ekaterinoslav had found a friendly welcome. Heese also fetched his bride from there. Thus, gradually but steadily, the threads were woven finely and firmly, which later entwined the families Thiessen and Heese and still connect them.

District Secretary in Chortitza

Heese was very happy and living with his young wife among the friendly Russians became more comfortable with each passing day. But when after three short years his students began attending high school, and no longer needed a tutor, so Heese moved to Chortitza, where he became the district secretary.

His knowledge of Russian, combined with a good general education, made him particularly suitable and desirable for this post, and, inspired by the best intentions to serve his new co-religionists faithfully and honestly for the good of the colonies, he cheerfully moved into the regional office, where he also had an official residence.

As long as Heese was still a novice in his profession and had no real insight into the colonial conditions and mismanagement, things went smoothly and without particular excitement, like a wide steppe river. But already at the end of the year 1812 there were differences with the head of the school, which arose from the difference of their views. At the same time the spiritual and community life of the church was far from what he had expected. The Mennonites of the new settlement in Russia were far from being the honest men he had come to know and appreciate in Prussia. A bigoted nature, often with low character, dominated many here. Add to that, the sad, bitter struggle between the district office, the agricultural association and the church ministers! "What this, as was typical of those times, bitter dispute may have been about is not quite clear, *) writes A. Neufeld. **) It was not principles that men of conviction fought over, but petty considerations, over which petty men couldn't yield, because they expended the whole of their ambition and their self-honor, as Heese expressed it, completely losing sight of the welfare of the community and the work in progress. This is true of all these parties to the same extent - 'To my sorrow I had to learn', Heese writes further, 'that an independent sect is a true miniature of the papacy, where the high priest is not missing'.

Thanks to his position and his distinctive character, Heese was soon in the middle of these fights and an obstacle to the quarrelsome

*) Um die Hegemonie — die Obergewalt. Epp or To the Leadership - the supreme power. Epp.

**) „Die Chortitzer Zentralschule" or "The Chortitza Secondary School".

that everyone wanted to wash away, but at the same time like a rock on which the dirty waves broke, and which often diverted their harmful course or were greatly curbed it.

The then church Aeltester¹ Johann Wiebe² had become the father-in-law of that young Mennonite traveling companion,*) with who came with Heese from Prussia, and the cousin of my sponsor in Prussia. The same friendly Wiebe had blessed him when he was accepted into the Mennonite congregation and was also the cousin of a patron of our Heese who lived in Prussia. All this brought the Aeltester very close to the heart of the district secretary, so that the latter gave him his full confidence. Wiebe knew how to exploit this for his own selfish purposes. He made it his duty not only to keep a close eye on the course of colonial business and also to inform him of everything, since he, as the Aeltester, would have to be informed in detail of all events in the colony. Heese found this true and acted according to the wishes of the Aeltester. Soon, however, he began to realize, much to his chagrin, that Wiebe was not so much concerned with the welfare of his flock as with certain income from the community revenues, which had been paid to him in the beginning, but were then withheld. Now he took advantage of the favorable moment and made the community willing to make new payments. But when the necessary sums flowed to him again in the usual way, his behavior toward Heese suddenly changed. Heese now recognized the true intentions of his spiritual leader, which he had promoted in his trustfulness. The Aeltester, however, was now uncomfortable to look into the reproachful eyes of the district secretary. He also had every reason to fear public accusation of him, which is why he found it appropriate to remove him altogether. And young Heese did not take up the fight with his opponents. Whether it was because of his respect for the office Wiebe held, or because he saw the futility of his resistance in the present circumstances, he gave up the secretary's post, was ostracized by the church Aeltester, and left the colony altogether.

Administrator on the Estate of Countess Sievers

Now he became the administrator of the: Countess Sievers' estate, who herself lived in Petersburg. Here, among the simple Russian population, Heese found abundantly what he had been deprived of in Chortitza by his tribesmen and co-religionists - love, gratitude and attachment. When the estate was sold after two years and Heese again continued his wandering, old and young wept for him. The old people in the community wanted to try to persuade the new owner that Heese should remain the administrator, but he himself refused. The local police at that time had

*) Heese did not record his name. E.

- 1.) [The term Aeltester translates as Elder or Bishop.](#)
- 2.) [Johann Wiebe, GM#196813, 1766-1823, elected as co-Aeltester with David Cornelius Epp, GM#12844, in 1791 and continued as Aeltester after Epp's death in 1802.](#)

made his work very difficult by their constant demands for bribes that he didn't want to be under their authority any longer.

School Teacher in Interlude

He then moved back to Chortitza where he became a school teacher in Einlage, where his parents-in-law, the Penners¹, also lived and enjoyed a very good reputation among the villagers. Heese was a teacher in Einlage for three years. This period was one of the most pleasant of his life. "The relatives," he recounted, "were often our guests in the evenings. The parents of my pupils were happy about the good progress their children made in school. The five former students from Ekaterinoslav and from the Molotschna supported me economically in such a way that I was able to purchase a nice German one-horse buggy, with which I then made trips in the company of my cheerful wife to Altenau on the Molotschna (15 German miles) to the aunt, to whom we brought fruit from Einlage. At that time there was no fruit at the Molotschna, while now the noblest fruits are available there in abundance".

Thus, Heese was perfectly content and happy in his new profession and did not seek or desire any change. Least of all did he think of returning to Chortitza, where he had enjoyed so little. But the leaders in Chortitza soon sought him out again. There was no competent replacement for Heese and so they had to bite the bullet and call Heese back to take over the district office again. Heese was conflicted about returning to the place where his diligence and loyalty had been rewarded with such disdainful ingratitude, but his sense of duty was stronger than his offended sense of honor. And for the second time he moved into the official residence of the Chortitza district secretary.

District Secretary in Chortitza Again

He held this post for ten years, in good and bad times. It can't be said that he was shown more understanding and accommodation now. The attitude of the settlement was still the same as five years ago, and Heese's sense of justice had not yet diminished. In the meantime. However, he had become a man with a firm backbone, who was no longer afraid of a fight and who did not let himself be swayed by petty considerations when it was a matter of defending the good. So, of course, clashes were bound to happen again. And the opportunity for this was not too long in coming.

In the first year, when he tried to put an end to various abuses in the district office and to introduce new welfare institutions, he immediately met with opposition. There were many

1.) [Johann Penner, GM#46253](#) and [Helena Wiens, GM#46254](#)

heated arguments. Even the president of the Guardianship Committee in Ekaterinoslav, General von Contenius¹, suspected him, as a proselyte, of insolence and watched his every step suspiciously. "There was no one but God to support me, and there were many anxious hours and sleepless nights," Heese lamented when recalling those difficult times.

Only gradually did he earn the president's trust. But when the president was convinced of the sound proposals and honest intentions of the Chortitza district secretary he supported and promoted his work appropriately. It was especially difficult for the president that his favorite, the old shepherd Vektor on the communal sheep farm, should also side with the new colony administration and abuse his lucrative position. But to the honor of the President, it should be said that, after considering the evidence presented, he sacrificed his personal feelings and removed from the colonial service a man who had proved unworthy of his trust.

Under District Mayor Isaac Toews²

Heese's reputation with the authorities increased more and more, and when the Chortitza settler Isaac Toews, a reasonable and insightful man, was elected as the chief schoolmaster at his instigation, a particularly beneficial time began for the Chortitza district. In his "Notes" from 1853, Heese writes about that period: "The following happy deeds were carried out by the District Mayor:

- the neglected minister's conference was re-established; the large church debt was paid off, so that church treasury now possessed a nice cash balance;
- the disorganized communal sheepfold was transformed into excellent working condition, for the breeding rams purchased in Tsarskoye Sselo. With careful management of the sheep breeding program it produced offspring of the highest quality;
- removed investors from the failed distillery;
- the vagabond squatters were driven away;
- abolished the public thievery by merchants and abuse of the community forest;
- the shepherd Bekker, corrupted by abuses was replaced by an orderly, obedient man who restored trust and was not allowed to own a flock of his own;
- the detention transport, a dreadful practice at that time, was abolished;

1.) Samuel von Contenius, 1749-1830. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Kontenius, Samuel \(1749-1830\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Kontenius,_Samuel_(1749-1830))

2.) Oberschulze Isaac Toews, GM#164449, 1774-1831, served 1823-1826

after long resistance from the authorities, a district carriage was purchased in order to conduct business more quickly and easily;
The nightly mischief of ruffians was curtailed;
Prompt and correct payments, a very difficult task, was put into practice;
the hitherto unproductive communal pasture, despite great expenditures, was enclosed and converted at minimal cost to a flourishing and useful condition;
everything and anything has been renewed and improved under the blessing of God."

*)

These are results of which a district mayor can be proud, and which an insightful and grateful community would give him credit. Unfortunately, things were different back then. (And not only at that time!) All these innovations and improvements were opposed and interpreted in the wrong sense by the ill-minded, who needed murky water in order to be able to fish better. On the contrary, these people and their spokesmen considered every improvement of culture, as well as improved education for the youth, which exceeded a little reading and writing, as dangerous to the community. The authorities became aware of the improved economy of the colony and responded by imposing new taxes! This sly maneuver had a magical effect on the unenlightened mass of the colonists, to which, of course, was added the inertia and dullness inherited from the first settlers. Yes, that was true. Higher efficiency awakened increased demands. But what for? Therefore, fight against every enlightenment and every progress.

