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Sons of Freedom Doukhobors of Saskatchewan win communal land-holding, Canada, 1900-1907

June
1900
to: January
1907
Country: Canada
Location City/State/Province: *Saskatchewan province*

Goals:
Exemption from the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the Crown, and from the individual registration of land occupied by Doukhobors

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 020. Prayer and worship
- 022. Protest disrobings
- 037. Singing
- 038. Marches › Nude parading
- 048. Protest meetings
- 070. Protest emigration (hijrat)
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience
- 158. Self-exposure to the elements › Taking shelter in makeshift roadside campsites
- 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)

Methods in 4th segment:

- 022. Protest disrobings
- 038. Marches › Nude parading
- 048. Protest meetings
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience

Methods in 5th segment:

- 022. Protest disrobings
- 038. Marches › Nude parading
- 048. Protest meetings
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience

Methods in 6th segment:

- 022. Protest disrobings
- 038. Marches
- 048. Protest meetings
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 135. Popular nonobedience

Classifications

Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity
Group characterization:

- Freedomite/Sons of Freedom Doukhobors

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Ivan Ponamoroff, Vasily Obedkoff, Nicholas Zeboroff, and possibly Peter V. Veregin, leader of Doukhobors at large
Partners:
Not known
External allies:
Leo Tolstoy
Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Leo Tolstoy
- Orthodox/Community Doukhobors (Exit)

Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:
Segment Length: *Approximately 13 months*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Canadian government
Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Government had Quaker leaders attempt to persuade Doukhobors to abide by Canadian law in first march of 1902.
Campaigner violence:
Not known
Repressive Violence:
Police arrest and imprison protestors in march of May 1902. Resentful Orthodox/Community Doukhobors beat Sons of Freedom for protest. Police forcibly return Doukhobors to their homes on several accounts.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
4 points out of 6 points
Survival:
1 point out of 1 points
Growth:
1 point out of 3 points
Notes on outcomes:
The original Sons of Freedom objective, freedom from property, was achieved as they were relocated to reserve. Their loss of much land came at the cost of their freedom from registration, but is not reflective of a failed objective. However, many Doukhobors had to migrate to British Columbia to find more land, and Peter V. Verigin registered much property under his own name so that Doukhobors could live communally and peacefully. Four success points were given to reflect only relative success of the campaign.

The Doukhobors are a group of Russian peasants who left the Orthodox Church following a schism and were named “douko-borets," meaning “spirit wrestlers.” Their Christian beliefs led them to adopt principles of pacifism, communal living and the sharing of the possessions, the rejection of church and state authorities, and vegetarianism.

In 1899, nearly 8,000 Doukhobors migrated from Russia to Canada to escape Tsarist conscription laws, and settled in Saskatchewan province. Their leader at the time, Peter Vasilievech Verigin, remained in exile in Siberia but wrote them letters regularly. Not long after arrival, the Canadian federal government notified the Doukhobors that titles to their settled lands would be granted only upon their signing of an oath of allegiance to the Crown of British Empire. The Doukhobors were confused, as

their religious beliefs did not allow for their subjection to the state and required them to live communally instead of acquiring private property. As a result, most of them refused to sign the oath and register their land individually.

In June of 1900, the Doukhobors presented a petition to the Canadian government, signed by twenty-two delegates of the Society of Universal Brotherhood organization demanding exemption from the law: "we once more petition the Government of Canada to grant us exceptions concerning the use of lands, legality of marriage unions, and registration in order that we may be able to live in Canada without breaking the Divine Truth as we understand it" (Holt, 1964, pp. 29-30). In the petition the Doukhobors notified the government of their intent to disobey laws; they would refuse to individually register their lands and decline to register marriages and divorces or report births and deaths. Throughout 1901, restlessness increased among the Doukhobors as government demands remained.

In 1902, the Doukhobors began to march in protest. They hoped to disrupt the order enough to convince the government to cede the demands, or at least facilitate the Doukhobors' migration to a warmer climate. Nineteen marchers trekked southward as scouts for warmer land, promising that more would follow. Canadian government had the U.S. immigration service stop them at the border and turn them towards home.

In October 1902, following numerous inter-village meetings, migration efforts redoubled as a second procession of over 1,100 Doukhobors, led by Ivan Ponamoroff, Vasily Obedkoff, and Nicholas Zeboroff, marched from village to village promoting their cause. Men preached their religious principles to convert villagers by day, prayed and sang in campsites along the road throughout the night, and endured the elements. Women and children fasted and refused the food offered by other citizens in a brief hunger strike, but many soon took shelter in Doukhobor villages and accepted food.

