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THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MOLOTSCHNA MENNONITES IN THE FIRST REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS (mid-19th century)

Венгер Н., Ходченко О. Участь молочанських менонітів у перших регіональних, державних та міжнародних виставках (середина XIX ст.).

Автори статті досліджують перший досвід участі менонітів у державних та міжнародних агропромислових виставках 1840–1860 років. Причетність менонітів до цих культурних подій свідчила про офіційне визнання господарських досягнень колоній. Аналіз участі менонітів у виставках надає важливу інформацію сучасним дослідникам для загальних висновків стосовно рівня розвитку регіону та імперії на ранньомодернізаційному етапі.

Ключові слова: менонітська колонізація на Півдні України, «наздоганяюча російська модернізація», Філіп Вібе, Міністерство державного майна.

Venger N., Khodchenko O. Die Teilnahme der Molotschna-Mennoniten an den ersten regionalen, staatlichen und internationalen Ausstellungen (Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts).

Die Autoren des Artikels untersuchen die ersten Erfahrungen der Mennoniten bei der Teilnahme an staatlichen und internationalen agroindustriellen Ausstellungen in den 1840er bis 1860er Jahren. Die Beteiligung der Mennoniten an diesen kulturellen Ereignissen zeugte von der offiziellen Anerkennung der Erfolge der Kolonien und liefert wichtige Informationen für moderne Forscher, um allgemeinere Schlussfolgerungen über das Entwicklungsniveau der Region und des Reiches in der frühen Modernisierungsphase zu ziehen.

Schlüsselwörter: mennonitische Kolonisation im Süden der Ukraine, „nachholende russische Modernisierung“, Philipp Wiebe, Ministerium für Staatsbesitz.

Venger N., Khodchenko O. The Participation of Molotschna Mennonites in the First Regional, National, and International Exhibitions (Mid-19th Century).

In the article, the authors study the early experiences of Mennonites' participation in state and international agro-industrial exhibitions during the 1840s-1860s. The involvement of the Mennonites in these cultural events indicated official recognition of the colonies' achievements and provides important information for broader conclusions regarding the general level of development of the region and the empire during the early modernization (pre-modernization) period. Industrial and agricultural exhibitions reached their first peak of popularity in the second third of the 19th century. Participation in them became a mandatory duty for Mennonite colonies.

Taking part in those events the congregations showcased the results of their economic achievements, reflecting their adherence to the principles of their “Privileges” and the didactic mission imposed by the Russian monarchs. The list of exhibits offers a snapshot of the settlements' development just before the transformative Great Reforms. The exhibitions also demonstrate a dynamic shift in economic development, evolving from agricultural products to the implementation of early agricultural machinery. By the mid-1860s, Mennonites had already embarked on industrial projects, but it took time for their entrepreneurs to gain recognition. The history of Mennonite interactions with various central bodies and exhibition organizations challenges the idea about the colonies' isolation. The analysis of Ph. Wiebe's correspondence reveals his pivotal role in managing the colonies. As an ambitious leader, he showcased his abilities both as an organizer and as a

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Стаття підготовлена за фінансової підтримки в межах проекту кафедри всесвітньої історії Дніпровського національного університету імені Олеся Гончара «Європейський мультикультуралізм як досвід та шлях до європейської інтеграції України» / «European multiculturalism as an experience and a path for Ukraine's European integration».

lobbyist for the local Molochna elite which was loyal to him. By the mid-19th century, there was no established industrial elite strata within Mennonite society, and the circle of participants was quite narrow. Reliable information regarding the exhibition activities of the Chortitza colonies is limited. Given that Wiebe was responsible for both (Molotschna and Chortitza settlements) groups of the so-called "Mother colonies," it is assumed that the Mennonite leader primarily lobbied for the Molotschna settlements which he had closer ties to. This study helps to dispel the notion of Mennonite history as a mostly local phenomenon providing a broader dimension for their past.

Keywords: Mennonite colonization on the Ukrainian lands, "catch-up" Russian modernization, Philip Wiebe, Ministry of State Domains.

Historical Background and Significance of the Problem

The history of Mennonites' participation in agricultural and industrial exhibitions has not been thoroughly studied in problem-oriented historiography. Nevertheless, this narrative holds a significant relevance for understanding the history of these protestant congregations in Ukraine. Foremost, it is instrumental in illustrating the impact of colonial agriculture and industry not only on the regional economy but to some extent on the imperial economy. This theme enables us to grasp the dynamics of the development of the Mennonite colonies' economy to understand the border between pre-modernization and industrial stages.

The dynamic 19th century brought dramatic changes to socio-economic relations between European states, enriching them with the tradition of international exhibitions. Each exhibition represented its era, showcasing the best achievements in culture, science, and industry from various European countries. These remarkable events provided a comprehensive view of global progress across various fields of human development. Furthermore, agricultural advancements and innovations were strategically emphasized in their close connection to cultural diversity and ethnography. They contributed to a deeper understanding of the authentic essence of peoples from different countries, as well as essential aspects of their material and intellectual culture.