As long as Toews steered the community ship with a firm hand, one had to submit. But he created many enemies for himself, who made him feel all their bitterness when his term of service expired. Now came the long-awaited time of revenge for the many malcontents, and how they took advantage of it!

Toews was no longer reelected. Instead of that, the agitated masses, called him to account for his actions at a district meeting, in which nothing but encroachments had been seen, and forced him to make a public apology. Astonishing, an apology, for what? For a whole series of blessings, which they owed to this district mayor! Such an insult wounded the heart of the noble-minded and at the same time an honor-loving man so much that he became weak from that hour on and soon died.

*) An admirable characteristic of Heese is that he does not mention his participation in all the welfare work. Yet he was mostly the initiator and District Mayor Toews couldn't have accomplished what he did without Heese. E.

Yet Toews possessed all the qualities of a man who was especially qualified for the leadership of the community. He was serious, not presumptuous, thoughtful, he examined every matter thoroughly, in his decisions he was slow but firm, he always communicated them in short, concise speeches. He never hurt by pointed answers or speeches. The sentence passed had to be carried out exactly according to the regulation, and after a parental admonition he required only the signature of the punished person that he would refrain from his wrongdoing. He did not have anyone whipped. His earnestness instilled reverence for him in everyone. After the meeting was over, he refrained from all useless gossip about the things agreed upon or the people connected with them. If others spoke about it, he kept silent. The reenactments of his personal enemies, which he knew quite well, always seemed to weigh on him, but he did not speak about them to anyone. He was not very talkative and did not seek vain applause. With his superiors, on the other hand, he spoke about all matters in great detail, without any reserve, just as all his actions bore the stamp of complete openness. Wherever a cause had to be represented, he presented it in person, which could only help it to succeed. He rarely failed to bring a matter to a good conclusion.

In private company, Toews conducted himself very pleasantly and completely unpretentiously. He never interrupted when someone else was speaking but listened attentively and applauded a good cause with a friendly glance. He also loved little jokes, but he would only smile, and never respond with a loud laugh. But if someone wanted to distinguish himself by his joke, he turned away from such a buffoon in displeasure. How hurt this man must have felt when he was rewarded for his work and effort in such a disdainful way. It's a wonder that this wound did not scar over and cause his death.

Heese's position under Toews was very pleasant, the two men understood each other, strove for the same ideals and sought to implement them by appropriate means. Unfortunately, Heese had to face new obstacles in his career.

Under District Mayor Jakob Penner¹

Toews' successor in office was once again a capable man who tried to continue the good traditions of his noble predecessor to the best of his ability. This was a certain Jacob Penner from Einlage, Heese's brother-in-law (Mrs. Heese was born Penner). "If such capable men had always succeeded one another, our community would undoubtedly still be at the top today," complained Heese in 1863.

When Penner took office, he found the establishment of the communal sheep farm in the best order. He sought to improve it only by purchasing additional

1.) [Jakob Penner, GM#46257, 1787-?, served 1826-1829.](#)

breeding rams from Saxony. He traveled to established shepherds for to learn best practices, drove himself to the large wool markets in order to sell the community wool as advantageously as possible, and otherwise endeavored everywhere to maintain and continue the order that had already been introduced and, where it was necessary, to make new changes. "Now we had finally," writes Heese. "arrived at the main goal of founding a community school for the better education of our young people." This was to finally put a stop to ignorance and gradually enable the congregation to make correct and wholesome decisions.

But the community wasn't ready for that yet. When the enemies of progress realized the intentions of the district office, they channeled all their energies into installing someone else as district mayor. Heese was to be removed because he was the one who concocted new ideas which his brother-in-law, the District Mayor, then willingly carried out. And there was no lack of opportunities for new attacks. Finally, a conspicuous failure provided the desired means to completely attack the position of the district secretary. At Heese's suggestion, the district mayor, following Cornies' example, had also sent to Saxony in order to buy superior breeding rams to improve the communal flock. Unfortunately, no man like Luka Maln was there when the purchase was made, and the selection was extremely poor. It soon became obvious that the offspring were inferior. His enemies felt that no one else could be to blame for this financial loss except Heese. And now the storm broke. The long-held resentment of the mayors and many community members came out into the open.

Heese's Fall

Once again, there was a great deal of ferment, and many schemes were hatched to topple the powerful district secretary. District Mayor Penner was not the man who could offer lasting resistance to this onslaught. The district secretary was not forced to leave yet, but only one more incident was needed to bring the full wrath of the authorities down on his head. And that incident soon came. After some time, it happened that some juvenile delinquents were sentenced to eight days in prison for public insubordination against the district authority, and they actually had to do it. This was too much for the parents in the community whose misbehaving offspring were affected by the punishment. And since no one other than Heese was blamed for the harsh sentence and the angry fathers demanded that Heese be summoned to appear before the brotherhood. *)

*) See: Johann Cornies, Züge aus feinem Leben und Wirten". (Johann Cornies, Traits from his Life and Work) Echo Publishing House.

This seems incomprehensible to us today, but in those days it was not uncommon for civil offenses to be investigated and punished by the church council and the brotherly assembly, and in the present hall this means was resorted to all the more because one was not even allowed to think of suing Heese with the authorities¹. From the sources used, it is not clear whether any steps were taken by the ecclesiastical authorities to settle this conflict, and whether they remained without result. Enough, the Aeltester summoned the brotherhood to the Chortitza church, so that the community could sit in judgment on the rebellious secretary. The church was crowded. Many were interested in the matter; others were driven by curiosity. Quite a number of those present could not get in and voiced their displeasure. In front of the meeting, the district secretary appeared, as had District Mayor Toews a few years previously. The Aeltester chaired the meeting. According to the general opinion, Heese's guilt was so serious that he could only save himself by a remorseful confession and a humble apology. In deep silence, everyone waited for Heese's humiliation. Instead, something happened that no one had foreseen and that seemed like a bolt from the blue or a spark dropped into a powder keg: Heese declared in a loud voice that he was ready at any time to give an account of his actions before God and the authorities, but that he was not afraid of the agitated mob here, - "He is a devil," someone in the crowd shouted, and the others joined in. The Aeltester was greatly embarrassed; the whole story had taken a turn that was not quite suitable for the consecrated place of the meeting. And only with difficulty could he calm the tumult.

One is forced to ask oneself: Are these the good old times, which are so praised by some and longed for with silent nostalgia? - Good old days! - Cover your face with shame and weep! - Thank God that those times are over, that we have schools, and knowledge, and insightful men, who sacrifice themselves for the good of the community!

This was the end of the congregational meeting, but not of the fight against Heese. At the next District Mayoral election, Penner, the brother-in-law and supporter of the district secretary, was not re-elected. Instead, a man was sought who was one of Heese's staunchest opponents, and he was found in the person of a certain Löwen². The district authorities were Löwen's equal and like-minded helpers. The new district mayor was generally not held in high esteem by the community and was accused of usury. But in this case, neither good nor bad character traits were inquired about; the decisive factor was open and determined opposition to Heese. It is easy to imagine how the work in the district office turned out: all of Heese's proposals were rejected by the district mayor, the construction of

1.) [Peter Loewen, GM#809112, 1775-?, served 1829-1832.](#)

anything that aimed at an improvement was fought against. The District Mayor's obvious plan was to tire Heese by systematic opposition and to make him resign. The efforts of the higher authorities to bring the local authorities to reason were in vain. The president of the Guardianship Committee sent a member of his administration to Chortitza to calm the agitated minds. This gentleman seriously admonished the district office and the leadership of church not to work against Heese, since he was striving for the best of the colony. These admonitions were in vain and the struggle continued.

Heese held out under the new regime for only a year, then he asked the authorities for his dismissal. This was given to him without delay. A well-known carouser took his place. The district secretary and the district mayor formed one heart and one soul. Those spokesmen against Heese fell silent. They were safe from any changes or improvements. Good suggestions no longer emanated from the district office, but rather some misconduct, which the district secretary did with impunity in public. The resources to support his lifestyle were now readily available and, yes, he could buy himself an inn. The local authorities acted according to the motto: "If we agree, we can do whatever we want, but the less we do, the better.

Heese did not stay in Chortitza but followed the call of the chairman Johann Cornies¹ to Ohrloff, where he became a teacher at the secondary school founded by Cornies. Shortly before his departure he oversaw the transfer of a large inheritance in Prussia on behalf of the Bartsch family² living in Rosental and for this he was decently rewarded, so that he still had a few hundred rubles in cash in his pocket when he made his move to Ohrloff. One can imagine that he did not leave Chortitza with the most joyful feelings.

In Molotschna

"The Mennonites of Molotschna," writes Heese, "are an honest, skillful people, among whom Herr von Contenius liked to stay on his inspection trips, and where he was also awarded the rank of General and the Order of the Most High by the high-souled Emperor Alexander I. in 1818 during his passage as an expression of his benevolence over the stately villages."

It was inevitable that Contenius, who had known and appreciated Heese's efficiency for a long time, remained close to him also in Molotschna. While he had been a well-disposed superior to him in Chortitza, he now became a good friend with whom he enjoyed discussing serious matters and important questions. They especially liked to dwell on religious matters. But Contenius could not agree with Heese that man is blessed by grace, without any merit. Already

1.) [Johann Cornies, #44146, 1789-1848, served 1817-1848 with his authority increasing over time.](#)

2.) [The family of Johann Bartsch, GM#12624.](#)

an old man, Contenius once visited him in Ohrloff and then took him with him on the inspection trip through the colonies. The noble gentleman and the modest schoolmaster side by side in the sumptuous cushions of the carriage, something you hardly see today. "At the end of this journey," Heese continues, "His Eminence took leave of me with the warmest handshake and the warmest wishes, went home, lay down, and died with the peace of an accomplished philosopher."