Men continued to march south. Authorities offered them food and shelter and tried to persuade them to turn towards home, but the Doukhobors refused to cooperate. During this time, a few Doukhobors were found disrobed as an expression of the true freedom of living as original man, an ideal growing in popularity; the most radical believers sought to live as God had created Even and Adam, naked, non-oppressive of animals, and free from notions of property. In warmer lands they hoped to find fruits and other natural bounty on which they could sustain themselves without cultivating the soil or keeping animals. In November, a large group of marchers reached Minnedosa, Manitoba. Police used physical force to load some 450 Doukhobor men and women into guarded train cars and sent them back to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, where they were made to return home on foot.

In December 1902, following his release from exile, Verigin arrived in Canada. He persuaded a majority of Doukhobors to individually register their lands, claiming it would not interfere with communal living. Others were resistant to the idea, and favored the continuation of protest. Schism arose, producing three distinct Doukhobor factions: the Independents, already integrated into Canadian conventions; the Orthodox/Community, favoring Verigin's call to register individually; and the Freedomites/Sons of Freedom, refusing any kind of land ownership.

In May 1903, time came for land registrations, but the Sons of Freedom staged another march. This time, they would disrobe. Twenty-eight men, and seventeen women and children, led by Zeboroff, marched nude through sixteen villages toward Yorkton, baring their bodies to protest the government’s restriction of their right to their vision for free living. Russian author Leo Tolstoy published a letter of support, praising the Sons' protest. Exceptionally resentful Doukhobors, on the other hand, beat them on their pathway. At Yorkton, the Sons stayed in an immigration hall, were ordered to dress and then rounded up. They were all arrested on charges of nudism and sentenced to three months in prison. But by September, twenty-one Sons of Freedom once again marched nude in search of warmer lands and their number doubled by Saskatoon. Police forcibly rounded them up and took them home.

In 1906, the government established the Homestead Act, which issued a new declaration that Doukhobors would have to register land individually and accept the demands of Canadian citizenship. A land crisis ensued. Sons of Freedom continued to hold village meetings, hunger strikes, and nude marches frequently, while disagreement amongst Doukhobors escalated. Verigin, however, who showed concern at the Sons' actions, never openly condemned them, and, regarding the land registration issue, stated that “Each Doukhobor will decide for himself. None among us is greater than each other. We are all equals before God”

(Holt, 1964, p. 45). He claimed to have no part in Sons of Freedom actions, but the Sons were inspired by the religious ideals Verigin had written about and claimed that he had sanctioned the protests. Authorities suspected that Verigin had secretly arranged for the protest, but it remains unclear whether or not Verigin played any leadership role in the resistance.

In 1907, the government announced their cancellation of all existing Doukhobor land titles where owners did not comply with the new Act. They would have to re-register under the new terms or lose land titles altogether; either they accepted citizenship and naturalization, or they would be limited to fifteen acres per capita reserve land. In the end, less than three hundred of the 8,175 qualified Doukhobors accepted naturalization, and Doukhobors land was subsequently reduced to less than a third of the previous area. Community Doukhobors were placed into sixty-one village reserves with fifteen acres each.

The Sons of Freedom had not attempted to change land laws, but rather to remain exempt from them. They, along with moderate Doukhobors, succeeded in defending the rights of their community to live according to religious convictions. That they would be relocated to small reserves in the process was not expected.

The Sons of Freedom were diminished after Verigin's arrival, but flourished after 1907 and remained firm in their ideals while Community Doukhobors gradually accepted naturalization. The Sons continued to experiment with nudism and took up more extreme tactics in protest of other government regulations in the following decades, forming a culture of resistance.

Research Notes

Influences:
Sons of Freedom actions influenced by earlier Doukhobour protests, such as the Burning of Arms symbolic refusal to comply with Russian conscription laws (1).

Sources:

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Quincy Brandt, 24/02/2012

Doukhobor

The **Doukhobors** or **Dukhobors** (Russian: Духоборы, *Dukhobory*, earlier **Dukhobortsy**, Russian: Духоборцы; literally "*Spirit-Warriors of Christ*") are a religious group of Russian origin.