The participation of Mennonites in regional and international exhibitions indicated that they had important achievements which were recognized by the experts and had to be vividly demonstrated. In the early 1900s, Mennonite factories and mills proudly displayed awards on their letterheads, posters and in factory catalogs¹. This way the entrepreneurs celebrated their industrial success in the late 1800s – 1900s. However, the early history of Mennonite participation in exhibitions remains largely unknown. This research aims to shed light on the subject. In this article, we present our initial findings and outline prospects for further study of this important and complex issue. In preparing this publication, we primarily used sources

from Fond #89 (Molochna Mennonite Community) which are kept in the State Archive of Odessa Oblast (DAOO), Ukraine².

“Parades of vanity” and their significance for the Mennonites from Ukrainian gubernias

The tradition of regional and international exhibitions developed during the era of modernization. The mid-19th century was a time of dramatic changes for Europe, marked by rapid capitalist development, the growth of the global market, significant scientific discoveries, inventions, rapid technological progress, and further evolution of the so-called "industrial society". While these innovations were at the forefront of the era, significant changes were also occurring in everyday rural life. This was particularly relevant for Russia, a country that was undergoing "catch-up modernization". The Ukrainian peasantry, as well as the Mennonites, introduced numerous impactful improvements to their daily agricultural practices. Their achievements were not driven by vanity or a desire for competition (although exhibitions were sometimes referred to as 'parades of vanity'), but rather by a genuine wish to advance agricultural technology and, in the Mennonite case, to present their settlements in the best possible light. Through consistent effort over generations, through careful observation, daily practice, and simple experiments, they refined their production methods, making them more efficient and successful. This gradual progress led to significant advancements in the development of colony farming.

When presenting the Ukrainian gubernias, the exhibition organizers could not overlook the Mennonites. They got involved in exhibition activities at the initiative of the Ministry of State Domains (MSD), which the guardianship bodies were subordinated. In the second quarter of the 19th century, during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855), the state's approach to agrarian enlightenment became more systematic. This direction was shaped by ongoing discussions about the abolition of serfdom, reforms for state peasants, and the improvement of agricultural methods. The Ministry of State Domains ran exhibition

¹ For example, the "Lepp and Wallmann" factory was awarded 29 gold, silver, and bronze medals at regional, all-Russian, and international exhibitions between 1858 and 1910 [8, p. 40; 25, pp. 159, 227; 26, pp. 28–29].

² Access to these sources was provided by the Mennonite Heritage Archives (Winnipeg). The collection is in Russian and German.

activities alongside the establishment of educational centers, exemplary farms, and other projects in which Mennonites actively participated [17, p. 137–187, 217–245; 28]. In addition to serving this function, the factor of regional and, later, international competition became increasingly significant, fully manifesting in the participation of producers from various countries in exhibition activities. As the members of this kind of cultural events, the Mennonites were expected to represent Ukrainian lands, which historically were known as a "breadbasket" of Europe.

There is no evidence whether the Mennonites participated in the First All-Russian Agricultural Exhibition, which was held in Odessa in 1820. In 1828, the Russian government decided to organize regular industrial exhibitions to showcase advancements in industry, trade, and agriculture. The next expo event in Russia took place in St. Petersburg in 1829. In a few years (1836), the Ministry of Internal Affairs shared a comprehensive plan for organizing provincial exhibitions in the gubernias. In that same year, Grand Duke Alexander Nikolaevich (Romanov), the heir to the throne, embarked on a journey across Russia that included visits to Mennonite colonies [10]. The local displays, initiated by the ministry, aimed to familiarize the Grand Duke with the economic activities of the regions and to stimulate local development in industry and trade. Provincial exhibitions involved agricultural products, which would become a characteristic feature of all subsequent future display events [Ibid].

In 1848, the Imperial decree "About Exhibitions of Manufactured and Factory Goods, as well as Agricultural Products" was issued. It set the rules proposed the basic criteria for evaluating exhibits. In 1850, the "Standard Rules for Provincial Exhibitions of Agricultural Products" was approved by the MSD [1, p. 27]. Thus, a series of official regulatory acts were enacted to formalize and define the development of exhibition practices in Russia. Thanks to these measures, by the mid-19th century, the empire had developed an extensive network of provincial and regional exhibitions. At the initiative of the Ministry of State Domains, their main participants were state peasants, local landowners, nobility, and, of course, colonists, including Mennonites. For the Mennonites, the opportunity to showcase their achievements arose only after 1837, when regional exhibitions were held in several provincial cities and local agricultural products were presented [4, p. 89].