Teacher at the Ohrloff Secondary School¹

Heese was a teacher at the Ohrloff Secondary School for twelve years. He had begun this service with an anxious heart because he was to replace a capable man there, Tobias Voth, who had a special pedagogical (*educational*) background. Voth had already been a city teacher in Prussia and had proven his reputation as an excellent teacher in Russia as well. The only deficiency in him was that he had not mastered Russian, and yet it was Cornies' intention from the beginning to cultivate the Russian language in this school. Heese was the right man for the job, and as long as his strength was sufficient considering his age, he managed and administered the school with his characteristic zeal and loyalty. He provided the children with a good education and through his teaching and his conduct he kept them in the fear of God. He passed all the public reviews of his work to general satisfaction. He especially advocated the introduction of the Russian language in the German schools, and even in his old age took pride in the fact that he was second to none in Russian teaching, no matter how far the representatives of the newer methods, such as teacher Franz², might surpass him in other subjects.

This is all the more remarkable because at that time only a few people recognized the need to learn the Russian language.

He also brought great benefit to the Ohrloff Secondary School in other ways. As is known, this school was maintained from the beginning by the contributions of the members of the association, whereby the founder of the same, chairman Cornies, always had to pay the lion's share. Under Heese's leadership, however, the number of students soon increased to such an extent that already in the second year the school treasury showed a surplus, while before only deficits were expected. Previously, the class numbered 20, now 60 students. This, of course, tripled the work of the teacher, "but all the effort was balanced by the obedience of the pupils and by the satisfaction of the parents," writes Heese.

1.) Ohrloff Mennonitische Vereinsschule oder Zentralschule" transliterated means "Ohrloff Mennonite Association or Central School". Translating the name as "Ohrloff Secondary School" refers accurately to its function.

2.) Heinrich Franz Sr., GM#12708, 1812-1889.

Break Between Cornies and Heese

But also, this blessed activity was to come to an unpleasant end, and once again a time of struggle began for Heese, which was admittedly already the last, but must also be regarded as his most difficult period of life. There was also a break in Ohrloff. Unfortunately, Cornies and Heese did not harmonize in the long run. They had too many similarities of character, while their social position was so very different from each other. In any case, Cornies, who possessed a dear measure of labor and efficiency, overestimated the physical strength of his schoolmaster. He did not reckon with how much 60 pupils ate away at the life marrow of their teacher, who sacrificed his best strength to them, and wanted to exploit the rare mental gifts of the same also otherwise for the good of the colony. But Heese's aging body was no longer up to the task.

As a result, there were disagreements between the two, and where two hard stones strike repeatedly, there are sparks, and also fractures that won't heal.

But let us let Heese himself tell of the events: "There was only one circumstance that finally became so difficult that I gave up the service. Cornies depended on me so completely for all kinds of written work that I had to devote all of my free time, including many nights, to complete these tasks. With his reputation in the government and the increase of his wealth, the hardness of his heart also grew. We clashed several times until we finally separated.

Private School Project in Ohrloff

So Heese was once again thrown overboard. Fortunately, he had many friends on the Molotschna, and they asked him to open a private school in Ohrloff. The village council offered him a beautifully situated plot of land for this purpose. David Cornies¹ wanted to supply him with the necessary bricks from his kiln for the construction of the house on a discount of the future school fees for his children. Others promised him financial support. And so everything seemed to be in place to bring the private school into being and to roll a heavy stone of worry from the heart of the depressed schoolmaster. But whoever is not born as a Sunday child³, despite all the work and striving, grows far more thorns than roses along the path of life, and if he finally wants to pick one, the thorn is quickly there to prick him. Heese has experienced this.

Again, things turned out differently than he and his friends thought and hoped. In order to become a fully legal Ohrloff resident, which his patrons there may well have wished, he had to be counted there both ecclesiastically and civilly. To do this, he needed a release certificate from Chortitza, which they did not want to give him.

- 1.) [David Johann Cornies, #44148, 1794-1873, a younger brother of Johann Johann Cornies, #44146](#)
- 2.) [Monday's Child is fair of face; Tuesday's Child is full of grace. Wednesday's Child is full of woe; Thursday's Child has far to go. Friday's Child is loving and giving; Saturday's Child works hard for a living. But the child who is born on the Sabbath Day is bonny and blithe, merry and gay.](#)

Instead Heese was asked back to establish a secondary school in Chortitza, similar to those in Ohrloff and Halbstadt. In the beginning, Heese refused to accept this call, thinking of the opposition he had experienced as district secretary, where all his good plans had been thwarted, being convinced that even now the plan would not proceed as promised. Only when he was promised that he would be allowed to set up the new school according to his plans did he accept the proposal. The district secretary position was not vacant so there was no risk of Heese aspiring to that office and they did feel that Heese would be a good school teacher. It was hoped that in this position he would not have any influence on the colony government and would therefore not be a threat to the continuing slovenliness.

Again in Chortitza

Foundation of the Central School

With his move to Chortitza the last chapter of Heese's official activity begins.

In 1842 we find Heese again in Chortitza. His faithful companion¹ had died in Ohrloff in 1838. In Chortitza he met with the same aversion among community leaders regarding the school and education in general. The secondary school had to be opened because the government was demanding it, but the district office and the church ministers resisted it. Even with Heese's hire they hated to yield to their government superiors. Heese still had the courage to oppose their preferences in the work. However, the old principle: "The more learned, the more wrong"² still existed to its fullest extent, so first and foremost a restriction of the subject matter was demanded of him. However, it contradicted Heese's sense of duty and justice not to promote the children in the central school any further than was done in the lower-ranking village schools. And with that, the old disputes were dug up again, and the old factions arose anew.

When Heese arrived in Chortitza, he found that no efforts had yet been made to build the secondary school. He demanded the election of a committee and worked out specifications, drawings and a budget. He opened the classes in a house that had been placed at his disposal for the time being. However, this house was so badly furnished that Heese hurriedly moved to his son-in-law's place and returned only after urgent requests and many grand promises.

Soon there was new cause for quarrel and discord. The church Aeltester of the time wanted to pursue the whole matter secretly and independently of the district authorities, and therefore delayed the dispatch of the documents concerning the construction of the school, which were not sent until Heese submitted his resignation again.

1.) This appears to be a reference to the death of his first wife, Catherina Penner, #199357, who is listed in GRANDMA with a DOD of 1833.

2.) An old proverb possibly dating back to the Netherlands. <https://hnanews.org/hnar/reviews/pieter-bruegel-art-laughter/> . A well known Low-German version also exists.

The District Mayor Bartsch¹, who had already been reprimanded by Count Kisselev² for delaying the construction of the school, now accelerated it, but could not agree with Heese on the site. Heese wanted a site that would be suitable for planting and, more importantly, he wanted the school to be built next to the church. A demand, which again testified to his deep insight that the school has not only to impart knowledge, but also to take care of the overall religious and moral education of the children, and in the pursuit of this task the school should go hand in hand with the church and the latter with the former, both equally entitled, equally independent, both united by unity of purpose.

The school also had its difficulties when instruction began. It had not been possible to gather the necessary number of pupils, which was a very difficult task then, as it was later, so that one often had to use force. The contract with Heese was not signed. In short, they only hurried with the construction, not out of eagerness, but because of the reprimand given to the district mayor. Heese says that they did not want anything real, they even feared it. Heese, who considered himself responsible to the governmental authorities for the appropriateness of the instruction, even for the good taste of the plantings, as well as for sharing the duty of marking and planting the school grounds with the school principals, after having protested in writing several times in succession, turned to the committee with a complaint and asked them to give him leave of absence again to Ohrloff, where he wanted to open a private school. This seems to have worked, because at least the building committee now chose the place Heese wanted. In return, however, they studiously avoided consultation with him. As the former filled him with joy, the latter saddened him - "The school will look wonderful," he wrote to the school committee, "on this site and be a credit to the community. If only the building would be appropriate for its appealing location, that would bring recognition to the community and for the school directors an appreciation by the authorities for their good will and taste. But it would inspire me with new courage, out of the conviction that God blesses everything that is good and noble. And then: "Do not exclude me from your deliberations in this noble and important work, which is just getting started. I came here out of loyalty to you! What have I done to make you suspicious of me and to make you avoid my fellowship? I want to give good advice, I do not want to act harmfully in any way, I testify to you before God, whom I fear and honor, and my former work among you is still known here and testifies for me. Is what I have done not in the best interests of the church? Let go of your distrust against me and listen to my advice. I would be pleased to have you refute me with reason. This is the way it must be if something good is to come of this project but carry out rightly conceived decisions and this will promote the work."

1.) [Jacob Bartsch, GM#187277, lived 1797-1877, served 1832-1838 and 1841-1854.](#)

2.) [Adjutant General and Count, Pavel Dmitriyevich Kiselyov, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pavel-Dmitriyevich-Kiselyov>, aka Count P. Kisselev, PM Friesen, "The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1789-1910", p. 539](#)

This and other letters also show how concerned Heese was about a proper execution of the building in all details. It seems, however, that his wishes and advice were not taken into account; because a few months later, he complains that everywhere they acted in a way that was contrary to the goals and because of neglect, the masons were not supervised, so that the chimney was not placed in the middle; the fence was erected without proportion and taste, and the same with the gateway; the floor was laid when the earth was still wet, and is lower than the thresholds, which is both unsafe and unsightly

He also found no support in teaching. The children, he complained, walk around in rags; they have no interest in becoming educated, teaching has to wait patiently for a favorable time, otherwise the instruction has no effect. Even after the official opening of the school in the new school building, the situation of the teacher, and of the school in general, does not seem to have improved much. Two years later, Heese still has to urgently ask for "Kirpitsch") in writing, in order to be able to save the firewood. He complains about the late payment of his salary, from which his business suffers greatly, etc.