The Doukhobors were one of the sects—later defined as a religious philosophy, ethnic group, social movement, or simply a "way of life"—known generically as Spiritual Christianity. The origin of the Doukhobors is uncertain. The first clear record of their existence and the first use of the names related to "Doukhobors" are from the 18th century. However, some scholars believe that the sect had its origins in the 17th or even the 16th century. The Holy Bible was the key source of their faith which is evident in the majority of Doukhobor psalms, hymns, and beliefs. The teachings of Jesus Christ have been accepted as their foundational truth and they drew on the characteristics of God, as portrayed by Jesus, to guide their faith as God's peaceful ambassadors. They rejected the tyranny and oppression of the Czarist Russian government of the late 1800s. They also rejected the Russian Orthodox priests, icons, and all associated church ritual. They came to believe that the Bible alone, as a supreme source, was not enough to reach divine revelation, and that doctrinal conflicts can actually interfere with their faith. Their goal was to internalize the living spirit of God so that God's spirit would be revealed within each individual. Their pacifist beliefs and desire to avoid government interference in their life led to an exodus of the majority of the group from the Russian Empire to Canada at the close of the 19th century.

The modern descendants of the first Canadian Doukhobors continue to live in south-eastern British Columbia, southern Alberta and Saskatchewan. Today, the estimated population of Doukhobors in North America is 40,000 in Canada and about 5,000 in the United States.Wikipedia:Citation needed

History

Early days

The origin of the Doukhobor movement dates back to the 17th and 18th century Russian Empire. Believing in God's presence in every human being, they considered clergy and rituals unnecessary. Their rejection of secular government, the Russian Orthodox priests, icons, all church ritual, the Bible as the supreme source of divine revelation, and the divinity of Jesus elicited negative response from the government and the established church, attested as early in 1734, when a Russian Government edict was issued against *ikonobortsy* (Iconoclasts).[1]Wikipedia:Citing sources

The first known Doukhobor leader, in 1755–75, was Siluan (Silvan) Kolesnikov (Russian: Силуан Колесников), originating from the village of Nikolskoye in Yekaterinoslav Governorate in what is today south-central Ukraine.Wikipedia:Citing sources He was thought to be a well-read person, familiar with the works of Western mystics such as Karl von Eckartshausen and Louis Claude de Saint-Martin.

The early Doukhobors called themselves "God's People" or simply "Christians". Their modern name, first in the form *Doukhobortsy* (Russian: Духоборцы, *Dukhobortsy*, 'Spirit wrestlers') is thought to have been first used in 1785 or 1786 by Ambrosius, the Archbishop of YekaterinoslavWikipedia:Citing sources or his predecessor, Nikifor (Nikephoros Theotokis)[2][3] The seat of the archbishops was actually in Poltava.</ref>

The archbishop's intent was to mock them as heretics fighting *against* the Holy Spirit (Russian: Святой Дух, *Svyatoy Dukh*); but later on (around the beginning of the 19th century, according to SA Inikova) the dissenters picked the name, usually in a shorter form, *Doukhobory* (Russian: Духоборы, *Dukhobory*), implying that they are fighting not *against*, but *along with* the Spirit.

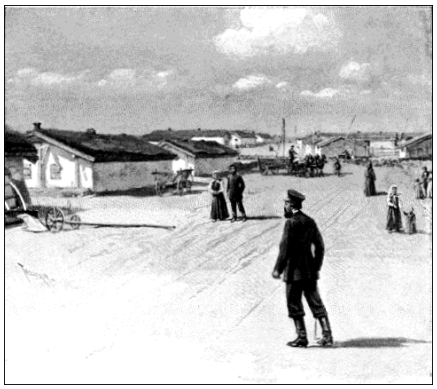
As pacifists, the Doukhobors also ardently rejected the institutions of militarism and wars. For these reasons, the Doukhobors were harshly oppressed in Imperial Russia. Both the tsarist state and church authorities were involved in the persecution of these dissidents, as well as taking away their normal freedoms.

The first known use of the spelling *Doukhobor* is attested in a government edict of 1799, exiling 90 of them to Finland (presumably, the Vyborg area, which was already part of the Russian Empire at the time) for their anti-war propaganda.

In 1802, Tsar Alexander I encouraged resettlement of religious minorities to the so-called 'Milky Waters" (*Molochnye Vody*): the region of Molochnaya River (around Melitopol in today's southern Ukraine). This was motivated by the desire both to quickly populate the rich steppe lands on the north shore of the Black and Azov Seas, and to prevent the "heretics" from contaminating the population of the heartland with their ideas. Many Doukhobors, as well as Mennonites from Prussia, accepted the Tsar's offer, coming to the Molochnaya from various provinces of the Empire over the next 20 years.