The congregations considered their participation in these events as a chance to showcase their achievements, share farming methods, and demonstrate the effectiveness of their agricultural practices. They also used the opportunity to sell their goods at higher prices, while guaranteeing buyers good quality

products. Additionally, awards often came with a specific cash prize, thus bringing not only prestige but also some profit. It was the combination of all these factors – advertising, prestige, and profit – that contributed to the active participation of all producers and entrepreneurs of that time in exhibitions and fairs.

For the Mennonites, it is important to highlight another motivation frequently emphasized by their leaders, J. Cornies and Ph. Wiebe. They encouraged their communities to adhere to the well-known 'didactic mission' outlined in the 'Granted Charter' by Paul I (1800) [13, p. 32, 46, 49].

First Timid Attempt (Odessa, 1845)

Clearly, the first exhibition in which Mennonites participated was 'The First Agricultural Exhibition of Taurida Gubernia,' held in October 1845. It was a timid attempt with minimal representation from the colonies. Since J. Cornies was a corresponding member of the "Imperial Independent Economic Society" («Императорского Вольного Экономического Общества»), he was included in that exhibition's Organizing Committee. The list of the border included prominent provincial officials such as the Civil Governor of Taurida Gubernia, V. I. Pestel (who served from 1845 to 1854) [6, p. 202–206], and H. Steven, a State Councilor and an expert in agriculture and gardening who was nearly a friend of J. Cornies [21, p. 7–8]. Thus, participation in the work of the Organizational Committee was not only significant but also, to some extent, a prestigious duty. According to the catalogue, there were 343 participants in the exhibition, and only 4 of them were Mennonites [21, p. 2]. The exhibition collected 1652 items, which were put up for sale.

Some items from different departments of the exposition were described in the catalogue. It mentioned a silk-spinning machine by the Mennonite Abraham Janzen. That device was unique for that time. The committee member H. Steven insisted on testing the machine publicly. It proved to be practical, "convenient and easy to use" [9, p. 10]. The machine was purchased by the local Ukrainian nobleman I. G. Khristovskiy "for his peasant women engaged in silk production, as he was satisfied with the samples of silk presented by the Mennonites". Additionally, A. Janzen was awarded a cash prize of 25 rubles for the machine – a substantial money for those times [Ibid, p. 34].

J. Cornies presented the best sorts of tobacco. In the Tobacco Department, his products (out of 13 presented by other producers) were recognized as the best in the gubernia. Albanian, Syrian, and Shiraz sorts were documented the highest praise [9, p. 10]. The cheese produced by Cornies was also highlighted for its premium quality. Based on the exhibition results, Johann was awarded a 'Certificate of Merit' for his top-quality

cheese and tobacco in all the Tavrida Gubernia [Ibid, p. 18, 32].

The flat tile manufactured in the Mennonite colonies was recognized as the best in that category of products [9, p. 25].

Mennonites at the St. Petersburg Exhibition: Imperial Level (1860)

The archival materials give us detailed information about the participation of Molotschna Colony Mennonites at the "Saint-Petersburg Exhibition of Agriculture and Industry" (September 1860). The sources reflect the deep interest of the Mennonites in participating in the exhibition and their desire to present their colonies in a dignified manner.

As it was indicated from the letter addressed to Ph. Wiebe from the members of the "Imperial Independent Economic Society"³ and its director, E. P. Kovalevskyi [5, p. 501], the Mennonites won several awards: one small gold medal, one large silver medal, one small silver medal, two large bronze medals, as well as five diplomas [19, p. 17 rev.].

The list of exhibits presented by the Mennonites at the event holds significant interest. At first glance, one might be underwhelmed by the seemingly modest products they displayed. However, a closer analysis reveals the importance of not rushing to conclusions. This list is particularly telling, as it reflects the level of economic development not only within the Mennonite colonies but also across the Ukrainian gubernias and the empire as a whole in the mid-1840s. It's crucial to remember that the Mennonite exhibits were selected by the Committee, representing the region and offering a snapshot of the economic activities in the Ukraine.

What was sent to the exhibition located in the capital of the empire? At the top of the list, we can find some drawings – the maps of a modal Mennonite farm. Herman Jantzen, the teacher from Orlovo village (Molotschna Colony), depicted a structure of a typical Mennonite homestead with all important details [18, p. 13]. The significance of the modal lay in the fact that the inspectors of the Ministry of State Domains associated the success of the Mennonite communities primarily with a rational approach to the organization of their agricultural activity, the structure of their farms, the division of land within the homestead, as well as the size of landownership. As the abolition of serfdom in 1861 was approaching and debates over the new law neared their conclusion, it became especially important to showcase the Mennonite village model as a positive example for the entire empire.

The Juschanlee farm, owned by Ph. Wiebe who succeeded J. Cornies as a leader of congregations, provided 48 samples of young trees from the local plantations. [18, p. 2]. From his estate, a fleece of the Saxon breed ram, aged 4 years, was sent. The wool was highly estimated and sold at 14.5 silver rubles per pood⁴.

