Preservings

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"A people who have not the pride to record their own history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great." — *Jan Gleysteen*

Molotschna Colony - Bicentennial 1804-2004

The Molotschna Colony was founded by 193 Danziger Old Flemish Mennonite families from the Vistula delta in Polish-Prussia, who arrived at the Chortitza (Old) Colony on the Dnieper River in Fall of 1803. In the Spring of 1804 the first nine villages were laid out along the banks of the Molotschna River some 100 km. to the southeast. Another 165 families came that same Fall with eight new villages laid out in 1805. Much like the 19th century settlers of the American-midwest, the Molotschna pioneers traversed the 1000 miles of primitive roads and trails in covered wagon trains carrying their possessions and herding livestock. The journey took an average of five to seven weeks.

The former Mädchen Schule or Mennonite girls' school in Halbstadt, Molotschna, was built in 1909. In 1910 it was upgraded to a full secondary school for girls with five grades. In 2000 the building was acquired by "Friends of the Mennonite Centre, Ukraine" and remodelled as a centre for the distribution of humanitarian aid, medical services, adult and childrens' education and religious training. Photo by Johannes Dyck, Germany - courtesy of Walter Unger, Toronto. See Preservings*, No. 18, page 64.*

The Molotschna Colony consisted of 120,000 desjatien (320,000 acres) of land lying to the east of the Molotschna River which flowed from north to south into the Sea of Azov. "A number of shallow streams crossed the colony, the larger ones flowing westward towards the Molochnaia (Milk) River, so named because in flood its cloudy waters resembled milk," Urry, *None But Saints* (Winnipeg, 1989), page 83. When the settlers arrived on the Molotschna hills (escarpment) along the west bank of the river they made their first acquaintance with their new neighbours, the Nogaier, a nomadic and warlike people. A panoramic view of miles of waving grasses, as tall as a man, greeted the settlers from their vantage point on the heights. "The Nogai would burn off the tall grasses to enrich the soils and to provide fresh pasturage for their animals. Often the entire steppe horizon would be engulfed in flames and heavy black clouds would obscure the sky," Urry, page 84. The colonists quickly built earth huts for themselves and their livestock to be followed within a few years by more substantial buildings constructed of brick.

"These new immigrants included a number of progressive farmers and businessmen with considerable capital, equipment and livestock," Urry, page 57. "In 1808 61 percent of household heads in the Molochnaia listed their previous profession as `farmer.'" Urry, page 91. By comparison, many of the early pioneers at Chortitza were skilled artisans and craftsmen. Although the Chortitza (Old) Colony, would surpass it in terms of manufacturing and commercial enterprise, the Molotschna Colony was the most successful agricultural settlement in Imperial Russia and frequently visited and cited as a model by Government administrators and bureaucrats. By 1861 the population had grown to 20,828. At its peak in 1918 the Molotschna Colony consisted of 57 villages and several estates with a population of 30,000 Mennonites.

On June 6, 2004, the Molotschna Mennonite Bi-centennial was celebrated in Halbstadt (Moloschansk), Ukraine, in conjunction with an academic conference held in Melitopol, Zaporozhe and Dnjepropetrowsk on June 2-7. These events were organized by the International Mennonite Memorialization Committee and local and regional officials who deserve our gratitude for their vision and hard work. The Flemish Mennonite Historical Society Inc. is proud to present this special issue of *Preservings* featuring the history of the Molotschna Colony in honour of its 200th anniversary. The Editor - D. F. Plett.

Inside This Issue

Ältester Abram Klassen, age 67, and wife, nee Judith Bergen, Campo 65, Nordthal, Nord Colony, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. The Klassens have 16 children including Heinrich also a servant of the Word. Bishop Klassen is the successor to Ält. Peter Peters (1930-2000) (see Pres.*, No. 21, page 107). Photo - Bernd Längin, Karlsburg, Germany. The photo is on the front cover of Jack Thiessen's new* Mennonite Low Germany Dictionary *(see page 133 for a book review). We salute the Klassens for being faithful to the call of Christ and the countless hours they dedicate in their service of the Master. May God bless them richly in their ministry.*

Kleine Gemeinde church at Gnadenthal, Manitoba Colony. Seats 1,000. Dedication ceremony was held June 2001. Photo - Cornie Enns, Km. 14, Cuauthemoc, Mexico.

Kleine Gemeinde church at Schönfeld (Campo 106), Swift Colony, Mexico. Seats 800-1,000 and is the largest Mennonite church in Mexico. Photo - Cornie Enns, Km. 14, Cuauthemoc, Mexico.

Interior of the Kleine Gemeinde church at Gnadenthal. Photo - Cornie Enns, Km. 14, Cuauthemoc, Mexico.

Sunday morning at the Old Colony Mennonite Church, Chortitza Colony, South Russia, circa 1910. Painting by Henry Pauls, A Sunday Afternoon Paintings by Henry Pauls *(Waterloo, 1991), Plate 19.*

Introduction:

Molotschna Colony - Battle for the Faith

Introduction.

The Flemish Mennonite migration to Russia resulted from a convergence of various factors. Mennonites in Prussia had been under a relatively benign and tolerant Polish rule since the first Anabaptist refugees escaping persecution in Flanders and Brabant had arrived in the Vistula Delta in the 1530s. In 1772 Poland was partitioned and the Danzig-Elbing area fell under the rule of Brandenburg-Prussia, a militaristic regime which restricted the religious freedoms of the Mennonites. Freedom from military service was granted begrudgingly and, even then, only upon payment of an annual fee coupled with a prohibition against purchasing more land for their growing numbers.

At the same time Catharina the Great, Empress of Imperial Russia, invited the Mennonites to settle in the provinces north of the Black Sea, newly acquired by conquest from Turkey. In contrast to the Hohenzollern regime in Prussia, the Romanow Czars freely offered perpetual exemption from military service as well as other privileges regarding schools and the practice of their religion.

One of the central themes in the emigration of the Flemish Mennonites from the Vistula delta to southern Russia was the perceived opportunity to reconstruct a pure community in a new physical environment far removed from the polluting influences in the old Homeland such as the pressures of assimilation, Germanization and the increasing inroads of aggressive religious cultures such as Pietism. The Danziger Old Flemish in the Vistula Delta had valiantly and steadfastly fought the battle for the integrity of the Gemeinde ("Kampf um die Gemeinde"). But many prominent church leaders such as Ältester Peter Epp (1725-89), Danzig, and his son-in-law, Prediger Ohm Klaas Reimer(1770-1837), Neunhuben, saw the Mennonite community in Prussia as being doomed and led the way to regroup the faithful in Russia.

With the emigration of the Chortitza "Old" Colony Mennonites in 1788 followed by the Molotschna settlers in 1803, the Danziger Old Flemish community was successfully transplanted to the Ukrainian steppes. Here they continued the process of denominalization and confessionalization eventually developing many of the Christo-centric traits, customs and traditions which we associate with the Flemish Russian Mennonites of the modern day. The strategy of withdrawal with a regrouping in a new environment is known as "Retreat and Retrench", and has frequently been resoundingly successful in preservings the faithful remnant over the centuries.

Civil vs. Church Authority.

As it turned out, however, the struggle to build a renewed "pure" fellowship on the Russian steppes based on the traditional teachings of the Flemish faith was seemingly frustrated at every turn by the forces of modernization in the form of accelerated material progress and/or the injection of outside religious influences. The resulting cultural and religious conflict - the battle for the faith - imposed itself upon every unfolding development in the Molotschna Colony in the ensuing century.

In Imperial Russia, for the first time, the Mennonites were responsible for their own regional governance. This resulted in a new challenge to the Flemish teaching of the sovereignty of the Gemeinde as well as the fundamental belief that every aspect of society was to be based on New Testament teaching including the underlying premise of a grass-roots democratic process. "Under Polish and Prussian rule the *Ältesten*, that is, the religious leaders, had been the acknowledged heads of the Mennonite community and spokespersons before the government....The Russian government through the *Fürsorgekomitee*, which was responsible to the Department of the Interior, worked through the civil administration," John Friesen, "Mennonite Churches 1789-1850," in Friesen, *Mennonites in Russia* (Winnipeg, 1989), page 58. Thus "From the very beginning the ecclesiastical and civil powers were in conflict," Goertz, *The Molotschna Settlement* (Winnipeg, 1993), page 63.

These principles had already been tested in Chortitza when the delegates Jakob Höppner (1746-1826) and Johann Bartsch (1757-1821), who were appointed by the Russian administration and did not have any elected status within their own community, refused to abdicate their authority to the Flemish Gemeinde when it finally completed its organizational process in 1794. The issue was resolved in favour of the congregation when the colonial administrator Samuel Contenius investigated the situation and charged Höppner with various improprieties. Bartsch admitted his error, apologized and was reaccepted into the Gemeinde with love and forgiveness. After the turbulent early years, the situation in the two churches - the majority Flemish and minority Frisian - in the Chortitza settlement became relatively peaceful and harmonious. Both had stable leadership and schools were under the control of the church. The ecclesiastical leadership continued to have considerable voice relative to the civil authorities (see John Friesen, page 52).

A Third Option.

A group of new immigrants at Chortitza in the winter of 1804-5 seemingly hit upon an obvious solution for the cultural and social battles which they saw ominously looming ahead for the Molotschna, namely, for the conservers and/or traditionalists to purchase a block of land to establish their own colony so that like-minded people could settle together. The concept was rejected out of hand by colonial administrators seemingly operating under the simplistic view that the Flemish and Friesians (and/or traditionalists and modernizationists), each with their longstandnig ethnic and social traditions and cherished religious teachings dating to their pre-Reformation roots, could be thrown together and amalgamated overnight.

Molotschna, 1804.

Almost surprisingly, the situation in the Molotschna Colony would turn out to be much more turbulent and strife-ridden than the "old" Chortitza Colony. The Molotschna Colony "....was settled under the direction of a Mennonite civil authority, apparently elected or appointed in Khortitza before the new settlers moved to the site of the colony." The first Vorsteher or district mayor was Klaas Wiens, "....a competent administrator and later a successful landowner and entrepreneur," Urry, page 74.

The organization of the Flemish Mennonite Gemeinde in the Molotschna was completed on February 25, 1805, with the election of Jakob Enns (1763-1818), Tiegenhagen, as the first Ältester. Although Enns was a capable person and a competent administrator, he was autocratic by nature and insensitive to the traditional ways and teachings of the people he was elected to lead.

Although the Molotschna pioneers were almost exclusively of the Danziger Old Flemish confession, they came from several regional parishes in the Vistula delta, each with their own history and traditions. To gather these diverse factions and to blend them into a smoothly functioning Gemeinde would have been an immense challenge under the best of circumstances. Soon Enns was locked into a bitter battle with Klaas Wiens (b. 1767), Altona, the district mayor, whom he excommunicated.

In his paper, "Prussian Emigrants 1788-1840," Henry Schapansky, Edmonton, divides the immigrants into two groups: pre - and post - Napoleonic Wars. Those who immigrated before were mainly Danziger Old Flemish who hoped to reconstitute their communities in Russia based on the old traditions and mores. Those immigrating

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after the Napoleonic Wars were already more assimilated, Germanized and influenced by Separatist-Pietist religious culture. Many were Friesians and Gronigen Old Flemish thereby bringing into the colony a whole new set of values and beliefs. It has been said, for example, that Gnadenfeld, settled mainly by Gronigen Old Flemish from Brandenburg Prussia, was the trojan horse of the Flemish Mennonites in the Molotschna Colony, becoming a hotbed of aggressive religious aggitation.

In his paper, "The Pioneer Molotschna Gemeinde, 1805," Professor Adolf Ens, Canadian Mennonite University, describes some of the difficulties of the organization of the pioneer Flemish Gemeinde in the Molotschna and subsequent events up to the founding of the Kleine Gemeinde in 1812-16. Professor James Urry considers the ministry of Kleine Gemeinde theologian Heinrich Balzer (1800-46), Tiege. Professor Urry concludes that "....although Balzer exhorted his readers to `cling firmly to fundamentals' and to firmly unite in love, because `firmness protects [against] decline,' his appeal to continuity and maintenance was based upon a critique of the modern world through an understanding of recent developments in ideas and their application to human affairs. Balzer was thus an informed, intellectual conservative by choice, rather than a conservative holding onto perceived traditions out of ignorance or stubborn narrow mindedness."

Johann Cornies (1789-1848).

It has been said that the story of the Russian Mennonites is the story of Johann Cornies, and vice-versa. In his renown work, *None But Saints*, Professor James Urry has described Johann Cornies (1789-1849) as a modernizationist, the great "prophet of progress" who became the reforming agent whereby the Mennonites were transformed from being rule-bound traditionalists. In the end, "progress" triumphed over the forces of the old "closed order" with the Mennonites turning into capitalists and commercial farmers. Johann Cornies, Urry writes, had "....turned his skills and fortune to the benefit of the community and was to be in the forefront of the economic and social transformation in the three decades after 1820" (page 109).

The regime implemented by Cornies included the obligation of the village Schulze or mayor to physically whip fellow brethren if they did not meet the wishes of the Agricultural Society in their farming operations. The power was so far reaching that even the Bishop was to be flogged if he breached these rules or protested their implementation. Cornies openly overthrew duly elected officials and replaced them with puppets, eager to do his bidding. The deposition of Jakob Wiens in 1842 and the exile of Heinrich Wiens in 1847 were clearly intended to intimidate and break the back of the Flemish "Reine" Gemeinde once and for all.

Cornies, in Urry's view was not a particularly religious person, and tolerated various religious beliefs of the different Mennonite congregations as long as they did not interfere with his reforms. In his *Preservings* article, Professor John Staples has reported that Johann Cornies converted himself to Separatist-Pietist religious culture while on a trip to Hernhut in 1827. I agree with the view that Cornies simply acted too dictatorially for his conduct to be fully explained by the image of a rational, basically non-religious reformer. Recognizing that he was - at least in part - also driven by a Separatist-Pietist agenda certainly helps understand his draconian actions. Dr. Staples is currently working on a biography of Johann Cornies and his article provides valuable revision to the historical record.

From the standpoint of Flemish Mennonite tradition going back 300 years to the Reformation, the opposition to Cornies was based on biblically-grounded principles such as grassroots democracy and the supremacy of the Gospel and church over secular authority. Physical punishments implemented by church brethren to enforce the dictates of the church or civil authority were never acceptable. Community leadership as opposed to autocratic rule was paramount. It was charged "...that Cornies had deliberately eroded the fundamental guarantee of freedom of religion contained in the Charter of Privileges granted to the Mennonites in 1804." Certainly, Wiens and Neufeld were not the only ones who objected to Cornies despotic rule. Professor Harvey L. Dyck reports that the "....moderate Khortitza church leader, David Epp, confided similar sentiments to his diary in the late 1830s and early 1840s," (Harvey L. Dyck, 14).