Transcaucasian exile

As Nicholas I replaced Alexander, he issued a decree (February 6, 1826), intending to force assimilation of the Doukhobors by means of military conscription, prohibiting their meetings, and encouraging conversions to the established church. On October 20, 1830, another decree followed, specifying that all able-bodied members of dissenting religious groups engaged in propaganda against the established church should be conscripted and sent to the Russian army in the Caucasus, while those not capable of military service, as well as their women and children, should be resettled in Russia's recently acquired Transcaucasian provinces. It is reported that, among other dissenters, some 5,000 Doukhobors were resettled to Georgia between 1841 and 1845. The Akhalkalaki uyezd (district) of the Tiflis (Tbilisi) Governorate was chosen as the main place of their settlement. Doukhobor villages with Russian names appeared there: Gorelovka, Rodionovka, Yefremovka, Orlovka, Spasskoye (Dubovka), Troitskoye, and Bogdanovka. Later on, other groups of Doukhobors — resettled by the government, or migrating to Transcaucasia by their own accord — settled in other neighboring areas, including the Borchaly uyezd of Tiflis Governorate and the Kedabek uyezd of Elisabethpol (Ganja) Governorate).



The village of Gorelovka in southern Georgia, the "capital" of the Doukhobors of Transcaucasia (1893)

The Doukhobor worship place in Georgia

After Russia's conquest of Kars and the Treaty of San Stefano of 1878, some Dukhobors from Tiflis and Elisabethpol Governorates moved to the Zarushat and Shuragel uyezds of the newly created Kars Oblast (north-east of Kars in today's Republic of Turkey).

The leader of the main group of Doukhobors that arrived to Transcaucasia from Ukraine in 1841 was one Illarion Kalmykov (Russian: Илларион Калмыков). He died in the same year, and was succeeded as the community leader by his son, Peter Kalmykov (? – 1864).

After Peter Kalmykov's death in 1864, his widow Lukerya Vasilyevna Gubanova (? – December 15, 1886; (Russian: Лукерья Васильевна Губанова); also known as Kalmykova, by her husband's surname) took his leadership position.

The Kalmykov dynasty resided in the village of Gorelovka, one of the Doukhobor communities in Georgia (shown on one of Jonathan J. Kalmakoff's maps). Lukerya was respected by the provincial authorities, who had to cooperate with the Doukhobors on various matters. The number of Doukhbors in the Transcaucasia reached 20,000 by the time of her death in 1886. By that time, the Doukhobors of the region had become vegetarian, and become aware of Leo Tolstoy's philosophy, which they found quite similar to their traditional teachings.

Religious revival and crises

The death of "Lukerya", who had no children, was followed by a leadership crisis. Lukerya's own plan was for leadership to pass after her death to her assistant, Peter Vasilevich Verigin. However, only part of the community ("the Large Party"; Russian: Большая сторона *Bolshaya Storona*) accepted him as the leader; others, known as "the Small Party" (Малая сторона *Malaya Storona*), sided with Lukerya's brother Michael Gubanov and the village elder Aleksei Zubkov.

While the Large Party was a majority, the Small Party had the support of the older members of the community and the local authorities. So on January 26, 1887, at the community service where the new leader was to be acclaimed, the police walked in and arrested Verigin. He was to spend the next 16 years in exile in Russia's Far North; some of his associates were sent to exile as well. Still, the Large Party Doukhobors continued to consider him their spiritual leader and to communicate with him, by mail and via delegates who traveled to see him in Obdorsk, Siberia.

At the same time, the government applied greater pressure to enforce the Doukhobors' compliance with the laws and regulations that they found vexatious, such as registering marriages and births, contributing grain to state emergency funds, or swearing oaths of allegiance. Even worse, the universal military conscription that had been introduced in most of the Russian Empire, was now (in 1887) imposed in its Transcaucasian provinces as well. While the Small Party people would cooperate with the state, the Large Party, wounded by the arrest of Verigin and other leaders, and inspired by his letters from exile,[4] only felt strengthened in their desire to abide in the righteousness of their faith. Under instructions from Peter V. Verigin, they stopped using tobacco and alcohol, divided their property equally between the members of the community, and resolved to adhere to the principles of non-violence. They would refuse to swear the oath of allegiance required by the new Czar Nicholas II in 1894.

Under further instructions from Verigin, as a sign of absolute pacifism, the Doukhobors of the three Governorates of Transcaucasia made the decision to destroy their weapons. As the Doukhobors assembled to burn them on the night of June 28/29 (July 10/11, Gregorian Calendar) 1895, with the singing of psalms and spiritual songs, arrests and beatings by government Cossacks followed. Soon, Cossacks were billeted in many of the Large Party Doukhobors' villages, and over 4,000 of their original residents were dispersed through villages in other parts of Georgia. Many of those died of starvation and exposure.

