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THE DOUKHOBORS OF WESTERN CANADA

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Doukhobors of western Canada have long constituted one of the most serious social problems in Western Canada. This is especially true of the extreme west, because well over half of all Canadian Doukhobors, as well as the entire fanatical Sons of Freedom faction reside in the province of British Columbia.

Though widely publicised, Doukhobors are relatively unknown outside the confines of the provinces which they inhabit. In addition, the vast majority of such public knowledge as there is concerning the Doukhobors, is gleaned from highly sensationalized newspaper and magazine articles, supplemented with public gossip. If one were to pose the question, "Who are the Doukhobors?," to the average western-Canadian citizen, the reply would undoubtedly be, "Oh, those are the crazy people in British Columbia who burn schools and bomb bridges, and like nothing better than to parade around in the nude." The truth of the matter is, that the public is generally uninformed on the Doukhobor situation. Only a fraction of the sect can be included in such an answer.

The writer's personal opinion was until very recently the same. He became interested, after reading newspaper and magazine accounts of most recent exploits of terrorism in British Columbia, in knowing just who the Doukhobors are, where they come from, and why do they act as they do.

The following study is the result of this interest. It concerns itself with those very issues. It shall set forth the origin and historical background of the Doukhobors, their migration to Canada and settlement in Saskatchewan, the migration of a large part of their number from Saskatchewan to British Columbia, and the events that have taken place since that time. This bare outline of their history shall be supplemented with the causes behind the several migrations, the first to Canada, specifically Saskatchewan, and then later to British Columbia. In addition, the various schisms that have rent the sect shall be considered. In this connection an account of the exploits of several leaders of the Doukhobors shall be considered also. An outline and summary of their religious beliefs, and a short account of their most prominent customs and practices, followed by a chapter on the contemporary picture shall close out the study.

In view of the fact that detailed information concerning the sect and its actions since 1952 was not available, the writer shall but briefly touch on this period.

It is the writer's hope that this study will contribute to general public knowledge concerning the Doukhobors. Perhaps the reader of this study shall benefit in like measure with the writer who has compiled the facts concerning the Doukhobors of Western Canada.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE DOUKHOBORS

The earliest beginnings of Doukhoborism are very difficult to determine. This is in no small measure due to the absence of any written records by the Doukhobors (the "k" is almost silent, and the accent is on the last syllable) themselves. Consequently, much that is said pertaining to their origin must be regarded rather critically.

It is an established fact, that the Russian Orthodox Church suffered a serious schism about the year 1654. The schism was provoked by the introduction of a reformed prayer book, by a certain ambitious Archbishop Nikon, who had risen above his humble peasant origin to the highest position in the Russian Orthodox Church. The reform, if it may be termed as such, was entirely one of religious formalism. It provided mainly for such changes as the use of two fingers instead of three when making the sign of the cross, for reducing the number of hallelujahs from two to one, for a special shape which the cross must take, and for the spelling of Jesus' name.

Although the so-called reform did not effect matters of doctrine, it nevertheless provoked much dissention in the Orthodox Church. The Church split into three factions: those who readily adopted the reform; those who rejected it and clung to the older forms; and those who began to challenge the right of men to force changes in religious matters on others.¹ It is believed, and this belief probably has

¹John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), p. 6.

good foundation, that the Doukhobors grew out of the last named faction.

According to Aylmer Maude,² the name "Doukhobor," was used at least as far back as the year 1785. It means, "spirit wrestler." The name was ascribed to those whom the Russian Orthodox Church considered to be wrestling against the Holy Spirit. The Doukhobors gladly appropriated the name, with this interpretation however, that they are those who fight not with carnal weapons, but armed with the Spirit of Truth.

The question rises, who was the founder of the Doukhobor sect? One can find no definite answer. However, there is a tradition among the Doukhobors themselves, which casts light on the subject. The English Quaker, Aylmer Maude, in his work entitled A Peculiar People, The Doukhobors,³ cites this tradition pertaining to the founding of the Doukhobors:

In the Ukraine, in what is now the government of Kharkov, at the village of Ohotch, in the last years of the first half of the eighteenth century, there lived a foreigner, by some accounts a Prussian non-commissioned officer (but said also to have been a Quaker), who acted among them as adviser and instructor. He settled their disputes, cooperated in their work, and was as a judge and friend among them. He had no fixed place of residence, but moved from house to house till his death. He taught that "Governments are unnecessary, all men are equal, the hierarchy and the priesthood are a human invention, the church and its ceremonies are superfluous, monasticism is a perversion of human nature, the conspiracy of the proprietors is a disgrace to mankind, and the Tsar and Archbishops are just like other people."

² Aylmer Maude, A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., c. 1905), pp. 6-7.

³ Ibid., p. 111.

It is not difficult to ascertain why the Russian Orthodox Church would resort to persecuting a group of people who professed and zealously spread such beliefs. Furthermore, it is quite apparent from subsequent history that the Doukhobors held such beliefs. As was inevitable, persecution followed. History was made manifest many times over, that when any dissenting body is persecuted because of its peculiar beliefs, it invariably becomes more consolidated in those particular beliefs during the course of the persecution. The Doukhobors certainly proved no exception to this as they, together with other dissenters, bore the brunt of a severe persecution by the Russian Orthodox Church.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Doukhobors, who in their earliest history were scattered throughout different provinces of Central European Russia, emerged as a distinct and unique sect. This emergence became manifest with a concentration of Doukhobors in the province of Ekaterinoslav under the leadership of a certain Sylvan Kolesnikov, while another group of Doukhobors concentrated in the province of Tambov, where the arrogant and ambitious Ilarion Pobirohin assumed leadership. The respective reign of these two self-imposed Doukhobor leaders merits brief consideration here since it sheds light on events that followed in Doukhobor history.

Sylvan Kolesnikov of the Ekaterinoslav group is the first Doukhobor leader to be named. The fact that he was literate, marked him as one of the elite, as one unique among the illiterate Russian peasantry. He was kind and generous. These qualities he coupled with a strict and austere life. Characteristics such as these made his person attractive

to people. It is significant that Kolesnikov and his group did not encounter any trouble with the Russian government, which was due in no small measure to his administrative ability, and aptitude for leadership which he combined with his teachings. The latter are still reflected in the basic beliefs and teachings of the Doukhobors. Very briefly, he taught that men's souls fell before the creation of the world, hence, men are fallen angels. Two of his favorite sayings, as they have been cited by Aylmer Maude in his work on the Doukhobors are the following: "Let us bow to the God in one another, for we are the image of God on earth" and "by the cleansing of repentance, and the enlightenment of spiritual instruction, men reach the sweetness of union with God."⁴ These concepts are still reflected in the contemporary Doukhebor beliefs regarding the equality of man and the "Christ within."

In 1775, Syivan Kolesnikov died. The less astute, and fanatical Ilarion Pobirohin, leader of the Tambov Doukhobors, was requested to take over leadership of the group. This now made him leader of both colonies. Ilarion Pobirohin's activities were concentrated chiefly between the years 1775 and 1785. Pobirohin, the proud and boastful dictator, who established a theocratic despotism among the Doukhobors, possessed neither the administrative ability nor the aptitude for leadership of his predecessor. Under his rule, communism was first introduced among the Doukhobors.

To aid him in his divinely ordained administration (his church was infallible) Pobirohin chose a council of twelve "apostles" and twelve

⁴Ibid., p. 113.

"death-bearing Angels." The latter, became an inquisitional tribunal "to punish all who relapsed after once becoming Doukhobors."⁵

It was but a matter of course for Pobirohin and his group to encounter conflict with the authorities. This conflict resulted in the exile of Pobirohin and his family to Siberia, while at the same time, much of the group under his jurisdiction was dispersed over distant parts of the Russian empire.

Immediately after this, Savely Kapoustin secretly assumed the post left vacant by the banished Pobirohin. Kapoustin had served his twenty-five years in the army, and was now in the prime of his life. Kapoustin is credited with founding the Kalmikov ruling dynasty among the Doukhobors. The founding of the Kalmikov dynasty occurred in a somewhat peculiar and unorthodox manner. Aylmer Maude in his work on the Doukhobors, treats this subject rather extensively. (The writer shall here briefly summarise Aylmer Maude's⁶ account). By reason of the fact that Savely Kapoustin had been a military man, his unborn son was therefore subject to serve in the army when he came of age. Kapoustin desired most ardently that his son should escape this fate. To implement this desire, he conjured up a rather shrewd if not an unethical scheme. He sent his pregnant wife back to her family. During her stay there, a son was born to the Kapoustins under the mother's family name of Kalmikov. Consequently the son was declared illegitimate. Later Kapoustin remarried his wife, but the son retained the name of

⁵Ibid., p. 119.

⁶Ibid., p. 120.

Kalmikov, and when he later became leader of the sect, he was the first of the Kalmikov ruling dynasty.

In the year 1801, lenient and humane Alexander I ascended to the Russian throne. He felt that persecution of Doukhobors because of so-called religious error was an ineffective means of persuasion. He therefore approved a plan that called for a Doukhobor migration to what became known as the "Milky Waters" colony. The colony consisted of a small plot of fertile land bordering on the Sea of Azov, just north of the Black Sea, and blessed with most favorable climatic conditions. Accordingly, in 1801, thirty Doukhobor families were transported to this location. Migration of Doukhobors continued and a considerable contingent arrived at "Milky Waters" in 1805. By the year 1816, Kapoustin was leader of approximately three thousand people inhabiting nine villages in this area.⁷ In view of the fact that the "Milky Waters" people are the ancestors of contemporary Canadian Doukhobors, the writer shall from henceforth confine himself to a study of this group. It should be added at this point, that many Doukhobors were widely dispersed throughout the Russian empire at this time, but the largest compact body was concentrated at "Milky Waters."

To shed light on important events that follow in the history of Doukhoborism, it is necessary to say something further about Kapoustin relative to his administration of the "Milky Waters" group.

The migration to "Milky Waters" had hardly taken place when Kapoustin established himself as absolute ruler, to whom all owed

⁷Ibid., p. 127.

implicit and unquestioning obedience. The result was that he "converted an ultra-democratic, anti-governmental sect into a society in which he was an autocrat, controlling not only persons and property, but even the very thoughts of his subjects."⁸ An habitual and furtive secrecy in matters relative to the sect, its leader and its internal affairs, was quickly instilled. This secrecy prevails right down to this day.

Kapoustin adopted thirty elders and twelve apostles who aided him in administering the colony. Community of goods as well as community of women was also introduced. The latter, although denied by a few historians who are manifestly and overly sympathetic towards the sect, is fairly well established as fact. The chief occupation at "Milky Waters" was agriculture, to which the soil and climate was most favorably suited. In addition, handicraft was carried on extensively. The colony became in all respects self-sufficient, which it necessarily must, because the leader discouraged trade and commerce as well as any intercourse with outsiders who were referred to as "Chaldeans."⁹

It was Kapoustin who established the Orphan House which he called Zion. Presumably, the Orphan House was intended to provide a welfare agency for aged widows and orphans. There is a well-founded suspicion however, that its main intention and objective were to supply a seat of government, to centralize the power, and form a treasury to meet administrative emergencies.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 132.

⁹Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 133.

In the Orphan House were planted the seeds of the "Living Book," a collection of Doukhobor beliefs, psalms, Scripture quotations and pat answers to curious inquiries. The "Living Book" has never been written, but always committed to memory and passed orally from generation to generation. The psalms which Kapoustin supplied to make up the "Living Book" were sung in Zion by trained virgins. On reading various accounts relative to the "affairs" of Zion, one gets a lurid picture of lewd and lascivious orgies, banal feasting, and much singing by virgins who were virgins in name only.

Kapoustin was arrested and imprisoned in 1816 on the charge of perverting the Orthodox to his heresy.¹¹ An aged, sickly man, he languished in prison and was finally released on bail. His death occurred in 1817 according to Doukhobor testimony. The authorities however, became suspicious and exhumed his grave. They found therein a man with red hair and moustache, which Kapoustin never possessed. Conclusive proof is lacking, but the general belief is that he recovered from his illness at this time, and lived a self-imposed exile in a cave, from where he directed the affairs of his people until his actual and natural death.

Between the years 1792 and 1841, leadership of the sect passed through the hands of Kapoustin's son Vasily Kalmikov, and his son Ilarion Kalmikov. There is little if anything to say regarding the persons of these two men, save that they became drunkards and fell into very evil practices. During the reign of the Kalmikovs the Doukhobors experienced some of their darkest days. The Kalmikovs roamed from

¹¹Cf. Chapter VII.

village to village, too "busy" to attend to the administration of affairs. Under Vasily Kalmikov, the administrative power passed into the hands of an inquisitional tribunal consisting of thirty elders and twelve apostles. Secret crimes were committed by the wholesale. Torture and death were meted out upon mere suspicion of treachery and treason. When eventually an investigation of the crimes was conducted, the authorities found many bodies horribly mutilated, as well as many which had been buried alive. The execution ground was discovered to be located at the mouth of the Milky Waters river. Resultant to the investigation and the findings, Alexander I decided to transport the sect to the Caucasus.

A milestone, perhaps better, a turning point in Doukhobor history was reached when in 1841, eight hundred Doukhobors, Ilarion Kalmikov among them, were transported to the Caucasus. The year 1842 brought eight hundred more, and in 1843 an additional nine hundred were transported. All told, more than four thousand Doukhobors migrated to the Caucasus.¹²

Soon after the arrival of the first contingent, Ilarion Kalmikov died, and leadership passed into the hands of Peter Kalmikov, one of his several sons. Peter Kalmikov died in 1864, after a short but peaceful reign, during which time the community prospered. Peter Kalmikov, upon his death, gave charge to his wife Loukeria Kalmikova, a rather remarkable woman who became one of the most efficient and outstanding Doukhobor leaders.

¹²Maude, op. cit., p. 146.

When the Doukhobors were transported to the Caucasus, they were given a high bleak plateau with unlimited rich pasture land, which was, however, scarcely fit for agricultural pursuits, and which suffered under the pains of a severe climate. Traditionally men of agricultore, the Doukhobors were called upon for vocational adaptation, which to their credit was accomplished with a marked degree of success, as they became almost wholly raisers of sheep and cattle. This Doukhor location in the Caucasus became known as the "Wet Mountains" colony.

Under the able and guiding hand of Loukeria Kalmikova, to whom the members extended unreserved loyalty, the sect prospered and expanded, so that by the time of her death in 1886, the number of Doukhobors situated in the Caucasus had increased to twenty thousand.¹³ Eventually, the settlements in the Caucasus included the three provinces of Tiflis, Kars, and Elizabetpol. These were situated between the Caucasus mountains and the Persian frontier, bordering on the Black Sea and extending eastward almost to the Caspian Sea.

It was under Loukeria Kalmikova's administration that a new Orphan House was built, the expenditure being met with her personal funds. This new Orphan House served the good and intended purpose. In a short time the colony possessed large capital as well as considerable land and cattle.

Loukeria Kalmikova's action toward the close of her career led to a schism in the Doukhor camp, but probably more important, it was responsible for the new ruling dynasty that emerged after her demise.

¹³Ibid., p. 150.

Loukeria Kalmikova, while visiting at the home of Vasily and Anastasia Verigin (Loukeria's aunt through marriage) who lived in a southern village took a fancy to young Peter Vasilovich Verigin, the son of Vasily and Anastasia. Apparently at that time she secretly decided that Peter V. Verigin should some day succeed her as leader of the sect. Some years later when the strapping, intelligent young Peter V. Verigin married a childhood sweetheart, Loukeria Kalmikova became infuriated and demanded a divorce of the happy young couple. In spite of the fact that her word was law among the Doukhobors, it was almost a year before the divorce was finally sanctioned by the parents of the bride.¹⁴ Meanwhile, young Peter V. Verigin was ordered to the home of Loukeria, where in subsequent years he was educated toward his impending leadership of the sect. Although positive proof is lacking, there is good reason to believe various accounts of illicit relationships between Loukeria and her protege during the course of his instruction.

When at her death, Loukeria Kalmikova proclaimed Peter V. Verigin the new leader, contention--and subsequently schism--arose within the sect. A certain Michael Goubanov, brother of Loukeria, who could best be referred to as secretary-treasurer of the administrative body, disputed Peter V. Verigin's right to assume leadership of the sect. He was supported in his contention by two high-ranking officials in the Doukhobor hierarchy, as well as a considerable following among the subjects. There were many Doukhobors in the Caucasus who did not believe that the "spirit" had passed on to Peter V. Verigin, and they denied his so-called hereditary and divine right to assume the post left vacant by Loukeria Kalmikova.

¹⁴On divorce, see Chapter VII.

In the ensuing contention, proof of Peter V. Verigin's royal blood was established, although in a somewhat dubious and questionable manner. A delegation was sent to his mother before which she publicly declared that the late Peter Kalnikov, husband of Loukeria, had on one of his numerous visits to the village honored her with his holy intentions. This resulted in the birth of one Peter Vasilovich Verigin. Proof sufficient had by this manner been established for the followers of Verigin, who then became known as the Large Party.

Now followed a first in Doukhor history. Loukeria's brother, Michael Goubanov, and his following which became known as the Small Party, appealed the case to the civil authorities. The civil authorities intervened. In the ensuing court case, administration of the communal property was awarded to Michael Goubanov. Consequently a schism took place within the ranks of the sect. The more zealous and faithful who believed that Peter V. Verigin possessed hereditary and divinely inspired right to leadership, adhered to him while the unfaithful who doubted and denied the hereditary and divinely appointed right of Verigin, adhered to Goubanov and identified themselves with the Small Party. Of note is the fact that most members of the Small Party were on the whole better educated than those of the Large Party. It is the Verigin or Large Party with which the writer will hereafter be concerned, in view of the fact that this is the group which emigrated to Canada.

The events which followed close on the heels of the schism contributed largely to the subsequent Doukhor migration to Canada. They further contributed, in no small measure, to a consolidation of existing

Doukhobor beliefs, while at the same time making additions to their flexible repertoire of beliefs.

Fuel was added to the fire in so far as the "we were robbed" Verigin group was concerned, when in 1887 military conscription was introduced into the Caucasus. Unwillingly, the Goubanov party complied and allowed their young men to enter the army, with the admonition however, "not to become murderers, and to be sure, if they had to go to battle, to shoot high so as not to hit anybody."¹⁵

The conscription order encountered a flat refusal among the Verigin adherents. This extreme negative attitude toward conscription provoked the authorities to send a force of Cossacks to the village demanding surrender of the conscripts. When the Doukhobors staged a royal performance of passive resistance - which led to the arrest and banishment of their leader Peter V. Verigin--an interesting and enlightening spectacle ensued:

. . . the Doukhobors assembled their young men, together with their wives and children into a granary. The rest of the Doukhobors surrounded the granary having previously armed themselves with scythes, sickles and clubs. When the Cossacks arrived at the guarded granary the Doukhobors defied them to take the conscripts. On the repeated demands of the officer the Doukhobors simply threatened them with their scythes and sickles. The Cossacks withdrew without firing. They came back reinforced, arrested P. V. Verigin and took the conscripts into penal battalions.¹⁶

Peter Verigin was condemned on February 26, 1887, "for the pretence of being Christ and the Tsar, and for provoking the Doukhobors to dis-

¹⁵Maude, op. cit., p. 26.

¹⁶Vladimir Snegarev, "The Doukhobors of British Columbia" (Unpublished Thesis, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1931), p. 12.

obedience of the law of the country."¹⁷ He was sentenced to five years exile in Archangel where he lived in his own house, enjoyed the services of a Doukhor manservant, and complete expense coverage by his loyal followers.

Refusal on the part of the faithful to comply with government regulations, coupled with Verigin's exile and his remote control administration of the group, touched off a series of chain reaction protests and persecutions which led ultimately to much suffering and an exodus from Russia. Reports of ultra-cruel treatment in the penal battalions began to filter into the anxious Doukhor camp bereft of its divine leader. The government, in an effort to enforce conscription, brought increasing pressure to bear. Protests, imprisonments, floggings and banishments occurred in rapid-fire order. In addition, strife with the Goubanov party continued with increasing tension between the two groups.

Peter V. Verigin having completed his five-year term in Archangel, was, instead of being allowed to return to his wandering sheep, assessed an additional ten years in Siberia. His own actions, and the fact that many messengers were apprehended attempting to communicate with him, together with the well-founded suspicion that he was still directing the affairs of the troublesome sect, undoubtedly provoked this action on the part of the government. His adherents of course denied in their traditional secrecy that Peter Verigin was their leader. When questioned as to who their leader was they replied with the stock answer, "We have no leader, we are all equal."

¹⁷Ibid.

The additional ten-year term assessed to Verigin provoked increased unrest and anxiety among the faithful, as well as increased animosity towards the government. Messengers continued to brave elemental and governmental hazards in their efforts to communicate with their leader. Most of them were apprehended and forced to make their way back to the communities via prison after prison. Few of them made contact with Verigin, but those who did always returned with advice and suggestions which Verigin gave in the form of letters.