In this instance, the "Kampf um die Gemeinde" entailed serious sacrifices for leaders. The chronicles of Heinrich Neufeld and "Farewell Address" and letters of Heinrich Wiens (1800-72), document the viewpoint of the Flemish conservatives. *Preservings* is pleased to publish these significant primary source documents.

Source: Harvey L. Dyck, "Russian Servator and Mennonite Hero: Light and Shadow in Images of Johann Cornies," in *JMS*, 1984, 9-41.

America Civil Religion.

The faith and life section in this issue again examines the question of American civil religion. In the past century a new convergence of religion and secular power has taken place in the U.S.A. resulting in a more transparent alliance of state and church. The study of the concept has gained new significance with the George W. Bush White House controlled and influenced as it is - at least to some extent - by the Evangelical Fundamentalist Right and definitely by certain of its ideas such as those affecting middle-east policy. Professor J. Denny Weaver addressed this issue in his article "American Civil Religion, Christ-centered theology and September 11," published in *Preservings*, No. 20, pages 40-45. Weaver "...used the Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthaler, and Old Colony writers to remind the Mennonite peace church to resist the temptation to follow the many voices calling us to violence in response to September 11," (page 44).

We are fortunate in this issue to have an insightful article by Dr. Robert Lindor of Kansas State University on "American Civil Religion and the New Religious Right." Dr. Lindor concludes with the thought provoking question, "For more than thirty years now, adherents of the New Religious Right have been trying to save the American Dream. But how ironic it would be if, in the process, they have helped to destroy it!"

Editorial.

In the editorial I develop the idea of the "Kampf um die Gemeinde" and the role that the ceaseless struggle has played in the history of the conservative and traditionalist Mennonites over the past five centuries.

Articles.

The articles section opens with Professor John Staples evaluation of the 1860s landlessness crisis. Brüdergemeinde apologists have interpreted this event as another manifestation of the corruptedness of traditional Flemish Mennonite culture. Not so argues, Dr. Staples, citing evidence that the crisis was brought on by wider events such as the Crimean War and the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

Professor Leland Harder's biography of Ältester Johann Harder (1811-75), Blumstein, tells the story of this important mediator between warring factions in the Molotschna during the 1860s. From the perspective of Ältester Harder we see the resolution of the "barley" dispute, the "Halbstadt church building" dispute, the secession of the Brüdergemeinde, and the resolution of the "landless" dispute.

Ever since their secession in 1860, Brüdergemeinde historians and apologists have clung tenaciously to the founding myth that "individual Christian spirits within the corrupted and fallen Kirchengemeinden spontaneously gathered to worship, resulting in severe persecution and leaving no alternative but separation from the Babylonian whore and the founding of separatist congregations consisting only of the elect." In his article, "The Secession of the Brüdergemeinde, 1860," Henry Schapansky thoroughly debunks the aforesaid myth and provides the actual historical narrative which roots the secession in immigration patterns, kinship networks and the influences of various outside religious groups and ideologues from Germany.

The biographies of Ältester Gerhard Plett, Hierschau, Nikolai Reimer and Tamara Klassen continue the account of the Molotschna Menno-

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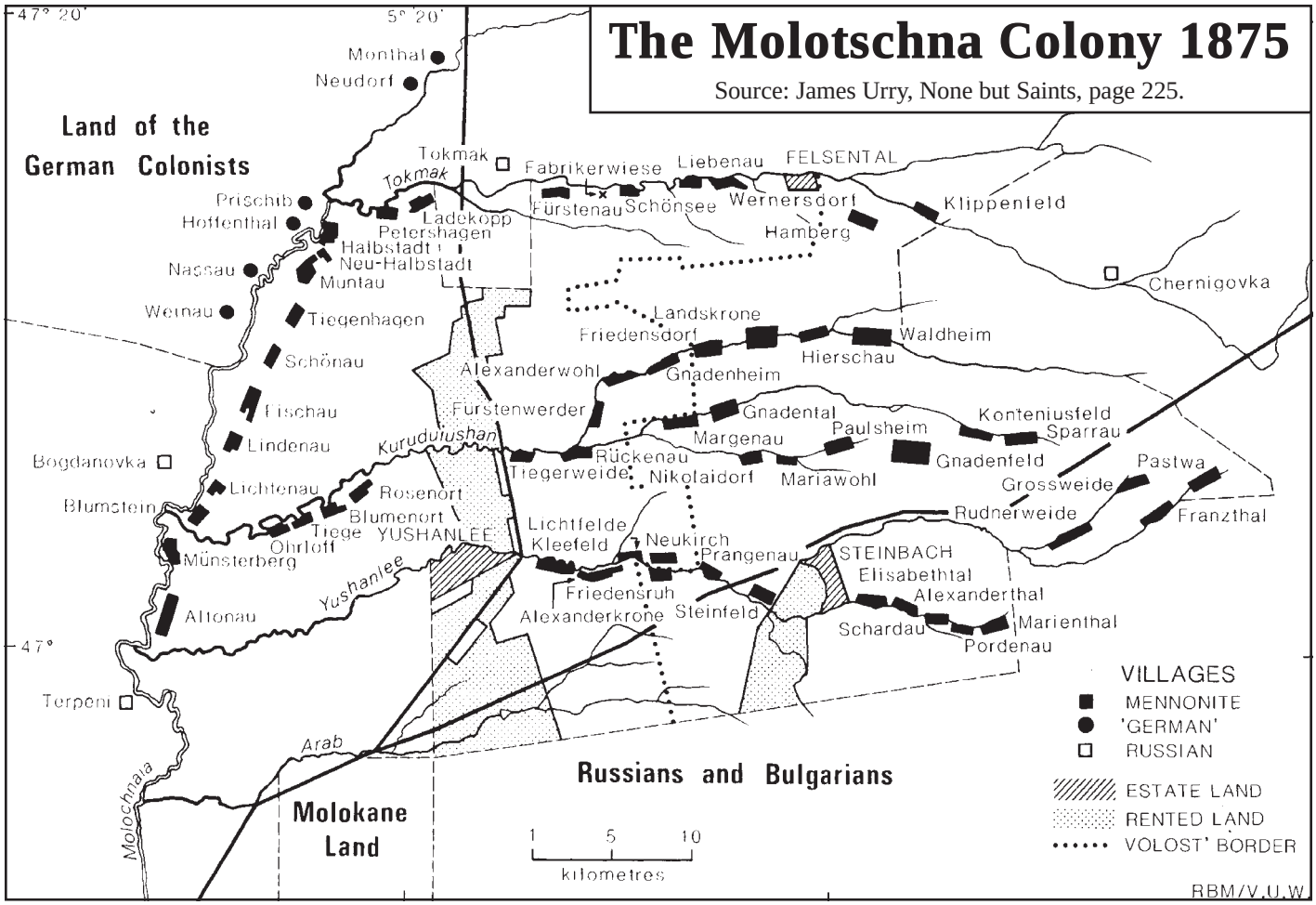

nites under Sovietization, exile and Stalin's GUlag, and the eventual return to the Zaporozhe area of small numbers of Mennonites.

Material Culture.

The material culture section features an article by Gerhard Wiens (see *Pres.*, No. 23, pages 131-2) on Low German nicknames of the Molotschna villages. On a more serious note, Walter Klaassen describes the Bible translations which were used by Mennonites in Reformation times. Of particular interest is the article by Christian Neff on the Biestkens Bible used extensively by the Flemish Mennonites in Holland and Danzig.

Books.

The work of Samme Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden: Geschiedenis van de doperson in de Nederlanden 1531-1675* ranks among the most important Mennonite books to be published in the past several decades. It is seriously revisionistic, rewriting much of the Dutch history upon which most Russian Mennonite history books are anchored. In his book review essay, Henry Schapansky carefully examines this important work evaluating its contextual premises and commenting on its major components. Certainly every reader of *Preservings* is encouraged to obtain and read this important work which for the first time treats the Flemish Mennonites in the Dutch Netherlands in the 17th century with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The book section of this issue of *Preservings* contains a readers' feast of reviews including books by Royden Loewen, David G. Rempel, Jack Thiessen and Brad Gregory to name only a few. Enjoy.

Conclusion.

The battle for the faith ("Kampf um die Gemeinde") was foundational to the history of the Molotschna Colony. The story has rarely - if ever - been recounted from the perspective of the traditionalist majority. The conservatives in the Molotschna suffered a crushing blow at the hands of Johann Cornies with the deposition of Ältester Jakob Warkentin in 1842 and the exile of Ältester Heinrich Wiens in 1847. Where the conservatives (Zonists) had gained a stunning victory in the War of the Lambs in the Dutch Netherlands in the 1660s, they suffered an equalling devastating setback in the Molotschna in the 1840s.

In fact, it could be said that with these defeats the Molotschna was permanently lost to the forces of traditionalism. But the conservatives in the Chortitza "old" Colony did learn their lessons well. When Russification and freedom from military service became an issue in the 1870s, they already instinctively knew that the only escape was emigration: to retreat and retrench. In 1875-80 a small but dedicated Old Colonist remnant immigrated to Manitoba where they took root and have blossomed and grown to become one of the most significant components of the Russian Mennonite diaspora.

History belongs to the people and every community is entitled to have its story told from their own perspective. In this special issue of *Preservings* the descendants of the Molotschna conservatives, for the first time, hear the voices of their ancestors articulating their vision of the community of the saints.

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. The editorial viewpoint of *Preservings* is conservative and orthodox with respect to the Russian Mennonite story and the settlers of the East and West Reserve, Manitoba, Canada. Our mission is to inform our readers of the history and faith of the Flemish Mennonites and their diaspora around the world. The views and opinions expressed in the editorials, commentaries, various articles and letters published in *Preservings* are those of the editor and/or individual writers alone and do not reflect those of the FMHS, its board of directors and/or membership.

Polish - Prussian Emigrants to Russia 1788-1840

A Survey of the background of the Prussian Emigrants 1788 to 1840 relative to the Divisions in the Russian Mennonite Community and particularly in the Molotschna Colony. By Henry Schapansky, 108-5020 Riverbend Road, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5J8, 1993, reprinted from Plett, ed., *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 1993), pages 25-30.

Introduction: Terminology.

In a paper published in 1989, Dr. John Friesen has categorized the Russian Mennonites of 1820-1850 as ideologically "progressive" or "conservative" (conservers) (Note 1). In the progressive division, we find most members of the Ohrloff, Alexanderwohl and Rudnerweide Gemeinden. In the conservative group, we find the majority of the Molotschna Mennonites, and almost all of the Old Colony or Chortitza Mennonites, including the Bergthaler Gemeinde.

I do not like the term "progressive" and "conservative" as they can have a prejudicial connotation. In my view, the Russian Mennonites of 1820-1850, as in previous and subsequent periods, were again faced with the major issue of their relationship with the society around them. The traditionalist view, held by the majority group, was that worldliness was an evil, and that integration and assimilation in the society around them involved a surrender of the fundamental religious beliefs (and to a much lesser degree of their cultural beliefs) on which their lives were based.

This view has been held by almost all the Flemish Mennonite groups from 1550 to 1750 and was an integral part of true Christianity, involving simplicity, humility, honest and plain dealing and piety. Worldliness and true Christianity were thought to be incompatible, and this view has survived well into the twentieth century. In this context, seemingly petty disputes involving style of dress and the decoration of wagons have philosophical and religious significance. Needless to say, in matters such as education and politics, much stronger and more well defined guidelines had developed. The traditionalists, therefore, regarded education as necessary, but too much education and sophistication as likely to lead to assimilation and to a disregard for their fundamental Anabaptist beliefs. The holding of government offices and involvement in political affairs was also an evil to be avoided.

During the 1700s, some relaxation in the attitude towards the world developed among the Mennonite merchants and tradesmen of Danzig and Elbing. This was to lead to a complete split in the Danzig and Elbing congregations after 1800, and after this period, despite the apparent leadership of the urbane and sophisticated city Mennonites in questions of academic interest, the real leadership in spiritual matters passed to the "land" and emigrant Mennonites, who were mainly of the Danziger Old Flemish (Note 2). After a time, the Russian Mennonites no longer really regarded the Prussian Mennonites as true Mennonites, particularly after the emigration of the more conservative (and mainly "land") Mennonites, to America as well as to Russia in the 19th century.

Non-traditionalists.

In Russia too, the breaking away of the traditional Mennonite beliefs also developed somewhat parallel to the West Prussian experience. The Russian non-traditionalists had no particular qualms with the idea of integration and assimilation into Russian society. They later had an aggressive approach to missionary work among non-Mennonites, and were generally disposed to learn Russian and work with Russian officials. Bernhard Harder (1832-1884), Halbstadt, a minister of the Ohrloff Gemeinde wrote several patriotic poems including poems praising the Tzar. Johann Cornies (1789-1848), Ohrloff, well-known head of the Agricultural Society, worked closely with the Russian government, and was, incidentally, a member of the Ohrloff Gemeinde.

Heinrich Hesse (1788-1868), a Gebietschreiber of the Old Colony, and a one time colleague of Cornies, became fluent in Russian and had many friends in the Russian gentry. Coincidentally, both Cornies and Hesse were widely disliked and very unpopular in the Old Colony and among many of the Molotschna Mennonites (Note 3). They were both authoritarian and had no respect for the democratic nature of the traditionalist Mennonite community. Hesse, in particular, was critical of the Old Colony Oberschulz Jacob Bartsch for his democratic ways, "Rechtspflege", and stated "Ein Jeder will sich lieber seine echte Freiheit wahren, als dass er Dienst nimmt . . ." It should be remembered that Hesse was of Lutheran background and fled to Russian in 1808 to escape conscription by the French. He married into a Mennonite family, but did not share many of the traditionalist Mennonite beliefs. Curiously untraditional was his fervent Russian nationalism and his attitude during the Crimean War: "Konnte nur bis unsere Kavallerie zum Einhauen kommen! . . . Ich mochte doch wissen, was eure spitzigen Democraten in der Stadt zu meinen Versen sage wurden."

From the non-traditionalist group was to arise the Brüdergemeinde. The division of the Russian Mennonites into Kirchliche and Brüdergemeinde was to have devastating and long lasting effects on the Russian Mennonites.

John Friesen categorizes yet a third ideological group, the Kleine Gemeinde (KG). Although the KG was indeed independent in almost every respect from the other churches in Russia, and at times supported the Ohrloff Gemeinde, I believe nevertheless, that they were only a branch of the traditionalist group. They differed only in the firmness to which they held to the idea of no compromise with the world. The majority of the traditionalist group did reluctantly admit some form of compromise, in practical situations, and in various contexts.

The Traditionalists.

The traditionalist group has not fared well in the literature (unjustly so in my opinion). Several obvious reasons for this come to mind. They of course did not leave much behind in the way of written material. And the Russian bureaucracy would naturally favour the assimilationists, and did in fact, interfere in the organization of the traditionalist group, removing leaders, and dividing and weakening its jurisdiction. The proselytizing and aggressive approach of the non-traditionalist group naturally extended to their writing, and the works of Peter M. Friesen, Franz Isaac, Bernhard Fast, etc., only paint a very negative picture of the traditionalist group.