Heese also works out rules that should apply to the first students. They read:

- 1.) These boys must not be under ten years old, those who are already capable of developing their faculties; they must also have some experience in reading, writing and arithmetic;
- 2.) they must be healthy, especially in intellect, hearing, sight, chest and lungs, because they should grow up to be capable schoolmasters for the community, and because costs and efforts of teaching must not be wasted on them.

A good singing ability is also of great value in these boys, and so on.

Cornies Authority Extended to the Chortitza Colony

In the meantime, an event occurred on the Molotschna River, which sent its ripples even to the shores of the old colony. The new president of the Guardianship Committee, E. von Hahn, deposed two church Aeltesten: he dismissed Warkentin² from his office, and later he even banished Wiens³ from the country because of their rebelliousness against the orders of the civil authorities. Cornies took full control of the Molotschna colonies⁴ having authority over both ecclesiastical and civil affairs.

*) Brennmist. (Dried manure to burn for heating)

- 1.) Privy Councillor, Senator and President of the Supervisory Commission, dates unknown, appointed over the colonies prior to 1842 by Tsar Nicholas I.
[https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hahn, Eugen Kaspar von \(1807-1874\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hahn,_Eugen_Kaspar_von_(1807-1874))
- 2.) Jacob Johann Warkentin, GM#46779, ca 1783-?, served 1824-1842.
- 3.) Heinrich Jacob Wiens, GM#47016, 1800-1872, served 1842-1847
- 4.) The original reads "Molotschnaer Kolonien" but the context indicates that it included the Chortitza Colony.

Heese predicted the fate of the Chortitza Aeltester¹ from the very beginning and he said that the Chortitza Aeltester would meet a fate similar to that of the two Molotschna Aelteste. But the latter paid little attention to his words. But when Cornies was appointed the head of the Chortitza colonies he immediately tightened the reins on the church ministers, it was clear to everyone that he would have to fight a fierce battle with the church Aeltester. But the latter preferred to humbly bow his neck and bear the imposed yoke as his well-deserved punishment from God for his and the congregation's sins.

Cornies' relationship with Heese unfortunately remained strained. How much blessing could have come from this if these two men, full of strength of character, insight and courage, had worked hand in hand! Cornies could not have found a better assistant, and Heese a more worthy mentor. Alas, alas, there are too often human beings even among the best of us, and personal differences has nipped many a great work in the bud. So, it happened here as well.

The chairman of the Chortitza Agricultural Association, Siemens², who was also one of Heese's opponents, accused him before the committee of being an obstacle to his work, of interfering with the finances of the community, of inciting the heads of the communities to resist the association, etc. The president, E. von Hahn, was wearing his poker face at his next meeting with Heese and greeted him in his usual friendly manner. Heese was calm then. But soon there came a discord with Cornies that kicked the bottom out of the barrel.

Heese is Removed as Teacher by Cornies

In the previous school year, Cornies had already ordered Heese, on the basis of the law, to immediately remove a Russian student from the school. When the chairman then came to Chortitza for the school review and found the Russian boy still in the school, the resentment that had been held back for a long time broke out, and Cornies went into a vehement tirade against Heese. Heese calmly and silently endured the rebuke, but then looked at the chairman with blazing eyes and replied: "This boy has a good father, a disgraced guard officer, who has become bankrupt through unfortunate speculation. He wants educate his son, but he can't afford the payment. But I cannot and will not turn the child out, even if I am never compensated." Cornies saw at once that he had been hasty. His usual iron calm and strict self-control had left him at that moment. But only for a moment. Already the inner balance was restored, and the anger seemed to vanish. Tenderly he stroked the terrified boy

- 1.) [Jacob Dyck, GM#196356, 1779-1854, served 1812-1854. There were two Jacob Dyck's; one an Aeltester, the other a District Mayor.](#)
- 2.) [There are two Johann Siemens in this narrative, This Johann is associated with the Chortitza Agricultural Association. The other Johann was District Mayor. This Johann Siemens is, GM#110572, 1808-1853, he succeeded Cornies as chairman of the larger Agricultural Association with jurisdiction over Molotschna and Chortitza when Cornies died in 1848.](#)

and promised Heese all possible leniency. The latter felt quite secure in the knowledge of his loyalty and conscientiousness and soon calmed down about the unpleasant incident. But how great was the shock when the president suddenly removed him from his teaching position!

It was not so difficult that Cornies sued him at the authorities because of the Russian students, whom Heese, while in Ohrloff, had kept in his house illegally, because it was easy to disprove this accusation by showing that Cornies himself had been the actual cause for the admission of the Russian students. Although a punishment did not follow, he still had lost his teaching position. The school, his real brainchild, was taken from him. Old and tired, he had no place to lay his head. His situation was quite critical.

Where to go now? What to do next? Heese was already approaching sixty and the best years of his physical strength were behind him. Of the 200 Ruble salary he had received as a teacher, not much was left, especially since after the death of his first wife he had distributed 100 Rubles to each of his seven children as a maternal inheritance. In addition, he had married again and had enlarged the family with more children. Now it was not easy to create a new livelihood for himself as an old man. And yet this was the only option open to him, because he could not count on the support of the community.

Again in Einlage

So, for a pittance he purchased a two-acre plot of land in Einlage that had been devastated by floods, which had a dilapidated cottage on it. There he moved with his young wife¹ and two sick children, depressed by all that had happened to him in Chortitza. In a mood bordering on despair, he set about cultivating his property. First, he pulled out the weeds, which overgrew everything like a forest. This had to serve him when dried as fuel for the fire. Then he filled up the fissures in the flooded hills and dug a channel between the rocks. "The sun found me by the spade as it rose, and the moon illuminated me by the cart. My hands and feet burned from the humidity and callouses that developed, so that sometimes I could not sleep at night because of the great pain," his autobiography says.

His young wife helped him faithfully and diligently with the work. So, as soon as she knew the little ones in sweet slumber, she worked with him in the yard and garden. "And yet," Heese continues, "I overcame this physical exertion more easily than those mental ones which Cornies demanded of me and which made me sick to death."

1.) [Anna Martens, GM#199367, 1814-?, married 1844](#)

In Chortitza he still had other community responsibilities besides the school. So, he wrote regulations to increase arable farm land, regulations about the management of Russian servants of both genders, instructions for improving the breeding of cattle of all kinds, regulations for the improvement of the farm land etc. It almost seems as if he was being exploited by the district office and by the agricultural association no less than was the case in Ohrloff, although, unlike Ohrloff, the Chortitza leadership had been opposed to him from the very beginning.

The agricultural work on his land went quickly. Already in the next fall, Heese was able to plant 1000 mulberry trees, which should have allowed him to keep silkworms and beginning silk cultivation on a larger scale. But the silkworm plague found its way into the house of the old ex-schoolmaster, destroying all prospects of a much-needed profit. Heese suffered so badly from all his failures that he sometimes felt no need to continue living.

Moreover, his situation in the village itself was not the best. I don't know, was the measure of fine suffering not yet full enough, should he endure even more renunciations and humiliations, "in order to go out of life" as pure gold, purified in the fire? Some inhabitants of the village, but especially some lads had apparently made it their special mission to annoy and offend the old man, then already over 70 years old, in every possible way. Were the village police not strong enough to protect him, or did they deliberately turn a blind eye? This we can't know. Enough, it was both annoying and sad what he had to put up with there for a while.

Heese lived on this first property for only two years, then he acquired the farm of the deceased teacher Hausknecht¹, who had had a private school in Einlage. The new property was about the same size as the previous one, but it seems that there was not much order on it, because Heese started again to clear out wild bushes and to plant fruit and mulberry trees. However, he primarily focused on the Hausknecht residence, to which he wanted to transfer his already opened private school. He had owed 1400 Rubles on this purchase. This squeezed him financially, and in order to earn a little more, he took manorial children (Russians) into his house for education and lessons, which brought him a good bit of money. Thus, in a relatively short time, he paid off his debt and built a good stable and a nice barn. Yes, he even allowed himself the luxury of erecting a high, heavy wooden fence to protect himself from the rain and snow water pouring down from the mountain, which otherwise threatened to drown his land, especially since troublemakers diverted the drainage channel, from higher ground, so that the runoff ran directly onto Heese's farm.

1.) [Kaspar Adrian Hausknecht, GM#223615, 1790-1848, see also https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hausknecht,_Kaspar_Adrian_\(1790-1848\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hausknecht,_Kaspar_Adrian_(1790-1848)). Heese calls him "David"

Along the road he planted a row of beautiful fruit trees, which were also separated from the road by a wooden plank fence. To give the whole yard a welcoming appearance, his son Johann¹ painted it with a nice oil paint. All this orderliness and cleanliness, however, were interpreted by ill-minded villagers as undue luxury and improper presumption, and gave them permission to annoy the old man. And there was no end to the rumbling and banging on his fences on the part of some street punks, often into the night. Or the troublemakers raised such a roar in front of his windows that all the peace of the night left the quiet house. And this not once, but continuously, evening after evening. And the authorities allowed it to continue because they were unable to control the mischief of street punks, a phenomenon that was also occurring in other villages. But he did not think that Einlage deserved this. He says: "The Einlage, which I once freed from the cruel detention stage, to which I occasionally provided over 600 Dessantin of superfluous land as a substitute for the sandy soil, and such not without great effort, would now so gladly have given me the rest."