Migration to Canada

The port of Batumi as it was in 1881. Here the Doukhobors embarked on their transatlantic journey in 1898 and 1899

As persecution seemed to be unsuccessful in making the Doukhobors comply with the conscription laws, and the entire affair was an embarrassment in the face of international public opinion, the Russian government agreed in 1897 to let the Doukhobors leave the country, subject to a number of conditions:

- the emigrants should never return;
- they would migrate at their own expense;
- community leaders currently in prison or in exile in Siberia would have to serve the balance of their sentences before they could leave.

Some of the emigrants went first to Cyprus, but the climate there did not suit them. Meanwhile, the rest of the community chose Canada for its isolation, peacefulness, and the fact that the government welcomed them. Around 6,000 migrated there in the first half of 1899, settling on land granted to them by the government in what is now Manitoba and Saskatchewan. More people, including the Cyprus colony, joined later that year, bringing the total count to 7,400 – about one-third of the total Doukhobor population in Transcaucasia. Several smaller groups joined the main body of migrants in the later years, directly from Transcaucasia, or from various places of exile. Among these late-comers were some 110 leaders of the community that were in prisons or in exile in Siberia in 1899 and were obliged to serve out their term of

punishment before they could join their community in Canada.

The Doukhobors' passage across the Atlantic Ocean was largely paid for by Quakers and Tolstoyans, who sympathized with their plight, and by the writer Leo Tolstoy, who arranged for the royalties from his novel *Resurrection*, his story *Father Sergei*, and some others, to go to the migration fund. He also raised money from wealthy friends. In the end, his efforts provided half of the immigration fund, about 30,000 roubles.

The anarchist Peter Kropotkin and James Mavor, a professor of political economy at the University of Toronto, also helped the migrants.

Canadian Prairies

In accordance with the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, Canadian government would grant 160 acres (0.65 km^2) of land, for a nominal fee of $10, to any male homesteader able to establish a working farm on that land within three years. Living on single-family homesteads would not fit Doukhobors' communitarian tradition. Fortunately, the Act contained the so-called Hamlet Clause, adopted some 15 years earlier to accommodate other communitarian groups such as Mennonites, which would allow the beneficiaries of the Act to live not on the actual land grant, but in a village ("hamlet") within 3 miles (4.8 km) from their land. This would allow the Doukhobors to establish a communal life style, similar to the Hutterites.

Vosnesenia ('Ascension') village, NE of Arran, Saskatchewan (North Colony). A typical one-street village, modeled on those back in the Old World.

Even more importantly, by passing in late 1898, Section 21 of the Dominion Military Act, the Canadian Government exempted the Doukhobors from military service.

The land for the Doukhobor immigrants, in the total amount of 773,400 acres (3,130 km^2), was granted in three "block settlement" areas ("reserves"), plus an "annex", within what was to soon become the Province of Saskatchewan:

Doukhobor pilgrims leaving Yorkton to evangelize the world, 1902

- The **North Colony**, also known as the "Thunder Hill Colony" or "Swan River Colony", in the Pelly and Arran districts of Saskatchewan. It became home to 2,400 Doukhobors from Tiflis Governorate, who established 20 villages on 69,000 acres (280 km^2) of the land grant.
- The **South Colony**, also known as the "Whitesand Colony" of "Yorkton Colony", in the Canora, Veregin and Kamsack districts of Saskatchewan. Some 3,500 Doukhobors from Tiflis Governorate, Elisabethpol Governorate, and Kars Oblast, settled there in 30 villages on 215,010 acres (870.1 km^2) of land grant.
- The **Good Spirit Lake Annex**, in the Buchanan district of Saskatchewan, received 1,000 Doukhobors from Elisabethpol Governorate and Kars Oblast. Russia settled there in 8 villages on 168,930 acres (683.6 km^2) of land grant. The annex was along the Good Spirit River, flowing into Good Spirit Lake (previously known as Devil's Lake).
- The **Saskatchewan Colony**, also known as the "Rosthern colony", "Prince Albert Colony" or "Duck Lake Colony", was located along the North Saskatchewan River in the Langham and Blaine Lake districts of Saskatchewan, north-west of Saskatoon. 1,500 Doukhobors from Kars Oblast settled there in 13 villages on 324,800 acres (1,314 km^2) of land grant.

Geographically, North and South Colonies, as well as Good Spirit Lake Annex (Devil's Lake Annex, to non-believers) were around Yorkton, not far from the border with today's Manitoba; the Saskatchewan (Rosthern)

Colony, was located north-west of Saskatoon, quite a distance from the other three "reserves".