While in exile, Verigin gave himself over completely to studying and thinking. He fancied himself to be another Plato or Aristotle, the great and indispensable thinker without whom the world would surely collapse. With utmost diligence he read the writings of pacifists, the most notable among them being Tolstoy. He adopted many of Tolstoy's ideas and "suggested" them to the faithful as his very own. In addition, he spent considerable time studying the New Testament which authorities claim he knew practically by heart.

The advice forwarded to the faithful via Verigin's letters provoked economical, social and religious changes within the sect. A letter written in the late 1880's precipitated in a change of the Doukhobor's official name.

Furthermore dear brothers and sisters, I offer for your consideration that we should in the future call ourselves "The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood." The name "Doukhobor" is not understood by outsiders; and though we shall in future still invoke the Spirit of the Lord, to strive against the weakness of the flesh and against sin, yet the name "Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood" will tell more clearly that we look on all men as our brothers, according to the command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From this time we will, to the praise of the Lord, take the name of "Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood." Inform all the brothers and sisters. . .¹⁸

The writer, on the basis of his study of the Doukhobors, is compelled to agree with the comment of an observer of the sect in Canada who said, "They belie every noun and adjective of their cumbersome title."¹⁹

The following are excerpts from one of Verigin's letters in which he advocated measures and changes which added to the Doukhobor repertoire of beliefs, revolutionized their social life, reintroduced pure communism among them, and culminated in a consolidation and unique manifestation of pacifist views.

It is wrong to kill animals for food because it is wrong to take life; therefore only vegetables and fruits should constitute the diet of humans.

Oaths are both unnecessary and wrong - I, as one of God's humble servants on earth cannot swear allegiance to anyone but Him.

The time has come when all true Doukhobors must show the world that it is wrong to own a weapon of any kind, wrong to be in the army. It will be right for Doukhobors to refuse military service of any kind.

Discontinue sexual intercourse during the time of your tribulation.

The most important thing in this matter my most beloved brothers and sisters, is not to take into account or pay any attention to the lusts of the flesh of people who are not yet one with us, but to raise oneself to the highest possible level if we understand the truth. . .²⁰

Some time elapsed between the date that the faithful received this latest letter and the burning of all their firearms. During the inter-

¹⁸Maude, op. cit., pp. 152-63.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

lude, there was much questioning and much thought concerning the new precepts. "Just what did the leader mean?" was uppermost in the mind of every faithful follower. "Must we give up our family life?" "Must we give up our daily food?" "Shall we keep our arms or destroy them?" In addition, when Nicholas II succeeded Alexander III in 1894, he decreed that every adult Russian must take the oath of allegiance. True to form, the Verigin party flatly refused, and persecution again beset them. The persecution doubtless hastened the adoption of Verigin's suggestions and contributed largely to that fanatical and memorable event which occurred on a June night in 1895.²¹ The event to which reference is made, consisted in the burning of all weapons in the southern colony of the faithful Verigin party. Not a firearm remained uncharred. Renunciation of all and every war had taken place.

This action brought hasty retribution and severe persecution. Cossack soldiers were dispatched into the villages as occupational troops. They were typical, hardened, morally questionable soldiers, and if accounts of their exploits in the villages can be accepted, they certainly carried on as such. Floggings, beatings, bestialities, molesting of women, incarceration of ringleaders and sentences to penal battalions in the army followed. Yet the faithful remained passive. It seemed the sole alternative to obedience was almost total extermination.

An account related by Aylmer Maude tells of one settlement of some four thousand Doukhobors which was utterly broken up, dispersed, and

²¹Maude, op. cit., p. 33.

reduced to such straits that approximately one thousand of their number died in less than three years.²²

Zubek and Solberg²³ in Doukhobors at War, enlighten their readers with the fact that the Doukhobors were never again permitted to settle in one community. The government had had enough trouble with them and consequently dispersed them among the villages of the Georgians in the Caucasus, where they were prohibited from buying land. Low wages and the few hours of available labor could not possibly suffice to purchase food independently. Accordingly, during the next two years, over six hundred of the original 1,300 exiled to the Georgian Caucasus died; while another hundred deserted the ranks rather than suffer.

The Georgian exile of the Doukhobors is an established fact, but there is apparent lack of agreement about the number of those who perished during this time. However, both accounts cited above, give one a vivid picture of the dire straits in which the Doukhobors found themselves, and to what extremities their blind faith in a leader led them.

Meanwhile, pacifists in England, America and the Continent began to take up the Doukhobor cause. The Doukhobor camp had come to the end of the proverbial road. Persecution and suffering, their lot since Loukeria Kalmikova's death, had rendered a hearty, robust folk rather weak and demented. They yearned for an escape, a promised land, a Utopia where they could live and work and believe as they saw fit. Peter V. Verigin had similar visions in Siberia, and while his motives

²²Ibid., p. 29.

²³Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 15.

were not the most commendable, he pleaded his people's cause with the Czaritsa, requesting permission for his followers to leave the country. Finally, when Nicholas II's mother visited the Caucasus, the Doukhobors themselves presented her with a petition to settle in some remote place or be allowed to emigrate. She in turn referred the matter to the proper authorities. At long last, in 1898, permission to leave Russia was granted the Doukhobors on the following conditions:

- 1) that they should go at their own expense,
- 2) that those who had been called on for military service, and those (including Peter Verigin) who were in Siberia, should remain to work out their sentences; and,
- 3) that if any of them ever returned, they should be banished to distant parts of Siberia.²⁴

Pharaoh had consented. The faithful could already feel the dry land of the Red Sea bottom beneath their feet. What they needed now was a Moses to lead them and a miracle to part the waters of the sea that lay between persecution and freedom. Who would lead them out? Who would furnish the funds?

²⁴Maude, op. cit., p. 37.

CHAPTER III

TURNING TO CANADA

Pacifists in England and Russia, who were sympathetic to the Doukhobor cause, supplied a major share of the funds required to finance a Doukhobor exodus from Russia. Tolstoy, the noted Russian pacifist thinker, was highly influential in soliciting financial aid on behalf of the down-trodden Gregorian-exile Doukhobors. Most influential and helpful, financially speaking, was the Quaker Society of England.

An initial attempt was made to settle the Doukhobors on the Island of Cyprus. Two Doukhobors, Ivan Ivin and Peter Mahartof by name, were dispatched to Cyprus to investigate the possibility and suitability of a future Doukhobor location on the Island. They were not too favorably impressed with the prospects which the island offered, and returned with a like report. The soil was too sandy to be suitable for agricultural pursuits, while the climate was simply too hot for the Doukhobors.

Simultaneously, the Quakers of England dispatched a certain Mr. St. John to Cyprus, armed with money, for the purpose of arranging the financial aspects of the proposed Doukhobor migration. The English government, to which authorities in Cyprus were responsible, required a guarantee of 125 dollars per capita, as a precautionary measure in the event the project failed. Eventually the English government was persuaded to lower this fee to 75 dollars per immigrant.¹

¹J. F. C. Wright, Slava Bohu: The Story of the Doukhobors (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, c.1940), p. 108.

In the meantime, approximately eleven hundred Doukhobors assembled at the port of Batoum, anxious to leave behind the fever-infested swamps and the country in which they had been pushed from pillar to post because of their "Christian" beliefs. A French ship was chartered for Cyprus, and St. John with no other alternative, paid the required stipend. The Doukhobor contingent embarked for Cyprus.

Meanwhile, those who sincerely felt that Cyprus was a big mistake, cast about for other possible locations to which the Doukhobors could migrate. North America came into serious consideration, and plans were formulated to commission and dispatch an advance party to "feel out" the possibilities of locating in Canada. Accordingly, on September 1, 1898, Aylmer Maude, D. A. Hilkoﬀ (a non-Doukhobor, who had been banished to the Caucasus where he lived among the Doukhobors, understood them, and was acquainted with farming and suitable farm lands), Ivan Ivin with his wife and six children and Peter Mahartof and wife, sailed from Liverpool for Canada on the S. S. Vancouver.²

On arrival in Canada, Aylmer Maude and his entourage were eagerly received by the Canadian government. When one takes into consideration the fact that Canada was a very young nation possessing unlimited resources and tremendous possibilities--yet lacking the manpower to tap and exploit these resources--one can readily see why Canada welcomed the news that such a large group of people wished to settle en masse within her borders. For some years, Canada had been encouraging immigration, but her efforts in the years immediately preceding the Doukhobor immigration had met with

²Aylmer Maude, A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors (London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., c.1905), p. 39.

little success. The number of immigrants that had entered Canada in the year 1895 was but one-fifth of the number that had entered the country in 1891.³ Manifestly, it was welcome news that so many farmers desired to settle on Canada's vast unsettled lands. Hence, it was a relatively simple matter to obtain permission to immigrate and settle. What remained now, was the choice of a suitable location.

The first site investigated by the advance party was located near the city of Edmonton in the province of Alberta. Twelve townships⁴ of some of Canada's richest and most productive farming land were chosen for a site of location.

The happiness and satisfaction at discovering such a choice tract of land was soon to wane when it was discovered that this land was not available for Doukhobor settlement. There was at this time a great deal of public resentment towards the so-called "Galician" immigrants, many of whom had settled near this area. These "Galicians" who were of Ukrainian stock, had by their arrogance and general way of life incurred the resentment of the public and the press. Consequently, they were given a large share of publicity, most of it bad, which eventually precipitated a controversy in the Canadian Parliament, where a goodly measure of opposition sprang up from the ranks of the Progressive Conservative Party.⁵ The public and the Progressive Conservatives opposed

³John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), pp. 19-20.

⁴A township consists of thirty six square miles, divided into sections of one square mile, which in turn are divided into one-quarter sections of one hundred and sixty acres each.

⁵Maude, op. cit., p. 51.

any further settlement of Russian-ancestry immigrants in that area, regardless of their apparent desirable qualifications. The Doukhobors as well, had received bad publicity in Canadian and United States newspapers, which did nothing to alleviate the tense situation. Accordingly, when the investigating party returned to the Dominion Capitol at Ottawa with it's choice and decision, it was flatly refused by the Canadian government. Thus the Doukhobors met with their first defeat in Canada, when they were prohibited from settling near Edmonton on the tract of land they had chosen.

Less suitable, yet good locations were shortly selected in the Northwest Territories. Two tracts were located north of what is now the city of Yorkton, Saskatchewan, and a third was located between the present Saskatchewan cities of Saskatoon and Prince Albert. Colony number one, named the North or Thunder Hill Colony was located in the northeast corner of Assinibcia. Colony number two, named South Colony (with an annex named Devil's Lake Colony), was located eighteen miles southwest of Thunder Hill. Colony number three, was divided into the Duck Lake and Saskatoon settlements, also called the Prince Albert Colony.⁶ It is to be remembered that this colonization took place prior to 1905. In 1905, Saskatchewan became a Province of the Dominion of Canada, at which time the territories referred to were included in the Province. With this in view, the writer shall elect to refer to the entire settlement as the "Saskatchewan Settlement."

⁶Ibid., p. 53.

A generally favorable agreement pertaining to immigration and land settlement conditions was reached with the Canadian government. The following, are such conditions as outlined by Aylmer Maude⁷ who negotiated with government officials on behalf of the Doukhobors:

- 1) For each male over eighteen years of age, 160 acres of good land, subject to payment of an entrance fee of ten dollars, which payment could be deferred for three years;
- 2) Assistance by government interpreters, and accomodation in Government Immigration Halls, on first arrival in Canada; and,
- 3) A grant of one pound⁸ for each immigrant, man, woman, or child, reaching Winnipeg by June 30, 1899.

Additional stipulations relative to pending Doukhobor settlement in Canada, were, that entry for homesteads be made individually in the usual Canadian fashion, that vital statistics be supplied, that they conform to the laws of the country, and pay taxes. A very important feature of the agreement, which was of special concern to the Doukhobors, was this, that they were given the benefit of Canada's Militia Act which was on December 6, 1898 supplemented by an Order in Council to include the Doukhobors. Provisions of the Militia Act are the following:

Every person bearing a certificate from the society of Quakers, Mennonites, or Tunkers, and every inhabitant of Canada of any religious denomination, otherwise subject to military duty, who from the doctrines of his religion, is averse to bearing arms and refuses personal military service, shall be exempt from such service when balloted in time of peace or war, upon such conditions and under such regulations as the Governor in Council from time to time shall prescribe.⁹

⁷Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁸The English pound was valued at approximately \$4.86 in Canadian funds at that time.

⁹Maude, op. cit., p. 61.

The Homestead Law¹⁰ which caused much strife between the Doukhobors and the Canadian government in later years, should be considered briefly in order to shed light on the unhappy circumstances which issued therefrom. The Homestead Law provided that every settler must reside six months of each year on his quarter-section of 160 acres. Six months grace was allowed for those who entered applications in the fall of the year, whereas, in the case of foreigners, the period of grace was extended to one year. In order to "perfect" a title or deed to the land, fifteen acres must necessarily be under cultivation at the end of the third year. In the event a homesteader failed to meet such provisions, his entry was liable to cancellation by the Land Department, and another prospective settler could conceivably make entry for the same tract of land.

Plainly, the provisions set down by the government were economically feasible, lenient, protectory and considerate to a large degree, of the human conscience. No one affiliated with the pending immigration foresaw even a semblance of the contention, ill-will and general confusion that eventually came to pass. All concerned, were satisfied and happy. The Doukhobors in Russia were anxious to be on the move, lest permission to migrate be rescinded by the Russian authorities. The stage was set for the record-breaking migration to North America's shores.

In January of 1899, the curtain rang down on a huge scale production, as the S. S. Lake Huron sailed out of Batoum with her human cargo of

¹⁰Joseph Elkinton, The Doukhobors: Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada (Philadelphia: Ferris and Leach, c.1903), p. 212.

some two thousand Doukhobors. On the twenty-third day of the same month, the Lake Huron and her anxious cargo docked in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Four days later, the S. S. Lake Superior arrived with an additional two thousand. Each of these vessels made another voyage, with the result that by June of 1899 there were 7,363 Doukhobors in Canada.¹¹ Approximately twelve thousand Doukhobors who did not wish to emigrate remained in the Caucasus, and an additional 110 remained in Siberian exile. The total number of Doukhobors who had settled in Canada by the year 1899 included the thousand-odd Cyprus immigrants who were dissatisfied with the unsuitable climate of the Island, and migrated to Canada in May of 1899.¹²

An eye-witness account of the first Doukhobor arrival in Canada aboard the S. S. Lake Huron is related by Zubek and Solberg in Doukhobors at War. It was on Sunday, January 23, 1899, and

. . . crowding the rails were the entire 2,000 Doukhobor passengers, picturesque in their Sunday garb. Men and boys wore goatskin caps with the fur turned out and coats with the fur turned in. Women and girls had long, full skirts, brightly colored in reds and blues. Topping these were the dark homespun jackets and the various-hued shawls, the platokes. A closer look would have revealed the strong, massive build of both men and women. The older men were heavily bearded; the younger wore moustaches, trimmed to long tapering points. Their features were prominent, their eyes clear and alert. You might have interpreted from their expression that they were quite as curious about you as you were about them.¹³

Thus, Canadians had their initial sight of their country's newest settlers. To them, Canada extended an eager welcome and warm hospitality.

¹¹Maude, op. cit., p. 73.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 25.

Doubtless, not a single curious onlooker even dreamed of the strife and ill-will that lay in the future. The Doukhobors were received as future desirable citizens, but all too few of their number have to this day fulfilled that trust completely.

When the first contingent of Doukhobors arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, they did not disembark, but proceeded to St. John where they were transferred to the West coast of the continent. At St. John, the Doukhobors boarded the special Canadian Pacific Railway train and proceeded westward. In Winnipeg, they disembarked. Here the Doukhobors were largely warmly received in the huge Dominion Hotel. During their stay in Winnipeg, the Doukhobors settled down to a routine life of handicraft and hand-structures of tools and wagons, while they anxiously waited for word that they might safely proceed to their lands.

A group of three hundred Doukhobors proceeded from Winnipeg west of Winnipeg to Brandon. Rather than trying to find work there as they enroute were to their lands, these enterprising Doukhobors hired their services for the paltry stipend of fifty cents per day. This was well above the local rate. Consequently, it was not long that the anti-Doukhobor sentiment arose among the public, because prominent residents of Brandon were forced to either lower their rates or cease working. Anti-Doukhobor sentiment grew to such proportions that the residents of Brandon dispatched a complaint to Ottawa, in which they berated the government for bringing the Doukhobors to Canada, thus forcing laborers out of their jobs. When finally the anti-Doukhobor sentiment reached the stage where "Deal with the Doukhobors"

¹John F. Ridd and Patricia Jane Bellamy, *Doukhobors at War* (Toronto: The Canadian Press, c. 1963), p. 36.

CHAPTER IV

SASKATCHEWAN SETTLEMENT

When the first contingent of Doukhobors arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, they did not disembark, but proceeded to St. John where railway transportation to the West awaited them. At St. John, the Doukhobors boarded five special Canadian Pacific Railway trains and proceeded westward. In Winnipeg, they detrained. Here the Doukhobors were temporarily quartered in the huge Immigration Halls. During their stay in Winnipeg, the Doukhobors settled down to a routine life of handicraft and hand-manufacture of tools and wagons, while they anxiously waited for spring when they might safely proceed to their lands.

A group of three hundred Doukhobors proceeded some hundred miles west of Winnipeg to Brandon. Rather than lying idle until such time as they could move to their lands, these industrious Doukhobors hired their services for the paltry stipend of fifty cents per day. This was considerably lower than the current wage. Consequently, it was but a short time until anti-Doukhobor sentiment arose among the public, because permanent residents of Brandon were forced to either lower their rates or cease working. Anti-Doukhobor sentiment grew to such proportions that the residents of Brandon dispatched a complaint to Ottawa, in which they berated the government for bringing the Doukhobors to Canada, thus forcing laborers out of their jobs. When finally the anti-Doukhobor sentiment reached the stage where "Down with the Doukhobors"¹

¹John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c. 1952), p. 30.

placards were paraded down the streets of Brandon, someone with foresight took the pains to explain the situation to the bewildered Doukhobors, giving the reasons for resentment and suggesting that Doukhobors raise their rates to the customary and current wage. The Doukhobors readily complied, and the miniature warfare ceased. Nevertheless, a few seeds of resentment had been sown, which conceivably could have sprouted into full-blown antagonism.

Meanwhile, a group of the younger Doukhobor men advanced north of Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where they set up a rough winter camp and began preparations for the pending arrival of the entire group. They labored diligently as they erected their rough-hewn homes. When five homes had been erected, forty members of the party moved south to the next location where the same preparations were carried out. Consequently, when spring arrived, there had at least been some provision made for sheltering the homeless Doukhobors.

At long last, spring arrived, and the anxious Doukhobors proceeded to their lands. Two hundred and seventy thousand, four hundred and eighty acres of prairie land had been set aside for 7,363 members of the sect, 1,500 of whom were men.² As may well be expected, the first year of settlement was not without its grave difficulties and privations. The land had to be cleared and broken, homes had to be erected, tools and machinery had to be purchased as did food and other indispensables. Pecuniary funds were scarce. Charitable friends and sympathizers took

²Joseph Flinton, The Doukhobors: Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada (Philadelphia: Ferris and Leach, c.1903), p. 212.

it upon themselves to help alleviate the acute shortages that prevailed, and the government supplied seed for the first year. Most notable among the charitable friends were the Quakers who sent thirty thousand dollars to the Doukhobors.³ However, the benevolence and charity fell far short of the Doukhobor's needs.

Fortunately, the railway was being extended into Doukhobor territory. This supplied a means whereby the Doukhobors were able to earn additional money. But it also caused a rather serious problem, because a vast majority of the able-bodied males treked off to work on the railway grades, while manpower at home was reduced to a minimum. Likewise, the few draw animals which they had the good fortune to possess were almost constantly occupied in transporting indispensable foodstuffs and supplies from Yorkton to the colonies, thus rendering the situation yet more serious.

Consequently, an added burden was placed on the women and children. They worked feverishly building homes, plastering houses, clearing land, planting minute gardens. When the situation reached the stage where draw animals were not available to draw the plows, women in teams of twenty or more, assembled themselves in harness and performed the work of horses and oxen.

A semblance of progress soon began to manifest itself among the industrious and frugal Doukhobors. With the wages that men earned from "outside" sources--the villages that now dotted the colonies--the land that had been cleared--and the eager expectation of next year's crop--

³Aylmer Maude, A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., c.1905), p. 150.

there was a hint of pending economic stability. In addition, the Doukhobors were becoming orientated to their new surroundings and homes, and the fear of the unknown, which had haunted them for so long, was rapidly disappearing.

However, life in their new-found home was not to be a bed of roses. Trouble began to rear its ugly head. Internal disputes and contentions began to arise in ever-increasing numbers. In addition, pressure was brought to bear upon them by the government as a result of their non-cooperation pertaining to vital statistics and homestead provisions.