For ten years he had to suffer from such nonsense. He always hoped that they would give up on their own but in vain. Finally, he filed a complaint with the District Mayor Dyck¹, who put an end to the childish but very unacceptable goings-on by issuing a strict order to the village authorities. At the same time, a new bright time began for the old man. His inner equilibrium was no longer constantly disturbed, and he could again give his full attention to his work.

Private School

Little can be said about how Heese was taught and educated in his school because there are only a few records. He had a high opinion of the school. He described it as "the only planting ground for the development of the community spirit of the youth etc.".

And again, the old man was happy. He was already thinking about the purchase of an equipage, when new dark clouds came up and a new blow hit him, breaking the self-sufficiency he had so long preserved and bowing his mind deeply, deeply. Another teacher, who had once been Heese's pupil, a good-for-nothing, as Heese labeled him at that time, complained to the director of the Ekaterinoslav Gymnasium that Heese was illegally educating and teaching Russian children. The director appeared unexpectedly at Heese's private school and told him that he had to take the teacher's exam

1.) [Johann Heese, #199365, 1829-1892](#)

2.) [Jacob Franz Dyck, #353486, lived 1811-1875, served 1857-1866](#)

otherwise he would no longer be allowed to teach. In any case, this was a heavy burden for the man, who was already over 70 years old and had repeatedly demonstrated his abilities. Heese also hoped that he would be treated humanely and that he would be excused from taking the exam. But this was not the case. The high school board in Odessa imposed a fine on him and strictly forbade him any teaching. In addition, the director was extremely displeased that Heese had not immediately complied with his instructions.

Then the old schoolmaster's son, Heinrich Heese¹ of Ekaterinoslav, intervened. First of all, he appeased the strict director, with whom he was acquainted due to business relations, and then he persuaded his old father to submit to the required examination because it was a legal demand even if it was technical in nature. The seventy-year-old stood before the green table as an examinee. And he passed the exam. The director of the grammar school asked the Minister of National Enlightenment for a teaching certificate for Heese. This was also issued to him, but with the remark that he was only allowed to teach German children.

This struck at the financial aspect of his work. The Russian students, of whom he had many, paid him well. Heese confessed that he had not been able to part with his "fat Panichi*") immediately, even when he received another written ban. Suddenly the school inspector arrived at his house to investigate the matter. When the inspector saw the old man, who was by now no longer a stranger to him, he closed his eyes until Heese dismissed "his young lords" all together - and this time forever - to their homes. Thereupon the investigation proceeded without further consequences for the schoolmaster.

But - "a misfortune rarely comes alone". Not even in the case of Heese. Hausknecht's house proved to be so poorly constructed that Heese felt compelled to build a new one even now, when his income was cut off. He built as modestly as possible, but he built massively, and then he had to incur debts again. In addition, food worries arose. All this saddened Heese and finally depressed him to such an extent that his bent neck could no longer straighten. Even this unusually strong nature was finally broken by the incessant blows falling on it. - Poor old man! - How many teachers share the same fate in their old age!

In this deeply sad mood, a good old friend from Molotschna found him one day and came to visit him. Heese did not even recognize him immediately, but he looked up kindly when he took his hand with the words: "What are you doing old man?"

*) Herrnsöhnchen = Lord's sons

1.) [Heinrich Heese, GM#197239, 1828-1883.](#)

"I couldn't answer for melancholy," he quoted Heese as saying later, "and crying suits me so badly."

And now his heart was overflowing with all the sorrow, grief and worries that had accumulated. If the pronouncement had already lifted part of the burden from his heart, another bright sunshine fell into his house when, soon after the guest's departure, a large sum of money arrived for Heese, which was not only enough to cover his debts, but also relieved him of worries for the near future. This was a wonderful sacrifice of gratitude from his Molotschna friends and former students.

Heese's Death

Heese remained faithful to the work of the school until the end of his life. His income was low, the number of students dwindled down to ten. Toward the end his adult children had to help him with the lessons. But already sitting in his sick chair, he delivered his lessons with his old zeal.

Heese closes his autobiography with the words: "My earthly desires have come to an end, my pilgrimage has bent me greatly, my longing for the rest of eternal peace is great! The good angel of the covenant, our Lord Jesus, will now soon introduce me into his blessed Canaan! To Him be glory forever and ever!"

Heese died on April 12, 1868, His earthly remains were laid to rest for a long time in the Einlage cemetery. The colonies were poorer by one outstanding, good and useful man, heaven was richer by one blessed man.

Addendum

We have hurried ahead with the biographical part of our work, but cannot conclude it properly without first taking a brief look back at that time, when Heese was finally free of all municipal offices and only on the board of his private school. Heese, who would have had good reason to withdraw from all intellectual affairs, continued to take a very active part in the development of the community. He could not refrain from trying to influence the course of the community's affairs as much as possible through suggestions that he gave to the district office and the other community leaders. "I feel," he wrote in his time, "like the warhorse that neighed when it heard the sound of the trumpet, even though it was retired and crippled.

Gradually, a pleasant change for the better occurred in the civic administration of the Chortitza colonies. They had come to the realization that the earlier generally applied harsh punitive measures, which reached their climax in numerous corporal punishments, would not bring about the desired improvement.

People often wanted to proceed in Cornies' way, but Cornies' authority had gone as a result of his death. Another man with such an iron will and such a pronounced talent for ruling was not to be found again.

Perhaps the time for him had already passed. Other conditions existed; other means had to be used. The president of Hahn's welfare committee had ceded his place to Baron Rosen, who had influence in the colonies, and thus many things changed in the internal and external administration. In addition, the Crimean War¹ broke out. The Crimean War demanded the attention and activities of the colonists, especially their direct superiors. The settlers had to transport the bread they had baked and delivered themselves to the theater of war with their carts. On their way back they took wounded soldiers with them, who were taken care of and fed in the colonies in a truly Christian way. The wounded thanked the Germans with grateful hearts, often to their last breath.

The Chortitza District Mayor Siemens² offered up all his strength in the service of the community and the hard-pressed He was not afraid to fight, but he did not hesitate to do so. He did not spare himself, but the war affairs took up all his time and energy so completely that the internal development of the community could not be thought of. When the war was finally over, District Mayor Siemens also died as a result of a hemorrhage.

His place was taken by the District Mayor Dyck³. The president of the welfare committee at that time was a certain Islawin, who preferred to do nothing in order not to make any mistakes. The Odessa administration no longer had proper influence on the colonies, since the generals who held this post were being replaced very rapidly. Islawin, who did nothing, was replaced by von Hamm. He was followed by von Lisander, who immediately initiated so many reforms that the settlers were constantly amazed and could not keep up with the implementation of these regulations.

The communal shepherding was abandoned by him, and with it all the revenues that the shepherding had brought to the community were eliminated. The money to pay for the guardianship and other colonial buildings, as well as the clerks' offices, had to be collected by direct taxation from the settlers. In addition, he issued statutes according to which the central school was to be transformed into a teaching institute also for children of Lutheran parents, etc. - The implementation of his plans was far from being completed when Mr. Ettinger took his place, and the first rumors of the imminent abolition of the welfare committee were already spreading.

With so many and so varied events in the life of the colony, old Heese could not remain a passive observer. He gave advice and criticized. No one was better qualified to do so

1.) Crimean War, 1853-1856.

2.) Johann Siemens, GM#529173, lived 1816-1857, served 1854-1857.

3.) Jacob Franz Dyck, GM#353486, lived 1811-1875, served 1857-1866.

than him, but no one liked to hear, because they had to agree with him. He did not criticize anyone as sharply as he did your District Mayor Bartsch¹. In a memorandum, Heese laid down his views on the duties of a good high school principal, at the same time exposing all the grievances in the colony. As great as the temptation is for us to follow these rules "for a good headmaster" for the benefit of our and the coming generation, we have to resist the lack of space, but we would like to draw the attention of the coming historian to this document, which is in the possession of the Foth family of Chortitza. On the other hand, we want to touch briefly on general matters.

The Frondienst², writes Heese, should be abolished. Thousands and thousands of mines are still being built without having produced anything of value or importance. Almost all villages were mustered in 1845 with wagons, horses, and crews, and yet Einlage had to go under, while one could have kept the village in good order. *)

The new sheepfold on Grünfeld, - how many thousands of mines did it cost, without the capital for which five such sheepfolds could have been built. The mines have to be declared every month or every two months in the regional office, in the presence of all the mayors, in order to cancel the fraud that has crept in. On such occasions, the district mayor must consult freely and openly with the mayors about everything else, as did those men who worked for the blessing of the community.

Heese was particularly zealous regarding the administration of justice, which had declined under Bartsch: "This basic evil, the source of all moral corruption, must be abolished, then things will soon change, then the community will soon learn to recognize its own salvation. The nocturnal activities must be stopped, otherwise the authorities will be charged. Up to now, one had to be afraid to report this wickedness to the regional authorities in order not to get out of the frying pan into the fire. The Russian servants are also obnoxious. But what is to be done with them, if the German boys do it even worse? And yet it is easy to remedy the problem. The mayor's offices will only be able to maintain order if they can count on serious support from the district mayor.