At the time of settlement (1899), all four "reserves" were located in the Northwest Territories: Saskatchewan (Rosthern) Colony in the territories' provisional District of Saskatchewan, North Reserve, straddling the border of Saskatchewan and Assiniboia districts, and the other two entirely in Assiniboia. After creation of the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905, all reserves found itself within that province.

Doukhobor women pulling a plough, Thunder Hill Colony, Manitoba

Peter Verigin, the Doukhobor leader induced followers to free their "brethren" (animals) and pull their wagons and ploughs themselves. On the lands granted to them in the prairies, the settlers established villages along the same lines as back in the old country. Some of the new villages were given the same Russian names as the settlers home villages in Transcaucasia (Spasovka, Large and Small Gorelovka, Slavianka etc.); others were given more abstract, "spiritual" names, not common in Russia: "Uspeniye" ('Dormition'), "Terpeniye" ('Patience'), "Bogomdannoye" ('Given by God'), "Osvobozhdeniye" ('Liberation').

The settlers found Saskatchewan winters much harsher than those in Transcaucasia, and were particularly disappointed that the climate was not as suitable for growing fruits and vegetables. Many of the men found it necessary to take non-farm jobs, especially in railway construction, while the women stayed behind to till the land.

Due to Doukhobors' leaders aversion to private ownership in land, Petr Verigin (who had served his sentence and was able to come to Canada in 1902) managed to have land registered in the name of the community. But by 1906, the Dominion Government, in the person of Frank Oliver, the Minister of Interior, started requiring registering the land in the name of individual owners. Many Doukhobors' refusal to do so resulted in 1907 in the reverting of more than a third (258,880 acres (1,047.7 km^2)) of Doukhobor lands back to the Crown.

Another problematic issue raised by Oliver was that the Doukhobors would now have to become naturalized citizens (i.e., British subjects) and to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown – something that was always against their principles. A new crisis was to develop just a decade after the conscription crisis in Russia.

The crisis resulted in a three-way split of the Doukhobor community in Canada:

- The *edinolichniki* ('Independents'), who constituted by 1907 some 10% of the Canadian Doukhobors. They maintained their religion, but abandoned communal ownership of land, rejecting hereditary leadership and communal living as being non-essential to it.
- The largest group — the Community Doukhobors — continued to be loyal to their spiritual leader Peter V. Verigin. They formed an organization known as Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB, now USCC).
- The more radical Sons of Freedom group (also called the "Svobodniki" or "Freedomites"), which emerged in 1903, embraced Verigin's writings in a zealous manner.

The Independents were a group most easily integrating into Canadian capitalist society. They had no problem with registering their land groups, and largely remained in Saskatchewan. It was they who, much later on (in 1939) finally rejected the authority of Peter Verigin's great-grandson, John J. Verigin.

British Columbia

1900s photograph of Sons of Freedom nude protest.

To take his followers away from the corrupting influence of non-Doukhobors and *Edinolichniki* ('individual owners') Doukhobors, and to find better conditions for agriculture, Verigin, starting in 1908, bought large tracts of land in south-eastern British Columbia. His first purchase was near the US border around Grand Forks. Later, he acquired large tracts of land further east, in the Slocan Valley around Castlegar. Between 1908 and 1912, some 8,000 people moved to these British Columbia lands from Saskatchewan, to continue their communal way of living. In the milder climate of British Columbia, the settlers were able to plant fruit trees, and within a few years became renowned orchardists and producers of fruit preserves.

As the Community Doukhobors left Saskatchewan, the "reserves" there were closed by 1918.

The Sons of Freedom, meanwhile, responded to the Doukhobors conflict with Canadian policy with mass nudity and arson as a means of protesting against materialism, the land seizure by the government, compulsory education in government schools and, later on, Verigin's supposed assassination. This led to many confrontations with the Canadian government and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (continuing into the 1970s).

Verigin Memorial

Peter V. Verigin was killed in a still-unsolved Canadian Pacific Railway train explosion on October 29, 1924 near Farron [5], between Castlegar and Grand Forks, British Columbia. The government initially (during investigation) had stated the crime was perpetrated by people within the Doukhobor community although the Doukhobors' customary failure to cooperate with Canadian authorities due to fear of intersect violence culminated in no arrests being made. To date, it is still unknown who was responsible for the bombing. Thus, while the Doukhobors were initially welcomed by the Canadian government, this assassination controversy, as well as Doukhobor beliefs regarding communal living and no child education, amongst other beliefs, created an air of mistrust between government authorities and Doukhobors which would last for decades.