Internally, they disputed the right of individual and communal ownership of land. It is to be remembered that prior to the leadership of Savelly Kapoustin at "Milky Waters," and then later under the administration of Peter V. Verigin in the "Met Mountains" colony, the Doukhobors had always practiced individual ownership.⁴ It had been their sincere intention, however, to practice pure communism in Canada, but strife arose when individuals questioned the advisability and practicality of such an arrangement. One can readily see the reasons why such an arrangement would become subject to question. In the first place, the Prince Albert Colony was separated from the North and South Colonies by some three hundred miles. A shortage of draw animals, tools and machinery caused untold confusion and argument. Which village, or even which colony, shall benefit from the use of this particular horse or this particular plow on a given day? Inequality of distribution was another factor. Some villages were blessed with more money and relatively

⁴Supra.

adequate means, while in others a pitiful shortage prevailed. Many Doukhobor wage-earners were inclined to withhold part or all of their earnings from the central treasury. Consequently, there was much ill-feeling, questioning and contention. As a result, many of the Prince Albert colonists became independent and practiced individual ownership regardless of whether the group liked it or not. On the other hand, there were the dis-hards, the overly zealous and radically faithful, who blindly and foolishly followed Verigin and insisted on pure communism, yet were unable to make it function effectively.

In the spring of 1900, little more than a year after their arrival in Canada, a schism took place within the sect. Roughly, two thousand members separated themselves from the communal system and took up individual homesteads.⁵ The vast majority of these individualists were located in the Prince Albert Colony. These individualists formed the nucleus of the Independent Doukhobors society which exists to this day.⁶ This left roughly five thousand remaining Doukhobors who adhered to the community, possibly three thousand of which, according to one authority⁷ would have preferred individual or family ownership, but considered it impractical at this stage.

The next several years were spent in considerable confusion by the Doukhobors. General ill-feeling and non-compliance with Canadian government regulations increased. Aylmer Haude summed it up this way:

⁵Haude, op. cit., p. 184.

⁶Infra.

⁷Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 44.

First they refused to make entry for homesteads according to Canadian law and custom. Next, they objected to register births, deaths, and allow official cognizance to be taken of their marriages and divorces. Next, some objected to paying the light Canadian road tax, almost the only tax they were called on to pay. Next, they refused to accept settlement of land difficulty on terms they had proposed. Next, became evident they themselves did not know what they wanted.⁸

Into the midst of this confusion came Peter V. Verigin's letters of 1902. They were written it seems for his own amusement, and never intended to reach his people. In these letters, Verigin expounded his views of a Utopia and a "back to the Garden of Eden philosophy."⁹ He condemned the use of manufactured articles, of metals, clothing, horses and cattle, and foolishly enough he condemned even the cultivation of land. The following are some choice excerpts from Verigin's letters that were published by the Free Age Press and abridged by Aylmer Haude:

To agree to all the demands of Caesar's organization, means to take part in their doings; and their doings we see are not good. Money we consider ourselves bound to return to them. . . as much as they may demand . . . because these tokens are devised by them.

I admit the possibility of advising not to work physically, and yet to be sufficiently fed (obtain first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all the rest will be added unto you), . . . People should begin to preach peace and goodwill, which are bound up with abstinence. Plenty of corn exists, if only avarice were diminished. The earth freed from the violence of human hands, would begin to abound with all that is ordained for it. I do not even imagine that mankind would suffer want were it to submit to such a theory, for, feeding moderately, the catables now in existence would suffice mankind for a hundred years, and within a hundred years the earth would have time to clothe itself completely and return to its primitive condition. And humanity, together with the spiritual stature lost by Adam and Eve, would regain an earthly paradise.

⁸Haude, op. cit., p. 211.

⁹Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 48.

It is important for me to know: in order to live rightly. . . should we keep cattle? . . . For it is very natural that if fruits exist, man should feel on them (that is my ultimate conviction).

If we cannot get on . . . without knives, then we shall never free ourselves from the power of contemporary civilization . . . If all humanity began to live peaceably and quietly in huts, and still need an axe, then they would again return to the above-mentioned: that is to the vines. You may say that even in mines one may lead a peaceful and tranquil life. I reply, "That man was created not for physical existence, but for spiritual."

And therefore, in my opinion, man need not act, but need only observe and admire what exists.

"Take up thy cross and follow me," and to follow Christ - we must live as he lived, and we see that Christ did no physical work, nor did the Apostles. And if it is supposed that such a life is only possible for a limited number of people - that again is incorrect. Is it conceivable that Christ called the Apostles to such a life and then, seeing the whole or the half of humanity following, would have said "No, there are too many of you?" Perfection, or holiness, cannot be regarded as only meant for exceptional people: it is the portion of every man. That the Apostles and Christ wore clothes and ate bread was natural, for there were plenty of clothes and bread, and (one must add) even Christ and the Apostles were not able, all at once, to go naked.

In order to be true followers of Christ, it is chiefly necessary to go and preach the Gospel of truth, and one may beg bread for the body. Remember that the Apostles, passing through the field, "plucked the ears of corn and ate." If any wish to labor, let them do so; but our duty is to labor only in Christ's service.

From the fact that our earth borrows life from the sun, I think that the nearer we individually may be to the sun, the better it will be in all respects . . . I consider, the proper place of residence to be . . . where the sun, sending its beneficent beams on all that lives, at the same time will influence the brain of man with its vital energy . . . Man employing food raised by an abundance of solar heat, as for instance, raspberries, strawberries, and in general, so to say, tender fruits - his organism will be formed, as it were of energy itself, because tender fruits, I suppose contain in themselves very much, as it were, of compressed solar ether, that is to say, warmth-energy . . . Feeding on food that grows, and, as far as possible, on fruits, I see to be advantageous already in this respect, that I shall consume into myself more solar heat, which is energy. All in consequence of that I hope even to be wiser.

True Christianity from time immemorial has been persecuted because it is harmful to any and every governmental structure. Let the people carry out the saying, "If anyone smites thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other," what will follow? The completest ruin. Ultimately, of course the complete unification of the nations would result, but people fear to trust one another.¹⁰

One can well understand how such philosophy, coming from a "divine" leader, would raise havoc with minds already saturated with confusion. There were the overly zealous among the Doukhobers who readily and without reservation accepted these views as verbally and divinely inspired. Verigin's "promised land" was a beautiful vision, which some of his followers foolishly and blindly believed could become a reality. The idea spread like wild-fire across the prairies. Many were prepared to leave immediately in search of the "promised land." As a result of these letters and the fanatical views they contained, greater tension was provoked within the sect, that culminated in another schism. The Utopians became known as the "mad" brothers, while they in turn looked askance at the "bad" brothers.

Plans began to materialize for a pilgrimage to the "promised land." Ottawa was petitioned to remove the fanatics to this "promised land." Needless to say, the petition was ignored by the federal government. Now the Doukhobers began to confiscate many necessities of life. Animals were liberated, leather goods such as shoes and harness, buttons and metal fasteners all fell prey to the confiscation and were burned on a huge pyre. The money which they possessed was turned over to the nearest immigration officer, as the fanatics "rendered unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's."¹¹

¹⁰Maude, op. cit., pp. 224-26.

¹¹Cf. Mt. 22:21 and Mk. 12:17.

The climax of fanaticism was reached in the pilgrimage itself. From village to village the pilgrims marched, bearing only their clothes, some bread and apples. The majority were bare-headed and bare-footed. On October 25, 1902, the last village was left behind as the trek pointed towards Winnipeg. Three days later, the police interfered at Yorkton, where 1,060 women and children were not allowed to continue. The male members of the pilgrimage somehow managed to elude the police and marched on. By November 3, they encountered snow. Because they had no shelter, and because their only food was what they could glean from a few ears of corn on the fields, they were soon quite starved and demented. Finally, the authorities took action, and on November 8, after a demonstration of passive resistance by the Doukhobors, they were herded as cattle onto special trains and sent back to Yorkton, from where they eventually dispatched to their villages. All told, 450 men remained to the bitter end of the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage was over, but dissention continued to exist between the "mad" and "bad" brothers, until Verigin arrived on the scene. When he arrived the situation took on a new aspect. But again, seeds had been sown, seeds that grew eventually into the most fanatical demonstrations, seeds from which grew the Sons of Freedom¹² faction within the Doukhobor sect.

Autumn of 1902 proved a blessed season for the Doukhobors, especially those who adhered faithfully to Peter V. Verigin. It was then that the long-awaited news of Verigin's liberation from Siberian exile was joyously received. Well can we imagine the excitement and the feverish preparations that raged through the villages. To get a glimpse of the

¹²Infra.

picture one need only imagine the state of affairs that would prevail if Jesus Christ were to arrive in a colony of faithful and devout Christians. Peter V. Verigin, Petushka,¹³ was coming. December 22, 1902, was the great and memorable day. Verigin arrived in Winnipeg. Needless to say, ecstatic rejoicing and celebration followed his arrival. The Doukthobor Messiah had arrived, and "Christmas was celebrated figuratively if not literally."¹⁴

In short order Peter V. Verigin proceeded to restore order and harmony among his people. This he accomplished to a considerable degree by showing tact and good business judgement. However, Verigin was not as straightforward as it seemed. Concerning the recent pilgrimage to the "promised land," Verigin, to use a popular phrase, "played both ends against the middle." When discussing the matter with non-pilgrims, he berated the pilgrims for their antics. The pilgrims themselves he commended, and extended his admiration and approval to them. At the same time he admonished them to settle down, for they had accomplished sufficient to prove their zeal and spiritual strength. For the pilgrims, this was a moral victory, while for those who declined to participate in the ill-fated trek, a practical victory was won. In this way Verigin succeeded in some measure to repair the breach that had been caused by the fanatical move. On the other hand, his two-faced methods provoked doubts in many minds. Many of his followers began to doubt

¹³Meaning, "Messiah."

¹⁴Zubak and Solberg, op. cit., p. 59.

Verigin's divine leadership as well as his sincerity and interest in the group.

In spite of this, economic prosperity became evident under Verigin's administration. In addition, some Doukhobors began to make entries for land, give vital statistics, pay the road tax, and even made arrangements with the government to build roads themselves. Outwardly, it seemed that at last the Doukhobors would cooperate with the government and become an economically stable group and prove to become good citizens of their new country.

But the fanatics remained. They were determined to put the philosophy of Verigin's letters into practice. Accordingly, in 1903, another attempt was made to seek out the "promised land." As they marched from village to village a new feature was added. They began to strip off their clothes. The pilgrimage was short-lived however. Verigin disapproved and notified the police, who promptly put a halt to the nude procession.

Trouble began to brew afresh when the government appointed a Commission to tour the Doukhobor colonies. The duties of the Commission were to determine whether all Doukhobors had complied with the Homestead Act, to give a final word of caution pertaining to the homestead laws, and to report all non-compliers. Verigin, sensed that trouble was pending, and passed along instructions that Doukhobors were not to sign for land independently, and then conveniently decided to visit New York, after which he sailed for Europe and visited in Russia. During his perfectly-timed absence, he received woeful tales from his adherents, concerning the situation at home. In June of 1907, the government, on

the strength of the Commission's findings, and after repeated attempts to enforce the law, issued eviction notices and over one hundred thousand acres of Doukhobor farm land reverted back to the government.¹⁵ During the process, roughly, one thousand Doukhobors signed as Independents which increased the ranks of this group to approximately three thousand. Those who were the victims of the confiscation, were permitted to retain fifteen acres per family, which was hardly adequate on which to earn a decent living.

Shortly thereafter, Verigin returned from Europe. As a result of the land confiscation, he found his people more closely knit together, and clinging to him more faithfully. Collective Doukhobor sentiment was that they had been robbed by the evil government. So there was greater cohesion and faithfulness to Verigin within the sect. In spite of this, there was restlessness within the Doukhobor camp. Considerable tension existed between the Independents who did not suffer from land confiscation, and the faithful who now had but fifteen acres per family. In addition, the number of fanatical Sons of Freedom was increasing, while doubt and suspicion reigned on all sides.

By August of the same year, the volcanic stage was set for another fanatical eruption. Those who were responsible for this situation, well remembered Verigin's promise of four years prior to this time. He had promised that if necessity demanded it, they would look for the "promised land." In the eyes of the fanatics, the demand was never greater. The time was now. The result was another pilgrimage.

Eighty Sons of Freedom marched south over the same route which the first pilgrimage had taken. By November 1, 1907, the parade had

¹⁵Ibid., p. 71.

reached Fort William, Ontario, where it bogged down permanently. An old Anglican parsonage was rented, for which the Sons of Freedom dutifully paid their dues from monies earned at odd jobs during the winter. The parsonage became their headquarters. In view of the fact that the events that took place during the pilgrim's tenure in Fort William shed light on later Sons of Freedom practices, they will be given brief consideration here.

In Fort William, a certain Boris Sachatoff who was a Russian Jew and former watch mender in New York, became the pilgrim's self-appointed spokesman and leader. Zubek and Solberg give a picturesque characterization of him:

He was of course not a Doukhover but no one excepting the Sons knew that. He imitated their dress (more often lack of dress), grew a beard, became a vegetarian and otherwise conducted himself like one of them. He was a verbose individual and liked nothing better than to philosophize on anything from politics to love. . . . With long hair and flowing beard, his alert and quizzical brown eyes seeing out from beneath huge tufts of eyebrows, he would address the citizens of Ft. William in Russian-accented English, expounding the philosophy of "his" people. The amused audience threw question after question which he answered impressively while thoroughly enjoying their amazement.¹⁶

On New Year's Day of 1908, Fort William witnessed the strangest New Year's parade on record. It was a Sons of Freedom parade, and it consisted of Doukhobors marching along the streets of Fort William completely devoid of all clothing, save the rubbers on their feet. When apprehended by the police, they offered this explanation:

On their New Year's Eve the English Christians drink vodka and shout all night. We Doukhobors neither drink nor smoke;¹⁷ we are

¹⁶Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁷Infra.

temperate in our habits, our food and drink. But when we go for a walk in the clothes God gave us, these English Christians are upset as though we had done wrong. What is the matter with them anyway?¹⁶

The parade was brought to a halt and the participants were reprimanded, but the Sons of Freedom had won another victory. Their belief that nudity was an effective means of protest was consolidated. How right they were will be borne out later in this study.

The spring of 1908 brought another wave of Sons of Freedom nudity. It seemed that with the warm rays of sunshine, the green trees and grass, and the blooming flowers the Sons of Freedom acquired an irresistible urge to sun themselves in the nude. They had little or no regard for the public and its sentiment, be it pro or con. The inevitable result was the arrest of nineteen Sons of Freedom, ten men and nine women, who were sentenced to a six-month prison term. Another result was that the province of Ontario began to issue complaints to the federal government concerning the Sons of Freedom. "Send them back where they belong," was the hue and cry of Ontario. A struggle ensued between the Province and the federal government, in which the Province emerged victorious. The Sons of Freedom were shipped back to Saskatchewan, where unfortunately they became the responsibility of no one. Verigin vehemently denounced them to both the government and the press, and refused to have anything to do with the noxious faction. At the same time however, he slyly avoided any reference to his "back to the Garden of Eden" philosophy which was responsible for the existing situation.

¹⁶Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

Consequently, there was now in the Sons of Freedom a sect within a sect, the extreme "left" wing, bent on realizing to the fullest extent, the idle philosophy of a leader who betrayed and rejected them completely. There was trouble on the horizon. Something had to be done in order to salvage the temperate and level-headed members of the sect. There was danger that they would identify themselves either with the Independents or the Sons of Freedom. Verigin frowned on both factions. It was a perplexing problem for the leader. However, Verigin proved to have the answer to this perplexing problem.

CHAPTER V

PART I: BRITISH COLUMBIA SETTLEMENT

Under the Leadership of Peter Vasilovich Verigin

Peter Vasilovich Verigin's solution to the perplexing problem that confronted him, was a migration with his faithful following, to the province of British Columbia. Several factors served to influence such a decision on his part.

One of the chief factors which influenced Verigin's decision to migrate, was the fact that disintegration had already taken place within the group, and was steadily on the increase. More and more community members were becoming Independent and signing for their lands individually, at the same time refusing to share with the community. Relative factors, such as the antics of the Sons of Freedom and the confiscation of Doukhobor lands, played an important role also. Government action had been drastic and caused considerable ill-feeling and alienation on the part of the Doukhobors. Even though much of the Doukhobor land had already reverted back to the government, there was danger of losing that which remained. The government continued to apply pressure with respect to the Homestead Act¹ and vital statistics. The faithful continued in their obstinate refusal to comply. Something was bound to happen.

An additional and prime factor influencing Verigin's decision to migrate west, was the fact that education had found its way into the Doukhobor colonies. A relatively large number of Independents were send-

¹supra.

ing their children to schools which the Quakers had established in their colony. Verigin quickly realized that secular education could and would have a devastating influence on his philosophy. To increase the danger from the educational quarter, the Saskatchewan government was letting it be known that additional schools would be established throughout the Doukhobor colonies, and that education would eventually become compulsory. Undoubtedly, the education question as such as any other, influenced Verigin's decision to relocate in some place of seclusion where no government would interfere.

Consequently, he set out for the western province of British Columbia, to see what could be accomplished in the way of purchasing land outright. By purchasing land outright, he could avoid the objectionable Homestead Act and its consequences. His search for the "promised land" brought him to the Kootenay region of southern British Columbia.

Satisfied that this sparsely populated mountain region would well serve as the "promised land," Verigin took an option to purchase some land and returned to his colonies in Saskatchewan. He ignored completely the heretic Independents of the Prince Albert Colony, and unfolded his bestific vision of the "promised land" to the Thunder Hill and South Colony Doukhobors, who were highly impressed with Verigin's account.² They rejoiced at the prospects of a new home, where the summers are hot, the winters cool but not cold, where rainfall is bounteous, and where

²Verigin's adherents from the Prince Albert Colony had prior to his departure for British Columbia moved their families and possessions to the Thunder Hill and South Colonies in anticipation of an exodus to the "promised land."

if that should fail, the numberless mountain streams could well serve to irrigate the land.

Leaving an enthusiastic following in his wake, Verigin returned to British Columbia with an advance expedition of Doukhobors. Reminiscent of the advance expedition to Yorkton when preparations for the Saskatchewan settlement were made³ they began to clear some of the heavily-timbered land on which Verigin had taken an option to purchase, near Nelson British Columbia. Shortly thereafter, another party advanced west and south to the town of Grand Forks just north of the international boundary, where they cut timber for houses of a second colony. When the advance preparations were made, Verigin, in 1909,⁴ took up his option on the first tract of land. The first colony was named Brilliant.

In order to finance the British Columbia Settlement, Verigin had borrowed one hundred thousand dollars from a loan company, for which he pledged Community land in Saskatchewan as security.⁵ In addition, he acquired a sizeable sum of money from the central community treasury in Saskatchewan, and persuaded substantial amounts from the pockets of migrating Doukhobors.

In 1909, the first contingent, numbering eight hundred, left Saskatchewan on a special train. Arriving at Brilliant and Grand Forks colonies, they immediately set themselves to the task of clearing land, planting vegetables and building houses. Once again, as they had during

³Supra.

⁴J. F. C. Wright, Slava Bohu: The Story of the Doukhobors (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, c.1940), p. 252.

⁵Ibid.

the Saskatchewan Settlement, Doukhobors showed their enthusiasm and ability in rendering virgin soil suitable for bearing, and in providing themselves with shelter and a livelihood. The year 1910, witnessed the influx of another sizeable contingent of Doukhobors from Saskatchewan. In the same year, the industrious Doukhobors built a sawmill, planted fruit trees, and purchased a jam factory from the Kootenay Preserving Company in nearby Nelson.⁶ Under Doukhobor administration the factory prospered and easily produced and outsold its former capacity. The jam produced was named "K. C. Brand"⁷ a trade name that was to become famous with western-Canadian housewives.

In 1911, there was another influx of over one thousand men, women and children. Much of the heavily-timbered land had by this time been transformed into an orchard. In addition, practical and relatively comfortable homes had been built. A large and commodious ranchhouse was selected as a home for Peter V. Verigin. Pure communism was in vogue at this time. The people lived in communities as they worked and shared together. The people were happy, healthy and industrious. Although fruit farming was an innovation for the Doukhobors, it is said that their orchards were among the cleanest and most productive in the country. Doukhobor lands, the titles to which were registered in Verigin's name, and which he turned over to the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood in his last will and testament, had rapidly increased in value, and by this time half the total purchase price had been paid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

New colonies were beginning to dot the landscapes of southern British Columbia. From the two mother-colonies at Brilliant and Grand Forks, settlements spread to Champion Creek, Glade, Pass Creek, and Crescent Valley. By autumn of 1912, there were some five thousand Doukhobors in British Columbia, leaving approximately one third of the Community Doukhobors in Saskatchewan. Of this number, approximately seven hundred were school-age children who had never had the benefit of formal education, and whose knowledge of the English language was for all practical purposes nil.⁶

In spite of illiteracy, a new and prosperous empire, a veritable nation within a nation had been founded by the Doukhobors. Unfortunately, prosperity was not to continue. All would have remained well with the Doukhobors, were it not for their belief that human governments are evil. Therefore, they would not and could not show any allegiance to the government. It would have been well with the Doukhobors if they had conceded to cooperate with the government, or if the government in neglect of its duties would have been content to leave things as they were. But every government must necessarily have its legislations, be they evil or otherwise. Citizens or non-citizens (as in the case of the Doukhobors), who are under the jurisdiction of that particular government are obliged to abide by its laws; likewise in British Columbia. Formal education and registration of vital statistics, the two factors which caused contention between sect and state, were compulsory according to British Columbia government legislation. When the Doukhobors failed, and then simply and utterly refused to comply with these

⁶Ibid., pp. 253-54.

laws, it naturally led to attempts at law-enforcement by the government. When attempts to enforce the law failed, there arose a series of contentions between the Doukhobors and the British Columbia government which exist to this day.