But where does the root of all evil lie? Heese exposes it in the following: There are still many lazy people in the community, especially among the young families. The previous dawdling administration could do nothing to transform them morally, which is a real disgrace for us. But this should be put to an end. The mayors must make sure that no one in the

*) It is about the great flood of the Dnieper in that year.

1.) [Jacob Bartsch, #187277, lived 1797-1877, served 1832-1838 and 1841-1854](#)

2.) [A type of mandatory service to the Crown or Overlord.](#)

the village has any kind of arrears; such leniency is quite unjust. It only strengthens carelessness, and because of this carelessness the mayor has to write out one note after another. Almost none of our people are day laborers. Among our Germans there are poor people who would rather rely on the dole than go to work; they do not even clean their homes properly. Such careless people are still supported by community without consequence. They should be forced to work and their children should be rented out. But such action has been considered too harsh until now. The masters of the various trades prefer to take on apprentices from outside, because our young people lack discipline and cannot be kept from drifting about at night. If a master wants to restore discipline, the apprentices run away, and force is required to bring them back.

The craftsmen's professions are generally deserted. We no longer have any land for the next generation, and yet not the slightest advance in the trades. Lazy fathers take their children to other people's land and let them run wild, while we lack servants everywhere and tradesmen lack apprentices. Everyone would rather remain idle than take a job, and those who do agree to work want to work on their own terms, even with great pay."

Coming to the school, he continues, "The education of children in the fear of God begins with a true Christian faith. A father who fails to discipline his son honors neither Christ nor the church and will have to suffer from his children's action one day. We do not approve of higher education for our pastors. Should not our schools then be even more excellent, from which disciples of spirit and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures can come forth? Shouldn't our schools then be so much higher, from which disciples of spirit and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures would emerge, who can read the word well and explain it to me? We are fortunate to have a capable school teacher in Franz¹, through whom we can reach our goal, but his sphere of influence must be expanded. His plan for school instruction must be supported by the district mayor, otherwise the whole thing will fail.

For the education of our youth, more than twice the present expenditure must be allocated, if we want to remain independent in the school matter. Our young people must also become masters in the Russian language, just as in German through Franz. They must be able to speak, translate and give lectures, otherwise we will not get through. It is the national language! Just keep it fresh, God will help.

The past 25 years have brought us in dishonor, a worthy district mayor can bring us with God's help in a few years

1.) [Heinrich Franz Sr., GM#12708, 1812-1889.](#)

and the people will be freed from their old unfortunate arrogance.

We would have drawn Heese's picture imperfectly, if we did not want to consider his patriotic attitude, which was averse to everything revolutionary and stood faithfully and firmly for Russia's ruling house and power. This attitude is clearly expressed in a letter to his son in Ekaterinoslav, in which he says, among other things: "From my poems you will see that in my heart I am confident of a happy outcome of the war*) for Russia, trusting in God and in the justice of our monarch, although it will not end without terrible bloodshed and great dangers. France and England will tire if Austria remains calm. I pray to God without ceasing for assistance for our army in battle. The enemy is strong, their weapons murderous, but our officers and soldiers are very brave, before their bare arms the enemy trembles. If only our cavalry could strike first! The soldiers complain a lot about the boldness of the Cossacks in the stormy nights. They show how they beat the surprised outposts in front of them with the shouts of "Haida! Haida!" Such terrible nights are called Cossack nights by them. The blood will flow terribly in the Crimea. Our people will climb over piles of corpses in order to attack with bayonets. If they succeed in this, they will be victors. I would like to know what your ardent democrats in the city would say to my verses. Of course, they will find them distasteful. Johann could occasionally hand them to his tenant, he is a German, but probably also a democrat.

In one of these poems, he writes:

Yes, Russia's sons we are! Power-penetrated
From the glory of the Slavs came the old lineage.
The fatherland holds our hearts.
The emperor's word is our law and right.
The tsar calls us when the storm of war rages.
We stand out! And look: shattered
There lies the pride that Russia's enemy bore.
God in heaven is with us forever!
You demand to measure yourselves with Titans,
You, Christ's enemies! Here it resounds loudly:
Lord, our refuge, you have never forgotten us.
A heart is Russia, which feely trusts thee!
When we arm ourselves for faith,
Who can rob us of our high courage?
God rises, the Czar's word is given.
And his country's enemies are scattered.

*) meant is the Crimean War

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Johann Philip Wiebe

Johann Philip Wiebe¹

His Life and Work in the Mennonite Settlements in Russia

Collected and edited by Nikolai Regehr.

Introduction

The old people who can tell about the earlier life and work of our people in Russia are becoming rarer and rarer among us. Especially those who can report about the merits of individual men in the Mennonite settlements in Russia. Many documents about them have been destroyed in Russia. I am indebted to the memories of Johannes I. Wiebe² in Golzwarden Oldenburg, Germany and the suggestion of Jakob Cornelius Toews³, Leamington, Canada, in the "Boten" that this transcript, only a small contribution to the Mennonite past in Russia, has come about. Prof. B. H. Unruh⁴, Karlsruhe gave us a short account of Johann Cornies' colonizing achievements in Russia in the "Boten". At the cemetery in Ohrloff, B. H. Unruh, so he tells us, stood as a thoughtful young person before the gravestone of the great promoter of Mennonite independence in Russia: marked by an unfinished column.

Certainly, Johann Cornies could not complete his work as he might have thought. But he laid a firm foundation on which his successors, though not at the pace of the master, gradually built an edifice that united pure Christian faith with the beauty of spiritual and material existence in purest harmony. Many have contributed to this effort, who have never been named. Among them was Johann Philip Wiebe, the grandson of the "colonial organizer" Johann Cornies. If we want to say something about Johann Philip Wiebe today, we can do it only according to the available documents containing limited information. We can only base our statements on the memories of those who knew him personally. But even according to these memories, we see before us a man who was completely absorbed in the work for the common good of his fellow men and brothers in faith. We recognize in all his activities a continuation of the work of his grandfather Cornies. However, in order to fully understand the holder of many public offices, the exemplary farmer and animal breeder, the man Johann Philip Wiebe as he stood at his post, we must first go back to the heyday of the Mennonite settlements in Russia.

1.) Johann Philip Wiebe, GM#127311, 1849 or 1850-1918.

2.) Johannes I. Wiebe, GM#111500?, 1861-1933.

3.) Jakob Cornelius Toews, GM#692815?, 1944-2018.

4.) Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, GM#133597, 1881-1959.

The Settlement Work of the Russian Mennonites

What path did the settlements of the Mennonites in Russia take after Johann Cannes left the scene of his tireless and determined work in 1848?

We know that the emigration of Mennonites from the Vistula region (West Prussia) to Russia began in 1787 and continued in smaller and larger intervals until 1865. The first settlements were formed around the Dnieper island Chortitza near the district town Alerandrovsk (Zaporozhie) from the right and left bank of the Dnieper (1790 to 1888 - 18 villages). A second wave of emigrants in 1804 founded the Molotschna colony near the Azov coast, which with its 57 villages became the most prosperous and exemplary Mennonite settlement in Russia. Another 20 villages were established in the years 1853 to 1873 in the Samara governorate, that is, after the death of J. Cornies' death. These three settlement complexes, called the mother colonies, formed the basis for a far-reaching expansion and settlement activity of the Mennonites throughout European and Asian Russia. - It was, as always, a long and difficult beginning. Firmly founded on the faith of their fathers, the Mennonites laboriously began to make the virgin steppe soil arable and productive.

The Russian colonial authority was responsible for the Mennonite settlements, as well as for other colonists in the southern Russian region. At the same time, however, the Mennonites were granted extensive self-government and internal jurisdiction. They were guaranteed complete religious freedom by the Imperial Privilegium. Within this given external framework, Johann Cornies and his successors spent their lives in service to their fellow believers and for the economic development of the settlements.

The introduction of silkworm breeding and the associated planting of mulberry hedges, the systematic planting of gardens and forests, which prevented the erosion of the loose humus soil by the steppe winds, and the introduction of the black fallow are only a few of the improvements that could be mentioned here.

God's blessing visibly rested on the actions of our ancestors. Well advised and guided by wise men, the Mennonites, through their strong will to work, their sense of order, and their whole sober and realistic way of life, developed an economic power that helped them to live their faith and traditions in old Russia, even if these were to be attacked by the state. Let us recall the solution of the question of military service in Russia in favor of the Mennonites, to which we will return. First of all, we must continue to trace the broad line of Mennonite development in Russia.

The Mennonite families in Russia were very large. The first Mennonite immigrants became a religious community of 120,000 souls through constant immigration

from West Prussia, but mainly through strong rate of population increase until 1922, a religious community of 120,000 souls. With the rapid increase in the number of souls, the so-called "landless question" arose. It was necessary to create new settlements for the young people.

Already at the time of settlement, the Mennonites had received so-called "reserve land" from the Russian government, which remained in the possession and advice of the community. In the first time, cattle breeding was practiced on it. As the reclamation of the land increased, the land was leased to the highest bidders. The income from the leases was returned to the community coffers and used to increase the size of the communal land. The growing Mennonite youth was settled on these "leaseholds". Then, when there was a shortage of land in southern Russia, daughter settlements were established in Siberia and Central Asia. No less than 290 daughter settlements with a land area of 495,013 dessiatins (1 dessiatin - 1,0925 ha) were founded in the short period from 1860 to 1913. There were only 90 mother colonies with 204,966 dessiatins of land. Our Mennonite brothers settled from the Black Sea to the Ob River and the Amur River on the Manchurian border.

