

DOUKHOBORS TO SEEK FREEDOM IN COLORADO



How the Doukhobors Did Their Threshing Four Years Ago.



How Threshing is Done Now.

Russian Colonists, Pestered by Canadian Authorities, Will Migrate to United States

By VOLDEMAR KRUGLAK.

All those interested in the life and progress of the Russian Quakers, known as the Doukhobors, whose settlements, over fifty in number, are scattered in the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, and in the Kootenay district of British Columbia, have been aware for some time of trouble brewing ominously between the colonists and the local authorities, due to the officials' commendable but misdirected desire to "convert" them into the fold of the British allegiance, and the Doukhobors' gentle, but adamant, resistance to all attempts to impose even some sort of an outward semblance to loyal British subjects on them.

The Doukhobors came to Canada on a clear understanding, which was effected on their behalf by Leo Tolstoy and other sympathizers, that they would be left free to live in their own land, which does not recognize either "subjects" or human powers that be, and no authority over mankind other than that of God. And for the first eight years or so they were not interfered with.

But when the Doukhobors emerged triumphant from the sombre wilderness of virgin forests and deserts of western Canada, with nature subdued stretching at their feet in beautiful vistas of fields and orchards, the British authorities sat up and took notice. So long as the Doukhobors were buried in the throes of their pioneer work their customs and their communal life did not matter.

But no sooner had they settled down to comparative rest and started in arranging their social life into a system embodying their dogma in practice than trouble began smouldering at once.

All sorts of pressure was brought to bear upon the colonists, from coaxing propositions to open coercion. It was pointed out to them that they were to forfeit their land on the ground of non-compliance with the letter of the law on land patents. The regulations provide for a patent being granted to the settler at the end of three years, during which time he must cultivate at least fifteen acres of his quarter section.

True to their cooperative principles, the Doukhobors cultivated one great tract at the centre of the land allotted to them, 2,000 homesteads of 160 acres each, equal to fifteen acres for each settler. When they came to ask for their title they did not ask for individual patents, but for the whole piece. They surely met the spirit and the object of the law, but there was no provision made in the law, the authorities said, for the communal method of cultivation, combining so many quarter sections into one tract of property. So the authorities held up their title, and finally came forward with a thinly veiled ultimatum to either become British subjects or else forfeit the land. The Doukhobors gave up the land without a moment's hesitation.

It is ten years now since the Canadian Government gave the Doukhobors land and income in Canada—\$20,000 worth of land, which at the very lowest valuation must be worth \$10 an acre now.

The Doukhobors retained their freedom and fifteen acres a homestead. It was nothing new for them to contend with official coercion. And they are not afraid of work. Their name implies that their religion lies in struggling—

They will have no police for there is no crime among them, while theft is out of the question. They will not apply for any certificates for interment, nor will they do anything to do with officials except pay their taxes. And this is by no means an account of any nihilistic propensities of their doctrine.

Their cult is Christianity pure and simple, simple as can be, adhering to the dogma of Christ as closely as possible to human endeavor. In his book on the history of the Doukhobors' migration from Russia, Joseph Elkington, the noted Philadelphia Quaker, says on

the subject: "Whoever may be the opinions of those who do not know the virtues of these men, by actual acquaintance they have had the privilege of learning of their personal experience from their own lips and have been witnesses of their self-sacrificing devotion to a high principle and their affection for one another, must believe in them and in their

future. . . . A people who will not fight, or steal, or drink anything intoxicating, or smoke, or use profane language, or lie have a character which will bring forth the best qualities of Christian citizenship."