In Grand Forks, the school authorities began to apply pressure, and for a time a few Doukhobor children attended schools. In short order, however, the attendance dwindled, and within a year died out completely; likewise at Brilliant. Peter Verigin erected a school at Brilliant on the pretence that Doukhobors were willing to abide by the laws of the Province. This Verigin school was attended by selected children only. After one term, the school was closed with the excuse, "the Doukhobors do not wish to send their children to school."⁹ Resultant to the entire situation was this, that four Doukhobors were sentenced to three months in prison for violation of the school legislation, and the "Births, Deaths, Marriages and Registration Act." These four men became the first, but by far not the last Doukhobor "martyrs" in British Columbia.

Before proceeding farther, something should be said with respect to the organization of the Doukhobor villages in British Columbia. As mentioned, pure communism was practiced. The community or "commune" existed on the principle, "for each according to his needs, from each according to his abilities."¹⁰ All members of the commune, when at home,

⁹Ibid., p. 254.

¹⁰Vladimir Snesarev, "The Doukhobors of British Columbia" (Unpublished Thesis, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1931), p. 45.

were provided with shelter, flour, potatoes, and salt by its central office. Each house¹¹ provided a sufficient supply of green vegetables and fruit for its own use. An annual, predetermined stipend was allotted to each member of the commune. The allotted amount was not stationary, but varied from year to year, as well as from person to person, in keeping with the principle upon which the commune existed. For instance, different amounts were allotted to able-bodied men, widows, and old men respectively. Any "outside" wage money was turned over to the central office, and the wage earner received his annual stipend and no more.

Under this system of administration the Doukhobors thrived and prospered for several years. However, abuses, inefficiency and wastefulness finally precipitated a breakdown of the system. As a result, a marked degree of disintegration made its way into the communities. Some members struck out on their own and became independent, perhaps because they were unwilling to share the "outside" profits, and because Verigin's needs seemed to be in great excess of his abilities. Others, dissatisfied with both the community and Independent life, drifted into the Sons of Freedom fold.

Non-Doukhaber neighbors could not but admire the sectarians for their industry and prosperity, yet they could not (and understandably so), see eye to eye with them concerning their views toward formal education, vital statistics and allegiance to government. A steady file of complaints was received by the British Columbia government to the effect that the Doukhobors were not sending their children to school, and failed to

¹¹infra.

manifest attitudes that would make them desirable citizens. Consequently, the "Royal Commission on Doukhobors of 1912"¹² was appointed by the government for the purpose of studying the entire Doukhobor situation. Another stated purpose of the Commission was to render suggestions and recommendations toward a solution to the existing problems. An unwise choice, in the opinion of most authorities, was that of Mr. Blakenore as Commissioner. Under his commissionership there followed a series of hearings and investigations, at which Peter V. Verigin rendered evasive and ambiguous testimony. For example, he testified that in the original immigration agreement with the Canadian government, the stated conditions were that each immigrant he required to pay only the ten dollar stipend for his homestead.¹³ He maintained that no other conditions and bonds were attached. It is true, that the illiterate Doukhobors probably misunderstood the terms of the agreement, but Verigin himself was sufficiently literate to understand them. He was well aware of the fact that the agreement contained terms in addition to payment of the ten dollar entry fee.

The question of military exemption also arose during these hearings. Some officials were minded to deprive the Doukhobors of this privilege which the Canadian government had granted them. In this matter, Verigin, to serve his own cause and that of the community Doukhobors, played both ends against the middle as one day he would assure his adherents that they would continue to remain exempt from military service, and the

¹²Wright, op. cit., p. 259.

¹³Supra.

next day assured the government that Independents were no longer to be considered Doukhobors and therefore not entitled to exemption. Every consideration that arose during the course of the hearings received the same treatment from Verigin. The upshot of the entire procedure was this, that Commissioner Blakemore recommended cancellation of the Order in Council¹⁴ exempting Doukhobors from military service. He berated them to the effect that they never would become good and desirable citizens, and he suggested rather imperatively that they abandon their traditional pacifism and serve in the army when called upon.

The net result was this: the government had wasted huge sums of money because the Commission failed to accomplish its intended purpose. The entire procedure caused increased allegiance to Verigin where the community people were concerned, while at the same time alienating many of the Independents because of Verigin's dual strategy concerning the military exemption question. Another result was further alienation of all Doukhobors in their sympathy, or lack of it, toward Canadian institutions.

World War I caused much excitement and tension within the Doukhobor fold. It served however, as a lever in the hands of Verigin, with which he pried a considerable number of Independents from their substantial holdings back into the communal fold. To serve this purpose, he threatened them with conscription into the military forces as the inevitable result of remaining Independent. The large majority of Independents did not however avail themselves of Verigin's dubious protection. But

¹⁴supra.

there was nevertheless much anxiety and tension among them. Finally, in 1917, they formed a society of their own with Peter G. Makaroff¹⁵ as leader. The Society of Independent Doukhobors issued cards to their members which identified them in the following manner: "This is to certify that is a member of the Society of Independent Doukhobors, otherwise known as Doukhobors, and as such is specifically exempted from the effects of the Military Service Act of 1917."¹⁶ These identification cards were honored by the authorities. Thus the Order in Council¹⁷ exempting all Doukhobors from military service was upheld. Because of the war, public feeling was at this time at an all time high. Consequently there was much public resentment toward the Doukhobors and their military exemption, especially toward the Independents, many of whom had substantial holdings, large new homes, automobiles, trucks and various other modern conveniences and luxuries. One can understand why the public felt as it did toward the Doukhobors. Son after son marched off to war and never returned, while these well-to-do Independents stayed at home and thrived on high prices and labor shortages.

During the war, the community showed great prosperity. The war itself with its high prices for agricultural products and labor, both of which could be supplied by the community, was almost solely responsible. The time had also come for Doukhobor expansion; for community membership

¹⁵A Saskatchewan Independent Doukhobor, also an attorney.

¹⁶Wright, op. cit., p. 269.

¹⁷Supra.

in British Columbia was now nearly five thousand eight hundred. In addition, there was ill-feeling towards Verigin from Independent sources, which could easily penetrate and infest the communities. Because of these factors, Verigin decided that something should be done, because his position as recognized leader of all Doukhobors was in jeopardy. Consequently, in 1917 Verigin organized and incorporated under a Dominion Charter, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood Limited, with a capital of one million dollars. One million shares were issued to Peter Verigin himself, and thirteen directors on whom he could rely for continued adherence and faithfulness.¹⁸

The excesses of Peter V. Verigin, together with his wild dreams of expanding his "empire," and the cessation of hostilities, brought decline and indebtedness to the communities. Problems with the government, arising out of refusal to comply with its legislation, were increasing rather than being solved. Further agitation was precipitated when in November of 1923 a government school was mysteriously burned to the ground. This school burning, was the first in a series of school burnings in Doukhobor districts of both British Columbia and Saskatchewan. The following year, three government schools and Verigin's residence in Brilliant were put to the torch. Who was responsible? To this day there is no conclusive proof. There was a wide range of feeling on the matter. The fact that Verigin's house fell prey to the torch, caused many to accept the version that Sons of Freedom were responsible. Verigin himself placed the blame on Sons of Freedom. However, he was unable to

¹⁸Wright, op. cit., p. 268.

muster sufficient evidence to secure a conviction in court. Consequently, the fire, like others, went down in history as "destruction of unknown origin."¹⁹

It was becoming quite a task for Verigin to keep his people together. For that reason, he became a rather frequent commuter between British Columbia and Saskatchewan. He also made frequent excursions between the towns in the Kootenays, on the Canadian Pacific Kootenay Express.

One such excursion proved to be his last and fatal trip. On the night of October 28, 1924, Verigin boarded the train at Brilliant station, westbound through the mountains. Zubek and Solberg in Doukhobors at War give the following account of the ill-fated journey:

With a grinding of brakes the Canadian Pacific Kootenay Express began to ease its way westward out of Farron station. The conductor swung up on the last car. The cold night air was good. He took several deep breaths and closed the door. It was good to be on the way again, too. Soon he would be home. These night trips were rough on a man his age.

Accompanied by a trainman he made his way down the train. The sleepers were quiet. No, no new passengers. He hadn't seen anyone get on but he had been exchanging comments with the station agent and might have missed one. In the day coach twenty passengers dozed. Nothing new there, either. . . . One fat man, of greater girth than height, sat bolt upright with hands clasped over a giant bay window, head tipped back at an angle against the cushions, snoring loudly on inspiration and with an odd whistle on expiration. The conductor studied him for a minute, an amused grin spreading over his face, then shook him gently. As he leaned back over his shoulder to gauge the effectiveness of the shake, he looked into the bearded face of Peter Verigin. Verigin was also asleep. The conductor dimmed the lights and swung the door of the coach shut behind him.

Seconds later a reverberating roar split the quiet of the night. Glass and wood splinters scattered. The train stopped with a

¹⁹John F. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), p. 104.

jerk throwing the conductor off balance. Getting to his feet, painfully he looked toward the door he had just left, and the door seemed to be coming in to meet him. It fell with a crash at his feet. He stumbled back to the day coach and stopped in amazement.

For a second the interior of the day coach was barely visible for the lights had gone out. Tongues of flame licked their way up the base of the upholstered seats midway down the coach, giving more illumination for each passing millisecond. The passengers seemed to have disappeared. A few, like bundles, leaned at odd angles. Other passengers had been blown through the place where the roof had once been and through a gash in the north wall. Flames spread and seemed to engulf the coach at once, belching out fiery tongues and volumes of smoke into the corridors and upward into the starry sky.

Peter Verigin was found a hundred feet from the wreck where he had been blown by the explosion. One leg was almost cut from his body. A gash in his side was still bleeding profusely. His bearded face looked upward toward the cold stars and the mountain tops that he would never see again.²⁰

A month's-long investigation followed. Various clues were uncovered, but no conclusive evidence was found. The most significant clue discovered was an alarm clock attached to a battery, intimating that a makeshift time-bomb was the death weapon. The verdict of the coroner's jury at the inquest concluded that death had come as a result of "powerful explosives placed in the coach through ignorance or deliberately."²¹

Verigin was buried in traditional fashion²² and a huge mausoleum was erected over his grave. Needless to say, there was a huge and mournful gathering at his burial. After the six week's mourning period, the traditional second service was held, when Verigin's soul passed from his body.²³

²⁰Ibid., pp. 105-6.

²¹Ibid., p. 106.

²²Infra.

²³Infra.

One can well imagine the hysteria that prevailed in the Doukhobor communities. The Doukhobor Messiah was dead. There was great mourning on the part of many, yet secret relief and even joy on the part of others. Mingled with this was a feeling of uneasiness. Amongst the sobs and sighs of the mourners there was also the whispered gossip that the government had killed Petushka. Furthermore, there was a new question now. Who will be our new leader? There were mixed emotions on the subject. Some favored his son Peter Petrovich Verigin. Others felt that a woman might do a better job, for had not Loukeria Kalmikova of the Wet Mountains colony been one of their best leaders? Still others wanted no leader at all. Notable among these was a vast majority of the Saskatchewan Doukhobors.

A conspiracy to place a certain Anastasia Holubeova, Peter Verigin's favorite consort, into the hereditary office, arose. Anastasia was now living in Alberta, with some five hundred members of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood upon a tract of choice growing land near Cowley and Lundbreck.²⁴ Verigin had purchased this tract of land in the early 'twenties. The entire colony supported Anastasia, and threatened to secede from the Brotherhood if she was not put into office.

However, there was a growing feeling that the Spirit of Christ would now enter the body of Peter V. Verigin's only son Peter Petrovich Verigin who was now living in Russia. A large majority favored his leadership, and cablegrams were dispatched to him in Russia, informing him of this. It took three years for Peter P. Verigin to arrive in Canada. These were years filled with anxiety, confusion, tension, arson,

²⁴Wright, op. cit., p. 275.

incarceration, and increasing disintegration of the sect. During these years, the belief that the government had killed Peter V. Verigin, was becoming more pronounced among the faithful. Protests by fire and nudity appeared on the scene. Without a doubt, the Doukhobors, rather than becoming sympathetic toward the government and its institutions, were further alienated therefrom. Problems were increasing in number and stature, rather than being solved.

CHAPTER V

PART II: BRITISH COLUMBIA SETTLEMENT

Under the Leadership of Peter Petrovich Verigin

The first word received in Canada from Peter P. Verigin was a letter dated March 22, 1926.¹ In it he pleaded for financial assistance. The funds supposedly were to serve in financing his expedition to Canada, so that he might assume the post left vacant through the violent death of his father. Even the Independents and Sons of Freedom responded to his plea and contributed liberally to the fund. Simultaneously, the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood negotiated a loan of three hundred and fifty thousand dollars² to replenish a sadly depleted treasury and pay pressing debts. Exactly how much of this loan was dispatched to Verigin is not known.

At the expense of his people in Canada, Peter P. Verigin in Russia, dissipated in mundane and riotous living. The season passed in Canada, and all were still anxiously awaiting his arrival on the scene. It then became known in Canada, that Peter P. Verigin had fallen into bad graces with the Russian authorities who were seriously considering his banishment to Turkestan. Immediately, the faithful dispatched frantic appeals to influential people connected with the proposed banishment, petitioning for his release, so that he could come to Canada and assume

¹Ibid., p. 288.

²Ibid., p. 289.

leadership among them. The Russian authorities agreed that to issue him a passport from the country would be less troublesome than to banish him. Consequently, in the fall of 1927, Peter F. Verigin abandoned his wife and family and set out for Canada.³

On September 16, 1927, the vessel Aquitania docked at New York harbor and Verigin disembarked.⁴ A lone Doukhobor representative formed the reception committee. In short order, Verigin gave a preview of what was to follow under his administration. The reception committee, who lacked the foresight to bring along the community records, immediately underwent a severe reprimanding. Verigin and the one-man committee then proceeded to Ottawa, where Canadian government officials who vainly hoped that Verigin's arrival would have a sobering effect on his people, were apprised of his countless virtues and intended reforms. He spoke at length on the need for formal education among the Doukhobors, and enthusiastically agreed that they should and would conform to the laws of the country. To their eventual dismay, government officials gullibly believed him.

A brief characterization of Peter F. Verigin will be of considerable help in understanding the whys and wherefors of subsequent events. In a word, Peter F. Verigin was singularly impressed with himself. Although he possessed neither the strength of character, business acumen, nor aptitude for leadership which his father Peter V. Verigin had possessed, he let it be known to all and sundry that he represented the epitome of

³Ibid., p. 290.

⁴Ibid.

such human qualities, and that great things were to come. Believing himself to be abundantly infused with the Spirit of Christ, he recklessly played at being God, and chose for himself the title "Chestiakov" the "purger."⁵ He had come to purge the faithful from the filth of sin.

His example proved just the opposite. His verbosity and eloquence redeemed him on repeated occasions however. Peter P. Verigin imbibed almost to the point of chronic alcoholism. On several occasions his drinking habits caused him short prison sentences. In addition, he was possessed of a passion for squandering, and riotous living. He thoroughly and all too frequently enjoyed an expensive game of poker. Morally questionable, it was rumored that he frequently indulged in licentious and illicit relationships with the opposite sex. He revelled in blasphemy and profane language, and recitation of obscene stories. The victim of a volatile temper, he was on slightest provocation given to fits of rage, and on several occasions bodily attacked individuals who failed to agree with him or satisfy his unreasonable demands. On such occasion, when he maltreated some poor brothers and sisters he was taken to task and gave the following defence:

It's like this. I know I swear a lot, and tell many dirty stories. I also drink whiskey. It is very wrong to blaspheme and it is very wicked to drink whiskey, but I have to do it for good reason. Do you not recall how Christ was crucified and how he descended into hell, and on the third day he again rose from the dead? I am like Christ. I shall on the final judgement sit on one hand of God, while Christ sits on the other. I have told you that. But, you, brothers and sisters have often left the straight and narrow way that leads to heaven. Some of you have gone so far on the way to perdition that it is too late for me to save you in this world. You will go to hell. Therefore, I have to blaspheme and drink whiskey so that I will also descend into hell where I can intercede for you. There is no danger for me. On

⁵Ibid., p. 303.

the third day I shall rise again like Christ. But for you there is danger, for you cannot get back from hell unless I go to bring you back. Therefore brothers and sisters, do not be deceived. I do not blaspheme and drink whiskey because I like it. Inwardly I shudder each time and like Christ I often say "Dear God, if it be possible, take this cup away from me."⁶

In addition to his various "attributes" Verigin considered himself to be the philosopher and statesman deluxe. On various occasions he deluded his people into believing that international affairs revolved about his advice and suggestion. One such occasion found him seated at his desk, leafing through a series of overdue bills. A crowd of curious onlookers was grouped before him. Curiosity changed alternately to amazement, then great pride and esteem, as Verigin nonchalantly announced that Mackenzie King, Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini were all seeking his advice and counsel pertaining to international affairs. But he was a busy man and could not be bothered with such trifling matters. Besides, they often did not follow his sound advice.

In reality, Verigin had sufficient cause to be an extremely busy man. Prior to his arrival on the scene, he had learned that the Doukhobors in Canada now represented three distinct factions. These were the Community Doukhobors, the Independents, and the Sons of Freedom. It was his keen desire to unite the three factions into one mighty group and build a Doukhobor empire, with Peter P. Verigin at its head. Therefore, he launched, upon his arrival in Canada, an inaugural tour of the Saskatchewan colonies, where in village after village he expounded his philosophy and strategy for a united Doukhobor front.

⁶Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 123-24.

Verigin's addresses on these occasions reached the epitome of contradiction. He praised each faction. The Sons of Freedom he lauded as preachers and pilgrims, the shining lights in a world of darkness. The Independents he lauded as farmers without peer. The Community Doukhobors he lauded as the stabilizing influence who prevented the Sons of Freedom from straying too far to the "left" and Independents too far to the "right." Indeed, they had all sinned, yes, but now was the time for repentance, the time to work together and live together, each group carrying out its specific task. During these addresses he also took occasion to tell lewd stories and make extensive use of profanity and blasphemy. Contradictory statements issued forth in rapid-fire order as he philosophized about education, agriculture, government, religion, and even about the future value of the Canadian monetary unit. The faithful listened uneasily to their new leader. Surely there were some startling and divine revelations here! Surely there was some hidden meaning! But what did he mean? Rather than consolidating the entire Doukhor family, Verigin only caused uneasiness and bewilderment.

Having completed his tour of the Saskatchewan Settlement, including the Prince Albert Colony which was now essentially Independent with the exception of a few scattered Sons of Freedom, he launched forth to British Columbia with an entourage of fifteen men.⁷ Enroute, he stopped at Cowley, Alberta, where he delivered essentially the same address he had delivered in the Saskatchewan Settlement. When he arrived in Brilliant, British Columbia, a great reception awaited him. He delivered his address

⁷Wright, op. cit., p. 298.

and then repaired to a bounteous feast. During the feast, the faithful caught a preview of things to come when Verigin, in his attempts to open a stubborn window, flew into a rage, and shattered glass over a youthful choir serenading him from without the house.⁸

On the following day he began an inspection tour of the British Columbia villages. During the tour, many responsible people were berated, old and respected members became victims of his loud and profane tirades, and the faithful were subjected to a critical scrutinization. At Grand Forks,⁹ the faithful assembled before the meeting-house in the early morning hours, to receive their new leader. Throughout the entire day Verigin "rested" while he consumed liberal proportions of whiskey. Midnight, and still no Verigin. Many of the faithful, weary and exhausted with waiting for their leader to present an appearance, fell asleep. When Verigin was apprised of the fact that many had fallen asleep he rushed outside in a fit of rage, where he delivered a *tirade* to the exhausted faithful, likening them to the sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane.¹⁰ Having sufficiently berated and confused the Grand Forks people, he ventured forth to Trail where he organized a "non-dictatorial, democratic organization" under the name of "Supreme Council of Bonkhebor Soviets."¹¹ Ministers of varying degrees and positions were "unanimously" elected until the entire ministry of the

⁸Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 114-15.

⁹Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁰Op. Mt. 26: 40-43.

¹¹Wright, op. cit., p. 301.

mythical Soviet Republic was filled. The organization was forgotten almost as quickly as it was formed.

Verigin then returned to Brilliant, where as self-appointed auditor of the community books he spent three days and three nights gleaning information, berating his assistants and expounding his views for a united Doukhobor front. For the Saskatchewan men who had accompanied Verigin to British Columbia, it was just too much. Bewildered, confused, humiliated and debased, they were thoroughly convinced that the new Doukhobor leader was a madman, and decided to go home.