Special mention should also be made of the Mennonite landownership that developed over time. In accordance with their simple lifestyle, the Mennonites invested their profits in new land. In this way, Mennonite landowners acquired a total of 328,300 hectares of land. There were three large farms in Russia, ranging in size from 10,000 to 14,600 dessiatins. The rest was in the hands of 298 landowners. These landowners purchased property outside the Mennonite colonies but remained in the communities where they had deep roots. As representatives and spokesmen for their fellow Mennonites, they have always vigorously and successfully advocated for Mennonism as a whole with the Russian authorities. In addition, they always contributed from their assets when it was necessary to found institutions that would promote the community.

In this context, the 400 elementary schools, 25 secondary schools, 2 commercial schools, the deaf-mute institute, a preacher's school and the two teacher training institutes of the Mennonite settlements in Russia should be mentioned. The solution of the military service question in 1874 should not be overlooked. After 10,000 Mennonites had emigrated to America, the Russian negotiations allowed the Mennonites to serve in the non-combatant roles. The Mennonites had to pay for their own upkeep, starting with the construction of barracks and ending with food. For example, in 1913 the expenses for the maintenance of the servicemen amounted to 347,492.73 rubles. It was the community effort and the sacrifice of all that made it possible to remain faithful to the principle of conscientious obedience.

At that time the Mennonites in Russia lived true to their faith and their traditional convictions. They held peaceful

1.) Dessiantin: land area equal to 2400 square Sahzen, 1.0925 hectares, 2.7 acres

church services, organized singing festivals and cultural meetings.

With this general picture of life of our Mennonite settlements the work of people within our communities should be noted including that of the landowner Johann Philip Wiebe.

The Wiebe Family

Johann Philip Wiebe was born on October 4, 1849 in Juschanlee, on the estate of Johann Cornies¹, who is well known in our history. His father is Philip Justine Wiebe², his mother Agnes, née Cornies³, the daughter of Johann Cornies. In his seventh year he lost his mother. Since his father, Philip Wiebe, had many poor siblings, he took them to live with him in Juschanlee. One of his sisters became the governess of his son. The only sister⁴ of Johann Philip Wiebe died at a young age. He was only 18 years old when his father Philip Philip Wiebe died. A few years later he also lost his brother Philip⁵.

Generous, helpful and good-natured as the young Johann Philip was, his close relatives feared that he would lead the inherited property of his father to economic collapse in a very short time. Although the above-mentioned characteristics remained dominant in Johann Philip in later years, God's blessing visibly rested on all his actions.

With the exception of his six years of attendance at the Richelieu Lyceum⁶ (*school*) in Odessa, which was then famous in southern Russia, his education followed the usual Mennonite path. Early on, through his childhood friend Bernhard Warkentin, he met his sister Helene, whom he married in 1871. This marriage produced six children. Only the two youngest, Elisabeth and Johannes, survived their parents.

After the death of Philip Philip Wiebe, his brother Cornelius Wiebe ran the businesses for his still young nephews Johannes and Philip. It is characteristic of Johannes Philip Wiebe how he initiated the division of the inheritance with his brother. He said to him, "If you want to go to the right, I will go to the left." His brother Philip chose the estates Juschanlee and Kopaschlee, Johannes Philip thus received the estate Kampenhausen and the old farm No. 4 in Ohrloff, which Johann Cornies had built.

Wiebe Family Land Ownership

The Kampenhausen estate had already been acquired by Johannes Philip Wiebe's father. Besides the Juschanlee estate, Philip Philip Wiebe had inherited part of the Tashchenak estate on the Tashchenak River, not far from the city of Melitopol, from Johann Cornies. He sold his inheritance of Tashchenak to his brother-in-law Johann I. Cornies. He refrained

- 1.) Johann Cornies, GM#44146, 1789-1848.
- 2.) Philip Wiebe, GM#53874, 1816-1870.
- 3.) Agnes Cornies, aka Aganetha Cornies, #102093, 1819-1858.
- 4.) Agnes Wiebe, GM#1003491, 1855-1873. The author skips the fact that Agnes had an older sister named Agnes who died before her 2nd birthday. Perhaps this was unknown to him.
- 5.) Philip Wiebe, GM#689512, 1851-1882
- 6.) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richelieu_Lyceum

from the intended purchase of the 12,000 dessiantin Buruntscha estate in the Crimea for various reasons. The main reason was the great distance from the center of life of the Mennonite settlements and because the railroad for transportation did not exist at that time. This again shows the strong community consciousness of the Wiebe's.

Philip Philip Wiebe decided to buy the estate Stokopani: (Kampenhausen) on the northern shore of the Azov Sea, not far from the city of Genichensk. He bought it from the baroness Kampenhausen, who lived on her estate near Bachmut (today Artjemowsk), and paid twice the price in the Crimea, i.e., 55 rubles per dessiantin. Therefore, he had to limit himself to the purchase of originally 5,200 dessiantin. However, with it he also acquired buildings and inventory and the grain harvest of several years, which was stored in the warehouses unsold.

In the course of the transfer of this estate to Philip Philip Wiebe, difficulties arose due to the fact that the transfer coincided with the liberation of the peasants in Russia. The law on the liberation of serf peasants obliged the landowners who, like the Baroness of Kampenhausen, had serf peasants, to give them free farm land parcels, the size to be determined by the state. The peasants, for their part, were obliged to pay the purchase price of 40 rubles per dessiantin to their former landlord over the course of thirty years. The peasants of Stokopani (Kampenhausen) refused to pay this purchase price. In this case, the law provided for a compensation of the peasants in the form that the lord of the manor had to give them a quarter of the state-established parcels of land free of charge. As a result, the Baroness of Kampenhausen had 1500 Dessiantin of unsold land in her Stokopani estate. This was finally bought by Philip Philip Wiebe at the price of 35 rubles per dessiantin. and thus, increased his property Kampenhausen to 6700 dessiantin. After their father's death, the sons divided this property, that Johann Philip took over the Kampenhausen property with 3900 Dessiantin and the rest, 2800 dessiantin, called Kopaschlee, went to his brother Philip.

The Kampenhausen estate, which now belonged to Johann Philip, had about 2700 Dessiantin of arable land, of which 1300 Dessiantin was divided into parcels and leased to the peasants of the former serf village at reduced prices. Widows and orphans were usually exempted from the rent. The Wiebe family had about 1200 additional Dessiantin of arable land under their own cultivation. The rest was uncultivated pasture land, on which Johann Philip Wiebe bred horses, sheep and cattle. The dairy cows were kept the black-and-white Dutch. For the purpose of raising good working oxen, different breeds were crossed again and again until the most favorable crossing of the native Volhynian steppe cattle with Scharole, Simmenthaler and Romanjola resulted in the most workable draft ox.

Likewise, attempts were made to improve the light Nemonte horse of Danish origin,



Kampenhausen estate of the Wiebe family. Farmyard with stables, storehouses, residential house. On the left the Russian Orthodox Church.

which was used to the climate, by crossing it with the Arabian, Percheron and Oldenburg horses. Merino sheep were crossed with Wallachian and Chuntuk fat-tailed sheep. The noble Yorkshire and Birkshire pigs replaced the unsuitable South African steppe pig. Furthermore, camels, buffaloes and goats were kept at Kampenhausen. Even the poultry farm was exemplary. All best breeds were represented on it. The black and brown Spitz were kept and bred. Kampenhausen bred good breeds resilient in the southern Russian steppe. The all-Russian agricultural exhibitions and animal shows rewarded this breeding work by awarding silver and gold medals to the Kampenhausen breeding specimens.

Until 1905 Kampenhausen was managed by Cornelius Wiebe and Nikolai Penner, who were Johann Philip Wiebe's employees. Then the estate was taken over by Johann Philip Wiebe's son³ until 1909 and after him Peter Cornies⁴, the son-in-law. Johann Philip Wiebe kept his old farm in Ohrloff as his permanent residence.

In 1909 he acquired the Schelegino estate. So named after the adjacent lake of the same name. It was located in Western Siberia in the Tobolsk Governorate, Yshimer District, 70 km north of the city of Petropavlovsk. It comprised 6200 dessiantin of land and was purchased at 37 rubles per dessiantin by the Smolin Kurgan brothers. Shelegino had 2800 dessiantin Forest, 800 dessiantin of lowland meadows and 2800 dessiantin of highland, so-called forest-steppe. From 1909 to 1917 Schelegino was administered by Johann Philip Wiebe's son Johannes. The agriculture was in its initial stage with 150 dessiantin About 150 native cows were kept, which were crossed with Shorthorn and Simmenthal cattle to improve milk yield. Siberian Kirghiz horses were crossed with the Oldenburg horse. The Schelegino estate did not reach full development. Without war and revolution, it would have quickly developed into a progressive model farm, like Kampenhausen, and would have had a positive influence on its agricultural environment. But it went up in flames in 1918.

Public Offices

Services to Agriculture and Animal Husbandry

In the best sense of the word, men have always worked for the common good who, out of inner conviction, out of free will, in economic independence, without claim to fame and honor, took upon themselves the burden and the work. Johann Philip Wiebe.