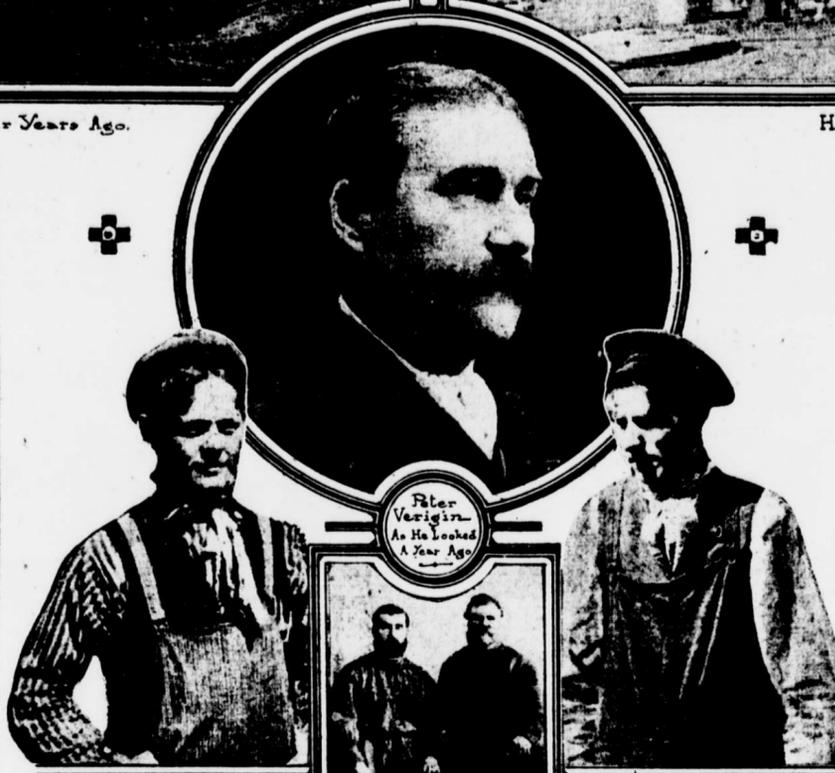
All was going well in British Columbia for four years. With the infinite patience and perseverance, verging on obstinacy, characterizing the Russian peasant, the Doukhobors have cleared hundreds of acres of their new land of the dense timber and have planted it with fruit trees. There is mapped out and in part operation an irrigation system covering the entire territory, and already a domestic water supply system fed by springs in the mountains connects all of the dwellings in the settlements of Grand Forks, Brilliant, Glade, Pass Creek and others. The calm of the mountain fastness is pierced by the shrill whistles of steam tractors hauling modern ploughing and threshing machinery, by the noisy, hoarse of gigantic sawmills, by brick and concrete steam works, grain elevators and mills and foundries.

In connection with the sawmills, where also all lumber needed for the buildings is turned out, there is a planing mill. Finished lumber is made there, and mouldings, undistinguishable from the product of a big factory, are

manufactured. All furniture, tables and chairs used in the Doukhobors' houses are made by Doukhobor labor. An enormous pumping plant is now nearing completion on the high embankment of the Kootenay River—the largest in the whole of Canada, as the president of the company, Peter Verigin, pointed out to me with the nearest approach to pride I ever witnessed in a Doukhobor. When this plant is in working order the fields will be covered by a network of pipes. In connection with the pumping plant a generating station will be built to supply light and power to the whole colony. At least this and many other enterprises were being planned by the executive of the community but a few weeks ago, at the time of my visit to the chief, Peter Verigin. But storm clouds were already gathering then about the heads of the peaceful and prosperous settlers.

On June 13 last four Doukhobors were seized and clapped in jail. Later an officer of the law visited the house and was received by women, who threw him out bodily. The infuriated minion of the law raved and threatened dire reprisals. The women faced him time and again with grim resolution. Finally the officer flung the royal warrant into the house. The women tore the paper into little pieces and threw them after him.