In this manner Peter P. Verigin assumed his post as hereditary leader of the Doukhobors in Canada. His philosophy and action certainly had not endeared him to his people. The faithful, the more zealous, the more fanatic adhered to him it is true, in the blind belief that the Spirit of Christ had passed from the elder Verigin to the younger, and regardless of his views and actions he was the divine hereditary leader. Yet there was mingled with this conviction an uneasiness, a wariness that was soon to manifest itself in opposition to Peter P. Verigin.

The new leader now attempted to put his philosophy into practice. Means of "educational letters" were circulated among the Doukhobors, and numberless conferences (most of which he did not attend) were arranged.¹² Policies were set and never enacted. Repeated promises were made to the government and never adhered to. Unrest was increasing among the followers of the sect. It soon became evident to Verigin that if he was to retain his position as leader in good standing, some

¹²Wright, op. cit., p. 303.

sort of action other than what had been, must be taken. As a security measure, security of his own position more than anything else, he founded the "Society of Named Doukhobors."¹³ Unconditional adherence and loyalty to Verigin was a prerequisite for membership in this elite group. Unfortunately for Verigin, unconditional adherence and loyalty was rapidly decreasing. In addition, Doukhobor prosperity was no longer in existence. There were several reasons for this situation. Peter Verigin himself presented the prime reason. His methods and views simply did not endear him to his followers, nor did they make for economic stability and prosperity. His excesses, his riotous living, his vices, and his escapades were looked upon with growing disapproval. In addition, the Doukhobors were in some measure acquiring an affinity for the Canadian way of life. This was frowned upon by many of the faithful, and alternately praised and condemned by Verigin himself. Community bankruptcy played an important role also in the growing disintegration of the communities. Many community members were forsaking the traditional ways and joining the ranks of Independents, or attaching themselves to the radical Sons of Freedom. Thus, Verigin's "dream empire" was rather than becoming consolidated and strengthened, crumbling beneath his very feet.

During the Thirties, the Doukhobors suffered along with the entire nation which struggled in the throes of an economic depression. To add to Doukhobor miseries, Verigin's excesses increased as he became involved in a series of prison terms and lawsuits. The lawsuits consumed a great share of the almost non-existent treasury. After two

¹³Ibid., p. 307.

imprisonments for drunkenness and disturbing the peace, Verigin was finally sentenced to a lengthy prison term for perjury.¹⁴ The sentence was reduced to eighteen months however, when the Canadian government, now under the guidance of the Progressive Conservative Party, attempted his illegal deportation.¹⁵ Although the ranks of the faithful were becoming thinner and thinner, these incidents caused a wave of protest from nearly all Doukhobors. The Independents, led by attorney Makaroff, protested the deportation on legal grounds. The protest was upheld by the court, with the result that Verigin was not deported. Community Doukhobors protested to the government via petitions, to the effect that the government was incarcerating him illegally, and attempting to do away with him. The old argument that the government had killed Peter V. Verigin became standard gossip once more. Now the government was also attempting to kill Peter P. Verigin. Sons of Freedom protested the government moves with a wave of arson, nudity, and vandalism. So, the Doukhobors, constituted at this time, a seething, boiling pot of unrest. There was strife and contention within the ranks as well as without.

It was during the early Thirties that Verigin dreamed of moving his faithful adherents to another country. It was clearly evident to him, that unless they began to conform to government regulations, and unless disintegration of the sect ceased, his personal position would be in extreme jeopardy, as would that of his community followers. Consequently,

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 335-36.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 347-50.

he negotiated with various people in an attempt to find a new location for his following. An attempted migration to Mexico¹⁶ rapidly came to a standstill. Verigin became so disgusted with people, that he left Canada for California,¹⁷ there to attach himself to a small group of Independent Doukhobors. He soon returned however, with reports that they were so secular and sinful that any attempts to reform them was compelled to leave the California settlement, or change his views and tactics entirely. The California Doukhobors simply would not have him in their midst.

Late in the Thirties, Peter P. Verigin's health began to fail. Exactly what the nature of his ailment was, is not known. However, it is known, that he was suffering from severe chest pains. This only caused him to imbibe more freely and to recite lewd stories more frequently. In autumn of 1938, Verigin sought medical aid in Vancouver. When informed that surgery would be necessary, he cursed the doctors, cursed the nurses, cursed the hospital and the entire medical profession. He refused to submit to surgery on grounds that they were trying to murder him, walked out of the hospital and went home.

Accustomed to moving about like a nomad from colony to colony, and province to province, Verigin now set out to visit the Saskatchewan Settlement. He got as far as Saskatoon, Saskatchewan where he was hospitalized and committed to surgery. He sensed by now that he was nearing the end of his days, and sent for his grandson Johnny Verigin.¹⁸

¹⁶ibid., pp. 316-29.

¹⁷ibid., p. 315.

¹⁸Infra.

Johnny Verigin arrived on New Year's Eve to find a very sick and feeble grandfather. By this time he could scarcely utter a whisper. It seemed that this was the end. Exactly what passed between the dying leader and his grandson still remains a mystery, although a scattered few believe that hereditary leadership was transferred to the adolescent Verigin at this time. This is purely conjecture for which there is not the slightest thread of proof.

Peter P. Verigin recovered miraculously from his operation. Rather than feeling grateful toward those who had saved his life, he launched a bitter tirade against them and threatened to sue the hospital. Nothing ever came of the empty threat.

While recuperating in his hospital bed, Verigin dreamed new dreams. He dreamed of a new association called the "Spiritual Community of Christ."¹⁹ Membership in this elite organization was limited to those who followed his teachings implicitly, who were able to pay an entrance fee of three dollars, and who had no contact whatsoever with the evil government. This naturally excluded all Independents, most of whom had by this time taken the oath of allegiance to the government, as well as the poorer community members who were for the most part on government welfare relief.²⁰ The plans for this society were submitted to the administrative council but never acted upon. Thus, died another pipe-dream.

Verigin never completely recovered from his illness. Shortly after he was released from hospital he was again confined. This time there was no surgery, no lawsuit, no new society. On February 11, 1939,

¹⁹Wright, op. cit., p. 431.

²⁰Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 162.

Peter P. Verigin died. He was buried beside his father in the Brilliant mausoleum. In traditional fashion, the six-weeks-after-burial ceremony²¹ was observed and his soul passed from his body.

Dissention in the ranks increased after Verigin's death. The Saskatchewan Doukhobors had no desire for a new leader. Their vast majority had not adhered to Verigin anyway. But there were those within the sect who had blindly followed Verigin and were again as sheep without a shepherd. They asked: "What shall we do now? Who shall be our new leader?" Confusion and bewilderment reigned supreme among the faithful. At the six-weeks-after-death ceremony, one of the Saskatchewan followers acted as Verigin's proxy. He brought a message which he claimed was Verigin's last wish for the faithful. The message was as follows:

Petushka left a message for you. He spoke to me while he was in the hospital but asked me not to say anything until he had gone. No delegation shall be sent to Russia to bring back his son. When the time is ready, he will come of his own accord or send for you. In the meantime you are to abandon the communal way of life. Buy your farms and work them independently. Conform to the Canadian laws. Send your children to school, for they need education. Comply with the registration laws. God has commanded that you should "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." By that He meant that you should conform to the government rules as well as pay taxes. Remain in Canada and live as brothers, not as factions warring against each other. Above all, live with God and be governed by His word and your own conscience.²²

These may or may not be Verigin's wishes. If they were, they certainly manifest a wisdom infinitely greater than any thing he ever said or did throughout his life. If the advice had been heeded and acted upon by all, Doukhobors would undoubtedly be prosperous, law-

²¹infra.

²²Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 165.

abiding, and desirable citizens of Canada today. Unfortunately, Peter F. Verigin's last advice, if this was it, went for the most part unheeded by the faithful few.

CHAPTER VI

SONS OF FREEDOM

World War II followed in the wake of Peter P. Verigin's demise. All the old antagonisms of World War I burst into flame anew. Non-Doukhobors became embittered as they watched their sons march off to war, while the Doukhobors remained at home. On the other hand, Doukhobors were again facing threats of conscription which caused no small amount of excitement and protest. In all fairness, it must be pointed out, that twelve young Doukhobors volunteered their services and marched off to war with young virile Canadians.

The war period also brought a large measure of prosperity to the sect. Especially was this the case with Independents who owned their land individually, and with community members who reaped the benefits of an acute labor shortage together with high wages and high-prices produce from their farms. Affinity for the Canadian way of life was steadily increasing in the communities, so that by the end of World War II, the community Doukhobors were much the same as Independents. It is true, they continued to live in communities, to purchase staples jointly, and to work in groups, but there was an unmistakable trend toward assimilation.

Since the death of Peter P. Verigin, when they had debated, "What shall we do?" they had come a long way. Their children were for the most part now attending schools (not only elementary, but also secondary, high schools, and even colleges), seeing movies, dancing, and playing

baseball.¹ Parents were now driving automobiles and enjoying luxuries which had but short years ago been considered unforgivable sins.

Doukhobor assimilation to the secular Canadian way of life was quite evident. If such a trend was noticed by the spectator outside Doukhobor circles, it was noticed much more by the suspicious eyes of Sons of Freedom, and by those community and Independent Doukhobors who were more deeply steeped in tradition, and were sympathetic to the Sons of Freedom cause. Consequently, many of the collective troubles within and without the sect were a direct result of the radical leftist philosophy and strategy of the Sons of Freedom faction. For this reason, the writer elected to give a running survey of Doukhobor history from the British Columbia migration until the end of World War II, as presented in the chapter above. The more significant and specific problems confronting sect and government shall therefore be considered in this chapter on the Sons of Freedom.

As pointed out, the seeds that sprouted and brought forth the Sons of Freedom, were planted with the pilgrimage of 1902.² The two subsequent pilgrimages of 1903 and 1907, served as nourishment for those seeds. The pilgrimage of 1903 featured nudism in addition to a search for the "promised land." In 1907, this feature was broadened and expanded. When the Fort William pilgrims had been returned to Saskatchewan, the firm conviction that nudism was an effective means of protest had been well established in their minds. It had taken them but a short time to discover that nothing could infuriate and confuse the Canadian mind so

¹John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), p. 194.

²Supra.

quickly as the complete removal of all clothing. Thus, they added to their repertoire of pacifism and nonconformity, a third weapon. Nudism! In a short time this was supplemented with a fourth, namely, the persecution complex. They became firmly convinced that the pilgrims who had been incarcerated for nudism were suffering for Christ. They were regarded as true martyrs for the cause for freedom. The next weapon to be added was arson. Prior to the British Columbia Settlement of 1909, Sons of Freedom destroyed by fire the working parts of Independent reaping machines. Shortly after the migration to British Columbia, Peter V. Verigin's house in Saskatchewan was put to the torch "to save him from materialism."³

At first the Sons of Freedom faction numbered relatively few. During the course of contentions and agitations both internal and external, the number gradually increased. When Peter V. Verigin decided to relocate in British Columbia, Sons of Freedom were quite enthused with the prospect of migrating to the "promised land," where they could bask in the hot sun, eat fruit off the trees, and avoid the interference of the cruel and hated government. For a short period there was peace and quiet. But when members began to leave the communities and become Independent, and when the government attempted to enforce school attendance and registration of vital statistics, there was a resurgence and considerable increase of the Sons of Freedom. Their attitude toward education and vital statistics was this:

We will make our children the servants of Christ but will not allow them to enter public schools which would turn them into

³John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukhobors at War (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), p. 104.

slaves of corruption, and we will never make entries in books of births, marriages and deaths for we know that the Creator has already entered us into the Book of Life.⁴

Relatively little was heard from the Sons of Freedom during the first several years in British Columbia. Talk of the Sons of Freedom had died down to a few scattered murmurs among their immediate neighbors and other Canadians. The years of World War I passed with no further overt demonstrations. There were, it is true, small Sons of Freedom jaunts to and from prison for refusal to comply with registration laws and the School Act, but no serious demonstrations nor violent outbreaks occurred. These were for Peter V. Verigin far from serious. In fact, he rather welcomed the small imprisonments, and readily used the Sons of Freedom as scapegoats. A general protest was made in 1918 when the Canadian government passed an act requiring every man and woman residing in Canada of sixteen years of age or more to register and carry with them an official registration card.⁵ In the eyes of many Doukhobors this was but the first step toward military conscription. During the course of the ensuing contention the Sons of Freedom ranks expanded somewhat.

In November, 1923, a government school mysteriously burned down.⁶ This was only the first of several cases of arson. During the next year, schools continued to disappear overnight in both British Columbia and Saskatchewan. In addition, Peter V. Verigin's house at Brilliant was

⁴J. F. C. Wright, Slava Bohu: The Story of the Doukhobors (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, c.1940), p. 304.

⁵Ibid., p. 268.

⁶Ibid., p. 274.

put to the torch. Verigin blamed Sons of Freedom who were in all probability responsible. He played his dual role to the fullest when he complained to the government, urging it to replace the schools more quickly, and urging it to apprehend the criminals. In the same year, the time-bomb episode responsible for his death occurred.

The years intervening the death of Peter V. Verigin and the assumption of power by Peter F. Verigin, were filled with considerable anxiety and protest. Sons of Freedom probably were responsible for Verigin's death, but the episode cannot be considered as a group activity. Consequently, the group as a whole, seriously felt his loss, and repeatedly accused the government of murdering him. Many community people were of the same opinion and the more zealous among them drifted into the Sons of Freedom fold.

Peter F. Verigin assumed leadership and at first he commended Sons of Freedom for their zeal. He called them shining lights, the preachers and evangelists of the world. But he failed in his efforts to unite the entire Doukhor sect, while simultaneously the Sons of Freedom increased in number. In Saskatchewan, renewed and more violent protests were made against education. In the three year span from 1929-1932, twenty-five schools were burned in the Doukhor districts.⁷ In addition, nude parades were becoming frequent occasions. Many Sons of Freedom were imprisoned for refusing to send their children to school. Peter F. Verigin, like his father adopted a dual role and played it to his best advantage. He vehemently denounced Sons of Freedom antics before the community members, press and government. Privately he lauded them for

⁷Ibid., p. 333.

their zeal and spiritual strength. The communities began to expel them and the press sensationalized their activities. The widespread publicity and their martyrdom only served to consolidate their views, that they were indeed suffering for the Christ. So they wandered about aimlessly, with no home, with no leader, and finally the government settled them at Porto Rico, British Columbia.

Meanwhile, the Kootenay region of British Columbia witnessed numerous nude parades and outbreaks of arson. The government knew of only one method of punishment, which was incarceration. In 1931, however, another drastic measure was taken when all Doukhobors were disenfranchised in British Columbia.⁸ Three years later all Doukhobors were barred from federal elections.⁹

By this time the communities had decided to isolate the Sons of Freedom at Krestova, British Columbia. This measure against the Sons of Freedom, taken by their own brothers, brought on a wave of arson and violence which caused the measures of 1932.¹⁰ In 1932 so many Sons of Freedom were incarcerated that the British Columbia prisons were literally bursting at the seams. To make matters worse, some six hundred women were committed to prison for nudity in that year. Evidently some sort of measures had to be taken in order to alleviate this serious situation.

The government decided to lease tiny Piers Island in the Pacific for purposes of confining the Sons of Freedom who had been arrested.

⁸Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 155.

⁹For latest government action regarding franchise, cf. Appendix, p. 129.

¹⁰Wright, op. cit., pp. 338-342.

In August the project was begun. Two compounds were erected, one for men and one for women, around which barbed wire twenty feet in height was strung. The compounds were built of shiplap and tarpaper. They consisted of dormitories, dining halls, kitchens and warehouses. There was an entrance to each compound, consisting of wooden gates reinforced with wire mesh and wide enough for a motor truck to enter. The gates were opened by a lever which a guard operated from a platform above.

Since in many instances whole families were incarcerated, an additional problem presented itself. What should be done with the children? It was finally decided to put the girls into custody of an orphanage, while the boys were sent to an industrial school at Coquitlam, British Columbia. Details of the governmental custody of Sons of Freedom children during the Piers Island incarceration are treated extensively by Ronald Henry Clarke Hooper, in his Master's Thesis entitled Custodial Care of Doukhobor Children in British Columbia 1929-1933.¹¹

The warden who was placed in charge of this peculiar group of prisoners manifested a rather unique and on the whole successful philosophy. It was his contention that punishment and enforcement would never be an effective means of persuasion where Sons of Freedom are concerned. Consequently, he left them very much to their own doing. They were required to prepare all their meals, do all the necessary housekeeping, and any other work that needed to be done in order to keep the project operating. However, there was no enforcement. When

¹¹Ronald Henry Clarke Hooper, "Custodial Care of Doukhobor Children in British Columbia 1929-1933" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, 1947).

they refused to transport foodstuffs from warehouses to the kitchens, they simply had to exist on oatmeal and water. In short order, the oatmeal was consumed. Faced with starvation, the prisoners cheerfully began to transport foodstuffs from the warehouses to the kitchens.

When a number of women appeared completely nude in the mess hall, they were not ordered to dress, or punished, but simply ignored. The following day, nudity was conspicuous by its absence. When they refused to launder their clothes, they simply had to don their soiled garments day after day. Traditional Doukhobor cleanliness soon prompted them to launder their clothes and no further protest was made in this matter. Of the entire number confined on Piers Island, approximately thirty die-hards refused to do any kind of work. When the project closed in 1935, approximately the same number were transferred to the Provincial Penitentiary to complete their sentences.¹²

The Piers Island project was in a measure successful, yet on the whole unsuccessful. The government had expended huge sums of money on the project without any tangible results. When the inmates were released they were in no measure reformed. In addition, they were very unwelcome in the communities when they returned. Since they had no permanent domicile they returned to their pre-penitentiary vicinities. Nudism became less frequent, but schools began again to disappear, and bridges were dynamited. The government had learned its lesson from the expense accounts of the Piers Island project and no more wholesale incarcerations occurred.

¹²Harry B. Hawthorn, editor, The Doukhobors of British Columbia (Report of the Doukhobor Research Committee, The University of British Columbia, n. p., 1952), p. 317.

Peter P. Verigin's "shenanigans" of the Thirties which resulted in his several imprisonments and attempted deportation,¹³ served to influence the more zealous community Doukhobors to cast their lot with the Sons of Freedom. They were convinced the government had murdered Peter V. Verigin, and was now attempting to deprive them of their present leader. Because the Sons of Freedom were apparently effecting the most influential protests, it seemed that they were the group to which one should belong. It was a vicious circle. Protest resulted in reprisal, and reprisal resulted in protest. By the time Peter P. Verigin died in 1939, Sons of Freedom were a notely group, disowned by their leader, and disowned by their community and Independent brothers and sisters.

By the late Thirties, distinct Sons of Freedom villages had appeared. In addition, there was a notable variation of their former annoyance and protestant techniques, namely, graveyard vandalism. The first such incident occurred in 1931 when the mausoleum of Peter V. Verigin was dynamited.¹⁴ Now, however, it was the latest Sons of Freedom fad. On one day, forty six tombstones were uprooted in Sacred Heart cemetery at Grand Forks. Simultaneously, several towns in Saskatchewan reported complete destruction of their graveyards.

Sons of Freedom had left their mark. By October of 1937, the list of damages and destruction attributed to Sons of Freedom ran something like this:

Totally destroyed by fire were seventy-five schools; partially damaged by fire or dynamiting, twenty-five schools. Over one-

¹³Supra.

¹⁴Wright, op. cit., p. 331.

hundred and fifty other buildings - houses, churches, halls, barns and bridges had been set on fire and burned or partially damaged. Only twelve criminals had been convicted - one was caught red-handed, the other eleven on circumstantial evidence.¹⁵

When the Piers Island inmates were released they found that community Doukhobors had appropriated much of their land. In addition, at Krestova, where there had been the largest concentration of Sons of Freedom, the once green and verdant fields were now entirely barren, as was the entire town. During the Piers Island incarceration, Krestova had become a veritable ghost-town. With nowhere else to go, they settled at Krestova. It was a broken and disheveled band that lived here. Barely able to eke out an existence, life became for them a dreary task. During the summer months, the men ventured forth to earn a few dollars in the lumber mills and logging camps. The winters were spent in dissipation, sexual promiscuity, and reminiscing. Spring arrived and with it the age-old question, "What shall we do now?" Lack of funds, and insufficient food helped to undermine the traditional Doukhobor honesty, and now brother stole from brother in an attempt to maintain a bare existence. This pitiful existence had no other result than to bring on spasms of nudity, arson and violence that occurred every spring.