The majority traditionalist group suffered great losses in 19th century Russia. Perhaps the most significant one was the loss of the strongest "conserver" sections through emigration to America in the 1870s. Weakening of the traditionalist beliefs with the gradual accumulation of wealth and increasing material prosperity, together with one concession after another, discredited the traditionalist group in the eyes of the progressive group.

Yet, another reason the traditionalist group has not had a favourable press is that, by now, we are all non-traditionalists and fairly well integrated into our respective societies. To a great extent, we have lost touch with our traditionalist ancestors, so that very few writers even today examine seriously the beliefs and attitudes of the traditionalist group.

Reasons for the Division.

An interesting question and the focus of this essay is how and why the Russian Mennonites came to be divided into traditionalist and non-traditionalist groupings, and how this split may have paralleled the West Prussian experience. There are several *a priori* possibilities. One idea is that the immigrant Mennonites were already divided into these groupings before they arrived in Russia. Another is that this split arose from the Flemish-Frisian division which had occurred shortly after the founding of the Anabaptist movement and which solidified in West Prussia in the 1600s and 1700s. Yet a further possibility is that the split may have arisen from the differences between rural and city Mennonites in West Prussia, or from differences between the Delta and Valley (Vistula) Mennonites.

For all these possibilities, there is some evidence that each contributed to the division of the Russian Mennonites. That this split began to take place very early in the period of Russian settlement and was solidified with the founding of the Brüdergemeinde in the 1860s leads us to seriously examine the West Prussian origin of this division.

We have some knowledge of the origins of the Mennonites who emigrated to Russia before 1815 (Note 5). The vast majority of these immigrants came from the Danziger Old Flemish denomination and mainly from the central Gross-Werder Flemish Gemeinden of Tiegenhagen, Rosenort, Ladekopp, Fürstenwerder (Bärwald), and Heubuden, from the Flemish Elbing-Ellerwald Gemeinde, and from the Flemish Danzig Gemeinde (mostly from the subdivision known as the Danzig "Land Gemeinde"). Only a very few of these immigrants came from the Frisian Gemeinden of Orlofferfeld, Thiensdorf, Tragheimersweide, Montau and Danzig. In the Old Colony there was an identifiable Frisian group composed mainly of Lithuanian Frisian Mennonites, and a group from the Tragheimersweide Gemeinde. Other than these groups, all the other Frisian immigrants

can be viewed as isolated cases. Our information on the individuals and groups who emigrated after 1815 is much less precise, although the information available suggests that the majority of these Mennonites were now from Frisian Gemeinden.

Influence of time of Emigration.

Although each of the above divisions in the West Prussian Mennonites contributed in some way to the division of the Russian Mennonites described above, one very key factor seems to have been largely ignored by historians. And that is the enormous impact on the thinking of all Western Europeans, West Prussian Mennonites included, of the Napoleonic era and war period (and of course of the ideas of the French Revolution).

The majority of the traditionalists had already immigrated to Russia before the devastating years 1806-1807. The Old Colony Mennonites had immigrated to Russia even before the outbreak of the French Revolution. In southern Russia, they were almost totally isolated from the European wars and the revolutionary ideas of the period.

The Mennonites left behind, on the other hand, were totally affected by the wars. We need only look in the West Prussian church books to observe the tremendous increase in death in 1807 (due to illness, malnourishment and not necessarily direct casualties) (Note 5). The effects of the war on the Flemish Danzig Gemeinde are documented in Hermann G. Mannhardt's work (Note 6). The Heubuden Gemeinde, for instance, cancelled the annual baptismal services in 1807 (usually an important event in the church year). The West Prussian Mennonites were profoundly shaken by the war. During and after the war, we see an increased rate of assimilation into Prussian and German society. It follows without a great deal of additional comment that the Mennonites who immigrated to Russia after 1815 were in many respects very different than pre-war immigrants.

In addition, of course, most of the strongly traditionalist Mennonites had already left West Prussia prior to 1806. They went to Russia in the expectation and hope of preserving their beliefs and culture. Those that remained in Prussia may have been more comfortable with the thought of integration into Prussian society.

Two of the three non-traditionalist Gemeinden immigrated *en masse* to Russia in the years 1819 to 1821, namely the Rudnerweide Gemeinde and the Alexanderwohl Gemeinde. It is interesting that both of these were basically Frisian Gemeinden. The Rudnerweide Gemeinde derived its name from a village of the Tragheimersweide Gemeinde, which was Frisian, but a number of the members of this Gemeinde were also from other Frisian Gemeinden, notably from the Frisian Gemeinde of Montau. The Alexanderwohl Gemeinde was composed of members of the Przechowko (Wintersdorf) Gemeinde who were classified as "Old Flemish" and regarded as a particular group, but who socially and ideologically were very close to their Frisian neighbours. Most of the surnames in this Gemeinde (except possibly Ratzlaff and Pankratz) are found extensively in all the other Frisian Gemeinden. It is also interesting that these two Gemeinden were Valley as opposed to Delta Mennonites. There is considerable evidence that Valley Mennonites were much more Germanified than their Delta counterparts (Note 7).

Many of the leaders of the Brüdergemeinde, including Johann Klassen, were from families who came to Russia after 1815, as were leaders of other peculiar groups, including Nicholas (Klaas) Epp who lead a group into Central Asia to await the second coming of Christ.

One has the impression that most of the non-traditionalists were from Frisian backgrounds. It is clear from data available that many Frisian Mennonites immigrated to Russia after 1815. Those that came before 1815 seem to have integrated quite well into the traditionalist group. Many members of the Bergthaler Gemeinde, a conservative traditionalist group came from the Frisian Gemeinde of Kronsweide in the Old Colony.

In West Prussia, however, the melding of Frisian and Flemish churches, especially after the war, had an accelerating influence on the assimilation of the Mennonites. If we take the Danzig Flemish Gemeinde for instance, which totally united with the Frisian Gemeinde at Neugarten after the war, we see that it was the bequest of the widow Flugge (Elisabeth Ekker, formerly Mrs. Bestvater) which led to the establishment of a paid ministry at Danzig, and coincidentally to the complete break of the Danzig Land Gemeinde from the City Gemeinde (The Bestvaters were previously members of the Frisian Gemeinde).

At the same time, a very large percentage of Danzig Frisian and Orlofferfelde Gemeinden were of middle class or of wealthy status as documented in the census list of 1776 and in Hermann G. Mannhardt. The Frisian Gemeinden generally were much more non-traditionalist than the Flemish Gemeinden, throughout the 18th century although this view is perhaps not yet fully accepted. Of the Delta Mennonites, a review of the census list of 1776 shows that Frisian Mennonites, although a minority, were much wealthier on a per capita basis than their Flemish neighbours (in cases where the record keeper thought there could be some doubt as to the church affiliation he put "ORL." after the village). The various *Bauernverzeichnissen* collected by Dr. Horst Penner likewise reveals a larger portion to be land-holding Frisians than would be expected from their numbers in the total Mennonite population (Note 8).

Conclusion.

Although it is unwise to make extensive generalizations, it is nevertheless clear to me that the split into traditionalist and non-traditionalist groups in Russia received its major impetus from the immigrants who came to Russia after 1815 and that a large percentage of these were from Frisian backgrounds.

If this analysis is correct, that the Mennonites who settled in Russia before 1815 had a common cultural and spiritual background which would tend to unite rather than divide them, we need to discover how the KG came to be formed and why this split came about before the later immigrations after 1815.

In my view, it is a question of leadership. Some of the leaders of the KG, notably Klaas Reimer and Kornelius Janzen had come from the Danzig Land Gemeinde (the Neunhuben Gemeinde) and had seen the signs of changes in the traditionalist beliefs at first hand in the city Gemeinde. They were, therefore, more disposed to defend the traditionalist view and to be alert for signs of changes (Note 9). Of the Chortitzer leadership, David Epp also came from the Danzig region, and seems to have adopted a similar position to Klaas Reimer, although he died in 1802, and his influence was therefore limited. David Epp became embroiled in a conflict with the Hoeppner group, although details of this conflict are sketchy. Jacob Hoeppner and some of his colleagues appear to have taken a "progressive" non-traditionalist approach to settlement, which was opposed by the Lehrdienst. In later years, the Hoeppner group was portrayed as a heroic group, whereas the Lehrdienst was portrayed as backwards and regressive (Note 10).

The early spiritual leaders in the Molotschna did not have this background and were therefore more complacent and less concerned with the safeguarding of the Mennonite heritage. In fact, the first Ältester of the Molotschna church, Jacob Enns (1763-1818), Tiegenhagen, came from the Heubuden Gemeinde, one of the strictest of the "land" Gemeinden. It was because Klaas Reimer and others felt the Molotschna Lehrdienst did not provide the leadership required that a rupture occurred.

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Endnotes: The Prussian Emigrants 1788-1840:

Note 1: Friesen, "Mennonite Churches and Religious Developments in Russia 1789-1850," in Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrentz* (Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publication, 1989), 43-74.

Note 2: Although Mannhardt depicts the history of the Danzig congregation in the 1700s and 1800s in very positive terms, the factual detail presented nevertheless presents a picture of a continuous decline in Mennonite standards, from the inability to attract its young men into service and the creation of a paid ministry, to the final acceptance of the military service. At the same time the Danzig Mennonites did become very wealthy in this period.

Note 3: Hermann Hesse, in his autobiography, was very contemptuous of his Old Colony colleagues, particularly of those in the ministry. Hesse later also had a falling out with Cornies. See *Men. Life*, April 1969, pages 66-68.

Note 4: See the discussion in B.H. Unruh, D. Plett and H. Schapansky (references).

Note 5: The death toll was very high in all the Gross Werder Gemeinden, but the highest mortality rate may have been in the Thiensdorf and Heubuden Gemeinden. Other disruption in the social fabric of the Mennonite life in West Prussia can be seen in the Tragheimersweide church books, where there are several instances of the birth of children occurring before the marriage of the parents. Whether this is due to poor record keeping or to irregularities in relationships is undetermined, but is due nevertheless to the war.

Note 6: Mannhardt, H. G., *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde* (Danzig, 1919).

Note 7: See for instance the research of Dr. A. Goertz on the subject.

Note 8: The identification by surnames is a good guide, some surnames were predominantly Frisian, some predominantly Flemish, and some mixed.

Note 9: Indeed, we need only take Klaas Reimer's own account at face value; see Klaas Reimer, "Ein Kleines Aufsatz," in Plett, ed., *Leaders*, Part Two, Chapter Two, pages 124-130.

Note 10: See my comments regarding the Jakob Höppner affair in *Preservings*, No. 20, pages 26-27.

The Pioneer Molotschna Gemeinde, 1805

"The Founding of the Molotschna Mennonite Flemish Gemeinde in 1805 and Its Development up to the Formation of the Kleine Gemeinde, 1812," by Dr. Adolf Ens, Professor of History, Canadian Mennonite University, 800 Schaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P OM4, 1992, reprinted from Plett, ed., *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 1993), pages 31-40.

Introduction.

The literature on the founding events of the church in the second Mennonite settlement in Russia is as sparse as it is for the first. Founded on the Molochnaia River 1804-1840 and popularly known as the Molotschna Colony, this settlement's growth and many of its developments were much more rapid than those of Chortitza. In part this divergence arises from initial differences.

Beginnings of Chortitza and Molotschna Compared.

Neither the 1788 nor the 1803 emigration was planned or organized by the church in Prussia. Rather, smaller or larger groups of families and individuals decided to leave, generally with some encouragement and guidance from the church leadership (Note 1). In some cases poor families were assisted financially by the Prussian Gemeinden to make their emigration possible (Note 2).

In the absence of direct involvement of the church there was no formal leadership of the two emigration movements. The 228 families leaving for New Russia in 1787-1789 to some extent acknowledged Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch as leaders, but their status even as "delegates" in 1786 was unclear (Note 3). Their role in decision-making during the actual immigration was even less well defined, accounting at least partly for their shameful treatment by the settlers. The 342 families arriving in Russia during 1803-04 did not have even this kind of leadership (Note 4). Since the *Privilegium* obtained by the Chortitza church from Czar Paul I in 1800 covered them as well, there was no need for advance delegates. Land inspection trips to the Molochnaia region were undertaken from Chortitza where most of the newcomers spent their first winter (Note 5). These immigrants were, in a sense, merely a continuation of the earlier migrations to Chortitza.

No minister accompanied the first settlers in either migration. Later historians found this remarkable in the 1788 movement (Note 6) but seemed unwilling to believe that it was also the case fifteen years later (Note 7). Nevertheless, organizing the church in Molotschna was less difficult than it had been in Chortitza primarily because an established sister congregation was now much closer and because all of the early immigrants here were Flemish so that the Frisian-Flemish division was not a factor here (Note 8).

By far the most significant difference between the two settlements lay in the socio-economic status of the immigrants. On average the settlers in Molotschna brought with them much more capital than had the earlier group (Note 9). Together with the better support system which the Russian government now had in place for needy families and the benefit of the experience of the Chortitza settlers, this made the pioneer period in Molotschna much easier and shorter. By 1807 a visitor to the settlement noted that very few houses were still unfinished and a decade later the same visitor reported Molotschna economically far ahead of Chortitza (Note 10).

Founding of Colony and Church.

The immigrant families who arrived in 1803 spent the winter in Chortitza where they elected 37-year old Klaas Wiens from Herrenhagen, Amt Marienburg, as their first Oberschulz (Note 11). Still relatively youthful, Wiens was well-to-do and considered a prudent, far-seeing person, although strongly self-willed (Note 12). Elected as his assistants (*Beisitzer*) were Jakob Enz and David Hiebert (Note 13). Hiebert, who settled in the village of Lindenau on 15 September 1804 (Note 14), helped Wiens in establishing nine villages in 1804 and another eight the following year, following the pattern established in Chortitza (Note 15).

The Ohrloff worship house as it appeared in 1910. Photo credit -P. M. Friesen, Mennonite Brotherhood, *page 890. The building constructed in 1810 was torn down and rebuilt in 1839. It was built in the tradition of the first Flemish Mennonite churches (or houses of prayer, as they were known) in Prussia with two stories and balconies. A two story extension was later added, which served as the entrance, opposite the raised council or platform where the pulpit was situated. See Rudy Friesen,* Into the Past, *page 275.*

Economically aggressive, Wiens took two homesteads in the village of Altona and rapidly expanded his own economic base. At the same time he energetically worked for the economic and cultural improvement of the settlement, eager to follow suggestions of the government. For example, when Contenius hoped that the Mennonites would introduce silk culture, Wiens was not only the first to plant mulberry trees in his own garden but also persuaded the village of Altona to set aside a tract of land for this purpose (Note 16). In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, Wiens lasted only one term as Oberschulz, being succeeded in 1806 by Johann Klassen, Rosenort, another wealthy entrepreneur (Note 17).