Thus a regular war was started between the Doukhobors and the rural police. Policemen would come day after day prying among the graves of the Doukhobors on the lookout for any fresh interments. The Doukhobors of the Grand Forks settlement got together one day and ploughed up the whole graveyard and then barrowed the land level. Following their line of passive resistance the settlers refused to talk to the police or answer any questions at all; the children were kept away from the English school. The following telegram was sent to the State Secretary of the Interior at Ottawa: "On the 13th of June last two men were seized from our midst and imprisoned because they did not make out declarations about the death of their mother and brother respectively; and two others likewise for preparing coffins for the interment of the deceased. They are to be confined in jail for three months in the very heat of such a busy season, when no hands can be spared by us at all. All of us, the 400 Grand Forks Doukhobor community of 400 men, consider such treat-



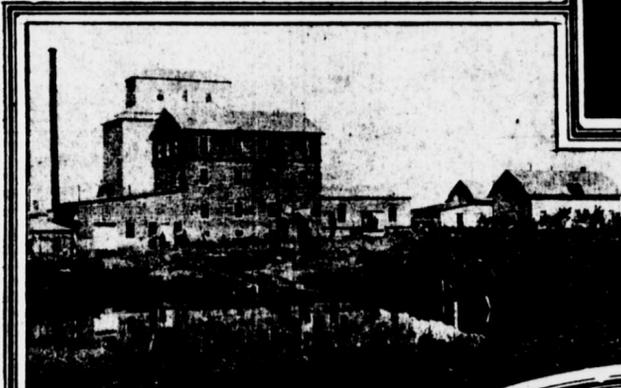
Peter Verigin As He Looked A Year Ago



Type of Doukhobor Farmer.



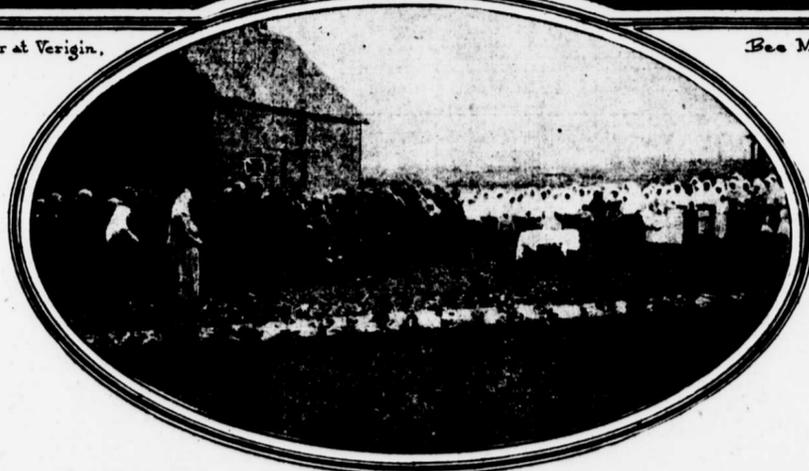
Type of Doukhobor Farmer



The Grain Mill and Elevator at Verigin, Sask.



Bee Master and His Assistant



Prayer Meeting Conducted by A. Woman. *Indicates Peter Verigin, Chief.

ment cruel and unjust and request you, as Minister of the Land, to immediately order the release of our brethren."

No reply was vouchsafed to this appeal. A letter was also directed to the chief constable, Dinsmore, at Greenwood, B. C., which elicited a very curt reply to the effect that compliance with the laws of British Columbia will be strictly enforced by all means in his power.

All of which bade ill for the Doukhobors. It means, so far as they can make it out, that before long they will have to gird their loins once more and start out, for the fifth time since their persecutions began back in Russia, in quest of some other haven of peace, so long and patiently sought.

Fortunately for the heart heavy tollers Uncle Sam is coming to their rescue, proffering the hand of cordial welcome and the assurance of peace and freedom from political and religious interference. The following letter was directed through me to the Colorado State Immigration Commissioner: "Kindly advise us whether the State of Colorado could accept us as aliens, or rather sell land to us as such. In view of the fact that in pursuit of their religious beliefs the Doukhobors are not inclined to adopt the citizenship of any

country they wish to live free from any interference on the part of local authorities. For instance, they wish to be excused from the obligatory registrations of any kind—of their births, deaths or marriages. They want full religious freedom, exemption from military service and from war taxation.

