

Leaving the Soviet Union ♦ HEIN

Heinrich Dyck (1913-2001)

Leaving the Soviet Union

Life had been grim for the Germans in Russia for a century. Under communism, they had been one of the most hated ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. They had been targeted, displaced, arrested, enslaved, and exiled. It had been no land of opportunity for them.

Hein had seen the beginning and the end of Soviet communism. He had been nearly four years old when the Bolshevik Revolution introduced communism to the Soviet Union in October, 1917, and he was 78 years old when the Soviet Union dissolved in December, 1991. Fifty-five of those years he had been exiled from his home in Ukraine; twenty years he had been a prisoner, doing back-breaking labor in the far north for a false charge of treason; two years he had served in the Russian army; and several months he had lived as a fugitive for the crime of stealing potatoes during a famine. He bore many scars from the oppressive regime.

After Kyrgyzstan gained independence in 1991, as many as 85% of the 101,000 ethnic Germans in the country sought to emigrate to Germany. A German law granted German citizenship to anyone with proof of their German ancestry, and provided a welcome homeland for the Germans like Hein and his family living in Kyrgyzstan. Many left. By Kyrgyzstan's 1999 census, only 21,000 Germans remained in the country, and by 2009, there were 10,000.

Tina, Hein's sister, sponsored him and his family to emigrate to Germany in the mid-1990s. Hein was the last of his family to leave the Soviet Union. In 1998, Hein's sisters Neta and Anni and Anni's husband Karl visited Germany, and the six Dyck siblings had a reunion. They were able to be together again.

Hein's wife Shura found adjusting to German life difficult. She wanted to return to Kyrgyzstan, she said just to visit, but once they got there, she wanted to stay. Within a year, she died there, and Hein returned to Germany where his daughter Tinka and her family lived. He lived out his last few years in Germany, and died on April 30, 2001. He was 87.



Hein and his family in August, 1988, in front of their home in Kyrgyzstan. L to R: wife Shura, daughter Tinka, Hein, grandson Andrew, and grandchild.



Shura and Hein immigrated to Germany in the mid-1990s, but Shura found it difficult to become accustomed to a new culture. They returned to Kyrgyzstan until her death.



Shura & Hein's daughter, Tinka, and her family.