About 50 ears of rye, wheat, barley, oats, millet, and alfalfa were displayed to showcase the achievements in grain farming. The owners highlighted that these crops were grown without the use of fertilizers, with their impressive yields serving as evidence of a unique approach to crop care [18, p. 2–2 rev.].

The miller from the Schoensee colony, Wilhelm Bonelis, submitted 8 sacks of wheat grains to the exhibition. His products were meticulously sorted to showcase each step of his processing methods. The exhibition samples were supplemented with explanations and descriptions [18, p. 13].

Mennonite craftsmen also garnered their share of attention at the event. Jakob Esau, the blacksmith from Juschanlee village, submitted a horse currycomb. It is a grooming tool that consists of a handle attached to a flat or slightly curved piece of metal or plastic with small, rounded teeth. The purpose of a currycomb is to remove dirt, mud, and take away hair from the horse's coat, especially during rainy seasons. It was reported that that small tool was "invented by J. Esau and used with special advantage in all private and state estates" [Ibid, p. 12 rev.]. Despite its high price of 17 rubles, the item was highly popular. Local residents frequently sought out the local blacksmith, willing to pay a "premium price" for a quality product. Finally, David Stamm, a craftsman from the New Halbstadt colony (presumably a German Mennonite), created a horse harness for the exhibition. The reins, featuring elements of leather and metal, were priced at 75 silver rubles [18, p. 13].

The Mennonites also showcased the tools they regularly manufactured, hoping to sell them profitably to the numerous visitors. These included shovels, various types of rakes, chains, axes, hammers, and horseshoes. [Ibid, p. 21 rev.]. Dietrich Jantzen presented a few wooden products (priced at 20 rubles) [Ibid]. Karl Lucas, a rope master from Lindenau colony, provided various options of his own products, ranging in price from 60 kopecks to 6 silver rubles [18, p. 13–13 rev.]. At the end of the list of artisanal products, it was noted that all the items were in demand in the region.

At the silk department the colonies were represented by Mennonites Martin Hamm and Abraham Jantzen. The exhibition featured two skeins of silk weighing 23

³ In the historiography it mentions as Imperial Free Economic Society [15] that is not a proper translation.

⁴ Pood (пуд – in Russian) is a unit of mass equal to 40 funt (фунт – Russian pound).

lots⁵, as well as cocoons. In the colonies, a pound of such silk cost 7.50 rubles. A. Jantzen (from the village of Tiege) exhibited 300 yellow and 35 (very rare) white cocoons [18, p. 12 rev.].

It's noteworthy that Ph. Wiebe ensured the exhibition included not only representations from the colonies but also contributions from the community of former Mennonite apprentices – state peasants from the village of Novopavlovka. Their training had been started by J. Cornies in 1841, and then Philipp (his successor) took on the responsibilities of a project leader [28]. Former Mennonite's student Fyodor Dyak provided 50 ears of high-quality spring wheat "Arnautka" for the exhibition [18, p. 12]. The price of a quarter⁶ of such wheat was 7 silver rubles.

It was somewhat surprising to read that the state peasants had provided samples of limestone (a versatile substance derived from limestone through a process called calcination) mined from the right bank of the Molotchna River. However, at that time it was an important raw material that was used for the constructions in the Taurida Gubernia. It was considered a rather important feature of the region. Ukrainian blacksmith Alexei Voznyak from Novopavlovka presented a horse-shoe he crafted with 12 nails. The item was priced at 60 silver kopecks [18, p. 12 rev.].

The Saint Petersburg exhibition of 1860 was presented a significant event, and the state took on various responsibilities related to its organization. The transportation of exhibits was managed by the St. Petersburg transportation company "Nadezhda." Ph. Wiebe personally visited the company's Kharkov office to sign the contract. The cost of transporting goods weighing approximately 240 kg amounted to a substantial 250 rubles and 30 kopecks, though it is unclear how much of this was covered by the state [Ibid, p. 4]. It is known that the state offered some discounts for the transportation of goods related to the event. Nonetheless, the Mennonites were prepared to contribute financially to their participation. The shipment of exhibits was completed in advance on August 22, 1860 [18, p. 7].

A total of 55 exhibits were sent to the All-Russian fair by the Mennonites. Reflecting on the list of Mennonite products and the fact that they were not only accepted for display but also received awards, it becomes clear how these items represented the average level of Russia's economy on the eve of the significant Great Reforms. Additionally, it should be noted that, despite the financial support, the Mennonites were ready to

invest considerable funds to ensure that their products were packaged and delivered in a good condition. This achievement was largely due to the personal efforts of Ph. Wiebe, and it also reflects the sense of self-awareness and group identity among the Mennonites, who presented themselves as a unified community. Being a corresponding member of the Imperial Independent Economic Society, Wiebe was obliged to participate in choosing and collecting the exhibits. A close analysis of his activities demonstrates that after the death of his father-in-law (J. Cornies), apparently, he unconsciously competed with his renowned predecessor. And he did it quite successfully! In the early 1860s, an official of the Ministry of State Domains, the actual state councilor P. Keppen, wrote about the role of Ph. Wiebe in organizing these events: "Philipp Wiebe is well-known to the Ministry of State Domains as a correspondent of the scientific committee and the manager of the so-called Berdiansk plantation. He greatly contributes to the implementation of the ministry's plans in the Novorossiysk region... The numerous medals and other honorary prizes he repeatedly received at exhibitions are a clear testament to his contributions to agriculture and industry..." [20, p. 19–19 rev.].