Unlike Chortitza, where the congregation was organized en route in Dubrovno, a civil administration was in place in Molotschna before the church was founded (Note 18). This gave Oberschulz and Gebietsamt a kind of precedence over church leadership because they were required to be responsible for everything initially.

On 10 April 1804 the 193 newly arrived families met in the church at Chortitza to elect their first ministers. Chosen were 36-year old tailor Jakob Enns (1768-1818) from Siemensdorferfeld, and two farmers, David Huebert (age 30) mentioned above, and Abraham Wiebe (age 40) from Königsdorf, all three Amt Marienburg (Note 19). Enz and Hiebert had earlier been elected *Beisitzer* in the civil administration (Note 20). They were ordained by Johann Wiebe, Ältester of the Flemish congregation in Chortitza (Note 21). Abraham Wiebe, who settled in Münsterberg 20 June 1804 (Note 22), and David Huebert became the first two resident ministers in Molotschna. In the spring of 1805 another five ministers were elected: Jacob Vogt, Johann Vriesen (Note 23), Heinrich Enß, Cornels Jantzen (Note 24) and Johann Penner (Note 25). Two ordained ministers arrived in Chortitza from Danzig in November 1804: the retired 76-year old Cornelius Epp (1728-1805), and Klaas Reimer (1770-1837), brother and son-in-law, respectively, of the late Ältester Peter Epp (1725-1789) of Danzig. Reimer settled in Petershagen 5 June 1805 (Note 26).

Early in 1805 the organization of the church was completed by holding Ältester elections. Molotschna settlers voted on 25 February in Lindenau and new arrivals in Chortitza on 5 March (Note 27). Candidates were the three ministers elected in 1804 and Klaas Reimer (Note 28). The latter had been elected minister in Danzig on 1 February 1801 and was thus the senior of the four (Note 29). However, Enns was chosen by majority vote and ordained by Johann Wiebe of Chortitza on 23 April 1805 (Note 30). On 18 July 1805 he settled in the village of Tiegenhagen, Molotschna and began his leadership of the large congregation of some 350 families scattered over seventeen villages (Note 31).

The first beer brewery and the first church building were erected in 1809, the latter with funds donated by Czar Alexander I. The following year a second church building and a water mill were added (Note 32). Other "useful indus-

trial plants" reported in 1848 included a distillery, three vinegar breweries, two dye works, and a cloth factory (Note 33). With only two church buildings (in Ohrloff and Petershagen) for the eighteen villages founded by 1806, most church services continued to be held in homes or other buildings.

Early Tensions in Church and Colony.

Before the church was fully organized, serious strife erupted in the colony. Oberschulz Klaas Wiens and his *Beisitzer*, the newly elected minister David Huebert, quarreled over some lumber. An appeal was sent to Ältester Johann Wiebe of Chortitza in the winter of 1804-05 to help settle the matter. The ministers Klaas Reimer and Jacob Enns, still in Chortitza, and a Jacob Dyk accompanied Wiebe on this reconciliation trip (Note 34). In spite of protracted discussions Wiebe was unable to get Huebert, judged the guilty party, to concede. He and Reimer then persuaded Wiens, though innocent, to give in for the sake of reconciliation (Note 35).

As a result of this process and its outcome it was difficult for Wiens to look with confidence to the church leaders for guidance in solving disputes justly, and accounts at least in part for his frequent clashes with Gemeinde and Ältester and for the pattern this set for the civil government in its relation with the church (Note 36). Reimer was deeply disappointed that Huebert, a minister, would not give in, that Ältester Wiebe inadequately confronted Huebert, that disputes like this occurred at all among Christians, and that in the midst of such unsettled strife elections for Ältester were held. It re-enforced his aversion to settling in Molotschna (Note 37). For Enns it meant that his leadership of the church began with serious tension among himself, his civic counterpart in the colony, and two of the senior ministers in the church.

The Ohrloff church as it appears today, view from the rear. The building is currently used as a home for the severely mentally handicapped. Photo credit - Diese Steine, *page 254.*

The Lichtenau church - interior view, showing detail of the council and side balcony. Photo credit - Quiring and Bartel, In the Fullness of Time, *page 76.*

Enns entered his term as Ältester with good intentions but very little experience and appeared to be unequal to the task. Reimer considered him "too rash," (Note 38). Later historians were harsher in their description: David Epp characterized him as having "mehr Herrschertalent als Hirtensinn" (more talent for ruling than pastoral giftedness) while P. M. Friesen thought he was perhaps "entirely devoid of God's life-giving Spirit -- and an exceedingly violent character" (Note 39). Faced with a very large and rapidly growing church whose members came from many different communities and several congregations in Prussia, Enns needed to create a sense of unity and a set of common expectations in ethics and church life. He quickly discovered that "a number of members were not serious about living according to the Gospel" and was more than willing to allow the Gebietsamt (colony administration) to bring offenders to justice and administer punishment (Note 40). On several occasions he also appealed to the Chortitza church leadership for help in dealing with issues (Note 41). This is not surprising, since Enns began his leadership with virtually no prior experience as a minister and headed a large team of ministerial colleagues all of whom, except Reimer, were complete beginners.

Those immigrants who had undertaken the move to Russia in hopes of effecting some reform in church life found Enns' style of leadership difficult to accept. This included some of his colleagues, especially the most senior active minister, Klaas Reimer.

Emergence of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG).

While still in Prussia, Reimer had admired the theology and piety of Ältester Peter Epp of Danzig, whose daughter Maria he married nine years after Epp's death. He then moved to Neunhuben from Petershagen but found himself in increasing disagreement with the largely urban Danzig congregation and the lax leadership of its elder Jacob de Veer. Fortunately, the rural part of the congregation had been granted the status of "Quartier" in 1792, giving it virtual independence from the congregation in the city except for the tie through a common Ältester who officiated at the ordinances (baptism, communion, election and ordination of ministers) (Note 42). The leading minister of this rural congregation was Cornelius Epp, Maria Reimer's uncle whose home the Reimers shared. Here Claas Reimer was elected minister in 1801 (Note 43).

The low level of moral life, the inconsistent and unscriptural church discipline, and the governmental restrictions on Mennonite land acquisition, combined with Ältester Peter Epp's frequent admonition to his children to go to Russia, finally persuaded Reimer in 1804 to emigrate. A group of twenty-eight adults, many of them inter-related, joined him and Maria (Note 44). Apparently most did not share his zeal for reform, since none seem to have joined his secession group during the next seven years, even though as many as twelve of them settled with him in the village of Petershagen (Note 45).

Reimer did find a kindred spirit in Petershagen. It was his colleague, the youthful (b. 1780) Cornelius Janzen from Münsterberg, Prussia, elected minister in 1805 (Note 46). Serious about upright moral living, these two criticized not so much the Gebietsamt and its punishments as the church ethos which made such punishment necessary (Note 47). Ältester Enns and minister David Huebert, however, not only condoned corporal punishment by the civil government but advocated and practised it themselves (Note 48). On one occasion Reimer and a witness confronted Enns at his home: "Is it true, Ohm Jakob, that you have thrashed your hired man?" "Go to the barn and ask him," replied Enns. They did so, and "Toms," who was a member of Enns' congregation, responded: "Yes, but I richly deserved it" (Note 49).

This probably reflects the widespread acceptance of corporal punishment as discipline for adult members. Nevertheless, when Enns presented this issue at a brotherhood meeting and allowed Reimer and Janzen to respond to it from the viewpoint of Christian nonresistance, members began to take sides and the rift became public. Reimer and Janzen then began to hold separate worship services in Petershagen, and by request in Münsterberg, without the elder's consent. This naturally angered Enns, but the final separation came over an even more serious concern. When the Ältester officiated at communion services in Ohrloff and Petershagen while he himself was in a state of unreconciled conflict with minister Huebert, Reimer

gave up on the Große Gemeinde. He left, even though "to leave the Gemeinde when there is as yet no hint of refuge in another is not within human power....What other choice is there for a Lehrer [minister] who seeks to save his soul from eternal punishment?" (Note 50). A group of eighteen families left the church. This was in 1812, the same year that the elder's harassment drove the former Oberschulz Klaas Wiens out of the colony to found his own estate at Steinbach.

The Lichtenau church - June 2004. View from the west. Several additions were added in Soviet times including a one-story addition in front. The building has recently been used as a warehouse. The building is deteriorating and the western wall is starting to crumble. Photo credit - Adina Reger.

The Dynamics of Separation.

The new Gemeinde would not be properly constituted until it had an Ältester of its own. Reimer and Janzen and their small group patiently worked at this during the next four years. For Enns to have ordained an elder for them would have meant tacit admission that Reimer was right and he wrong, and would have split his Gemeinde. Ältester Wiebe of Chortitza could not have done so without breaking the traditional solidarity of the larger Flemish church. The four Prussian Flemish Aeltesten, whom Reimer apparently contacted over the head of Enns with the help of former Oberschulz Klaas Wiens, withheld approval and urged Reimer's group to have patience (Note 51).

Unexpected help came from the small Frisian congregation in Schönwiese. Apparently acting independently, Heinrich Jantzen, Ältester there since June 1797, served communion in Petershagen to 40 members on 13 March 1815, baptized three of their candidates in Schönwiese later that year and again served communion in Petershagen 21 May 1816 (Note 52). According to Reimer, Jantzen also officiated at his election as Ältester in 1815 but not at his ordination. Whether this was solely because of the strong opposition to such a move by the Flemish elders Wiebe and Enns, or because Jantzen was himself not ordained by an Ältester, is not clear (Note 53). In the end, the separatist group convinced itself by 1816 that election was more important than ordination and justified a non-traditional ordination by a minister instead of an Ältester through an appeal to unusual circumstances and various historical precedents (Note 54). Reimer did not arrange for a successor during his tenure as elder. When the KG wanted to choose a new elder in 1837 after Reimer's death the issue clearly had not gone away and they appealed to Ältester Bernhard Fast of the Ohrloff congregation for assistance in the election (Note 55).

The Lichtenau church as it appeared in the 1920s. Side entrance. Photo credit - Quiring and Bartel, In the Fullness of Time, *page 76. The original Lichtenau church was built in 1826 as the first worship house of the newly organized Flemish "Reine" Gemeinde, also known as the Grosse Gemeinde. The structure was replaced with a new building in 1860.*

Ältester Enns on his part also did not know how to react to a division in the congregation. Mennonite history in Poland-Prussia-Danzig and in Russia offered no precedent to follow. Indeed, the inherited Flemish-Frisian division was rapidly disappearing here as it already had earlier in the Netherlands. Sometimes alone, sometimes together with his Chortitza colleague Johann Wiebe, Enns threatened with ministerial elections to replace Reimer and Janzen, exile to Siberia, excommunication and refusal to recognize baptisms performed by Reimer (Note 56).

The Gebietsamt considered the two ministers defrocked, refusing them exemption from statutory labour and harassing them in other ways (Note 55). This the small congregation suffered willingly and saw to it that their members never had to be disciplined by the civic authorities (Note 58).

Concluding Observations.

The early years of the Molotschna settlement reflect sharply the tension between the Anabaptist concept of the pure church and the Russian reality of a *Volkskirche* in which all adults in the community were also part of the church. The dilemma was heightened by the privilege of self-government thrust on the Mennonite community by the Russian government. This meant that lay members of the church served as civil administrators with magisterial powers exceeding in some cases those of church officials. On the other hand, it meant that when church discipline yielded certain offenders to the "secular arm" it was not to the jurisdiction of "outsiders," but to fellow members of the same congregation.

Klaas Reimer pursued the ideal of a pure church governed according to the Rule of Christ in Matthew 18. He left the "dissolute Babel" in Danzig in hopes of restoring an evangelical congregation in Russia. When Jakob Enns was ordained as Ältester of the whole Molotschna church, he shouldered the enormous burden of moulding into one Gemeinde all of the immigrant members transferring in from various communities in Prussia. To transform that mixed multitude into an ideal "pure" church was not realistic and Enns felt himself bound by his office to deal realistically. The events clearly show that he was not the man to achieve an acceptable compromise. Reimer's only hope of achieving his ideal was by separation. That was inherent in the situation from the outset. Yet, once achieved, he remained ambivalent about the separation. He and his KG wanted official recognition from the very church from which they had separated themselves.

The clashes between Enns and Reimer had been so persistent and bitter that the basic issue probably could not have been clearly articulated by them. In an exchange of letters in 1838 their successors, Bernhard Fast and Abraham Friesen, did so. In response to the KG request that the Fast lead the election of an elder for them and "thereby establish a formally organized Gemeinde" among them, Fast responded: "We have recently understood from you yourselves that in your mind you are not striving to undergird our church order and to help us confirm it" (Note 59). He invited them to join one of the established congregations and together build the Gemeinde. With KG members living interspersed throughout the Molotschna villages, a separate congregation did not make sense unless the separation were complete.

The response of Friesen and colleagues formally protests "that you should in some way have understood from us that we are not committed to assist you in the regulation of your Gemeinden and in the establishment of the same" (Sixty). But the letter then goes on to paint such a dismal picture of the "uncleanliness and disgrace [that] lies hidden in the official Gemeinden" and expresses such a "violent sense of indignation and antipathy towards all the human ordinances of these formal Gemeinden," as to make one wonder why they would want recognition from such bodies. Yet, the letter concludes by saying that while they will now conduct the election themselves, they will approach Fast once more regarding the ordination.

Endnotes: The Pioneer Gemeinde.

Note 1: See Adolf Ens, "The Tie That Binds: Prussian and Russian Mennonites (1788-1794)," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 1990, 34-51, for Prussian church involvement in the movement to Chortitza. On the migration to Molotschna see "Streiflichter auf die ersten Gemeindebildungen an der Molotschna," *Unser Blatt* 1 (May 1926): 171.

Note 2: N.N., "Kurzer Beitrag zur Geschichte der Molotschnaer Mennoniten," *Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1900, 103.

Note 3: Assessment of their status ranges from Heinrich Heese: "....zwei bevollmachtigte der Mennoniten," ("Kurzgefaßte geschichtliche Übersicht der Gründung und des Bestehens der Kolonien des Chortitzer Mennonitenbezirkes," *Unterhaltungsblatt für deutsche Ansiedler im südlichen Rußland*, 1851, Nr. 8-10; reprinted in M. Woltner, *Die Gemeindeberichte von 1848 der deutschen Siedlungen am Schwarzen Meer* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1941), 4) to Brons: "reisten auf eigene Hand und auf rußische Kosten." (A. Brons, *Ursprung, Entwickelung und Schicksale der*

altevangelischen Taufgesinnten oder Mennoniten in kurzen Zügen übersichtlich dargestellt (Norden: Dietrich Soltau, zweite Auflage, 1891), 284.) In between are Peter M. Friesen, *Die Alt=Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft in Rußland (1789-1910)* (Halbstadt: Raduga, 1911), 72: "....beglaubigt durch eine Vollmacht mit Unterschrift von 60 mennonitschen Männern," and Jacob Quiring, *Die Mundart von Chortitza in Süd=Rußland* (München: Druckerei Studentenhaus München Universität, 1927), .