A few miles from Krestova there was a different picture. It was a tiny village, consisting of approximately twelve young men and women with their families. This exclusive group was presided over by ex-convict Joe Podivinovkoff.¹⁶ Here the true Sons of Freedom philosophy thrived, according to Podivinovkoff. It was a clean and well kept little

¹⁵Zubeik and Solberg, op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁶Wright, op. cit., pp. 415-16.

camp. It showed signs of progress, and moderation was its byword. Here the plan was formed which caused a schism within the Sons of Freedom faction. Joe Podivinovkoff and Michael Verigin collectively agreed that the Doukhobors, including the Sons of Freedom were becoming too materialistic. In addition, the entire world was rushing madly to its destruction. What the world needed therefore was a spiritual regeneration. It had been revealed to Michael Verigin in a dream, that he was the Archangel Michael who was destined to lead the world out of wickedness. Following is an excerpt of his oration:

I have come to you from those in whom you believe. I am the blunt axe. You have the paints and brushes. The paints and brushes are religion and belief. Through them we shall know what to do and what not to do. Catastrophe will overtake the world if it does not repent. Cities, factories and towns will be destroyed by fire even as God said he would destroy the earth. The Sons of Freedom are messengers sent by God to warn mankind that a great fire will consume the earth if people do not turn back to true Christianity.¹⁷

The Doukhobors as such did not recognize Michael Verigin. However, he had gathered a small following which he organized into a new society called the "Union of Christ," and make arrangements for them to migrate. It was necessary to leave behind the ungodly Independents and community Doukhobors, as well as the erring Sons of Freedom. This was to be the final emancipation of the true Doukhobors. Accordingly, in 1916, Michael the Archangel, with a following of five Sons of Freedom forsook the Kootenays for the forests of Vancouver Island. The new colony was established at Hilliers¹⁸ twenty-five miles northwest of Nanaimo. Archangel Michael and his group were extremely unwelcome in that part

¹⁷Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 215.

of the province. A large hue and cry arose in protest to Sons of Freedom settling there. Nevertheless, the colony grew in a short period, to number two hundred. Within a year its borders were expanded from thirty one to three hundred and twenty acres of land, and continued to expand.¹⁹ Pure communism was the basic concept. All had equal rights, and no one owned anything individually. The colony provided for all. A board of elders composed of twenty-four of the oldest men and women held titles to the land and equipment, and settled all matters of policy as well. Michael Verigin himself held only a nominal title as did his Lieutenant Joe Podivinovkoff. Everyone worked for the common good. No one was compelled, but worked because he chose to.

The basic concept out of which grew the peculiar feature of life at Millers, was that "no rule must give one man claim over another."²⁰ This feature has given the name "The Sharing Doukhobors" to this group. Their peculiarity is the sharing of wives, which extends also to children. When outsiders jokingly referred to the practice as wife swapping, Michael Verigin objected to the term because it implied ownership:

Why all the time "my, mine" in the outside world? All time thinking "my husband, my wife, my house, my farm." If you put boundaries around men and women or nations then you have war. People here share everything. There are no boundaries. Therefore you have peace.²¹

The colony thrived and prospered, and although its members shied away from extremist views and demonstrations, they have been accused of instigating acts of violence. Michael Verigin died in 1951. Whether

¹⁹Ibid., p. 215.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 216.

or not the question of leadership which rested between Russel Verigin, a Jehovah's Witness preacher, and Joe Podivinkoff has been settled, the writer is in ignorance.

After Michael Verigin had moved his tiny band to Hilliers, an epidemic of destruction swept through the Kootenays. By 1947, terrorism reached such proportions that orthodox Doukhobors²² fled from their homes and slept in tents or whatever shelter they could find. Sons of Freedom protests had now reached out against their own people. Government attempts to quell the outbreaks with force and incarceration were futile. Complaints began to flood the government offices. Community Doukhobors had reached the point where they were willing to abandon their traditional secrecy, and submit a list of names and suspects. Additional police were dispatched to patrol the area and guard railway bridges. Still the destruction continued.

Finally, a four-man delegation of Sons of Freedom agreed to meet with the police in December of 1949, in an attempt to reach some sort of truce. The authorities strongly rebuked the Sons of Freedom and demanded strict observance of the law. The Sons of Freedom agreed to this. They would obey. They were prepared to give solemn vows and cease to disrupt the peace.

During the winter months there was peace. Perhaps the Sons of Freedom would now finally fall into line and at least attempt to comply to Canadian laws and customs. Government officials, as well as the public, were hopeful but wary. Their wariness was justified on April 18, 1950. On that date, as Zubek and Solberg so aptly put it, was

²²Infra.

"launched the social season of the radicals which in the Kootenay area will go down in history as the 'Reign of Terror' of 1950."²³

This was a Sons of Freedom reply to the warning, "Comply or else." It was furthermore a protest against secularization of the Doukhobors in general. The Reign of Terror was launched with the burning of Johnny Verigin's house. Johnny Verigin was rudely awakened from a sound sleep as he was dragged from his bed and forced out of his house. Thirty-six Sons of Freedom then lavishly poured gasoline over his bed, furniture and floors, and splashed the remaining drops over the exterior of the house. One match was sufficient to ignite the house and make it a blazing inferno.

On the following day the town of Krestova was put to the torch. Fanatic residents had decided it was necessary to burn their homes. The "inner voice"²⁴ demanded the supreme sacrifice. This was real freedom. The following is a brief summary of Zubek and Solberg's account of the orgy:

Armed with torches and chanting psalms they fired the first house. The old weather-beaten boards ignited quickly. Flames leaped and danced like phosphorescent demons playing among the beams. Another home and then another. Soon a full third of the village was in writhing flames. A spectator awed by it all disrobed and piece by piece the clothing was heaped on the pyre, others followed suit, and one could see them leaping out of range of the sparks.

Periodically a haunting wail, rose above the roar. An old man repeated the Lord's Prayer. A hysterical woman chanted, "Slava Bohu . . . Slava Bohu." Nudes on the hill seated in the traditional

²³Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 225.

²⁴Infra.

V watched the proceedings. A scripture verse was repeated and others responded. When they were all done they rose in a body, knelt and touched their foreheads to the ground.²⁵

When the police arrived on the scene bucket brigades were organized to save the buildings. Some of the Krestova people who were not convinced of the wisdom of destroying their homes volunteered their help. For four days the village continued in sleepless silence as smoke swirled heavenward from the dying embers. Fear and indecision gripped the village, as bands of radical arsonists roamed the streets, appraising each dilapidated shack as to its degree of luxury, undecided as to which should be fired next.

The "noble" example of the Krestova people was followed in other villages. Needless to say, a living reign of terror gripped the entire country-side. Radicals were arrested in wholesale numbers. Guards were stationed all around the area, covering bridges, railway junctions and public buildings. They patrolled as far and wide as their limited number would permit, but could not see and hear all. The reign of terror marched on.

As the reign of terror progressed throughout the summer months, talk of vigilante action was heard among the public. Sons of Freedom trials in Nelson dragged on for weeks with little or not tangible success. Nude demonstrations were given at the trials before the very judge and spectators. Sons of Freedom insisted on walking about nude in what they said were the "clothes God had given them." Some were disappointed at not having been arrested.

²⁵Tubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 226-28.

Another penitentiary project was undertaken, this time in New Westminister. Approximately four hundred Sons of Freedom were incarcerated. The small number of women involved were sent to the penitentiary in Kingston. By 1952, roughly forty Sons of Freedom still remained in the penitentiaries.²⁶ They steadfastly and obstinately refused to sign or utter pledges of respect for Canadian laws which was one of the criteria for release.

As an outgrowth of the reign of terror, the Sons of Freedom acquired a new leader. Stefan Stanley Sorokin,²⁷ a devout Baptist missionary of Russian ancestry is now at their head. He had spent five years in a German concentration camp during World War II, and migrated to Canada in 1949 on a Displaced Persons quota. For ten months he labored as a farm hand in Ontario, during which time he became manifestly intrigued with the possibilities of mission work among the Sons of Freedom. In the spring of 1950, he reached the Kootenays, and joined the Sons of Freedom villagers at Krestova. The reign of terror was then in progress. Sorokin tried to dissuade the Sons of Freedom from their violent techniques, for which he was threatened with his life, and told to leave the village. Undaunted, he remained among them, persuading against violence and commending them for more constructive industry, scarce as it was among them.

He frequently visited those who had been imprisoned, and freely offered his advice and sympathies. Many of them wanted to go home and

²⁶Hawthorn, op. cit., p. 319.

²⁷Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 230.

made no secret about it. Sorokin used the advantage this presented. In August of 1950, Stefan Sorokin was proclaimed the leader of all the Sons of Freedom.²⁶ There was variance of opinion regarding this action of the prisoners, but when in September of the same year he secured the release of three hundred and ninety five of their number, faith and confidence in Sorokin increased. Overjoyed at being free again and pleased with their new leader's performance, they pooled their resources, from which they purchased for him a new automobile and built for him a comfortable and commodious home.

Sorokin receives no salary for his services other than room and board. He attends to all the business and spiritual affairs of his charges. Repeated efforts by Sorokin to find a new home for the Sons of Freedom have thus far failed. The latest and most notable such effort was the investigation of Uruguay as a possible site of relocation. Sons of Freedom entrusted him with all their wealth in this venture, and when it was rumored that he would abscond with the sizeable sum, they expressed their implicit faith in him. The government of British Columbia is hopeful that his influence will eventually affect the Sons of Freedom in a positive degree. Showing its confidence, the government included him in a new committee formed for the purpose of reviewing the entire Doukhobor problem in the hope that some adjustment satisfactory to all concerned, can be made. Thus far, only recommendations and suggestions have been tendered. No satisfactory solution to the problem has yet been arrived at.

²⁶Ibid.

Meanwhile, nude demonstrations, arson, dynamiting, and other acts of violence continue to shock the Doukhobor country. Each spring brings with it renewed zeal for such demonstrations. The spring and summer of 1953 witnessed another veritable reign of terror, considered to be the worst reign of terror that British Columbia has ever known. An investigator for a Canadian National Magazine, who witnessed many scenes of destruction and interviewed many Sons of Freedom, claims that by the end of August, 1953 more than four hundred Doukhobor homes had been burned to the ground.²⁹ This is merely in addition to other destruction caused by the Sons of Freedom. The 1953 reign of terror was motivated by a government announcement that law enforcement would be put into practice to see that Sons of Freedom send their children to school. Each violator would be subject to a ten dollar fine per day, for each day his prodigy was absent from school.

The spring and summer of 1954 witnessed another season of violence, arson, nudism, and arrests. The Police have taken a large number of Sons of Freedom children into custody, for the purpose of sending them to school. The only method of persuasion it seems is strict law enforcement. Meanwhile, the Sons of Freedom steadfastly refuse to register vital statistics and send their children to school. Each spring and summer anticipate fresh outbreaks of violent protest to government legislation and attempts at enforcement. Total destruction attributed to the Sons of Freedom is estimated to be over fourteen million dollars.³⁰ The problem

²⁹William Guy Carr, "Why Do Doukhobors Act That Way?" New Liberty (June, 1954), p. 57.

³⁰Nathorn, op. cit., p. 19.

is serious. No feasible solution, that will be satisfactory to both the government and the Sons of Freedom seems to be in sight.³¹ Every new year anticipates another reign of terror.

³¹For most recent government action regarding Doukhebers, cf. Appendix, p.

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CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

The Doukhobors are not merely an ethnic group, but a religious sect. For this reason, their life of persecution, and contention with governments, has been the result largely of their peculiar religious beliefs. Their total existence revolves about their religious beliefs. In this chapter, the writer shall present an outline and summary of what the Doukhobors believe. In so doing, it becomes evident that the prominent features of Doukhor history revolve about, and result directly from their religious beliefs. The latter part of this chapter shall concern itself with a consideration of some of the customs and practices of the Doukhobors.

There is a Doukhor tradition which holds that Doukhobors are the spiritual descendants of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three youths who were cast into the fiery furnace in Babylon.¹ This Doukhor tradition was revealed via a petition which the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood presented to Commissioner Blakemore of the Royal Commission on Doukhobors of 1912.²

By tradition of our forefathers the beginning of our Doukhobors originates from the three Israel adolescents, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who the wicked Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon threw into the burning fiery furnace.³

¹Of. Daniel 3.

²Supra.

³J. F. C. Wright, Slava Fohus: The Story of the Doukhobors (New York: Farrar & d Rinehart, c.1940), p. 264.

Needless to say, it is rather doubtful that Doukhobor spiritual ancestry can be traced back that far.

It is known that the Doukhobors were once within the Russian Orthodox Communion. When prelate Nikon introduced his formalistic reforms during the sixteenth century, there followed a vast wave of disunion in the Orthodox Church. Some of the dissenters merely protested against external changes. Others, took occasion to protest the nature and content of doctrine as well as the entire ecclesiastical structure. Among the latter group we find the Doukhobors. No doubt, their radical views were in existence prior to this time, but the occasion for organized protest had not presented itself prior to this time.

Doukhobor religious beliefs presented by no means a religious innovation. This is plainly brought out by the work of a certain Grest Novitsky who in 1832 published a work on the Doukhobors. Novitsky notes a similarity of the Doukhobors with earlier sects:

- 1) With Gnostics, in their opinion concerning the Holy Spirit.
- 2) With Manichaeans, in their belief in an inner light, their opinions of Jesus Christ, and in their belief in the pre-existence, fall, and future state of man's soul.
- 3) With Paulicians, in many respects, especially in their rejection of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and in general of the authority of a visible Church.
- 4) With Anabaptists, in their theocratic aspirations and their dislike of mundane governments, and also in their repudiation of infant baptism.
- 5) With the early Quakers, especially in their belief in the Christ within, and their non-resistant principles.⁴

In view of the fact that Doukhobors have no written creed and have left no written records, it is rather difficult to obtain a true and

⁴Aylmer Maude, A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., c.1905), pp. 7-8

consistent picture of their religious beliefs. The difficulty is increased because the Doukhobors themselves are inconsistent with respect to their religious beliefs. Aylmer Maude in his work A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors, and Joseph Elkinton in, The Doukhobors: Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada, present what is no doubt the best and most authoritative outline of Doukhebor religious beliefs. Relying heavily on Aylmer Maude and Joseph Elkinton, the writer shall here present a brief outline of the religious beliefs of the Doukhobors.

Concerning God:

The Holy Trinity is a being beyond comprehension: the Father is light, the Son life, and the Holy Spirit is peace; it is affirmed in man, the Father by memory, the Son by reason, the Holy Spirit by will: they are one God in Trinity.⁵

Doukhobors profess belief in a monotheistic God. They also seem to profess belief in a Trinity. However, their statements concerning the Trinity tend to be somewhat mystical. The entire statement gives one the impression that it amounts to nothing more than that God can be approached from three sides. According to one of their earliest leaders, God does not exist by Himself, but is wholly inseparable from man.⁶

Concerning Christ:

The Divinity of Jesus Christ our Savior, as shown in the Old Testament was nothing but Wisdom revealed in nature; but in the New Testament He was the Spirit of piety, purity, incarnate. He is born, preaches, suffers, dies, and rises again spiritually in the heart of each believer.⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁶A. A. Stasouli, "Doukhobors," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), IV, 865.

⁷Aylmer Maude, A Peculiar People: The Doukhobors (London: Archibald Constable and Co. Ltd., 1905), p. 11.

There is difference of opinion among Doukhobors as to whether or not Christ is truly the Son of God. A large majority of their number believe that He is the Son of God, but only in the same sense that they themselves are the sons of God. Some Doukhobors of earlier times, ventured to claim that their elders and fathers knew even more than did Christ. At the same time, they call Christ Wisdom. The same group who professed this belief, also believed that Christ had pardoned their sins and given them His commandment. They did not specify, however, by what means Christ pardoned their sins, but stated merely that the process of forgiveness was a great miracle. The historical miracles of Christ were completely denied by this group.

Doukhobors lay a great deal of stress on the "Christ within" conception, which is not peculiar to them alone. Christ through His suffering set a divine imperative for man. Man, in order to accomplish salvation, must suffer even as Christ suffered and accomplish the Gospel within himself. Closely allied with Doukhobor belief concerning Christ, is their belief concerning salvation of man.

Concerning Salvation:

For our salvation it is not essential to have an external knowledge of Jesus Christ; for there is the inward word which reveals Him in the depths of our souls. It existed in all ages, and enlightens all who are ready to receive it, whether they be nominally Christians or not.⁸

Doukhobor belief concerning salvation is anything but the Christian conception of salvation. For Doukhobors, knowledge of the historical Christ is unnecessary for salvation. No mention is made of an atonement

⁸Ibid., p. 15.

or a vicarious suffering and death of Christ. Doukhobors are a work-righteous sect, and they believe in a salvation by faith and works. Works receive a major emphasis.

Concerning Scripture:

The Holy Scriptures or outer Word, are not essential for the sons of God. It is however, of use to them, because in the Scriptures, as in nature and ourselves, they read the decrees and the acts of the Lord. But the Scriptures must be understood symbolically, to represent things that are inward and spiritual. It must all be understood to relate in a mystical manner to the Christ within.⁹

Although the Doukhobors generally profess adherence to the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, and insist that their teachings are based upon Scripture, yet they deny the necessity of Scripture for the enlightened sons of God. Among Doukhobors, Bibles are conspicuous by their absence. Scripture if used, is to be used in a spiritual and a mystical sense, and is to be understood in the same way. In spite of this, Doukhobors are known to quote Scripture profusely in order to substantiate their motives and actions. Peter V. Verigin, it is said, knew the New Testament almost by heart. Very clearly, however, it can be seen that the Scriptures are of secondary importance and value to the Doukhobors. They are not held to be the divinely inspired Word of God, which is the rule and norm for all faith and life.

Concerning the Church:

The Church is a society selected by God Himself. It is invisible and is scattered over the whole world; it is not marked externally by any common creed. Not Christians only, but Jews, Mohammendans

⁹Joseph Elkinton, "The Doukhobors: Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada (Philadelphia: Ferris and Leach, c.1903), p. 282.

and others may be members of it, if only they hearken to the inward word.¹⁰

The opening words of this statement ^{sound} could like good orthodox Christian doctrine. Upon further examination, however, one can clearly see a parting of the ways. Doukhobors reject any outward or external church. The Church is not where the Word of God is preached in its truth and purity and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, but the Church is where the Christ within is active and men hearken to the inward Word. Doukhobors teach a universal brotherhood of man. One need not necessarily be a Christian to be a member of the Church. Jews, Gentiles, all are members of the Church as long as they hearken to the inward Word.

Concerning Worship:

The forms of worship of all the external churches in the world, their various institutions, all the ranks and orders of their servants, their costumes and movements, were invented after the time of the Apostles, those men of holy wisdom, and are in themselves naught but dead signs, mere figures and letters, externally representing that sacred, invisible, living and wise power of God, which (like the sun's rays) enlightens and pervades the souls of the elect, and lives and acts in them, purifying them, and uniting them to God.

To pray in temples made with hands is contrary to the injunction of the Savior: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Mt. 6:6.

Yet a son of God need not fear to enter any temples, Papal, Greek, Lutheran, Calvinist, or other: to him they are all indifferent. All the ceremonies of the churches being useless, were much better left alone.

Icons they do not respect or worship, but consider as idols.

The saints may be respected for their virtues, but should not be prayed to.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 281.

Fasting should consist in fleeing from lusts and refraining from superfluities.

The decrees of the churches and councils should not be accepted.

The Church has no right to judge or to sentence anyone; for it cannot know all man's inward, secret motives.¹¹

The sons of God should worship God in spirit and in truth, and, therefore, need no external worship of God. The external sacraments have no efficacy; they should be understood in a spiritual sense. To baptize a child with water is unbecoming for a Christian; an adult baptizes himself with the Word of truth, and is then baptized, indeed by the true priest, Christ, with the Spirit and with fire.¹²

All external worship and its forms are rejected. To worship God in spirit and in truth requires no buildings, no vestments, no preachers, but only a hearkening to the inward Word.

Concerning the Priesthood:

The Christ within is the only true Hierarch and Priest. Therefore no external priest is necessary. In whomever Christ lives, he is Christ's heir, and is himself a priest unto himself. The priests of temples made with hands are appointed externally, and can perform only what is external; they are not what they are usually esteemed to be.

The priesthood is not an office reserved for specially selected people: each real Christian, enlightened by the Word, may and should pray to God for himself, and should spread the truth that has been entrusted to him. What am I then? A temple to the Lord most high. The altar and the priest, the sacrifice am I. Our hearts the altars are; our will the offering; Our souls they are the priest, our sacrifice to bring.¹³

Concerning Sacraments:

Doukhobors insist that external sacraments are offensive to God, because God does not desire signs and symbols, but realities. Heal

¹¹Ibid., pp. 283-84.

¹²Ibid., p. 282.

¹³Ibid., pp. 282-83.

communion with God comes by Word, thought and faith. External baptism, for instance, is unnecessary because water only removes uncleanness from the external body. Real baptism consists in this, that man repents with a pure and willing heart. Communion by bread and wine, they contend, is merely so much more food and drink for the body, which is of no avail to the soul. Accepting God's Word makes one a partaker of the real and efficacious, eternal and sacred sacrament.

Concerning the Resurrection:

Those enlightened by the Spirit of God will after death rise again, what will become of other people is uncertain. It is the soul and not the body that will rise . . .¹⁴

Desires reaching man through his senses of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting or touching, including sexual desire, sow the seeds of future torment. The craving for honours now torments the ambitious man, and the craving for drink the drunkard - but much more will those who have sown the seeds of such desire be tormented in the future life, when they will not be able to gratify the passions which will nevertheless grow stronger and stronger.