It is important to mention that in 1861 the MSD was developing a project to establish the "Museum of Local Industry" which can be considered as another educational program. It was envisaged that the best items from the Saint Petersburg exhibition would be displayed in the museum. Additionally, Wiebe informed that "some other heavy and significant items for the local economy, which greatly influenced the settlements' income", had also been dispatched to the capital following the Saint Petersburg event [19, p. 21].

For instance, the samples of flour produced by Catarina Toews' mill (the village of Schoensee) were presented in a new package for the museum. Her exhibits demonstrated a step-by-step process of production. Thus, flour of different quality was exhibited here, ranging in price from 3.25 to 9.00 silver rubles [18, p. 8–8 rev.]. As it was noted, C. Toews successfully exported her product, marking a significant breakthrough for the regional flour industry. It should be assumed that the enterprise belonged to Catarina was one of the best on the eve of the Mennonite steam mills era.

In addition to flour, different types of cheese, ham, as well as some samples of tiles and bricks from Ph. Wiebe's estate were provided for to the MSD's museum [Ibid, p. 3 rev.].

⁵ The "lot" as a measurement of mass, was an equivalent to about 180 grams (approximately 5.4 ounces). It was used in Russia in 18th – 19th centuries.

⁶ The 'chetvert' (a measure of weight) is commonly used in the context of measuring the mass of specific goods, especially in agriculture and product trading. It signifies one fourth of the standard weight or volume of the goods, typically grains, flour, or other bulk materials.

Agricultural exhibition in Simferopol (1863)

Each subsequent exhibition saw increased representation from the Mennonite colonies. This is convincingly evidenced by the catalog of the agricultural exhibition that took place in Simferopol (1863) [21, p. 20–35 rev.]. It also reflected a certain progress in the range of the offered products.

The most popular section of the event was the "Kingdom of Plants." There, 24 exhibits from the Mennonite colonies were showcased, including contributions from both communities, such as "wheat from the Molotschna colonies' harvests of 1857–1863" and the Molotschna Mennonite Communal Sheepfold, as well as from individual agriculturists. The farmers (David Penner (Rueckenau), P. Schmidt (Steinbach), G. Wiens (Rosenort), D. Penner (Rosenort), G. Jantzen (Tigerweide), W. Toews (Orlovo), A. Zawatzky (Tiegenhagen)) showcased their barley, rye, oats, corn, sorghum, millet and other crops [21, p. 20–24].

In the department of processing industry, they could encounter 11 Mennonite entrepreneurs' surnames who had succeeded in the production of flour and groats. The group included following entrepreneurs: J. Derksen and B. Buller (Berdyansk), a widow C. Toews (Schoensee), P. Schmidt (Steinbach), W. Toews (Orlovo) [Ibid]. The expanding list of private mills signaled the early growth of the private milling industry, whose peak – marked by the advent of steam technology – had yet to be reached.

Contrary to expectations, Mennonites did not present good examples of vegetable crops (for example, we could expect from them new varieties of potatoes), but nonetheless, Isaak Friesen from the village of Rosenort exhibited 26 varieties of legumes at the display [21, p. 24 rev.]. Quite a lot of successful Mennonite producers were concentrated in the butter (7 participants) and tobacco (3 participants) departments [21, p. 27–27 rev.].

The department of gardening reflected previous Mennonite projects. Ph. Wiebe presented 46 varieties of garden tree seedlings from the village of Juschanlee. The fruit tree department abounded with fruit seedlings of apple, pear, quince, apricot, plum, cherry, and sour cherry (22 producers) [Ibid, p. 28 rev.–33].

Among the most unexpected exhibits presented by Ph. Wiebe, the visitors could find a stump (!) of a 20-year-old poplar. In turn, Ivan Cornies demonstrated the trunk of a 17-year-old, 6 sazhen [sazhen – 2.1336 m, 7 ft.] tall oak. These exhibits showed off the results of the forestry program – a project initiated over 20 years ago.

At the Domestic Animals' Department, Mennonite colonies were represented by Ph. Wiebe and Ivan Cornies who offered the result of their animal husbandry

practice: graceful horses, well-fattened sheep, cattle, and pigs [21, p. 33–33 rev.].

According to the catalog, J. Wiens (Petershagen) was recognized as an undisputed leader of the regional silk production, while the best honey and wax were produced at the Molotschna Mennonite Communal Sheep Farm [Ibid, p. 35].