Note 4: "Die ersten Anfänge der Kolonie Ohrloff," *Unser Blatt*, 1 (August 1926), 270; Woltner, 88.

Note 5: Franz Harder, "Die Auswanderung aus der Danziger Mennoniten-Gemeinde nach Rußland," *Mitteilungen des Sippenverbandes der Danziger Mennoniten-Familien Epp - Kauenhowen - Zimmermann* 3 (1937): 104.

Note 6: E.g., Peter M. Friesen, 73; C. Henry Smith, *Story of the Mennonites*, 5th ed., revised by Cornelius Krahn (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1981), .

Note 7: Smith, 259, says that the Molotschna settlers "brought their ministers with them." Peter M. Friesen, 703, thinks that the first Ältester, Jakob Enns, was elected as minister in Prussia. A. Braun, *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, I: 593, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, II: 225, and H. Görz, *Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung: Entstehung, Entwicklung und Untergang* (Steinbach: Echo Verlag, 1950/51), 56, report this as fact. John Friesen, "Mennonite Churches and Religious Developments in Russia 1789-1850," in John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia 1788-1988* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 56, assumes that prior to the election of an Ältester, worship services were led "by Lehrer [ministers] who had been ordained in the Danzig and West Prussian churches." In fact, no ministers from Prussia came to Molotschna until after the ordination of an elder.

Note 8: Görz, p. 54; D[avid H.] Epp, "Hundertjahrsfeier der Lichtenauer Gemeinde und Kirche am 31. Oktober 1926," *Unser Blatt*, 2 (December 1926): 75.

Note 9: Peter M. Friesen, 101; Görz, 9.

Note 10: Peter M. Friesen, 152, 154.

Note 11: Woltner, 99; In official correspondence he is addressed as "Gebiethsvorsteher." Samuel Contenius, Odessa, 26 March 1804 to Claas Wiensz, Peter J. Braun Archive, file 89-1-4(1804), microfilm, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen in 16., 18., und 19., Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: By the author, 1955), 317, Fam. 3.

Note 12: Abraham Braun, "Kleine Chronik der Mennoniten an der Molotschna seit ihrer Ansiedlung bis in mein 80. Jahr," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, 1907, 67. The Brauns were next door neighbours of Wiens in Altona.

Note 13: Correspondance in MHCA, Peter J. Braun Archive, 89-1-4 (1804).

Note 14: Unruh, 312, fam. 15.

Note 15: Woltner, 88; Unruh, 312, Fam. 15; Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* (Halbstadt: H.J. Braun, 1908), 12.

Note 16: Braun, "Kleine Chronik," 67-68.

Note 17: Isaak, 87.

Note 18: Contenius, 26 March 1804 to Wiens, refers to instructions he gave to the Gebietsamt on 18 September 1803.

Note 19: Letter, Jakob Wienß, Chortitz, to Johann Kauenhowen, Danzig, 11 April 1805, in *Der Bote*, 5 January 1938, 4; also in *Mitteilungen*, 6/3 (1940): 69; Jakob Enns, "Kleine Lebensskize," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 9 December 1908, 14; Unruh, 323, Fam. 15; 312, #15; 316, #4; Delbert Plett, *The Golden Years: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia (1812-1849)* (Steinbach, 1985), 169. *Namenverzeichniss der Aeltesten, Lehrer, und Diakonen der Taufgesinnten Mennonitischen Gemeinden in Ost=und West=Preuszen, Litthauen, Polen und den new angesiedelten Kolonien in Ruszland* (Elbing, Agathon Verlag, 1835), 24.

Note 20: It is not clear whether they resigned their office when they were installed as ministers. Hiebert, as noted above, seems to have assisted Oberschulz Wiens in founding the first villages.

Note 21: The suggestion of James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989), 76, that they were ordained by Klaas Reimer, is highly unlikely.

Note 22: Unruh, 316, fam. 4.

Note 23: Unruh, 339, #65, and 306, #3, identifies him as from Krebsfelde, settling in the village of Muntau. D. Epp, "Hundertjahrsfeier," 76, and Peter M. Friesen, 703, note that he was one of four ministers opposing Ältester Bernhard Fast in the 1822-24 division. Editor's note: Johann Friesen (1763-1830) of Muntau and later Rosenort, Molotschna, was the brother-in-law to Klaas Reimer and the founder of a large Kleine Gemeinde dynasty. His son Johann Friesen (1808-72), Neukirch, was the third Ältester of the congregation.

Note 24: Arrived Petershagen 5 June 1805 from Münsterberg, Amt Tiegenhof. Unruh, 321, #13; 350, #68.

Note 25: Jakob Wienß reports this election in his 11 April 1805 letter. *Namensverzeichniss* (1835), 22, also lists Franz Wiensz as a minister in the Petershagen ocngregation since 1805.

Note 26: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 163; Peter M. Friesen, 106. Unruh, 321, #4.

Note 27: Enns, 14.

Note 28: Wienß, 1805 letter.

Note 29: Peter M. Friesen, 106.

Note 30: Enns, 14, clearly refers to the tailor from Siemensdorferfeld, even though he never gives his full name; the first time it is "Is.E." and after that always "I.E." (which in Gothic print is identical to "J.E."). Unruh's identification (348, #36) of Jakob Enns, Hochzeit, Danzig, b. 1763, as becoming Ältester is almost certainly in error, though Urry, 76, n. 34, and A. Braun, *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, I:593, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, II: 225, accept it. Harder, "Die Auswanderung," *Mitteilungen* 3 (December 1937): 190, and Heinrich H. Schroeder, *Rußlanddeutsche Friesen* (Döllstädt: Selbstverlag, 1936), 86, make no mention of this Jakob Enns becoming a minister. There is certainly nothing in Reimer's autobiography to suggest that he and Ältester Enns came from the same congregation.

Note 31: Enns, 14. Unruh, 323, #15, gives the date as 23 August 1805. Smith, 272, erroneously assumes that "they founded independent congregational units from the start, either by villages or groups of villages." Isaak, 91, emphatically states that they "vereinigten sich . . . zu einer Kirchengemeinde." Cf. Jakob Wienß, 1805 letter: "die ganze Molotschnaer Gemeinde."

Note 32: Woltner, 92; Isaac, 91.

Note 33: Woltner, 92.

Note 34: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 163. Peter M. Friesen, 107, n. 2, misleads the reader with his comment that Wiebe and Dyk were co-elders of the Chortitza church. Dyck was only elected minister a year later (21 January 1806) and not ordained as Ältester until 1812. (Letter, Jakob Wienß, Chortitz, 4 February 1806 to Johann Kauenhowen, *Der Bote*, 4 May 1938, 5; Peter M. Friesen, 700). Plett, Vol. VI, Part Two, Chapter Two, n. 14, page 149, suggests that Jacob Dueck was not the later Chortitza elder but the father of the future KG minister Heinrich Wiebe, who settled in the village of Ohrloff.

Note 35: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 163. It is difficult to assess Huebert's role in the difficult early years of the church. As the only settler in the 21-family village of Lindenau who was wealthy enough not to require government assistance (Woltner, 99), he was a prominent member of the community. Church services and brotherhood meetings were regularly held at his home (Reimer, "A Short Exposition", page 127), and in the 1818 visit of Alexander I to the Molotschna colony, his family hosted the Czar for a meal ("Ein hoher Besuch," *Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1900, 112-13). Reimer opposed him on issues of corporal punishment and subscribing funds for the Napoleonic war effort, but seems to have got along with him well on a personal basis ("A Short Exposition," 126). In the 1822-24 split he was one of four ministers opposing Ältester Bernhard Fast (Epp, "Hundertjahrsfeier"; Peter M. Friesen, 703).

Note 36: Braun, "Kleine Chronik," 68. Wiens eventually (1812) withdrew from the community, selling everything he could not take with him, and settling on a private estate, Steinbach, so far outside of the colony that it seemed at the time almost "ausser Rußlands Grenzen." *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, IV: 241.

Note 37: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 164. Editor's note: At this time, Reimer - together with several associates - was negotiating for the purchase of the 1,000,000 ruble Volenko estate on behalf of 162 families.

Note 38: *Ibid.*

Note 39: D. Epp, "Jahrhundertsfeier;" Peter M. Friesen, 75 (Engl. transl., 92). See also Görz, 56; Braun, "Kleine Chronik," 67.

Note 40: Isaak, 91.

Note 41: Klaas Reimer, "A Short Exposition," in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 168, 171.

Note 42: Harder, 106.

Note 43: Klaas and Maria Reimer had in fact purchased a half share in the Wirtschaft of her uncle Ohm Cornelius Epp in Neunhuben, Prussia.

Note 44: Over half of the immigration group were related to each other. Klaas Reimer and Johann Regier were married to the daughters of Peter Epp, formerly Ältester of the Danzig Gemeinde in Prussia. The first wife of Peter Classen (born 1749) was Sara Epp, also a daughter of Peter Epp. Cornelius Epp (1728-1805) was the uncle of these sisters and the protege and former partner of Klaas Reimer. Peter Classen Jr. (born 1775), Catharina Classen (born 1777) - married to Franz Wiens, and Magdalena Classen (born 1778) - married to Abraham Enz, were the children of Peter Classen and his second wife Sara Wölke (born 1762). Cornelius Wölke was the brother to Catharina Wölke. Gertrude Regier (born 1775) who married Peter Classen Jr. was the daughter of Michael Regier (born 1747).

Note 45: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 152-56. Editor's note: It is assumed that Reimer was supported by his brother-in-law Regier since several of Regier's children were later involved in the KG. However, according to Henry Schapansky, Regier settled in Kronsgarten.

Note 46: See above, n. 21. Editor's note: The Janzen family also originated in the village of Petershagen where Klaas Reimer was born and raised. Klaas Reimer's mother, Aganetha Epp (believed to have been a sister to Ältester Peter Epp, Danzig), married for the second time to Abraham Janzen (1747-1822), uncle of Cornelius (b. 1780) and one of the wealthiest settlers in Petershagen.

Note 47: Isaak, 91.

Note 48: Reimer, "A Short Exposition," 125-7.

Note 49: Braun, "Kleine Chronik," 69.

Note 50: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 170-71; Peter M. Friesen, 107.

Note 51: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 173. Reimer, "A Short Exposition," Part Two, Chapter Two, 133.

Note 52: Cornelius Hildebrand, handwritten notes in *Namens-Verzeichniss der in Deutschland, Ost= und Westpreußen, Galizien, Polen und Rußland befindlichen Mennoniten-Gemeinden, sowie ihrer Aeltesten, Lehrer und Vorsteher* (Danzig: Edwin Groening, 1857), 78. Original in Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg.

Note 53: Peter M. Friesen, 75, 108; Reimer Feb 1819 letter to Aelt. J. Fast (Plett, Vol. VI, Part Two, Chapter Three). Reimer's assumption that Jantzen was ordained by the visiting minister Cornelius Warkentin of Prussia in 1794 (Peter M. Friesen, 108) is likely wrong, as Jantzen was apparently not elected as minister until January 1797 (Hildebrand, 67).

Note 54: Reimer, "A Short Exposition," 133.

Note 55: Peter M. Friesen, 111-12.

Note 56: Reimer, "A Short Exposition," 137; Peter M. Friesen, 108; Plett, *The Golden Years*, 171. 173.

Note 57: Plett, *The Golden Years*, 172.

Note 58: Braun, "Kleine Chronik," 69; "Kurzer Beitrag," 110.

Note 59: Peter M. Friesen, 111; Abraham Friesen, "A Simple Declaration, 1845," Part Three, Chapter Five, 291-193. Fast had himself experienced a split of the Grosse Gemeinde in 1824 and witnessed the Flemish Ältester Jakob Dyck of Chortitza ordain an elder for the breakaway faction. Had this been a "permissable" split because Fast was ordained by a Frisian, or because the group separating from the elder was so large, or because the Gemeinden in Prussia and Chortitza were largely in sympathy with the dissidents?

Note 60: Plett ms. VI; Friesen, 24; Peter M. Friesen, 112, calls it a "gelungene Antwort," while chastising Fast for his shortsightedness.

Ohm Heinrich Balzer 1800-46, Tiege

"Ohm Heinrich Balzer (1800-46), Tiege, Kleine Gemeinde minister and conservative Mennonite Philosopher: A Biography and Interpretation," by Dr. James Urry, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand, reprinted from Plett, ed., *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 1993), pages 295-304.

Introduction.

Heinrich Balzer was undoubtedly one of the outstanding "thinkers" of the 19th century Kleine Gemeinde (KG), a religious movement whose importance as the guardian of conservative thought in the first half century of the Russian Mennonite experience has been revealed only recently (Note 1). But very little is known about Balzer's life and the wider context of his ideas. The KG which emigrated to North America obviously prized his writings, circulating them in manuscript and publishing some as separate tracts or in religious journals (Note 2). But other Mennonites neglected his work until Robert Friedmann discovered and published Balzer's remarkable exposition "Faith and Reason" (Note 3). Friedmann, however, was a scholar of early Anabaptism, unversed in the complexities of Russian Mennonite history and he failed to enlighten his readers as to Balzer's identity or to place his writings in the broader context of Russian Mennonite religious thought. The pioneering researches and writings of Delbert F. Plett have at last provided us with more detail on the KG, its membership, aims, ideas, writings and history (Note 4). In the process, more light has been shed on Heinrich Balzer, his family connections and his ideas. These new sources help to confirm Friedmann's percipience in recognising that Balzer was drawing on a long tradition of Anabaptist thought as well as on more recent ideas and concepts and reinforce his opinion that Balzer truly contributed to a "philosophy of Mennonitism" (Note 5).

Heinrich Balzer's Life.

Heinrich Balzer was born in 1800, probably in Schweingrube, in the Stuhm district of West Prussia, the son of Heinrich Balzer senior (1773-1842) by his wife, Anna Goerz (nee Ewert) (1768-1812) (Note 6). His father apparently came from Montau, another area of Mennonite settlement in Prussia and had moved to the Stuhm area following his first marriage. Heinrich Balzer junior was one of possibly 15 children, seven full brothers and sisters, three of whom died in childhood, and possible eight by his father's later marriage to another Anna Ewert in 1815. In 1800 Heinrich senior was elected a minister of the Stuhm Lowlands or Schweingrube (later Tragheimwerder) Frisian congregation (Note 7) and young Heinrich was baptised with his elder brother David (1799-1844) in 1816. In 1819 he emigrated with his family and other members of their congregation to the Molochnaia colony in New Russia. His father, as an elected minister in Prussia, here became one of the leading ministers of the new Frisian congregation based in the village of Rudnerweide (Note 8). Heinrich senior settled in Grossweide, a newly established village in the New Plan *(Neuplaner/Nieplona)* area in the eastern part of the colony (Note 9).