The fire of abuse and contempt will burn and torment those who have striven for honours; the fire of aversion, shame, and loathing will be the consequence of impure love; and the flames of fury, enmity, revenge, rancour, and implacability will punish anger.

If this is the result of sowing evil passions in this life, on the other hand the result of sowing good seed will be continued growth towards perfection till the purified souls become like God Himself.¹⁴

Concerning the Soul:

Our souls existed and fell before the creation of the material universe; they are sent here as to a prison - as a punishment, and for their reformation. The sin of Adam is, like the rest of the Bible stories, figurative. His sin does not pass to his descendants, but each man has sinned for himself.¹⁵

¹⁴Naude, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 14.

Briefly then, Doukhobors believe in a pre-existence of souls.

Original sin, or the total corruption of the soul according to man's natural and unregenerate state is unknown among them.

Concerning Equality:

Inasmuch as all men are equal, and the children of God do good willingly without coercion, they do not require any government or authority over them. Government if needed at all, is needed only for the wicked. To go to war, to carry arms, and to take oaths is forbidden.¹⁶

These are the basic tenets of Doukhor religious beliefs. Upon reviewing their statements of belief, one senses two different, yet basic notes. The one is couched in the phraseology of the Eastern Orthodox Church, while it imparts philosophic truths. When a dangerous point arises, mysticism takes over. The other note is anything but philosophical or mystical. It is radical and resolute, often harsh and contemptuous toward all authority both ecclesiastical and secular, as well as toward all who do not readily and absolutely agree.

Perhaps the best summary of the Doukhor philosophy of life and religious beliefs is found in Doukhobors at War, by Zubek and Solberg. The summary statement was rendered to an interviewer by an old well-wisened community Doukhor. It was a cool summer evening. The old man and his interviewer sat on a hill overlooking the city that lay in the valley below. As the lights of the city broke into the night, the old man began to philosophize:

That's the way it is every night. Who but God could paint so magnificent a picture?

"We are a simple people. We wish only to live out our lives in peace here on earth and to let others live. God, who created

¹⁶Ibid., p. 16.

the earth and gave us all this beauty, did not intend that we should fight over it. The earth belongs to God, not to men or to governments. God intended that we, and all other living things, should live on the products of the soil, taking only what we need, and by our work putting life back into it. We have no claim on it other than our toil. It belongs to us only as long as we work and only as long as we need those products to subsist. There is enough for every creature.

God created all men in His image. Therefore we are all equal. No one has more rights than another. No nation has a right, through war, to seize another's land or to rule over others.

We were all created from the dust and slime of the earth and we lack wisdom.—Only God is wise. Therefore we must be guided by the spirit of God within us which we recognize as our conscience. Who of us is wise enough to rule over others? We are all equal.

Our task on this earth is not to amass wealth or property. It is to worship God and to live as close to Him as we can. Through our understanding with God, the Son, and through our will, with God, the Holy Ghost. God has given us memory and understanding and will only for those reasons. God has shown us the trinity in everything around us. Look at the valley down there, for example. The first person of the trinity is God, the Father who is light; the second, the Son of our Lord, is the life; the third the Holy Spirit, is peace. You see, our religion is so very simple. Since you see it everywhere around you, you can't forget it.

Christ the Son of God, came to earth to show us how to live. He was a simple man, a carpenter. Nowhere in the gospels does it tell of any formal education. He learned a trade from his father, Joseph, and he lived in a little village with his parents and practiced that trade. Later, he went out and preached so that others would also learn about the simple life. But others did not all believe. They did not want to give up their wealth to follow him. And so his life became a series of persecutions and suffering until finally he was crucified. We must follow the pattern of his life. He is re-born in each of us, and so we must also teach his teachings and be persecuted and suffer and die, and rise again.

Because Christ lives again within us, there is no point in all the external sacraments of the orthodox churches. What is their baptism? It is only water applied to the body surface. It can wash away only external uncleanness. True, baptism takes place when a man repents and calls upon his God. Then God washes away the internal sins. God's forgiveness is symbolic of God himself.

We do not confess our sins to priests. We confess our sins to God and ask his forgiveness. If we have sinned against a brother, then

we confess the sin in public so that the brother will know God has forgiven, and will also forgive.

We do not believe in the orthodox communion. Eating bread and wine can do nothing. You swallow it and digest it like other food. It cannot reach the soul. Only inward acceptance of the word of God can do that. That is communion.

Fasting is good, not in quality but quantity and not at any specific time. Abstain from gluttony at all times. Eat what you need and no more. Observe moderation in all things. Abstain from tobacco and liquor and such other things as are not necessary to the body. That is fasting. If you starve the body how can it help the soul?

We do not worship saints or observe Saint's Days or special holidays. Christ was a man like us. His spirit lives in us, therefore who is greater than another? If we are all equal, what effect has praying to a saint? Pray to God. Only he is greater.

We do not believe in churches, that is, in church buildings as meeting places. If Christ dwells within each of us, then he is present wherever the congregation meets. What need to build a special house? Outdoors . . . your home . . . my home, are just as holy as a church, for Christ is where you are. Christ cannot be present in an empty building. He can be there only when the congregation is present.

You do not need to be a Doukhor to gain salvation. The word "Doukhor" means that we wrestle with the Holy Spirit and not with material weapons. You can win salvation if you believe in God and follow him. You do not need to belong to our community or to belong to any church.

We do not believe in violence. Christ said that if anyone smites you, you must turn the other cheek. They call us pacifists. That is good. We believe in peace and we try to follow Christ's teachings.

. . . Our religion is very simple. We try to live the way God wants us to live, and the way Christ has preached. People accuse us of opposing governments. We cannot support them, for no one is greater than another; no one is wise enough to rule except God. People say that we do not believe in education; there is no record of formal education in Christ's life. If he did not need it, why should we? We teach our children the ways of their forefathers. We teach them to live useful, simple, honest lives and to worship God. What more could schools teach? People say that we will not give vital statistics, but God counts every sparrow that falls from the heavens, and he numbers every hair upon our heads. What more can we ask? Who are the governments that they should want to take over God's work? They are our equals . . . not God's equals.

People say that the government took our lands away in Saskatchewan because we would not take oaths; but God has said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God in vain."¹⁷

Doukhebor religious beliefs have changed from time to time. There is difference of opinion as to whether or not Christ is the Son of God, and whether the soul only, or the body also goes to heaven. From time to time there have been additions and subtractions to their creed in order to accomodate a given situation in life.

It is relatively easy to see, why, throughout their entire history, the Doukheborers have been the object of peresecution in one form or another. Their attempts to live a life in accord with their beliefs has rendered it impossible for them to avoid friction and conflict with both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. They have been free of peresecution by the Church since their earliest days in Russia, but peresecution by the State has followed them throughout their lives. Their pacifist views, and their rejection of all forms of human government, have cause them two centuries of grief and peresecution.

Doukheborers have consistently contradicted one of their basic beliefs. While denying any allegiance whatsoever to human authority, and rejecting all human forms of ecclesiastical and secular government, they have nevertheless blindly and foolishly followed human leaders who established despotic and tyrannic autocracies in their midst. Wherein lies the answer to this puzzling situation? Much of it lies in the Doukhebor's conviction that a greater measure of the Spirit of Christ has dwelled within their leaders. Once a divine dynasty had been established, the

¹⁷John P. Zubek and Patricia Anne Solberg, Doukheborers at War Toronto: The Ryerson Press, c.1952), pp. 175-77.

Spirit passed from one to another in the line of ascent. In 1901, a group of fourteen Doukhobor women from various villages of the Saskatchewan Settlement signed a document that essentially deified Peter V. Verigin:

Cease to pride yourselves on your rights and authorities and to exalt yourselves! Who is higher than the King of heaven and than God? God created the heaven and adorned it with all the heavenly splendours; the sun and its rays, the moon and stars to praise Him, and He made the earth firm above the waters, and adorned it with various flowers, and created all that liveth on the earth, that they should praise Him. And He gave freedom to all that lives and to the animals.

"Great is the Lord above all the nations, because His goodness and mercy endureth forever." And His goodness is that He has been born by the Spirit of the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God the Queen of Heaven, of the blessed race of Loukeria Kalmikova.

This Lord is our Leader, Peter Vasilovich Verigin. His beauty is in his Wisdom; in flesh he is pure.

We strive towards him, esteem him God and Tsar, and with full desire yield ourselves to his power.¹⁸

Another possible answer is this, that men do not always practice what they preach. Definitely is that the case where Doukhobors are concerned. They professed to have no leader, they professed no need for a leader (while in Russia) yet when on occasions they were deprived of local leadership, they fumbled and stumbled about in utter confusion, and became literally as sheep without a shepherd.

The Doukhobor creed, generally speaking, has in the course of two centuries lent itself to considerable flexibility. When it seemed necessary to add a new feature because the leader suggested it, or for the sake of expediency, or protest, this was done with little or no scruple. When Peter V. Verigin decided that Doukhobors should change their self-esteemed name, it was done without argument. When he decided

¹⁸Maude, op. cit., pp. 226-27.

that they should dispense with all individual ownership and practice pure communism this too became divine command. When he suggested in his letters that men could live without exploiting the animals and elements which God had created, many readily accepted this as divine imperative and adjusted themselves to the situation. While these features were evident in a vast majority of all the Doukhobors at one time or another, they were especially, and still are manifested in the Sons of Freedom.

Closely akin to their religious beliefs are the Doukhobor customs and practices. Many of them are quite unique and interesting. The writer shall now consider some of the more prominent Doukhobor customs and practices.

Very unique is the so-called religious observance.¹⁹ A necessity for all religious observances is the ceremonial table covered with a white cloth. On the ceremonial table, a loaf of bread, a jug of water, and some salt are placed. These are the Doukhobor symbols of faith. The table is usually placed on a spacious out-of doors plot. To the right of the ceremonial table some of the older men form to recite a psalm, while on the left of the table the older women do likewise. As the assembly continues to line up, with opposite sexes on either side of the ceremonial table, they soon form a huge human V. First a psalm is spoken in droning voices. Suddenly, there bursts forth as from a huge organ the throbbing notes of a psalm in song. When the last notes of the song have died away, the leader speaks a psalm while all bow

¹⁹J. F. C. Wright, Slava Bohu: The Story of the Doukhobors (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, c.1940), pp. 38-39.

their heads in reverent attention. In concluding this prayer the leader speaks the words, "Slava Bohu" (meaning God be praised)!²⁰ "Let us all bow to Almighty God." As if the entire assembly were one human body, they kneel to the ground touching their foreheads to the earth.

Next follows the ceremonial kissing. Beginning at the ceremonial table where the most devout and godly men and women stand, each person steps from his place to face his neighbor, bows three times, and then joining hands they kiss three times. When the ceremonial kissing has been completed the observance is brought to a close with the singing of another psalm.

There is really no standard form for the religious observance. There have been many variations of the one described. However, all their religious observances feature the basic elements. These are, the ceremonial table with the symbols of their faith upon it, the forming of a V, the singing of psalms and the ceremonial kissing.

A. W. Wainman, a member of the Doukhobor Research Committee has made a study of Doukhobor psalms, hymns and folksongs. The writer shall here present his summary of the findings.

The main theme of the psalms is God and his worship. They are taken from many sources. Some are from the Old Testament, including the psalms of David and the book of Isaiah. Others are from the New Testament, including the Gospels of Saint Matthew and Saint John and the book of revelation. But whereas the psalms from the Old Testament seem to adhere fairly closely to the biblical text, those from the New Testament are often a very free paraphrase.

A large number of psalms however, do not originate from the Bible at all and many of them are obviously modern compositions, some being in verse.

²⁰Ibid., p. 5.

The hymns are almost all modern and none is taken from the Bible. The words of the great majority are written either by I. S. Prokhanov, a man of Holokan Ivan Sysoy, of Ferry Siding, the leading poet among the Doukhobors in Canada at the present time. Some of the hymns are written by other Doukhobors living - or recently deceased - in Canada, while a few are taken from Russian literature, e.g. Lermontov and Nadson. The hymns are numerous and many are being added to the collection every year. In theme, like the psalms, they are mainly religious, but they do not always take God as their main subject. Some, for example, deal with their leaders, Peter the Lordly and Chestiakov, others with the sufferings of the Doukhobors in prison. As their Russian name "stikhi" (verses) suggests, these hymns are written in rhymed verse and divided into stanzas.

The folksongs of the Doukhobors are largely variations of the regular Russian folksongs, both as regards words and music. Sometimes they are so different from the original as to be almost unrecognisable. They are not meant to deal with the religious side of life, and they are often sung after the psalms and hymns at religious and social gatherings by way of relief. They have not however, anything resembling the gaiety and light-heartedness of the ordinary Russian folksongs.²¹

Most Doukhobors frown on musical instruments as inventions of the devil. Consequently, their music is purely vocal. Their singing is of a highly developed Russian "a cappella" style. Chanting is very popular among the Doukhobors. Also popular among the Doukhobors is so-called "round" singing. One voice begins the melody and is joined later by other voices, yet each voice retains its independence.²²

The Doukhor philosophy of marriage is in the tradition of the semi-oriental marriage customs. Until recently the marriage was of greater concern to the parents of the bride and groom than it was to the bride and groom themselves. Traditionally, they believe that marriage should be contracted without ceremonies.

²¹Harry B. Hawthorn, editor, The Doukhobors of British Columbia (Report of the Doukhor Research Committee, The University of British Columbia, n. p., 1952), pp. 262-63.

²²Ibid., p. 263.

It needs only the will of those who have come of age and who are united in love to one another, and an inward oath and vow, before all-seeing God, in the souls of those who are marrying, that they will to the end of their days, remain faithful and inseparable. An external marriage ceremony, apart from the inward marriage has no meaning; it has at most this effect that being performed before witnesses, it maintains the bond between the spouses by the fear of shame, should they break the promises of fidelity they have given.²³

Divorces are a rarity among the Doukhobors. However, to procure a divorce is a relatively simple procedure. Doukhobors believe that anyone who divorces his wife is an adulterer, and in addition makes his wife an adulteress. However, it finally becomes a choice between the lesser of two evils. If love no longer exists between husband and wife, the state of that marriage is considered as bad if not worse than a divorce. Therefore, when it becomes evident that the bond of love no longer exists between husband and wife, one or the other member of the union need simply leave the household, and thus procure his or her divorce.

Doukhobor marriages have caused considerable agitation in British Columbia. The government was not able on the basis of provincial marriage laws to consider Doukhobor marriages legal. Consequently, all children born of such unions were necessarily considered illegitimate. In addition, the Doukhobors steadfastly refuse, in keeping with their belief that God has numbered us all, to render an account of marriages and births to the government. This has been one of the major bones of contention between the British Columbia government and the Doukhobors. The British Columbia government, has in recognition of the problem taken steps towards recognising Doukhobor marriages as legal.²⁴

²³Elkinton, op. cit., pp. 282-83.

²⁴Infra.

The Doukhobor marriage which is pictured below,²⁵ is not an official rubric for all Doukhobor marriages. Variations of this ceremony are practiced within the various Doukhobor factions.²⁶

In view of the fact that Doukhobors do not believe in priests or churches, the ordained minister is conspicuous by his absence. There is an official speaker however, who may be any member of the community who enjoys speaking, and whose eloquence is equal to the task. When the guests have assembled in traditional fashion before the bride and groom, the orator launches into his dissertation, which usually consists of an admonition to the couple to remain united in love until death, and live peacefully together. There is no fixed outline for such a dissertation. The content and length thereof depend almost entirely on tradition and the eloquence of the speaker.

Now the parents of the groom move forward to embrace the bride and acknowledge her as their daughter. Parents of the bride perform a similar ritual with respect to the groom. All and sundry may now join in admonishing the bride and groom with regard to their future conduct and life. The major part of the ceremony has now taken place.

The guests move now to the tables. The bride and groom assume a position at the head of the table, as guests of honor. A prayer is said and the feast begins. Depending on the number of guests, the feasting runs through numerous relays. When the first group has dined, a new group fills the vacant seats. The bride and groom remain at the

²⁵Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 180-82.

²⁶Hawthorn, op. cit., pp. 291-93.

table until the last guest has dined. Often, as in cases of large weddings, this may last through an entire day.

At frequent intervals, empty bowls are dispersed among the platters of food upon the table. These are gift bowls into which wedding gifts of money are placed. Every gift placed into the gift bowls is acknowledged by the bride and groom kissing each other. Throughout the day, psalms and folksongs are sung and the latest gossip is passed from one to another. It is a gala festival, and often continues far into the night. When groups or families finally begin to leave, the bride and groom then adjourn to the home of the groom where more feasting takes place.

Among those Doukhobors who have become sufficiently secularized to indulge in the use of alcoholic beverages, the huge flask of vodka plays an important role in the wedding feast. Generally speaking, however, among the orthodox, and especially among the Sons of Freedom, there is total abstinence. Sons of Freedom brides still wear the traditional Doukhobor dress, but the majority of Doukhobor brides now wear modern wedding dresses.²⁷

There is no standard rubric for Doukhobor burial services. Community and Independent Doukhobors practice essentially the same type, but the Sons of Freedom differ. Doukhobors speak of death as "change."²⁸ When anyone changes in the community, a very simple ceremony follows. They do not embalm the body of the deceased, but dress it very carefully in his best clothes before placing him into a home-made casket. For a

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 189.

period of three days, the corpse lies in state, in order to give friends and relatives an opportunity to pay their last respects and sing prayers and psalms. After the three-day period the casket is carried to the cemetery, not by undertakers, but by the relatives. Since the Doukhobors have begun to use cars and trucks this procedure is usually carried out on the back of a truck. Relatives of the deceased ride along in the truck which is bearing the casket. Choirs, singing psalms, follow in cars and trucks, and behind this parade follow the friends and neighbors.

At the cemetery, the casket is placed at the edge of the grave while the death chant is sung, and various people speak of the deceased brother or sister. Often the service becomes a long drawn-out affair when many people wish to speak. When all the speeches have been completed, the casket is lowered into the earth while more psalms are chanted. The casket is then covered with a mound of earth after which a few slices of bread, a jug of water and salt are placed upon the grave.

Sons of Freedom have been known to simply leave bodies lying out in the open. Usually the spot chosen for this is on a high hill so that the brother will be closer to heaven.²⁹ This is done by only the most radical, however. Their explanation has been that since man and animals are all brothers created by God, the body should be left out in the open so that animals may consume it for food.³⁰

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 76-78

Six weeks after the burial, the second service takes place at which time the soul of the deceased passes from his body.³¹ This service is very similar to the burial service, although much shorter. Psalms are chanted and a few remarks are made concerning the deceased, but no prayers are offered. There is difference of opinion regarding the destination of the soul. An old man when questioned on this point mused:

We community people do not know. Perhaps it goes to heaven . . . but the Kingdom of Heaven is in man's soul, so how can the soul go anywhere? We believe that the souls of the righteous are in the hands of God. No torment of hell can ever touch them. Because they are righteous, heaven is in their souls even here on earth. The unrighteous walk in darkness even while they live, and therefore God is not within them. They walk from day to day dreading what may come after they die and expecting soon to perish. Therefore they have their hell here on earth just as the righteous have their heaven here on earth. Hell is the evil feeling, the feeling that soon you will perish. Heaven is the feeling that God dwells within you and therefore nothing can harm you . . . As for what happens later, that we do not know. We leave that for God to arrange. He knows whether or not there will be a resurrection. That is good enough for us.³²

In the previous chapter the writer stated that in 1931 the mausoleum of Peter V. Verigin was dynamited.³³ As far as one can determine, this is the only Doukhobor mausoleum in British Columbia. The monument was erected by the community Doukhobors in honor of their beloved leader. It is neither a traditional nor standard custom. Most Doukhobor graves, with the exception of Independents, do not even bear tombstones. Doukhobors believe that nothing is needed in the way of tangibles to remember the deceased. God remembers them. In recent years however, it has been the custom of some Doukhobors to erect tiny houses upon the grave,

³¹Ibid., p. 190.

³²Ibid., pp. 189-90.

³³Supra.

wherein they place a portrait of the deceased together with a piece of paper whereon his vital statistics are registered. When these begin to fade or are lost they are replaced with fresh ones. Often, fresh water, bread and salt are placed within the confines of these tiny houses.³⁴ As with many other Doukhobor customs, gradual changes are being observed in their burial customs.

Turning to the Doukhobor living quarters, the writer shall examine a community house of the 1930's. In the early Saskatchewan days, the houses were built of logs, plastered with a mixture of clay and straw, upon which a thatched roof was placed. On occasions, when timbers for house were not available, sod houses were erected.³⁵ The basic plan was however, the same as that for the house of the 1930's.

Community houses are always built identically and in pairs.³⁶ They are two-story red brick edifices with ample window space. A porch flanked by wooden pillars is erected on one side of the house. On entering the house, there is evidence of scrupulous cleanliness, and austere bareness. The walls are plastered and whitewashed. The floor is constructed of bare unvarnished boards, which have been sanded and scrubbed to a smooth whiteness. Furniture is very scarce, and what there is of it, is home made. In every house there is a hand-woven rug, the fruit of Doukhobor women handicraft, at which they excel. Pictures and ornaments are conspicuous by their absence. In the living room there

³⁴Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 190-91.