The initial appearance of Mennonite machines marked a shift in the industry. At the exhibition, four craftsmen showcased their innovations: 1) Ph. Wiebe with his sugar beet cutting machine; 2) Jacob Reimer (Karassan) with a similar purpose device; 3) Jacob Wiebe, who presented a four-furrow steam-powered plow; 4) Gerhard Wall (Karassan) with his oil press machine. The products were priced at no more than 35 rubles and were available for purchase, allowing them to be distributed throughout the region [21, p. 22 rev.].

The list of exhibits was completed by famous Mennonite tile manufactured in the estates belonged to Ph. Wiebe and Ivan Cornies [Ibid].

The London World's Fair: A Leap into Europe (May 1862)

The participation of Mennonites in the St. Petersburg event provided them with an opportunity to take the next step – to be invited to their first international exhibition in London.

The London International Exhibition of Industry and Art was a world's fair held in South Kensington (London) from May to November of 1862. Without exaggeration, it was an event of European significance, a showcase of the numerous advances featured the industrial revolution such as the electric telegraph, submarine cables, the first samples of plastic (parkesine), machine tools, looms, precision instruments, Charles Babbage's analytical engine, cotton mills, maritime engines (made by Henry Maudsley and Humphrys, Tennant and Dykes) and others [27]. None of the inventions mentioned above was made in Russia. And although the Mennonites did not participate in the London fair in-person, they considered a great honor to present their exhibits within the framework of this mammoth event.

The congregations were tasked with to represent the agriculture of the empire, and they were involved in preparing the stuff of the so-called Russian pavilion. In this direction, they collaborated with the "Imperial Society of Agriculture of Southern Russia" [2] established in Odessa in 1828 at the initiative of Governor-General of New Russia Count M. S. Vorontsov (in office 1823–1853).

A special commission (led by the leader of the Kherson gubernia's local nobility E. A. Kasinov) was organized to coordinate the efforts of the entire region

[19, p. 16–17]. Although the Mennonites did not have their representative in the Kherson's border, they collaborated with the imperial "Special Commission for the Selection of the Exhibits". The latter organization, located in St. Petersburg, aligned its activities with the "General London Commission" [Ibid, p. 30]. It was envisaged that the area of the Russian pavilion would be spaced 13,000 square feet [19, p. 18]. As it was notified in one of the letters addressed to Ph. Wiebe, the Mennonites' goal was to "present Russia in a worthy and, if possible, comprehensive way" [Ibid, p. 30].

The information brochure "About the London Exhibition of 1862" provided details about the structure and organizational features of the exhibition. The Mennonite goods were selected for the department "Products of Agricultural, Mining, and Factory Industries" [19, p. 17–24 rev.]. Special geographical points for gathering of exhibits from all over the empire were located in five major transportation hubs of Russia: St. Petersburg, Riga, Warsaw, Odessa, and Tiflis.

The exhibition participants were required to ensure accurate and comprehensive descriptions of their products, each accompanied by a label. The label had to clarify the exhibitor's name, the item's title, its cost, place of production (gubernia, city or village), purchasing options, and the location of the nearest logistics center, such as a railway station or a seaport. Brief information about the production process was welcomed, including crop rotation and crop care innovation practice for agricultural items. It was mandatory to provide information on the quantity and value of annual production, as well as the materials used (whether Russian or imported) and the production method (machine-based or handmade) for factory and handicraft items. Instructions were given before the opening event regarding the handling of exhibits, specifying whether they should be sold or returned to the owners. According to the brochure, items could be sent back to the producers at the exhibitors' expense no later than February 17, 1862 [19, p. 19].

Additional terms of Mennonite involvement in the London exhibition were outlined in correspondence between Ph. Wiebe and the members of the "Imperial State Scientific Committee" of the MSD in November 1861. Mennonites were requested to contribute "samples of rural industry and crafts that were most characteristic of the Southern provinces, gained popularity in the region, and were involved in trade" [19, p. 31]. Accordingly, the government arranged for the packaging and shipment of those items to Saint Petersburg, then to London and back, all at state expense. The Mennonite exhibits for the London fair were received in January 1862 [18, p. 50].

What did the Mennonites from Ukraine prepare for the London visitors? Among the contributors, there were both well-known and lesser-known members of congregations: Ph. Wiebe; the owner of the woolen factory, J. Klassen; miller Wilhelm Bonelis; craftsmen David Cornies, Martin Gamm, and Karl Lukas; farmer Ivan Cornies. For the food industry department, Ph. Wiebe and F. Klassen offered cheese, ham, wool (from various breeds of sheep), and dried fruits such as apples, pears, and plums. Miller Bonelis provided flour of various grades, while Ivan Cornies offered samples of plant material [18, p. 52–52 rev.].