"We can manage our own affairs within our settlements, and if we should have any surplus of fruit and vegetable crops at our disposal, the same would be willingly turned over to the State in some indirect manner. Now if all this should not be at issue with the laws of your State and in case the land would be suitable for us, we can at once purchase land to the amount of one million dollars and devote same to horticulture and vegetable farming."

"PETER VERIGIN." Commissioner L. C. Paddock replied that the Doukhobors cannot be compelled to become citizens of the United States, that as aliens they may own property, are exempt from compulsory military service and free to regulate their own domestic affairs and will not be hindered in religious worship. In the early fall the leader of the Doukhobors will take a trip to Colorado, where a huge tract of irrigated farm

and orchard land has already been earmarked, upon careful selection, with the view of making the necessary preliminary arrangements. Upon his return a delegation of 100 Doukhobors will be detailed, like spies into Canada, to go out and investigate the land from every viewpoint; also to put up the first necessary buildings; next the married couples and the families will be sent over, and finally the single men.

There is a system in all this. System and coordination of effort permeate the whole existence of the Doukhobor communities; everything is done upon joint consideration; no labor is wasted in singlehanded effort and none is undertaken unless the requisite number of hands can be put on the job to effect the maximum saving of time coupled with highest efficiency. No one is ever left idle, except upon reaching the age of 60, when men settle down to enjoy their well earned rest. In summer time all work is suspended between the hours of 11 to 3 in the afternoon. All work stops at noon on Saturdays.

The tilling of the land is all done in one piece. There are no ledges nor divisions of the whole 2,900 acres, as far as ownership is concerned. Men are put to work on whatever task they

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are best suited for, and may be changed to another, more congenial to them, if it means greater efficiency. Some are at work in the fields, while others are engaged in machine shops, others in carpenter work. And everybody being thus interested in his particular line of work, laziness is very seldom met with.

Mr. James Lightbody, who also visited the Doukhobors at the same time with me, was greatly impressed by the harmony and contentment reigning in this community, whose motto is "The Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood." Analyzing his impressions in a communication to the *Victoria Daily Times*, he says:

"It is the socialist Utopia, the realization of equality, which is being advocated for the rest of the world to-day." At Brilliant, unlike the modern city, there are no cares as to where the next day's meals are to come from. There is no stinting or grudging to provide sustenance when one's strength has ebbed in declining years. There are no divisions between "mine" and "thine," no man is richer than his fellow—therefore there are no jealousies or envies as to the possessions of another.

Cares as to money are totally absent, for there is no money in circulation.

use for either, since chickens cannot be raised or sold for any other purpose than eating, and dogs would have nothing to watch.

The men look hale and sturdy and the children are almost without exception pictures of blossoming health. In your walk, if school be not in session, you will be passed by numbers of them, the girls picturesque in bright colors and the boys—well, as growing mischievous boys—always dress. All have an inquiring, inquisitive look, for strangers are not seen every day, yet disrespect is totally absent, and they call to you "Hello!" their first word of English probably, and the boys doff their hats and the girls nod their heads.

The top floor of the great assembly house contains several big class rooms. The school has recently been put in commission by the provincial Government, with an English speaking school-ma'am in it, and the children, so they say, follow their studies with such an avidity that playing truant is practically an unheard of offence. In fact they come around to the school before their teacher rises in the morning, and she is an early riser.

Surely enough they have a large and well appointed hospital at Brilliant, and they have everything there except doctors, nurses or inmates. The building is inhabited by a superannuated and very affable janitor. Each dwelling comprises two special emergency rooms—one of them adapted for women in confinement.