³⁵Elkinton, op. cit., p. 218

³⁶A pair of houses on approximately one hundred acres of land constitutes a village.

is a long table, benches and chairs, and a huge homemade chest. One finds no item in the house that is not absolutely essential. The remainder of the ground floor serves as a combined dining room and kitchen in which there is a huge Russian-style oven.

The second story serves as sleeping quarters. It consists of several large rooms opening into a square hall. Doorways are devoid of doors, but hung with curtains. In each bedroom there are several homemade beds with huge warm feather comforters upon them. Double rooms are constructed for the married couples.

Every house of a given community is identical. They are built large enough to house an entire "family" of thirty or more of close kin. The women of the house work according to strict schedules, and prepare meals in shifts.

Each pair of houses has its own summer kitchen, bathhouse, outdoor toilet, warehouse and storage shed. The bathhouse is an interesting place. A low stove covered with flat stones is placed in the center of the room. Beside the stove are several water buckets. When the bathhouse is in use, the stones are heated and water is thrown upon them, thus filling the room with steam. This is the Doukhobors private variation of the Turkish bath.³⁷

In community villages the father is considered to be the head of the family. In the event of his death the eldest son shoulders the responsibility of managing family affairs. Great respect is shown for women among the Doukhobors. Without a doubt, equality of sexes has

³⁷Zubak and Solberg, op. cit., pp. 171-173.

reached its highest expression among these peculiar sectarians. Women are considered competent to judge business affairs, participate in councils, and perform religious rites on an equal footing with men. It is usually the women folk who supply the cohesive force within the community. When the men become weak and begin to waver, the staunch Doukhobor women remain firm and adhere to the old traditions. It is significant that among the Sons of Freedom, it is the aged grandmothers who often are the leaders in nude parades.³⁸

Doukhobors are generally speaking very hospitable. They have often been known to erect special lodging houses for visitors. Usually, they refuse any remuneration for lodging and food. Children are obedient and show great respect for their parents. As soon as they are able to speak they are taught the traditional prayers and psalms. In addition they are trained at an early age to do their share of the work. Regarded as spiritual equals,³⁹ they are also required to bear their full share of the burden by way of earning a livelihood. In this manner, Doukhobor traditions are handed down from generation to generation without the medium of any written books.

Most Doukhobors are vegetarians as a result of the decree sent forth from Siberia by Peter V. Verigin.⁴⁰ The more zealous are especially meticulous in this matter. Their main diet consists of borsch soup which is a spicy broth liberally spiked with vegetables. This, together

³⁸Ibid., pp. 186-87.

³⁹Elkinton, op. cit., p. 284.

⁴⁰Supra.

with huge slices of bread constitutes the main course. Large quantities of dried, as well as fresh fruits are consumed. The main beverage is tea.⁴¹ Since most Doukhobors still abstain from tobacco and liquor, there is neither an after-dinner smoke nor an appetizer prior to the meal.

The Doukhobors who hail from Russian peasant stock, are a hardy, sturdy, and generally healthy folk. Their dress is simple and mostly self-made. Until recently they have shunned medical aid, but they do have their own concoctions and brews to cure minor ailments. Their main desire is to lead the simple peaceful life, a life dedicated to God in accord with their beliefs.

⁴¹Zubek and Solberg, op. cit., p. 174.

CHAPTER VIII

CONTEMPORARY PICTURE AND CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Traditional Doukhobor antipathy toward governments and their agencies continues to this present day. Because they have refused in the past, and to a certain extent in the present, to register vital statistics, it is a difficult matter to obtain an accurate record of their numerical strength. Several estimates of their total number in Canada are to be found. Most authoritative is the estimate of Harry B. Hawthorn, a member of the Doukhobor Research Committee in British Columbia and editor of its findings entitled The Doukhobors of British Columbia. Hawthorn sets the figure at approximately twenty thousand.¹ Of this number, more than half reside in British Columbia.² A large majority of the remaining number are residents of Saskatchewan, while a few scattered Doukhobors are to be found in Alberta and Manitoba. Not without possibility is the conjecture that Doukhobors, or people of Doukhobor ancestry may be found in each of Canada's ten provinces. This is purely conjecture and not fact. In Saskatchewan, the main concentration of Doukhobors is still within the original Saskatchewan Settlement. Likewise in British Columbia, their main concentration, centres in the Kootenay and Grand Forks areas.

¹Harry B. Hawthorn, editor, The Doukhobors of British Columbia (Report of the Doukhobor Research Committee, The University of British Columbia, n. p., 1952), p. 10.

²Ibid.

There are as many as six existing Doukhobor societies in Canada,³ namely; the Union of Doukhobors in Canada, the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ, the Named Doukhobors of Canada, the Society of Independent Doukhobors of Canada, the Society of Independent Doukhobors, and the Christian Community and Brotherhood of Reformed Doukhobors. The vast majority however, fall into three groups, namely: the Society of Independent Doukhobors, the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ, and the Sons of Freedom.

The Union of Doukhobors in Canada⁴ is an over-all organisation with headquarters and main concentration in Saskatchewan. It is a rather loosely organized society whose main purpose is to look after interests common to all Doukhobors, i.e. military exemptions. This society excludes the Sons of Freedom and is on the whole rather remotely affiliated with British Columbia Doukhobors.

The Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (orthodox),⁵ numbering approximately five thousand adherents, is the nominal heir of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood. The latter, began to decline rather rapidly after the death of Peter V. Verigin and the accession of Peter P. Verigin to leadership of the sect. Declared completely bankrupt in 1937, the younger Verigin resigned its presidency, and approximately three years later the land belonging to the group was lost by mortgage foreclosure. Since then, the British Columbia government has assumed

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid., p. 11.

much of the mortgage and has rented the land to the Doukhobors. John J. Verigin is the secretary of this organization which today operates ten schools in Russian, and sponsors a youth movement for those between the ages of sixteen and forty. In spite of their name, the adherents are independent wage-earners and proprietors. They reside on community lands and pay rent to the government via the Lands Settlement Board.

The Society of Independent Doukhobors, with P. P. Abrossimoff as chairman,⁶ cooperates very closely with the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ on most issues, especially that of military exemption, and now also attend the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ religious meetings.⁷ Members of this society seem to have a rather uncertain and variable status. They own their lands, rather than rent them from the government. The British Columbia Independents are different from the Saskatchewan Independents. The latter do not even wish to affiliate with any society of Independents.

The Sons of Freedom are a rather heterogeneous group consisting of individuals from virtually every Doukhor walk of life. Today, they cultivate and occupy less land than do the other Doukhobors. Many of them are virtually landless and a majority of those at Krestova, one of their largest centers, lack sufficient adequately-watered land for even a tiny garden.⁸

Generally speaking, the Sons of Freedom are radicals. They are stricter in their beliefs, want no change from their way of life in

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 23.

⁸Ibid., p. 21.

Russia, and continue to object to education, registration, the use of metals, and war. Some of their beliefs and practices also differ.⁹ It is the Sons of Freedom who have in recent years demonstrated their violent protests to government and its agencies, via nudism, vandalism, incendiarism, and other forceful means. They have in the past, and still do present the greatest problem to the British Columbia government. Their present leader is Stefan Stanley Sorokin, whose followers have organized the Christian Community and Brotherhood of Reformed Doukhobors. Their total number is difficult to determine. Harry B. Hawthorn's estimate stands between two and three thousand.¹⁰ However, the Registrar of Vital Statistics at Helson estimated their number at three thousand and sixty nine in 1951.¹¹

The Sons of Freedom are inconsistent in their customs and village life, and continue to show an intense reaction to the process of adjustment to Canadian life. It is their firm conviction that conflict between good and government is absolutely necessary.¹²

Currently, the Sons of Freedom are gardeners rather than farmers. Women do a majority of the work while the men are away earning wages. A Sons of Freedom family owns possibly a garden plot and a cow, the which provide vegetables and milk for the family. Generally speaking, true Sons of Freedom have followed this way of life since they came to Canada. Their customs and way of life center mainly in their religious

⁹Supra.

¹⁰Hawthorn, op. cit., p. 12.

¹¹Cf. Appendix, p. 131.

¹²Hawthorn, op. cit., p. 12.

beliefs. It is their desire to relocate in an isolated spot, where they may develop a community without meeting conflict with other Doukhobors who have become "secularized," and without meeting conflict with the government. Efforts are being put forth to accommodate their desires, but to date no practical and satisfactory solution to the problem has been arrived at.

One may well inquire, what are some reasons why Doukhobors turn to the Sons of Freedom faction? The following reasons are plausible. Some Doukhobors still believe that the simple life dictated by their beliefs is quite possible to attain. Unable to find it among the orthodox or Independent Doukhobors they turn to the radical Sons of Freedom who lead the relatively simple life. In this category one will find especially the older people. Another reason why many turn to the Sons of Freedom is because they protest against secularization of the sect. By secularization they mean the use of modern implements, telephones, education, modern dress, lipstick and the like. This is of course closely connected with the belief that the simple life is possible. Still another reason for joining the radicals, was in the past a dislike for the Verigins. Among the Sons of Freedom such people found refuge from the leaders who alternately praised and condemned them. It is no secret that the great depression sent many Doukhobors scurrying into the Sons of Freedom fold. Economic necessity rendered the simple life imperative. No doubt, there are many other reasons why Doukhobors turned to the Sons of Freedom, reasons which cannot be detected nor explored without personal inquiry and contact.

The Doukhobors have undergone a vast change in the past half century. It was the radical element that migrated to Canada from the Caucasus.

In Canada, this radical element in turn experienced schism and factions that have rendered the sect heterogeneous. It is interesting to note however, a comparison of the attitudes of Sons of Freedom and the current Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ members, concerning various pertinent issues. These comparisons are based on the findings of experts who were colleagues on the Doukhobor Research Committee.¹³ The comparisons are concerned with the following issues: leadership, government, land, school, relocation, nudity, and arson and dynamiting.

The Sons of Freedom attitude toward their present leader, Stefan Stanley Sorokin, is that he is a "good man," but does not provide the powerful leadership that was once provided by the Verigins. He does not have the authority to make changes by suggestion or edict as did the Verigins. The Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ does not recognize Sorokin. They still await the hereditary leader, son of Peter P. Verigin, believed to be in Russia. There seems to be a great deal of confusion on the matter. Some say that there is a current leader in Canada, but decline to specify who he is; while yet others have no fixed opinion on the matter.

The basic attitude toward government is very similar in both societies. The Sons of Freedom dislike and distrust the government and make the characteristic statement, "the government knows what we want but will never agree to it."¹⁴ Pro-government sentiment among Sons of Freedom is a rare exception. The Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ consider the government rather unfair, especially where the land

¹³Ibid., pp. 322-25.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 322.

issue is concerned. On issues other than land, the most common belief among them is that the government has tried to be fair.

Concerning issues of individual ownership there is agreement in both groups. They all believe that Doukhobors should not own land individually. This is based on the "principle" of their beliefs. In addition, the idea of communal living is favored by a majority of both groups.

Concerning the school issue there is difference of opinion rather than agreement. The large majority of Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ members are pro-school. This pertains to school on the elementary level. Beyond that, school is unnecessary. Sons of Freedom are decidedly anti-school because they believe that government schools teach militarism and patriotism which are evil. Schooling is for the Sons of Freedom essentially unnecessary.

Both societies agree that proposed relocation of Sons of Freedom is a good thing. Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ members are very favorable to the idea, more so because they feel they are bearing the brunt of public anti-Doukhobor sentiment. The Sons of Freedom are the chief antagonists and are therefore responsible for what the Doukhobors as a whole must bear. Some Sons of Freedom are opposed to relocation. This opposition feeling stems undoubtedly from their inherent distrust of any government motive or action.

There is a definite distinction to be made on the issue of nudity. A vast majority of the Sons of Freedom are pro-nude in their sentiments. Nudity has in the course of years become the mark of a true Son of Freedom. For the most part, Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ Doukhobors believe that nudity is a crime. A fraction of their number,

however, believe that it signifies freedom from sin. Approximately one-quarter of their number believe that nudity belongs in the realm of individual liberty, providing it does not impose on others. Arson and dynamiting is condemned by both groups. Although Sons of Freedom do not approve of such methods, they express some "understanding" as to the motive behind various incidents of fire and blasting in the past. Contradictory to their sentiments, they continue to burn their homes and those of others, and blast bridges and railway junctions.

This comparison of attitudes renders the question, "why Sons of Freedom?" all the more puzzling. Even in the light of the reasons advanced above, it is difficult to understand why a relatively prosperous and progressive Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ Doukhobor, yea more so an Independent Doukhobor, should leave his community or home and choose to identify himself with a society that is branded as revolutionary, not only by the public, but by his brothers in the sect as well. A question of this nature cannot be solved by investigating an historical account of the sect alone. It must be supplemented with psychological study of the Sons of Freedom society.

Since their arrival in Canada little more than a half-century ago, the Doukhobors have experienced considerable change in their way of life. Generally speaking, they have become as a true Son of Freedom would put it, "secularized." A communistic society when they settled in Saskatchewan, today no Doukhobor in Canada lives in a self-sustaining community.¹⁵ While there is continued interest in the community principle, most every

¹⁵Ibid., p. 12.

individual either works at an outside job, farms, or conducts his profession or business as an individual. Those who do not fall into this class, are dependent on those who do, or on government welfare aid.¹⁶

Other changes have taken place also. Very notable among them is the language transition. Originally, a strictly Russian-speaking people, there were precious few who were able to converse in English even with great difficulty, when they settled in Canada. Today, almost all Doukhobors are bilingual, by virtue of the fact that all can speak their native Russian, and a vast majority can speak English also.¹⁷ For many, use of the English language is still at a minimum, and a few isolated Sons of Freedom children cannot speak it at all. Otherwise, the lack of English is confined to the older people.

Traditionally farmers, today, there are few full-time farmers among the Doukhobors. A vast majority are common laborers, a few are professional men, and the rest divide their vocations among merchants, proprietors and sawmill operators. In addition, there is a notable trend toward increased education on the secondary and college level, which will no doubt in the future alter this situation to some extent.

Although the standard of living has increased quite steadily since 1940, there are few well-to-do Doukhobors in Canada. It is estimated that only twenty five per cent of the Independents, and a still smaller percentage of the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ Doukhobors maintain the average standards of non-Doukhobors around them.¹⁸ It is

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid.

true, many of them to drive automobiles today, nevertheless the ratio of automobile owners among the Doukhobors is considerably less than average for Canadian citizens.

The Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ sponsors a weekly news bulletin called "Iskra" (The Spark),¹⁹ with a circulation of slightly less than eight hundred issues per week. The general tone of the bulletin is pacifist in keeping with their beliefs and traditions; nevertheless, it is in sympathy with "commendable" government action. It is widely read among the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ and Independent people, but is prohibited to the Sons of Freedom lest they misinterpret its contents and find motivation therein to embark on acts of violence and protest.

There is then a distinct evidence of change and assimilation to the Canadian way of life among the Doukhobors. They have come a long way toward becoming "Canadians" since their settlement on the Saskatchewan prairies. With time, patience, and understanding on the part of all concerned, Doukhobors on the whole may yet become the desirable citizens which in 1899 Canada hoped they would be.

Meanwhile, problems of a rather serious nature persist. Especially is this the case in British Columbia. As pointed out, Sons of Freedom steadfastly refuse to cooperate with the government, and even their own brothers. They continue in their annual terrorism. Anti-Doukhor sentiment has reached an all-time high. It would cause no little surprise if vigilante action would be taken by the public.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 261.

It is rather difficult to assume an unbiased middle-of-the-road position over against the Doukhobors and the problem they present. At times, one is sorely tempted to justify without reservation any government action employed against them, be it justifiable on legal and humanitarian grounds or not. One is sorely tempted to follow the crowd and express the popular sentiment that Doukhobors or "Douks" as they are popularly known, are immoral, clannish, unreliable, hypocritical, antagonistic, and on the whole undesirable. To an extent this is decidedly true. But has the public given them a full-fledged chance? The entire Doukhor sect cannot be regarded with the same sentiment. It is no secret that a good many of them are desirables today. It is also no secret that Sons of Freedom are at the root of all current problems, and therefore the entire sect should not be condemned. Neither can it be said that they antagonize simply for the sake of antagonizing. It must be remembered that they believe they are following a good conscience. Therefore it is not simply an economic or social or physical problem. The root of it is imbedded in spiritual ground.

Conversely, one is at times tempted to lean precariously to the Doukhor side of the issue, and sympathize unconditionally with a people who have manifested their willingness to persevere during a lifetime of persecution, privation, and insult, on behalf of their beliefs, traditions and customs. One must recognize that in their glorious moments they have borne witness to the world that when men wholly respect one another as equals in the Kingdom of God, and when they harmoniously practice what they preach, it is possible humanly speaking for an ideal community to exist. By the same token they have likewise given evidence that such an ideal community cannot exist for long, by virtue of the fact that humans are humans.

In all fairness it must be pointed out that there is right and wrong on both sides of the issue. The Doukhobors must be admired for their zeal and perseverance. They must be commended for their moments of industry and accomplishment be they ever so spasmodic. There is, however, much in their story that is to be frowned upon and condemned. By the same token, while all government action toward the Doukhobors cannot by any stretch of the imagination be justified, yet one must recognize that on the whole the government of Canada has been fair and just in its dealings with the Doukhobors, and has, and continues to seek voluntary solutions to the problem. With time and patience, with understanding and respect for the rights and consciences of individual men, a voluntary and satisfactory solution to the entire problem may yet be forth-coming. Meanwhile, the Doukhobor problem persists.

APPENDIX A

RECENT GOVERNMENT ACTION CONCERNING DOUKHOBORS

The following is an excerpt from a letter which the writer received from Mr. Emmet W. Gulley, dated March 2, 1955, at Nelson, British Columbia. Mr. Gulley has made a personal study of the Doukhobor problem. He has been active in this study for five years. This excerpt from his letter, renders information concerning some of the latest government action of an expert, pertaining to the justifiability of government actions.

The attitude of the Government has been to seek a voluntary solution to the problem, but every suggestion has been turned down by the Sons of Freedom, and in order to preserve the peace and forestall any possible vigilante action, the Government was forced to invoke the law. Starting a year and a half ago, after all the alternatives were refused by the Sons of Freedom, the Government required the children between the ages of seven and twelve to attend school. Seventy-five children have been from their parents and put in school when the parents refused to cooperate. A goodly number of children have been hidden away and have not yet been apprehended; and of course, there are threats of violence in retaliation. Everyone fully expects that with spring and warmer weather, there will be another outbreak of violence and nudism.

The Government, I feel, rightly believes that education for the children is one of the absolute necessities for the solution to this problem. Ignorance, superstition and fanaticism go hand in hand, and there can never be any hope of inducing these people to live peacefully and in a neighborly fashion as long as they are brought up in ignorance and in the same pattern as their parents.

The Government has taken several positive steps in other directions. The right to vote which was withdrawn in the 1930's, has been restored to all Doukhobors. The Doukhobor form of marriage has been recognized and legalized. A movement is on foot to return the former Doukhobor lands to the rightful heirs. Certain minority directed laws have been repealed and a great deal of public relations work has been done to make the main body of Doukhobors feel that they are a part of the community.

I am sure that you will feel that the Government has acted with great restraint and has only reluctantly embarked on a programme of law enforcement when every other alternative failed. During the years that this violence has been going on, the Province has suffered a loss of over fourteen million dollars in destruction and costs, but I believe the total number of years spent in prison by the numerous groups of Sons of Freedom who have been sentenced, would run well over four thousand years. Putting them in jail only adds to their feeling of martyrdom and does not in any way contribute to their reformation.

Exhibit: edited by Harry J. ...

Category	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	Total
Prison				100						100
... ..				200						200
... ..				700						700
... ..				400						400
... ..				100						100
... ..										5
... ..				200						200
... ..				300						300
... ..				500						500
... ..										2000
... ..				1000						1000
... ..				200						200
... ..				700						700
... ..				100						100
... ..				1000						1000
... ..				2000						2000
... ..										2000 (approximate)

Table of

APPENDIX B

DOUKHOBOR POPULATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, 1951.

Prepared by F. Oseroff, Registrar of Vital Statistics at Nelson, British Columbia. It is found on page 260 in Doukhobors of British Columbia, edited by Harry B. Hawthorn.

<u>PLACE</u>	<u>U. S. C. C.¹ &</u>	<u>INDEPENDENT</u>	<u>SONS OF FREEDOM</u>
Brilliant	190		45
Castlegar	500		25
Coteshonic	700		75
Pass Creek	600		25
Champion Creek	150		
Burnaby			5
Thrus and Tarrys	350		100
Shoreacres	300		150
Glade	500		275
Krestova			1600
Slocan Valley	1000		350
Blevett	300		25
Salmo and Ymir	250		10
Greston	150		
Grand Forks	3500		384
TOTAL	8490		3069
Other			200 (unspecified)

¹Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ.

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