The owner of a woolen factory, Johann Klassen, showcased various examples of his products at the London exhibition: cloth, baize, and flannel. David Cornies provided woven baskets, Martens Gamm contributed crates, and Karl Lucas presented 13 samples of rope products [Ibid, p. 52 "a"]. Perhaps, those exhibits were the only that the Mennonites could present to the "world" at that time. However, it should be noted that these product examples were among the best in their respective categories in Russia.

This time, in addition to agricultural products, the exhibition proposed including the renowned Mennonite carriages. The organizing committee agreed to this suggestion but stipulated that the carriage must be dismantled and meticulously packaged [19, p. 15–15 rev.]. The ministry covered all transportation expenses for delivering the carriage [18, p. 48–48 rev.]. It can be presumed that this decision stemmed from negotiations.

A curious situation emerged after the London Fair. The exhibits which Ph. Wiebe had expected to be returned were never received. It appeared that they had been lost. Despite numerous persistent letters sent to the Guardian Committee, the replies stated that, according to the decision of the Russian Exhibition Department, the Mennonite products "were handed over to museums in England and other states, while the perishable food, which had become moldy and spoiled, was discarded" [18, 47 rev.].

Paris World Fair in 1867: More Europe

It took more time to prepare for the Paris Exhibition. Meticulously documented, the fair stood out as one of the most significant international events of the mid-19th century, matching the grandeur of its predecessors. Renowned figures like Mark Twain, Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, and many others recounted their memories of this exhibition [12, p. 45–63]. Almost all the European monarchs, including Alexander II, visited the exhibition, and a special reception was organized for them. It is likely that the Russian tsar took particular interest in the Mennonite exhibits, recalling his visit to their settlements during his southern journey across the empire in the 1830-s.

The renowned Russian scientist Dmitry Mendeleev headed the Russian exhibition department. As it was noted by the Russian scholar and researcher, the priorities of the exhibition were: "First, ethnography, then fine arts, followed by machinery, fabrics, products of metallurgy, and agriculture..." [7].

The Russian section spanned eight galleries: the first two featured archaeological artifacts and works of art, while the remaining six showcased industrial and agricultural products. This section included numerous wooden items, such as a peasant hut, stables for horses from the Imperial Stud Farm, facilities for carriages, horse harnesses, and more [11, p. 9]. Consequently, the Mennonites with their agricultural exhibits reasonably aligned with the overall concept and direction of the exhibition. As before, the Mennonites themselves were not personally present at the exhibition in Paris.

Preparations for the exhibition began two years before the event, in 1865. For Russia's respectable representation at the Paris Fair, the "Special Commission" was allocated 200,000 rubles. With this funding, the government covered expenses for transporting exhibits, insuring the items, renting land, constructing and decorating Russian pavilions. Additionally, the commission collaborated with local gubernias' authorities as needed to address organizational and financial matters [16, p. 11].

Under the guidance of Ph. Wiebe, the Mennonites endeavored to form an imperial image [23, p. 1–1 rev.]. Perhaps for the first time, the names of Mennonites resonated in distant and sophisticated France. Forty-seven exhibits were prepared for the display. The exposition was started with the plans of Mennonite colonies, alongside the models of a typical Russian peasant hut. The Mennonite participants in the exhibition were David Cornies, who presented his baskets, and Karl Lucas from Liebenau, who showcased horse harnesses. Jakov Esau from Juschanlee displayed typical German tools, while Ph. Wiebe and Ivan Cornies presented a variety of agricultural products. Additionally, Bernard Warkentin from Altonau offered planting material, and Jacob Neufeld from New-Halbstadt exhibited silk [23, p. 4–7].

At the same time, some industrial advancements were evident with the debut of basic agricultural machinery in Paris. These items included Jacob Friesen's windmill and Gerhard Garder's cart (both artisans were from Orlovo), Johann Friesen's four-furrow plow (Altonau). The map of the Mennonite village Orlovo was drawn by teacher Jantzen to demonstrate the advantages of the Mennonite colonies' agricultural practices [Ibid].

We have no evidence whether the Mennonites received prizes. Given the competition was intense

and the many truly groundbreaking innovations were on display, it is probable that their simple items failed to capture the jury's attention. However, after the exhibition, Ph. Wiebe received a "Certificate of Honor" from the government. It was a mark of recognition for the "modest" achievements of his own as well as the Mennonites in general. Additionally, it was reported that the maps of the Mennonite farm had attracted the interest of experts and were generously gifted to the Paris Agricultural Academy [23, p. 2].

The exhibition activity and interaction with the Romanovs

The debut "exhibition period of the 1860s" concludes for the Mennonites with their participation in the Imperial Livestock Exhibition, which took place in October 1869. The duties of the curator of the All-Russian Exhibition were performed by the Honorary President of the "Imperial Independent Economic Society", Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov.