The Doukhobors show great consideration and solicitude for their women. As a general rule no family is encumbered with more than two or three children, and this by no means for reasons of economy. In fact equality of sexes has reached its highest expression in their social life. Women are recognized as being competent to judge upon all of the affairs of their community. Not only do they share in all administrative work and take part in all the council, but they also perform all the religious rites and conduct divine services on the same footing with men, as can be seen from accompanying photographs taken by me.

Prayers are always held in the open air, weather permitting. The congregation always stand, and not only bareheaded but in their bare feet as well, in summer. Prayers, however, they have none, neither is there a place of worship in the direct sense. In many weather prayer meetings are held in the great assembly hall, but the place bears not a trace of any religious emblems—anything to impart any sacred significance to itself. God is within men, they hold, so the place of worship is where the congregation happens to meet. They have no written laws or rules, and no written prayers. There is nothing fixed or moulded in their worship—it is a live and spontaneous religion. The hymns which they sing pass from generation to generation by oral tradition—modified and added to.

The figure of Peter Verigin, the leader of the entire Doukhobor sect now in America, is indeed one of almost awe inspiring personality. If ever there was a born leader of men Peter Verigin is one. He is the seventh leader of the Doukhobor sect, which has been in existence for 200 years. The one preceding him was a woman, Lookeria Vassilovna, who succeeded her husband in this capacity. She found and marked Verigin for leadership when he was a mere boy. He belonged to a very wealthy family of the Doukhobor persuasion and he followed her implicitly.

He was given a thorough education and prepared very painstakingly to assume this important post, which she passed on to him on her deathbed. No sooner had he assumed the leadership than he started a movement of passive resistance to the Russian Government's system of compulsory military service. He was soon seized by the authorities and exiled to Siberia. He was kept in exile for sixteen years—long after the last of the Doukhobors migrated from Russia—but he never relinquished leadership over his herd.

He maintained a constant correspondence with Count Leo Tolstoy, who was an ardent champion of the Doukhobor cause. Tolstoy never sold the copyright for his books or accepted any royalties from the publishers, but he made an exception in the case of the famous novel "Resurrection," the proceeds of which went to assist the Doukhobors in migrating from Russia.

There is no doubt that the migration of the Doukhobors into the United States could only be welcomed by this country. With the more propitious climate and the freedom of which they are assured, they are certain to prosper and help to develop the natural wealth of the State.

One member of the executive does all the outside selling and purchasing for the community. Any money received by individual members from outside sources is turned over into the treasury. It would have no purchasing value within the community, nor is there any need for it, for food and clothing and all necessities of life are doled out from the various departments in charge of these matters.

The government is in the hands of the people, effectively and simply, although with no machinery of government whatever. Once a week all persons, both men and women, who have reached years of mature understanding crowd into the large assembly house, which has a capacity of 2,000, and discuss the affairs of the community. At these meetings, held every Sunday afternoon, the managers of each department are given their instructions, according to the popular sentiment. No definite time is specified at the appointment of an officer, but he holds office as long as he does his work well. This is the initiative, referendum and recall system without the cumbersome machinery in use at the present day.

All the houses are built pretty much after the same plan. Like everything built or used or worn by the Doukhobors their residences are devoid of all elaborateness or ornamentation of any kind, but eminently substantial and practical for all intents and purposes. They are always built in pairs, and at a respectful distance from other buildings for sanitary reasons and fire isolation. There is an abundance of air and light. Each dwelling accommodates no less than thirty people. Married folk have double bedrooms. All beds are taken out of doors every morning and given a thorough sunning and airing. At the rear of each pair of buildings there is a bath house, with a heater in the centre, supplying steam for the hot room and hot water for the numerous baths around.

All the women of each household take turns at cooking and baking the bread for all the inmates. The food is very appetizing and well cooked. Needless to say the Doukhobors eat no meat or eggs. The first impression which strikes a stranger entering a Doukhobor settlement at night, as I did, is the absolute stillness of the place, which at first seems almost uncanny. One realizes before long that this is due to the absence of either dogs or poultry in the place. The Doukhobors have no