Heinrich junior probably first settled with his parents in Grossweide but around 1822 he moved to Tiege, an established Flemish village in the south west of Molochna. The reason for this move appears connected to his marriage to Helena, widow of Franz Martin Klassen (b. 1773), who had presumably inherited her husband's property, *Wirtschaft* No. 5 (Note 10). At the time widow Klassen was probably aged about 23, a little older than Heinrich. Whether or not she already had children or whether she and Heinrich subsequently had children is unclear. But Heinrich's move to Tiege took him away from the new Frisian settlements and close to the area dominated by the Flemish congregation centred in the adjacent village of Ohrloff. By this date Ohrloff was emerging as a dynamic centre in the Molochna, site of the first worship house built in 1809, the home of the first post-elementary school in 1822, and also of the Cornies family whose most famous member, Johann (1789-1848), was to have a profound impact on Mennonite life over the next quarter of a century.

Some time, probably, in the latter half of the 1820s Heinrich was elected a minister. In becoming a minister Heinrich joined a family tradition. Not only was his father a minister, but through his mother he was connected to a line of ministers and elders in the Frisian congregations in Prussia. Two Ewerts (Hans and Jakob) served as elders of the congregation in the 18th century (1750-76 and 1788-1800) and either Frantz Goerz (1779-1834), the first elder in Russia who came from the same area of Prussia, or his wife, Maria (nee Goerz 1781-?), who emigrated with the Balzer family and also initially settled in Grossweide, may have been distantly related to Heinrich junior's mother's first husband, Jacob Goerz (1748-1795) (Note 11). Such kinship links among members of the ministry were not uncommon in Prussia and Russia.

While probably elected and ordained into his father's Frisian congregation, Balzer's moved to Tiege and the territory of the local Flemish congregation. Sometime after his move he apparently transferred his membership to that of the Ohrloff congregation. While such transfers were probably still rare in both Prussia and Russia, especially for ministers, except in cases of disagreements between individuals or schism in a congregation, there are reasons to believe that this move may well have been peaceful and acceptable to both congregations. After the secession of the "large Flemish Reine" Gemeinde in 1824, there was a period of intense interaction between the Ohrloff and the new immigrant congregations, especially in religious matters (Note 12). Balzer's shift therefore reflected not only his change in residence, but also a spirit of reconciliation between some of the leaders of the Ohrloff congregation and those of the new arrivals.

Joining the Kleine Gemeinde.

In 1833 Balzer left his congregation and joined the small group known as the KG. His departure must have caused some debate as his father remained a minister in the Frisian congregation and at least three new ministers were elected that year to the congregation. Long after the event his actions were cited as precedence for other ordained ministers wishing to join other congregations (Note 13).

The reason for this extremely radical course of action, as articulated by Balzer himself in poems and addresses, was a matter of conscience. Balzer was concerned with the direction life was taking in the Mennonite colonies and the failure of the congregations, including his own, to uphold basic principles of the faith. It also should be remembered that the early years of the 1830s witnessed great changes and tensions in the Russian Mennonite world. Alternatives to government policy seemed to indicate an end to emigration, economic difficulties were apparent, and worse, drought and famine stalked the land (Note 14). There were also calls for reform to the economy, to the system of local administration and schooling. These reforms were part of a wider set of changes which were to result, after a period of considerable struggle, in Johann Cornies' control of the colony (Note 15).

Balzer appears to have undergone a crisis of conscience sometime in 1832 and entered into correspondence with a minister, later an important elder of the KG, Abraham Friesen (1782-1849) (Note 16). Friesen lived in the next village of Ohrloff and thus was Balzer's neighbour; like Balzer he was an important "thinker'" in matters of faith, writing a number of important religious statements. In 1818 Friesen had abandoned his position as a deacon in the Orhloff Flemish congregation to join the KG (Note 17). But it was the circulation of a booklet suggesting radical reform for all European Mennonites that appears to have been the catalyst for Balzer to leave his congregation and join the KG.

The booklet in question was written by a South German of Mennonite descent, Abraham Hunzinger (1792-1859), who was a district court actuary in government service in Hesse-Darmstadt. Hunzinger dedicated his text to the ruler of the neighbouring state of Baden which had been created during the Napoleonic period. Baden had adopted a liberal constitution that, in the tradition of the Enlightenment, attempted to rationalize religious belief by eliminating the old differences between established confessional faiths in the kingdom. In the same spirit, Hunzinger's booklet called for little more than the total reform on rational principles of Mennonite faith and practice to meet the challenge of the modern world and thus "improve" the Mennonites. His proposals included the abandonment of outmoded practices: rules against marriage with outsiders, the use of the ban, non-involvement with civil government and objections to military service. He also suggested broad reforms to edu-

cation with a recommendation that higher education be encouraged and a salaried, professionally trained ministry be established (Note 18).

According to a letter addressed to Johann Cornies from the head of the Russian government's Guardian's Committee for foreign colonists in south Russia dated January 12 1832, Andrei Fadeev, Hunzinger's booklet had been forwarded by Russian officials in St Petersburg to the religious leaders of the Mennonite congregations by "Imperial decree." Fadeev noted that the "`government's intentions are that some of our Mennonites might also wish to accept some of the suggestions [in Hunzinger's booklet], especially for the school system. I find that several of them are very useful for our Mennonites also according to my insights [Fadeev's emphasis]" He stressed that the "august religious leaders should not miss this opportunity" to improve the life of the colonists especially in terms of improving the educational system through the establishment of a central school (Note 19). At this period Cornies did not possess the power he would later gain under Russian authority, and he also did not have a copy of the booklet to which Fadeev referred. So he immediately ordered a copy from a bookseller in Leipzig through a Mennonite contact in Danzig (Note 20).

The suggestions in Hunzinger's book, and no doubt the backing they received from government officials, acted as a catalyst for Balzer's separation from his congregation and his return to basic Mennonite values through joining the KG. The proposals for rational reform contained in Hunzinger's book appear to have "awakened" in Balzer "a particular inspiration and impulse.... which I [was] unable to extinguish." In an epistle (Note 21) to the elders of the Ohrloff Flemish, Alexanderwohl Gröningen Old Flemish and Frisian Rudnerwiede congregations, Balzer described how he was "shocked" by the booklet and that it constituted "a departure and turning away from our beloved God" to the "ruination of all flesh." The threat of reform was that its followers were tempted away from the true path of faith. Balzer acknowledges how Hunzinger's "....booklet was the key to much which I had not previously perceived and which I had unknowingly promoted myself. Because this pitiable man so clearly demonstrated that he is obviously very distant from the right way, we all naturally confess that he is on the dangerous road of error . . . We, nearly all of us, find ourselves on this false course, and Hunzinger is a concern to us merely because he has progressed such a good distance ahead of us."

The problem was that in the name of doing good and by attempting to improve life, reformers became "worldly minded and finally entirely worldly." Balzer warned his fellow religious leaders that a "surreptitious transformation from Christendom to the world" was occurring in their congregational communities through "great wealth," a "disposition unto worldly knowledge [i.e. higher education]," and a taste for fashion, theatre and display. All this ultimately would lead to the abandonment of basic Mennonite principles just as Hunzinger had openly advocated: involvement in "big business", civil government and "finally the military and service in war." Balzer's call to his fellow ministers was to "cling firmly to the fundamentals of our fellowship and do not risk any departure from them."

It is perhaps significant that Balzer addressed his epistle to the three leading "reform" congregations in Molochnaia, leaving aside the Large "Reine" Flemish Congregation which, like the KG, was noted for its conservatism (Note 19). As Balzer's epistle and other writings all include appeals to conservatism, and stress the continuity and conservation of faith and practice, it is not surprising that only the KG appeared to offer separation from the "world" combined with a clearly articulated set of ideas associated with the maintenance of well established ways (Note 22). Many, if not most, Russian Mennonites were at this time deeply conservative and suspicious of innovations. The Large "Reine" Flemish Congregation, which included the majority of colonists, supported such sentiments. But such conservatism, unlike that of the KG, was not deeply grounded in the established Mennonite principles of faith. Their members were conservative because, like most rural people, they were suspicious of any change, but few could articulate the bases of their conservatism. In time, many proved quite willing to accept change if it was to their personal or financial advantage, with barely a thought as to its consistency with Mennonite teachings or principles of faith. What is remarkable about Balzer's and much other KG writing, is its clarity of vision and appeal to the basic foundations of Mennonite faith. But in Balzer's case there are distinctive features to his approach which probably reflect his broad intellectual experience before he joined the KG.

Balzer's intellectual background.

While it is obvious from his writings that Balzer was skilled in articulating his thoughts in High German, it is unclear whether this was a result of his early schooling or later self-education. There are reasons to believe it was a consequence of both. Balzer had emigrated to Russia as a young adult and although his childhood must have been disturbed by the Napoleonic invasions of Prussia, he may well have received a good basic education in the new, "reformed" Prussian schools (Note 23). The Tiege-Ohrloff area of Molochnaia was also a centre of intellectual life in the colony. It was the centre of the most liberal and progressive congregational community, the Ohrloff Flemish congregation, whose members provided many of the leaders in the colony-community. It also contained the offices of Cornies' Agricultural Union, the first high school in the colony and a private lending library (Note 24). Balzer was a friend of Cornies and was later remembered as a "knowledgeable preacher" and as a "liberal and intelligent" man (Note 25). So any education that Balzer had received in Prussia was no doubt enhanced by his involvement in the religious and intellectual activities of Mennonites in and around his home village.

After joining the KG, however, Balzer warned against the dangers of higher education and the reading of "alien books published by other confessions." Such books were "false coinage through which one can easily be overwhelmed and deceived and accept base metal of little worth instead of gold and silver." He also warned against being "tossed to and fro by the winds of all manner of foreign teaching" (Note 26) and exhorted Mennonites to be "on guard in the selection of one's reading material, particularly if the book is nicely made up, and makes a strong appeal to both the converted and the unconverted, be it true or false" (Note 27). These writings seem to hint that Balzer believed he had been once lead astray by such literature and an interest in worldly affairs (Note 28). The contribution of his earlier knowledge of philosophical approaches to the problems of faith is reflected in his writing and statements on human nature, thought and faith which are quite distinctive in comparison with the writings of the 19th century Mennonites which are currently available for study. His sermons reveal an extremely logical manner of thought and a clear presentation of ideas. He also seems to have relied heavily on the Bible as the source of his ideas. Unlike many KG ministers of Flemish background, he does not seem to have made much use of the books of the Mennonite tradition, those 16th and 17th century writings of Mennonites, including Menno, whose interpretations of the Bible, of life and faith were lovingly cherished, quoted and promoted in the KG community.

Balzer's views on human nature and faith.

Balzer's major work known as "Faith and Reason", whose full title is *Understanding and reason, simple opinions regarding the differences between understanding and reason, discussed according to the teachings of the Gospel*, was produced at the time he joined the KG. It is a major philosophical statement and obviously was intended to be circulated among those in the colonies, KG and non-KG, interested in religious ideas and concerned with the direction of Mennonite life.

Human life Balzer argued, had a "threefold character" (Note 29). Firstly there was the mortal flesh, the physical life subject to the trials of this earthly existence and, like all living creatures, ultimately death. Secondly there was "the life of the soul or [rather] of the senses," a "psychic or sensual life" which "through thinking [reasoning] . . . governs and directs the physical life by way of the five senses." Again this is an aspect of existence humans shared with other creatures "with this great difference that the bountiful Creator has endowed the human soul with reason, the natural light by which man can reasonably consider the affairs of this world, judge his own actions, and make a good and rational choice between right and wrong." The third characteristic Balzer called "the mental or spiritual life" was also a gift from God. This was God's special gift to humankind and to them alone. But it was a precious gift which, through Adam and Eve's disobedience, had been placed at risk: "it was through the fall of man that his *understanding* was darkened." Reason, in humankind's fall, was not lost, but "corrupted in body, soul and mind." However, through an acceptance of Jesus Christ and "a simple obedience" to the Gospel, "this

aspect of human life was redeemable": "The true knowledge, or the `reason of the heart' [*Verstand des Herzens*] is revealed thought the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to those who genuinely repent from their sins, deny them [*ihnen absterben*], and conduct their lives in accordance with the word of Christ . . . Out of grace the Father of Light will give them the right wisdom and *understanding* . . . [;] the more a man opens his heart to the working of the Spirit of God, the more the mind will be illuminated and inspired . . . [I]n a reborn and faithful heart, animated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit alone, this reason must be subordinated to the faith, and brought under its obedience [*Kindschaft des Verstandes*]."

Understanding was opposed to reason. The New Testament clearly indicated that understanding, "or knowledge of the heart illuminated through the Holy Spirit," could be "grasped only thought faith." It was not to be confused with reason and should be recognised as superior to reason. "Natural" reason, "restricted exclusively to activities of this world." had to be "tamed" for a person to achieve salvation.

Balzer acknowledged that reason could be "developed to a high degree" through "secular learning," but this only tempted people away from salvation because whatever goes beyond its concepts and judgements, reason puts to doubt." Reason had been greatly enhanced by "worldly scholarship" in "universities and schools of higher learning" and the development of science which tempted people to search into the mysteries of nature" through methods of "observation, analysis, experimentation, and logical deduction." But such developments of the faculties of reason threatened true understanding. Worse, developed reason promoted "pride, conceit, and complacency" and led to "conformity with this world." But by accepting Christ and the teachings of the Gospel, instead of the philosophical teachings of reason, understanding will soon spread from man's heart to all his actions and make him fit to carry on a divine (or sanctified) life in simplicity and truth" (Note 30).

Balzer then went on to condemn contemporary Mennonite life in Russia and to warn of future consequences if there was not a return to established ways. His warnings included a catalogue of sinful practices well rehearsed in Mennonite religious writings, including those of other KG writers: "[p]ride, ostentation, vanity, greed for money and lust for wealth, avarice, drunkenness, luxury, vicious life, masquerades, obscene songs, gambling, and above all the miserable smoking of tobacco." These faults need to be corrected through the application of understanding, Christian discipline and a return to a simple way of life, that of "the lowest estate, that of the husbandman" which was "the most conducive . . . for the preservation of genuine simplicity in Christ."