Peter V. Verigin's son, Peter P. Verigin, who arrived from the Soviet Union in 1928, succeeded his father as leader of the Community Doukhobors. He became known as Peter the Purger, and worked to smooth the relations between the Community Doukhobors and the larger Canadian society. His policies, seen by the radical Sons of Freedom as ungodly and assimilationist, were answered by increasing protests on the part of the latter. The Sons of Freedom would burn the Community Doukhobors' property, and organize more nude parades. The Canadian Parliament responded in 1932 by criminalizing public nudity. Over the years, over 300 radical Doukhobor men and women were arrested for this offense, which typically carried a three-year prison sentence.

In 1947–48, Sullivan's Royal Commission investigated arsons and bombing attacks in British Columbia, and recommended a number of measures intended to integrate the Doukhobors into the Canadian society, notably through the participation of their children in public education. Around that time, the provincial government entered into direct negotiations with the Freedomite leadership.

But W. A. C. Bennett's Social Credit government, which came to power in 1952, took a harder stance against the "Doukhobor problem". In 1953, 174 children of the Sons of Freedom were forcibly interned by the government agents in a residential school in New Denver, British Columbia. Abuse of the interned children was later alleged.

In less than a half a century Sons of Freedom acts of violence and arson rose to 1112 separate events and over $20 million in damages (bill to taxpayers) that included public school bombings and burnings, bombings of Canadian railroad bridges and tracks, the bombing of the Nelson courthouse, and a huge power transmission tower servicing the East Kootenay district resulting in the loss of 1200 jobs.

Many of the independent and community Doukhobors believed that the Freedomites violated the central Doukhobor principle of nonviolence (with arson and bombing) and therefore did not deserve to be called Doukhobors.Wikipedia:Citation needed However, rifts generated during the 20th century between the Sons of Freedom and Community and Independent Doukhobors have largely been laid to rest now.

Staying behind

After the departure of the more zealous and non-compromising Doukhobors and many community leaders to Canada at the close of in Elisabethpol Governorate (Azerbaijan); the former Doukhobor villages now were mostly populated by Baptists. Elsewhere, some Doukhobors joined other dissenter sects, such as Molokans or Stundists.

Those that remained Doukhobors were required to submit to the state. Few protested against military service: for example, out of 837 Russian Court Martial cases against conscientious objectors recorded between the beginning of World War I and April 1, 1917, merely 16 had Doukhobor defendants — and none of those hailed from the Transcaucasian provinces.

In 1921–23, Verigin's son Peter P. Verigin arranged the resettlement of 4,000 Doukhobors from the Ninotsminda (Bogdanovka) district in south Georgia into Rostov Oblast in southern Russia and other 500 into Zaporizhia Oblast in Ukraine.

The Soviet reforms affected greatly the life of the Doukhobors both in their old villages in Georgia and in the new settlement areas in the Russian South and Ukraine. The state anti-religious campaigns resulted in the suppression of Doukhobor religious tradition, and the loss of books and archival records. A number of religious leaders were arrested or exiled: for example, 18 people were exiled from Gorelovka alone in 1930. On the other hand, Communists' imposition of collective farming did not go against the grain of Doukhobor way of life. The industrious Doukhobors made their collective farms prosperous, specializing e.g. in cheese-making.

Of the Doukhobor communities in the USSR, those in South Georgia were the most sheltered from the outside influence, because of the sheer geographic isolation in the mountainous terrain, their location near the international border, and concomitant travel restrictions for outsiders.

Current status

Today an estimated 20,000–40,000 people of Doukhobor heritage live in Canada, some 4,000 of them claiming "Doukhobor" as their religious affiliation. Perhaps another 30,000 live in Russia and neighboring countries. About 5,000 live in the U.S. along the northernmost parts of the US-Canada border.Wikipedia:Citation needed

Canada

CCUB, the Orthodox Doukhobors organization or Community Doukhobors, was succeeded by Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ, formed by Peter P. Verigin (Peter V. Verigin's son) in 1938. The largest and most active formal Doukhobor organization, it is headquartered in Grand Forks, British Columbia.

During Canada 2011 Census,[6] 2,290 persons in Canada (of which, 1,860 in British Columbia, 200 in Alberta, 185 in Saskatchewan, and 25 in Ontario) identified their religious affiliation as "Doukhobor". As the age distribution shows, the proportion of older people among these self-identified Doukhobors is higher than among the general population:

Age groups	Total	0–14 years	15–24 years	25–44 years	45–64 years	65–84 years	85 years and over
All Canadians, 2001	29,639,035	5,737,670	3,988,200	9,047,175	7,241,135	3,337,435	287,415
Self-identified Doukhobors, 2001	3,800	415	345	845	1,135	950	110
Self-identified Doukhobors, 1991	4,820	510	510	1,125	1,400	1,175	100