Documents indicate that the idea about exhibition was proposed by the prince himself. In March 1869, Ph. Wiebe, who was already struggling with health challenges and considered resigning from his position, received a letter from the commission responsible for organizing the exhibition. As before, he was asked to voluntarily select skilled cattle breeders and the best cattle for the exhibition. Meanwhile, reports surfaced about Nicholas Nikolaevich's trip to the southern provinces to inspect animal husbandry. The Grand Duke decided that Mennonites must participate in the St. Petersburg exhibition [24, p. 22–22 rev.].

According to the organizers' plans, the primary aim of the exhibition was to show off various breeds of domestic livestock popular in the Russian Empire: dairy and meat-dairy cow breeds, sheep, and fattened pigs [Ibid, p. 6]. The exhibition committee not only gathered the animals but also took care of them during the event and arranged their transportation. The letter stated: "The committee will request a reduction in fees for transporting animals to and back after the exhibition." [22, p. 10]. Transporting exhibits back was free of charge. It is also noteworthy that the exhibition had no social restrictions, encouraging landlords, tenants, peasants, and urban residents to participate [Ibid, 17 rev.].

According to the decision of Wiebe and other leaders of the colonies, the following Mennonites were chosen to present their agricultural achievements: Ivan Cornies (13 animals), Ph. Wiebe (9), Peter Schröder (Neuhof) (3) [15, p. 136], A. Penner (Orlovo) (1), J. Dyck (Rosengoff) (3), P. Schmidt (Steinbach) (4), Andrey Martens (Tashchenak) (5), Michael Hofer (Johannesruh) (1), P. Fast (State Plantation of Berdyansk district) (4). The list of participants also included: P. Warkentin (Blumstein), B. Warkentin

(Altonau), Johan Cornies (Hochfeld), Ivan Neufeld (Hochfeld), and Daniil Schmidt (Steinbach) [24, p. 43–47 rev.].

It's noteworthy that former Ukrainian students of Johann Cornies and Philipp Wiebe, state peasants from the village of Novopavlovka (Yakov Solop, Kiril Shkurka, Ivan Timoshenko), also participated in the exhibition [Ibid, p. 45 rev.–46 rev.]. Although we lack specific information about the exhibition results, it's reasonable to assume that it was a highly successful endeavor for the Mennonites.

Some important conclusions

The history of Mennonites' participation in regional and international exhibitions not only represents a chapter in the history of colonies but also provides valuable insights into the actual development of their industry. Additionally, it helps to make some broader conclusions about the level of the national economy and the overall development of the Russian Empire.

Although exhibitions, which became popular in the middle of 19th cent., reflected the natural aspirations of countries and nations for regional and national competition, it was an important duty and work for the leaders of Mennonite colonies in Ukraine. It was essential for them to present the results of their economic efforts, reflecting their adherence to the principles of Privileges and the didactic role they were imposed by tsars.

The analysis of Mennonite participation in the 1860s exhibitions and the products they showcased does not fully align with common perceptions of Mennonite industrial progress at the dawn of the 20th century, which congregations took pride at the beginning of 20th century. However, it provides a snapshot of the settlements' development on the eve of the transformative Great Reforms. To some extent, the exhibitions of the 1860s summarized the pre-modernization state of the colonies. At the same time, the exhibitions demonstrate some dynamics in economic development – from exclusively rural products to the first agricultural machines. Although the Mennonites had already launched large industrial

projects by the mid-1860s, it took time for the entrepreneurs to achieve success.

The history of Mennonite participation in exhibitions and their interactions with various central bodies and specialized temporary organizations challenges the ideas of the colonies' isolation. The industrial exhibitions were a platform for showcasing their communities and sharing news about their congregations beyond internal government circles. It was an effort to gain sympathy and support from the broader multi-ethnic society.

Analysis of Ph. Wiebe's correspondence illustrates his pivotal role in managing the colonies. He not only inherited J. Cornies' leadership position but also retained his title as a correspondent member of the Imperial Independent Economic Society. This designation elevated his status to a regional and partly imperial level. As an ambitious leader, he demonstrated his abilities as both an organizer and a lobbyist for the local elite who were loyal to him.

The theme of elites is prominently evident when analyzing the lists of exhibitions participants. Firstly, we observe that by the mid-19th century, there had been still no established industrial elite within Mennonite society. Additionally, we note a limited circle of participants, where the names of Ivan and David Cornies (related to the famous Johann Cornies) consistently appeared in a list of the participants. We still lack reliable information regarding the exhibition activity of the Chortitza colonies. This issue requires further scholarly attention. Providing that Wiebe was responsible for both groups of the so called “Mother colonies”, we are inclined to hypothesize that Philip primarily lobbied for close to him Molotschna colonies. We need more verified sources to support this thesis.

The history of Mennonites' participation in international exhibitions is one of the most promising area for research. These events help to dispel the Mennonite history as a purely local phenomenon. Being involved in regional, imperial, and international exhibitions, they, like other participants, stimulated business and creative contacts in the region and across the continent, fostering the progressive trends of cultural exchange and enrichment of national traditions.

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