But Balzer also warned of the dangers of policies aimed at that reform of Mennonite life where they were based on reason and not on understanding. In this he singled out higher educational reform in the colonies. The "new secularism" which had occurred through greater contact with the world in business and through

Peter Balzer (1827-1902) immigrated to America in 1874 as part of the Alexanderwohl Gemeinde, settling in McPherson County, near Inman, Kansas. He was the younger half-brother of Heinrich Balzer (1800-46), Tiege. Peter belonged to the Hoffnungsau Gemeinde and served as a senior minister. In 1902 his son Johann Balzer (1851-1930) went on an extended trip back to Russia. Photo courtesy of great-grandson Harold Balzer, Box 59, Buhler, Kansas, 67522. For a photo of Peter Balzer and his first wife Anna Ewert, see Saints and Sinners, *page 73.*

Mennonite's reading books and newspapers, had "produced a desire for a better, that is a more refined education for their children." But in planning to improve "the school system" Mennonites had to be: "....on the alert lest the young flowers of our church become biased against our principles which later on would make it difficult for them loyally to follow our tenets. In particular one should be on guard not to expand the necessary instruction beyond such subjects as reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and anything else useful and handy for the simple practice of a husbandman. Whatever belongs to higher learning brings forth nothing but sophistry, unbelief, and corruption of the church; for `knowledge puffeth up' (1 Cor. 8:1). Reason gets its strength and sustenance from this learning, and soon simplicity is bound to be abandoned. Therefore I counsel and implore each member of our church to make it not too difficult for his own child to find his salvation in innocence."

This was written at time when a number of new Prussian school teachers had begun to teach in the colony and within a decade Cornies had wrested control of the village schools away from the local communities and congregations and brought them under control of his Agricultural Union. From 1842 onwards Cornies and his son-in-law, Philip Wiebe, forced a more regular and secularised educational system on the Mennonites (Note 31).

Balzer's Dualism and Two Kingdom Theology.

Balzer's contrast between understanding and reason, although his own, was built upon, and thoroughly integrated into, a well established Mennonite view of the world which Robert Friedmann called "the doctrine of two worlds" (Note 32). Its roots lay in ancient thought, could be justified by Biblical reference, the teachings of the Early Church and was particularly favoured by Anabaptist and later Mennonite writers.

A close consideration of Balzer's terms reveals a number of dualisms, binary oppositions, which connect his view on human nature with these other teachings. In terms of his basic view of human nature and "thought," the following opposites appear in his writings:

understanding	reason
heart	mind/head
soul/spirit	flesh/senses
spiritual light	natural light
illuminatedknowledge	darkness
innocence	learning
truth	fiction

In terms of the nature of the two worlds this corresponded to a well-established set of oppositions in Mennonite thought which Balzer also mentions in his writings:

non-worldly community	worldly community
nonconformity	conformity
purity	corruption
non-resistance/peace	violence/war
salvation	damnation

In terms of human action this implied to Balzer a number of further oppositions:

simplicity	complexity
obedience	disobedience
submission	domination
humbleness	pride
brotherly love/selflessness	hate/selfishness

In terms of the proper pursuits of a committed Christian this contrast in actions then involved another set of oppositions:

farming	commerce
husbandman	businessman
self-sustenance	accumulated wealth
plainness	ostentation
material poverty	material wealth
spiritual wealth	spiritual poverty

Thus Balzer's theological position, if it may indeed be called this, fitted easily into well established Mennonite ideas, concepts and practices dating back to Anabaptist and earlier Christian writers, and also KG thought and action as is apparent in their writings produced in the first half of the 19th century. His distinctive contribution was to add a new dimension built on a reaction to post-Reformation developments in theology and secular philosophy which debated the role of reason in human affairs. In this sense, although Balzer exhorted his readers to "cling firmly to fundamentals" and to firmly unite in love, because "firmness protects [against] decline" (Note 33), his appeal to continuity and maintenance was based upon a critique of the modern world through an understanding of recent developments in ideas and their application to human affairs. Balzer was thus an informed, intellectual conservative by choice, rather than a conservative holding onto perceived traditions out of ignorance or stubborn narrow mindedness.

Balzer's legacy.

It is clear from Delbert Plett's extensive researches that kinship has always played an important part in KG life. In the early 19th century the majority of its members were of Flemish background some with close ties to members of the Ohrloff Flemish congregation, including Ohrloff's religious leaders (Note 34). There were few converts from the non-Flemish congregations, especially those who emigrated to Russia after 1818. By leaving the Frisian congregation, Balzer must have broken with not only his congregation but also his family and kin entering a very different social and religious world. This occurred after he had achieved adulthood and probably after he married, so he had few, if any kinship links with the KG. No doubt by living in Tiege (Note 35) he had made friends with members of the congregation who lived in the neighbourhood and these undoubtedly were strengthened after his joining their congregation, but there were few other bonds to link him with the network of KG families which was well established by the 1830s. Even if any of his children married into the KG families (Note 36) this probably occurred too late to be of any social significance as Balzer died on January 1, 1846. His joining the KG was a matter of faith; he was joined in spiritual kinship not in social kinship with the KG. His legacy for the KG was therefore not sealed by continuity of blood and his descendants apparently vanish from KG history.

But it is obvious that his memory, and particularly his writings lived on for some time. The high esteem in which his writings were held is apparent from their inclusion in the manuscript *Collected History* of Peter Toews and the fact that an effort was made to publish some of his texts in North America before and after 1900 (Note 37). But by this date the KG community was itself under strain, as Plett has noted from "American fundamentalism (dispensationalism)" and the "writings of the forefathers were largely forgotten and relegated to dust bins" (Note 38). It took an Anabaptist scholar to rediscover and to recognise the value of Balzer's writing, and another twenty years before Balzer's work could be placed in a broader context.

Endnotes. Heinrich Balzer (1800-46):

Note 1: Delbert Plett, ed., *The Golden Years: the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia (1812-1849)* (Steinbach, 1985), and other volumes in this series; cf. James Urry, "All that glistens . . .' Delbert Plett and the place of the Kleine Gemeinde in Russian-Mennonite history," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 4 (1986), 228-50.

Note 2: Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 221, 233-4.

Note 3: Robert Friedmann (translator and Editor), [Heinrich Balzer's] Faith and reason: the principles of Mennonitism reconsidered, in a treatise of 1833. *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 22 (1948), 75-93 reprinted in Plett, ed., *Golden Years*, 237-47 - all quotations from now on are taken from the reprint in Plett.

Note 4: Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, and related volumes.

Note 5: Friedmann in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 237.

Note 6: Much of the genealogical information used here and below was supplied by H. Schapansky of British Columbia to Delbert Plett who kindly provided me with copies of Mr. Schapansky's research and direct correspondence with Mr. Schapansky who kindly answered other queries. Additional information was located in the genealogical notes of the John Balzer family in SA.I.106 in the Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas; I am most grateful to the archivist, John D. Thiesen, for supplying me with a copy of this manuscript.

Note 7: See Horst Penner, "Tragheimweide," *ME* 4, 741-42; the congregation was formed in an area settled only after 1724 by Mennonite refugees from Hohenzollern Prussia and Lithuania.

Note 8: See "Ein paar Blaetter aus der Geschichte der Rudnerwiede Gemeinde," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch*, 10, (1913), 31 and reports of various officials in villages founded in this migration in M. Woltner ed., *Die Gemeindeberichte von 1848 der deutschen Siedlungen am Schwarzen Meer* (Leipzig, 1941), 139, 142. On the migration of new congregations at this period see James Urry, *None but saints: the transformation of Mennonite life in Russia, 1789-1889* (Winnipeg, Man.: Hyperion Press, 1989), Chapter 5.

Note 9: For brief family sketches of various Balzer families connected with the KG, see Delbert Plett, "Balzer Genealogies," in Plett, *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 1993), 345-353.

Note 10: Franz Martin Klassen (b. 1773) was the son of Martin Klassen (d. 1774), Simonsdorf, 1776 census, West Prussia. Franz emigrated to Russia in 1818 where he became the owner of Wirtschaft 5, Tiege. Franz had a brother Martin Martin Klassen (b. 1770), Tiegenhagen, West Prussia, who emigrated to Russia in 1841. Two of Martin's children were involved with the KG: Martin Klassen (1822-82), Gnadenau, Kansas, and Katherina Martin Klassen (1819-99), married Heinrich Friesen (1815-50), son of Abraham, the KG Elder. Together with her third husband, Cornelius Enns (1832-79), Fischau, Katharina, emigrated to Kansas, also as Gnadenau pioneers. For additional genealogical information, see Plett, ed., *Dynasties of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 2000), various references.

Note 11: See Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergrunde der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16.,18.und 19. Jahrhundert* (Karlsruhe: the author, 1955), 367; "Ein paar Blaetter . . .," 29-33. Details supplied to me by Henry Schapansky indicate, however, that any relationship must have been distant, i.e. over three generations apart.

Note 12: See Klaas Reimer, "Ein Kleine Aufsatz," in Plett, ed., *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde*, 135, and Urry, *None but saints*, 99-101.

Note 13: For a listing of the Rudnerwiede ministry in 1843 see *Namenverzeichnis der Aeltesten und Lehrer der mennonitischen Gemeinden* (Danzig, 1843), 54 and compare its new elections with the ministry listed in the earlier 1835 edition republished by Adalbert Goertz, "Die Mennonitengemeinden Altpreussens und Osteuropas in Jahre 1835," *Ostdeutsche Familienkunde*, 13, (1965), 112. One of the leaders of the Templars cited Balzer's transfer as precedence for his leaving the Gnadenfeld congregation in the 1860s, see Nikolai Schmidt in Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben* (Halbstadt: H.J. Braun, 1908), 240.

Note 14: James Urry, editor and introduction, "Immigration and Famine in Russia, 1833. Two letters of Johann Cornies," *Mennonite Life* 46 (3), (1991), 18-20; see also Urry, "Molotschna: the Year 1833," in *Pres.*, No. 17, pages 17-19.

Note 15: Urry, *None but saints*, Chapters 6 and 7.

Note 16: Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 253-256; in his epistle to the other elder (see below) written in January 1833, Balzer spoke of "circumstances which came together in my life's history about a year or somewhat more ago," *ibid.*, 219.

Note 17: Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 248-50; 262-64.

Note 18: Abraham Hunzinger, *Das Religions-, Kirchen-und Schulwesen der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten; wahr und unpartheilisch dargestellt und mit besondern Betrachtungen ueber einige dogmen, mit Verbesserungs-Vorschlagen versehen* (Speyer: Kob'schen, 1830); cf. Christian Neff, "Hunzinger, Abraham," *ME* 2, 845. Hunzinger's booklet was republished in the United States in 1862 (Milford Square, Pa.: Mennonitische Druck-Verein). Hunzinger's son, Ludwig Heinrich Hunzinger (1842 - 1900), became a Lutheran minister and his grandson, August Wilhelm Hunzinger (1871-1920), a noted Lutheran church reformer.

Note 19: Letter from Fadeev in the Peter Braun Collection (89-1-232 (19)) originals in the Odessa Regional State Archives, Ukraine, a transcription of which was kindly sent to me by Professor John Staples of the Department of History at the State University of New York, Fredonia. In a later Russian government report on the Molochnaia during the period of intense reform of the Ministry of State Domains, Hunzinger's book was referred to as a good guide to Mennonite practice! See Opisanie mennonitiskikh koloni v Rossii, *Zhurnal Ministerstva Gosudarstvennykh Imushchestv*, 4, (1842), 34, where the author is incorrectly given as Heinriger. On the Ministry's reform programmes in the 1830s and 40s see Urry, *None but saints*, 117-22, 136-37.

Note 20: Letter of Johann Cornies dated February 5 [1832] to the "Reverend [Jacob] van der Smissen," Danzig in the Peter Braun Collection 89-1-236 (11-12) again thanks to Professor Staples.

Note 21: Heinrich Balzer, "Epistle to the Aeltesten," 1833 in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 219-20 all quotations in the next few paragraphs are from this source.

Note 22: On these ideas see Urry, "All that glistens . . ." 241-44.

Note 23: Urry, *None but saints*, 155-56.

Note 24: *Ibid.*, 105, 112-18, 156, 165.

Note 25: Abraham Braun, "Kleine Chronik der Mennoniten an der Molotschna seit ihrer Ansiedlungen bis mein 80. Jahr," *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* (1906-07), 69.

Note 26: Balzer to the school teacher Heinrich Rempel of Altonau, February 1834 in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 225.

Note 27: Balzer in "Faith and Reason" in Plett, ed., *Golden Years*, 245.

Note 28: In "Faith and Reason", Balzer wrote that "The big trading connections made it absolutely necessary to study business administration, geography and political science. Reading daily newspapers became a necessary and tempting habit, and made people familiar with the great politics of this world. They thoroughly enjoyed observing revolutions and the overthrow of kings and states" in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 244. Again this sounds like a confession of his earlier actions and interests.

Note 29: All the quotations which follow are from Balzer's "Faith and Reason" in Plett ed., *Golden Years*, 224-45.

Note 30: On the wider context of these changes in attitude towards "knowledge" and "learning" among Mennonites in 19th century Russia, see James Urry, "`The snares of reason:' changing Mennonite attitudes to `knowledge' in 19th century Russia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 25(1983), 306-22.

Note 31: Urry, *None but saints*, 132, 160-63.

Note 32: Robert Friedmann, "The doctrine of two worlds," in G. F. Herschberger, ed., *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1957); cf. Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1973).

Note 33: Balzer quoted in Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 220, 244.

Note 34: Delbert Plett, *Profile of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1874* (Steinbach, 1987); Plett, ed., *Pioneers and Pilgrims*.

Note 35: It is interesting that Balzer lived in Tiege as all the other Frisian ministers whose places of residence are noted in the listings at this period lived in the eastern villages. Was it perhaps the intellectual atmosphere of the Ohrloff/Tiege community which had attracted him to settle there before he joined the Kleine Gemeinde? Editor's note: There was a significant KG community in Tiege, including the prominent Isaac family. The KG community here also included brothers-in-law: Klaas F. Reimer - son of Ältester Klaas Reimer; and Peter W. Friesen - son of Ältester Abraham Friesen

Note 36: See above note 9.

Note 37: Plett, ed., *The Golden Years*, 221, 233-34.

Note 38: *Ibid.*, 233.

Johann Cornies and Pietism in the Molochna

"Johann Cornies (1789-1848) and Pietism in the Molochna," by Dr. John Staples, Professor of Russian and Soviet History at State University of New York, Fredonia, New York, U.S.A. E-mail: staples@fredonia.edu.

Introduction.

Johann Cornies (1789-1848) is probably the best known 19th-century Tsarist Mennonite. He was 15 when he came with his family from Prussia to southern Ukraine in 1804. By 1809 he was leasing large stretches of land from the state, and by the 1820s he had made himself one of the richest men in the entire region. Along with wealth came community responsibilities, and beginning in 1817 Cornies served as his Molochna Mennonite Settlement's principle representative to the state regarding new Mennonite immigration from Prussia. Over the following 30 years Cornies would be the most prominent Mennonite in the Tsarist Empire.