E.g., 28% of the self-identified Doukhobors in 2001 were aged over 65 (i.e., born before 1936), as compared to 12% of the entire population of Canadian respondents. The aging of the denomination is accompanied by the shrinking of its size, starting in the 1960s:

Census year	Self-identified Doukhobor population
1921	12,674
1931	14,978
1941	16,898
1951	13,175
1961	13,234
1971	9,170
1981	?
1991	4,820
2001	3,800
2011	2,290

Of course, the number of Canadians sharing Doukhobor heritage is much higher than the number of those who actually consider themselves members of this religion. Doukhobor researchers made estimates from "over 20,000" people "from [Doukhobor] stock" in Canada) to over 40,000 Doukhobors by "a wider definition of religion, ethnicity, way of life, and social movement"[7]Wikipedia:Citing sources.

Canadian Doukhobors no longer live communally. Their prayer meetings and gatherings are dominated by the singing of *a cappella* psalms, hymns and spiritual songs in Russian. Doukhobors do not practice baptism. They reject several items considered orthodox among Christian churches, including church organization and liturgy, the inspiration of the scriptures, the literal interpretation of resurrection, the literal interpretation of the Trinity, and the literal interpretation of heaven and hell. Some avoid the use of alcohol, tobacco, and animal products for food, and eschew involvement in partisan politics. Doukhobors believe in the goodness of man and reject the idea of original sin.

The religious philosophy of the Doukhobors is based on the ten commandments including "Love God with all thy heart, mind and soul" and "Love thy neighbour as thyself." The Doukhobors have several important slogans. One of the most popular, "Toil and Peaceful Life," was coined by Peter V. Verigin.

Georgia and Russia

Peter Kalmykov's house in Gorelovka, Georgia

Since the late 1980s, many of the Doukhobors of Georgia started emigrating to Russia. Various groups moved to Tula Oblast, Rostov Oblast, Stavropol Krai, and elsewhere. After the independence of Georgia, many villages with Russian names received Georgian names — for example, Bogdanovka became Ninotsminda, Troitskoe became Sameba, etc. According to various estimated, in Ninotsminda District, the Doukhobor population fell from around 4000 in 1979 to 3 000–3 500 in 1989 and not much more than 700 in 2006. In the Dmanisi district, from around 700 Doukhobors living there in 1979, no more than 50 seem to remain by the mid-2000s. Those who do remain are mostly older people, since it is the younger generation who found it easier to move to Russia. The Doukhobor community of Gorelovka (in Ninotsminda District), the former "capital" of the Kalmykov family, is thought to be the best preserved in all post-Soviet countries.

Historical sites and museums

In 1995, the Doukhobor Suspension Bridge spanning the Kootenay River was designated a National Historic Site of Canada. The sites of Community Doukhobors' headquarters in Veregin, Saskatchewan, was designated a National Historic Site in 2006, under the name "Doukhobors at Veregin".

Leo Tolstoy Statue at Doukhobor Discovery Centre

A Doukhobor museum, currently known as "Doukhobor Discovery Centre" (formerly, "Doukhobor Village Museum") operates in Castlegar, British Columbia. It contains over a thousand artifacts representing the arts, crafts, and daily life of the Doukhobors of the Kootenays in 1908–38.

Although most of the early Doukhobor village structures in British Columbia have vanished or been significantly remodeled by later users, a part of Makortoff Village outside of Grand Forks, British Columbia has been preserved as a museum by Peter Gritchen, who purchased the property in 1971 and opened it as the Mountain View Doukhobor Museum on June 16, 1972. The future of the site became uncertain after his death in 2000. But, in cooperation with a coalition of the local organizations and concerned citizens, the historical site, known as Hardy Mountain Doukhobor Village, was purchased The Land Conservancy of British Columbia in March 2004, while the museum collection was acquired by the Boundary Museum Society and loaned to TLC for display.

Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa has a collection of Doukhobor-related items as well. A special exhibition there was run in 1998–99 to mark the centennial anniversary of the Doukhobor arrival to Canada.

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Notes

[1] . Includes extensive bibliography of mostly English-language sources.

[2] ; Doukhobor Genealogy Website (www.doukhobor.org).

[3] Nikifor was styled "Archbishop of Slavyansk and Kherson" (Славенский и Херсонский), while his successor, Ambrosius, was "Archbishop of Yekaterinoslav and Kherson", because the diocese was renamed in 1786.<ref>.

[4] , quoted in

[5] http://www.nelsonstar.com/community/254130271.html

[6] . The census numbers are actually based on extrapolating a 20% sample.

[7] Tarasoff 2002.

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