

FROM CATHERINE TO KHRUSHCHEV: THE STORY OF RUSSIA'S GERMANS. By *Adam Giesinger*. Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada: Marian Press, 1974. viii, 443 pp. Maps.

At the beginning of the 1970s, some 1.8 million descendants of the approximately 100,000 Germans who had migrated to the Volga, the Black Sea region, Volhynia, and other parts of the Russian Empire were still to be found in the Soviet Union, while almost an equal number of the descendants of Germans who had emigrated from Russia lived in the new world. The Russian Germans are an interesting case study in the history of provincial Russia. Russia's rulers considered them useful subjects and therefore granted them a degree of autonomy similar to that of certain other privileged groups in the borderlands. Eventually, almost all such privileged groups were exposed to some form of Russification. Even so, the Baltic provinces, Finland, and the various colonies of the Russian Germans continued to flourish economically and to have a literacy rate that was higher than elsewhere in Russia. The Russian Germans, however, lived in scattered settlements, were mainly farmers, and rarely received more than a basic elementary education. Thus, in the twentieth century, they were somewhat less successful than many other Soviet minorities in surviving as an organized national community. Disruption of families, forced labor, loss of property, and the experience of total terror characterized this phase in the history of the Germans in Russia.

Giesinger's work is of great value for the student of migration history. It portrays very ably the movement of German-speaking peoples into the various regions of Russia, their founding of daughter colonies, their movement into Siberia, and their migrations overseas to Canada, the United States, Brazil, and Argentina. The chapter on "land hunger" (pp. 57-80) provides the key to the understanding of this population movement. The Russian Germans, whether Lutheran, Reformed, Catholic, or Mennonite, were mainly agriculturalists, intent on keeping homestead farming as a way of life for themselves and their offspring. This necessitated a constant search for inexpensive, but good arable land because their families were large and farms had to be provided for many sons. Since these farmers were deeply attached to their occupational way of life, to their religion, language, and cultural traditions, national loyalties came second. Giesinger is generally aware of this and only rarely becomes simplistic or one-sided in his interpretation of the background of Russian German migrations.

The usefulness of this work is enhanced by twenty-seven maps giving the location of the major Russian German settlements in European Russia, Siberia, Central Asia, South America, and the prairies of North America. It is based mainly on Russian German sources, but standard histories of Russia, such as those of Florinsky, Kornilov, Miliukov, Riasanovsky, Seton-Watson, Stählin, Sumner, and Vernadsky, are not overlooked. Giesinger is not a professional historian, but he has, in our opinion, provided a reliable introduction to the history of the Russian Germans. At the end of his work are sixty pages of bibliography and footnotes.

LEO SCHELBERT AND EDWARD C. THADEN
University of Illinois at Chicago Circle