His activity as chairman of the agricultural association was unselfishly in the service of the promotion of agriculture and animal husbandry in the Mennonite settlements. His estate Kampenhausen supplied premium breeding cattle to the settlements in Molotschna and

- 1.) Johannes Philip Wiebe, GM#127311, 1850-1918. Johannes had 3 older brothers and 2 older sisters that did not survive childhood. One older sister lived to age 72.
- 2.) Peter Cornies, GM#453569, 1883-1937

to the Crimea. He introduced the licensing of stallions and bulls in the settlements and established a herd of red East Friesian cows from the old shepherd's farm, from which the villages were supplied with bulls. He created a studbook in which only licensed mares were entered. The offspring were inspected annually. He made the long journey to Germany to buy breeding stallions and fresh breeding bulls for the settlements. In the field of agriculture, he advocated the observance of the fallow system, propagated artificial fertilization and initiated the trial field system for experimental purposes on the old sheep farm. Still in the war of 1914/18 he began to promote dairy farming in the settlements.

Elected to the council of the district Semstvo in Melitopol and Berdyansk, and later to the governorate Semstvo in Simferopol, Johann Philip Wiebe the possibility, like Johann Cornies in his time, to influence directly decisions concerning the Mennonite settlements. If his voice did not get through in the Semstvo Council, he sometimes found ways and means, very typical for him, to make himself heard. The following small incident is very significant: Since there were no artificial roads in the south of Russia at that time, it often happened that individual travelers or even whole columns got stuck in particularly swampy places. Wiebe, who always made his journeys in a four-horse team so as not to get stuck in such places, never abandoned a stuck traveler. Even if he was in a hurry, his coachman would harness the horses in front of the other wagon and pull it out of the swamp. As luck would have it, he encountered a bogged-down official of the county at a swamp that he had asked the county authorities to pave several times, but which had always been refused. In this case, however, he did not help. Friendly he explained to the official that this was the swampy place that needed to be paved. Then he promised to send help from the nearest village from the office, meanwhile recommended your official to make the estimate for the elimination of this grievance and drove away. Not long thereafter, the swampy place was paved.

His suggestion that the very well-paid agronomists employed in the Semstvo at Melitopol, who were a very heavy burden for the district, should be paid in a different manner remained unrealized. Wiebe had proposed to give these agronomists a land parcel of about 500 dessiantin from state lands instead of a salary. Here they would set up model farms to, first demonstrate their skills, second set an example for the farmers through their model farm and third earn a living from the farm. This proposal for a reasonable solution to this question was rejected. It was probably done because of the realization that the scientifically trained farmers and questionable officials would have subverted the process and would not have been example to the peasants and landowners. His greatest campaign in the Semstvo was always against the officials who abused their position to take advantage of the peasants and

to enrich themselves at the expense of the latter. Wherever he could, he worked for the protection and benefit of the peasantry, whether they were Mennonites or Russians. He was an avowed opponent of the veterinarians, agronomists, the doctors and, last but not least, the banks. He called them the privileged murderers of the peasantry. This peculiarity completes



Johann Philip Wiebe and his son Johannes I Wiebe in travel pelts (the Tschumarka) in the year 1907.

peculiarity, too, only completes the picture of the simple, peasant-minded Johann Philip Wiebe.

His fight against grain speculation also remained a failure. Although this peasant nature was completely lacking in commercial calculation, and Wiebe was aware of this deficiency, he nevertheless tried to oppose the unscrupulous grain traders, who deprived the peasants of a part of their hard-earned income. Wiebe acquired a storage place with a shed in the port of Genichesk, with the intention of harvesting the peasants' crops from his own resources and with

help to buy up bank loans at good prices and thus avoid speculation. The allied grain traders, however, were financially stronger and had more stamina than he.

We already know from his work in the fields of agriculture and animal breeding that he was not lacking in experimental spirit. This was so much a part of him that he, for example, sent his brother-in-law Bernhard Warkentin¹, living in Newton, Kansas, USA, a large batch of winter wheat from Crimea. Warkentin was interested in this wheat as a mill owner, after visiting Kampenhausen and the settlements. He distributed the seeds to American farmers in the Newton area; since the wheat made an excellent flour, it was widely used in America and, after continued breeding, finally became the Manitoba wheat we know today.

Wiebe was elected treasurer and director of the Marion School for Deaf-Mutes in Tiege early on. The institution relied on donations and as treasurer he was given the task of finding ways to keep sufficient funds available for the institution.

He was the first to draw on donation lists and at events in favor of our institutions he would first put a banknote in his hat and then do the rounds himself and collect further donations. His work is also the construction of the old people's home on the old sheep farm near Tiegerweide.

Since Wiebe had chosen the old farm in Ohrloff as his permanent residence, it became routine that his house was open to all guests coming from home for exams in the deaf and dumb asylum, in the central school and at events of all kinds.

The Mennonites from estates further away from the settlements met at his house. At these gatherings in his home, he discussed with his wealthy friends the amount of donations to be made to the deaf and dumb institution, nursing home, and other charitable institutions. Wiebe sometimes kept eight different coffers for charitable purposes.

With Johann Klatt², Ohrloff, and Peter Heese³, Umenzow, who in the same time rendered special services to the school system of our settlements, he often conferred on the latter matter.

Open-minded and accessible to all things, he saw the mistakes and shortcomings in our still young settlements, quickly recognized ways of eliminating them, and then worked restlessly until he had achieved his goal. With his well-known team of four horses, he traveled a lot within the settlements. He always personally directed the animal shows of the agricultural association in Melitopol, Halbstadt, Berdjansk, with the assistance of his coachman Sergej. Still, he had time to look after the final resting place of our dead and the beautification of the cemeteries.

1.) Bernhard Warkentin, GM#69192, 1847-1908.

2.) Johann Karl Klatt, GM#643017, 1842-1918.

[https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Klatt,_Johann_Karl_\(1842-1918\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Klatt,_Johann_Karl_(1842-1918))

3.) Peter H. Heese, GM#197243, 1852-1911. He was the grandson of Heinrich Heese.

Man and Personality

The characteristics of the man and the personality of Johann Philip Wiebe have often emerged from what has been said. Let us dwell for a moment on the man. We are told that already as a young man at the school in Odessa, he was the protector of the weak and the small. He surrounded his family with love, his human-Christian attitude resulted in caring for the needy, as we already know. But he did not stop at his brothers and sisters in faith. The widows and orphans of the Russian villages near Kampenhausen were regularly supported by him. From the storehouses of Kampenhausen they received the necessities of life each week. For the children of the workers of Kampenhausen he had hired his own teacher, because the state school of the Russian village was not adequate in his mind. He supported a number of talented but destitute young people and enabled them to study. Some of them owe their graduation from the teachers' college to his help.

Once, when two representatives of the Orenburg Daughter Colony came to Halbstadt (Molotschna Colony) to obtain a loan from the Volost for the purchase of seeds, they were refused a loan by the district mayor in the presence of Johannes Philip Wiebe, who happened to be present, with the following words: "You just don't want to work. We have no money for that." This rude refusal impressed the always helpful Wiebe so much that he took the two Orenburg emissaries in his carriage to Ohrloff, stood surety for them and thus procured the necessary sum.

It is characteristic for him that he never reprimanded his administrators or his son when mistakes happened on the estates. His motto was: "Only those who do nothing do not make mistakes". He could, however, become very angry about negligent or wrong treatment of the workers and staff. Thus, he once happened to be at Kampenhausen when a leash was brought into the office which the son of his old shepherd was supposed to have stolen and which had actually been found on his farm. Wiebe sent for his old shepherd Nikita Kriwonos and subjected him to strict interrogation. When Nikita denied everything and said that he didn't know anything about the matter, he was seized with fierce anger and, no longer able to control his senses, hit Nikita with the leash. Turning to his son Johann, he said: "I can't stand it that my old Nikita, whom I love, lies to me" and continued to chastise Nikita. But when Nikita confessed and asked for forgiveness, he immediately threw the leash from him, embraced Nikita and kissed him. Crying, the master and servant went to the living room, drank tea together and talked about the good old times.

We modern people of the present may think what we want about this punitive judgment, but it was more effective in its result and at the same time more humane than the distant justice of our time.

If agriculture in Europe or America encounters economic difficulties, the modern state grants it subsidies. In Wiebe's time, bad harvests plunged entire landscapes into misery. At Kampenhausen, provision was always made for notes. In such times, Wiebe also helped the surrounding Russian villages; they received bread and seed grain from him. His helpfulness went so far that when the peasants of Stokopani near Kampenhausen fell into the hands of land agents and their property was to be auctioned, he helped them from his own resources and redeemed their debts for them.

How well one understands that this man could neither comprehend nor affirm the insipid socialist slogans of the 1905 Revolution. At a peasant meeting in Stokopani, the revolutionary youth attacked him physically. He called on the old people present to force the young to be calm and orderly. But when the old people, whom he had always helped, to whom he had ordered weddings and funerals, when they too did not budge, his mind became confused in the all too general confusion of minds. He became afraid of people and finally had to be taken to a mental hospital. Restored, he lived the last years withdrawn, in the beautiful of house, yard and garden in Ohrloff. Death also overtook him at work. He succumbed to a heart attack while shoveling snow on his farm on February 15, 1918 at the age of 69.

Thus, Johann Philip Wiebe was spared having to witness the downfall of the Mennonite settlements, a human work, but nevertheless a beautiful human work, in the following years. He had lived his life upright and faithfully to the end. His whole work reminds us in many ways of his grandfather Johann Cornies, with one obvious difference, however: Johann Cornies enjoyed the unlimited support of the Russian government authorities, especially the colonial authorities. Johann Wiebe was always inhibited by them and even had to fight against them.