Cornies has traditionally been treated by historians as a secular, and secularising, figure. My own past work, which focuses on the interaction of ethno-cultural groups in the Molochna region, attempts to reinsert religion into the Cornies story, but I too dwell principally on his secular activities, and I have identified his religious beliefs as mainstream Flemish Congregation conservatism.

Pietism.

This is an interpretation that must be reconsidered. As I will argue here, Cornies was as innovative in religion as he was in other matters. Beginning in 1818 he was swept up in Pietism, and his new religious beliefs were an important contributor to his well-known conflicts with religious conservatives in his Molochna Mennonite settlement.

The Prussian Mennonite communities that provided the first Mennonite immigrants to southern Ukraine were divided between two congregations, the Flemish and the Frisian. The former promoted a conservative Mennonite world view closely linked to the 18th-century rural Prussian communities from which its members came. It practised a quietist theology of strict withdrawal from the secular world. The latter was more willing to accept outsiders and sanction inter-congregational marriages.

In Danzig in 1808 the Flemish and Frisian congregations united, and in the following years became increasingly open to ideas drawn from non-Mennonite, and particularly Pietist Christian groups. When the Russian state authorised a new immigration of several thousand Mennonites from Prussia in 1818, it opened the door to religious controversy by bringing into the conservative Molochna community a large group of Danzig Mennonites, regarded by Flemish Congregationalists in the Molochna as Frisian Pietists.

The religious evolution that began with the arrival of Pietist Mennonites in the Molochna in 1818 was a driving force in the rest of Cornies' life, for it freed him psychologically to pursue his vision of economic modernisation for his community. Consequently, understanding Cornies' religious beliefs is an important prerequisite for understanding everything that he accomplished in his life.

Many conservative Mennonites saw Pietism as a fundamental threat to Mennonite beliefs. Pietism is a religious movement that emphasises inner spiritual regeneration and evangelical activities. This evangelism was particularly controversial to Mennonites, whose beliefs promoted separation from the secular world. Their history of martyrdom had given particular emphasis to this belief, for Mennonites had learned to keep their heads down if they wanted to survive. Pietism, in contrast, demanded engagement with the larger world.

Johann Cornies (1789-1848), Ohrloff. From David H. Epp Johann Cornies *(Berdiansk, 1909). Urry,* None but Saints, *page 110.*

Hans Cornies V (1898-1918), the last male descendant of Johann Cornies. He was brutally murdered by bandits. Photo - Lohrenz, 151.

The Frisian newcomers to the Molochna in 1818 were justifiably regarded with suspicion by Flemish Congregationalists as Pietists. They quickly introduced their Pietist innovations to their new home, establishing a chapter of the Russian Bible Society in 1821, and creating the Christian School Association and opening a secondary school in Ohrloff in 1822. In the Molochna of the 1820s these were startling innovations. Johann Cornies, who had supervised the settlement of these Pietist immigrants, was at the heart of their activities, both as a member of the school association and secretary of the Bible Society. Cornies was being swept up in the Pietist movement, and it transformed him profoundly.

Friends.

This judgement is not based solely on Cornies' involvement in a few religious societies. Many of Cornies' closest friends in the 1820s were avowed Pietists. Daniel Schlatter was a Swiss Separatist missionary who came to the Molochna in 1824 and spent much of the next three years there, living for long stretches in Cornies' home. A fast friendship formed between the two men. Schlatter was a Pietist, and the nephew of Anna Schlatter, one of the leading figures of European Pietism.

David Epp, of Heubuden, Prussia, was another friend and frequent correspondent of Cornies. Epp was one of the two most important Pietist Mennonite ministers in Prussia. He and Cornies corresponded for years, and Cornies made a special side-trip to visit Epp in Prussia in 1827.

Jacob Van der Smissen, of Danzig, was the other leading Pietist Mennonite minister in Prussia. A member of a noted Swiss Pietist family, Van der Smissen too corresponded warmly with Cornies, and he too received a special visit from Cornies in 1827.

Finally, Cornies formed one of his strongest and most lasting friendships with Daniel Blueher, a Moscow wool merchant. Cornies visited Blueher in 1824, and in 1834 he sent his son, Johann Jr., to stay with Blueher, writing to his friend that, "counting on your friendship, I will now be so bold as to hesitate no further and to send my son directly to your address and I commend him to your guardianship. This provides great joy to us as parents and it eases our minds completely." Blueher made a return visit to Cornies' home in the Molochna in 1837.

Blueher was the head of the Moscow trading house of the Moravian Brethren, who offered a Pietist version of Christianity that was almost diametrically opposed to that of conservative Flemish Mennonites. As noted above, the Flemish Congregation, to which Cornies formally belonged, represented a conservative Mennonite world view that promoted a quietist theology of strict withdrawal from the secular world. The Moravian Brethren, by comparison, promoted

an outward-looking theology, focused on prosylitization and mission work. In particular, the Moravian Brethren viewed economic engagement with the broader world as a good thing, both because it opened the door to religious engagement, and because it financially supported mission work.

Cornies' Pietist friends offered him access to an entirely new world view. Although Cornies would never show any sign of fully adopting the Moravian Brethrens' missionary goals, their message of engagement with the secular world, and particularly of economic engagement, must have come to him as a breath of fresh air. Beginning in 1827 he would increasingly focus his attention on convincing Mennonites to become involved in the Tsarist economic world. This strongly resembles elements of Moravian Brethren policies.

Hernhut, 1827.

The year 1827 marks a critical watershed in Cornies' life and it demands very close attention. In that year Cornies embarked on a long trip to Saxony. This was a business trip; he went to buy high-quality sheep for his own and community herds. But as always for Cornies, business and religion were inseparable, and he took the opportunity for a side trip to the town of Herrnhut, the world headquarters of the Moravian Brethren.

There is no evidence of exactly what went on in Herrnhut, except that Cornies found the town and its people extraordinarily welcoming. He wrote to David Epp, describing it as "quiet, orderly Herrnhut, whose inhabitants have given me, and still give me, much pleasure and true inner happiness." It was on the way home from Herrnhut that Cornies stopped in Danzig and Heubuden to visit the Pietist ministers David Epp and Jacob Van der Smissen. Still in 1827, when Cornies arrived back home from Saxony, he experienced a further life-altering event: he fell very seriously ill. For four long months he was bedridden, and the illness was probably life-threatening. For Cornies the illness, close on the heels of his visit to the Pietist heartland of Saxony, marked the climax of a period of religious and personal exploration.

In a handful of letters following the illness, Cornies described his own sense of this transforming experience. In a particularly revealing letter to Daniel Schlatter he wrote: "I have often read that God's ways are marvellous but now, in part, I have experienced and understood them in practice, and, from time to time, I have been humbled by His loving hand and I understand that it is good for me because it serves to enable me to learn to know myself better. By these means, I acquire the perception to be able to think better of others than of myself. I have learned to perceive that for the Christian, simple recognition of the letter of God's word is not sufficient, but that one must experience it. The letter kills and the spirit alone gives life. I am happy to be alive and that God so obviously made me recognise many things that I did not know before."

Scholastic Conservatives.

Cornies' emphasis on experience demands close attention. Here is an explicit rejection of the scholastic conservatism of Flemish Mennonite beliefs and an acceptance of the experiential Christianity that is so characteristic of Pietists. Pietism placed great emphasis on the experience of conversion through a "New Birth." In particular, Philipp Jakob Spener's successor, August Hermann Francke, emphasised the centrality of a "living experience" of faith, first through the conversion experience, and then through "ongoing actions presumed to further God's plan for the world."

Farm of Johann Cornies in Ohrloff. Photo - P. M. Friesen, 850.

Old Mennonite estate home - Juschanlee, Molotschna. Photo - P. M. Friesen, 840.

Writing in 1828 to a Mennonite friend in Prussia, Cornies reiterated this emphasis on action as a demonstration of the love of God, saying: "To love meaningfully is to do so with deeds and not simply with words." Nor did Cornies follow conservative Flemish Mennonite fashion by limiting the scope of this call to action to his own Mennonite community: "We would be in a terrible position, if we could only love those who were around us. Thank God that he has not limited our feelings of love to a tight circle but that they encompass the whole human race, that we may love everyone and be active on their behalf. The more we feel this impulse to love, the more we learn to comprehend that the whole world with all its millions of human inhabitants is bound together and the more we learn to comprehend this, the more energetically we become involved and productive for everyone."

Conclusion.

The essential religious attitudes of Pietism that emerged in Cornies in 1820s were a permanent part of his world view, as an 1834 letter to his son reveals. Johann Jr. was setting out for Moscow to live in the home of Blueher and be educated in the big city. Cornies gave his son a letter of fatherly advice that began with this injunction: "Conduct your pious devotions quietly and do not neglect to visit churches. Devotion is a spiritual state of mind and can only be practised at particular times, namely, when we are disposed to it. For example, this feeling is awakened by contemplation of a religious truth or by honouring God. Therefore you must never be indifferent to the feelings which affect you."

The well-documented creation of the Forestry Society in 1830 and the Agricultural Society in 1836, as well as Cornies' efforts to reform the economic and social practices of the neighbouring Nogai Tatars, must all be considered in the light of this religious awakening. Pietism had opened the way for him psychologically to leave behind the narrow confines of conservative 18th century Prussian Mennonitism and seek a new Mennonite world view that fully engaged 19th century Russian realities.

Cornies' confrontational relationship to conservative Mennonites within his Molochna community takes on new dimensions in light of his Pietism. The predominating interpretation of Cornies views him solely as an economic moderniser, and in turn views economic modernisation as implicitly secular. In this equation, the religious conservatives' opposition to Cornies is equated to opposition to economic modernisation: conservatives are "backward" and secular figures are "progressive."

This interpretation has always rested uneasily with the economically progressive attitude of some religiously conservative Mennonites. A prime example is the Kleine Gemeinde, a religiously conservative but economically progressive group. Cornies himself acknowledged their progressive and productive economic efforts, and yet he was often at loggerheads with them. This conflict only makes sense if it is understood in religious terms.

Kleine Gemeinde members - and also members of Jacob Warkentin's Large Flemish Congregation - correctly understood that Cornies' religious beliefs conflicted sharply with their own. This religious opposition sometimes manifested itself as opposition to Cornies' economic program, but not always. Members of the Kleine Gemeinde were willing to take part in his economic modernisation schemes as long as those schemes did not infringe upon their religious beliefs. Conservatism was not anti-modernism: it was anti-Pietism. And Cornies was not a seculiser: he was a Pietist.

The Chronicles of Ohm Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort

The Chronicles of Prediger Heinrich Neufeld (1791-1865), Rosenort:
A Report Regarding the Dismissal of Ältester Jakob Warkentin, Altona, Molotschna.

Introduction.

Through the journals of Heinrich Neufeld several figures make appearances on the stage of history in the events leading up to the dismissal of Jakob Warkentin in 1842 and the exile of Heinrich Wiens in 1847. These introductory comments will provide some historical background.

Heinrich Neufeld 1791-1865.

Chronicler Heinrich Neufeld (1791-1865) was the son of Hermann Neufeld (1760-1835) of Münsterburg, who served as village Schulze - 1810/16. In 1814 Heinrich married Regina von Riesen (1795-1852), sister to Kleine Gemeinde Ältester Abraham Friesen (1782-1849) of Ohrloff and Prediger Klaas Friesen (1783-1870) and brother-in-law to Johann Friesen (1763-1830), the latter a senior Grosze Gemeinde Prediger, both of Rosenort (*Dynasties*,529-683). The Heinrich Neufeld family also moved to Rosenort purchasing Wirtschaft 17 (1835 census). They owned a lumber yard managed by son Abraham.

On April 14, 1838, Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Neufeld left for Petershagen, Prussia, for a journey of ministry and to visit brother Peter v. Riesen, well-known co-publisher of Menno Simons' "Fundamentbuch" in 1833. Heinrich and Regina arrived in Prussia on May 14, 1838 where daughter Susanna was born. Two letters of 1842 and 1843 by Abraham Friesen to sister Regina, provide insight into the relationship between the siblings and their beliefs (*Golden Years*, 283-6). Heinrich Neufeld married for the second time to the widow Peter Harms from Blumstein. He married for the third time to the widow Goertzen from Fischau.

On May 30. 1830, Heinrich Neufeld was elected as minister of the "Reine" Flemish Gemeinde in the worship house at Lichtenau. He acted as Vice-Ältester in 1842, serving as intermediary with the feared Johann Cornies. Sons Abraham, Peter and Johann, and daughter Margaretha and son-in-law Prediger Abram Wiens, immigrated to America in the 1870s settling in Inman, Kansas. Adolf Neufeld, great-grandson of Peter served as mayor of Inman during the 1980s and also published a local Inman history book.

Johann Neufeld 1801-55.

Another important personage in the chronicles of Heinrich Neufeld is younger brother, Johann (1801-55). In 1832 Johann Neufeld started a beer brewery and vinegar factory in Alt-Halbstadt (Irvin G. Neufeld, "Family Records, Fresno, Ca., 1991). Johann purchased Wirtschaft 1 in Halbstadt (1835 census). In contrast to Heinrich, Johann was originally on the side of Cornies and his proto-elite band of supporters. Johann, it appears, was appointed as Beisitzer (assistant District Mayor) by one of Cornies' political manipulations.

Johann's son Hermann Neufeld (1823-89) married Elisabeth Bolt. He took over the brewery and vinegar factory in Alt-Halbstadt and increased its capacity. Hermann's daughter Katharina (1847-1937) married Hermann Enns (1847-97). She received a 5000 ruble inheritance and purchased a double Wirtschaft in Schönau. Later they added a tile and brick factory. Hermann's son Heinrich (b. 1857) was killed by bandits (Korn. P. Neufeld, "Register Heft....," 80 pp., courtesy Eric Neufeld, Swan River, Man.,).

Gerhard Neufeld 1795-1869.

Gerhard Neufeld (1795-1869) was another brother in the important Münsterberg Neufeld clan. In 1825 Gerhard and wife Katharina Thiessen purchased a Feuerstelle in Lindenau for 820 ruble (1835 census). In 1845 the Gerhard Neufeld family was honoured by a visit from the Russian Czar. Kornelius P. Neufeld writes: "On August 20, 1845 His Imperial Highness Konstantin Nikolajewitch visited in Lindenau and was at my grandparents Gerhard Neufeld's place for dinner. My grandmother received two ear rings as a present," (see K. P. Neufeld; cf. Woltner, 100).

In 1853 Gerhard's son Hermann (1829-1909) and family moved to Blumenort and paid 7600 ruble for their Wirtschaft. On February 7, 1872, Hermann Neufeld bought a Wirtschaft in Ohrloff for 6320 ruble. Hermann's son Wilhelm and wife Katharina Warkentin, were the parents of Herman Neufeld (1893-1982) who came to Canada in 1930.

Heinrich Wiens 1800-72.

Heinrich Wiens (1800-72), Gnadenheim, was the son of Jakob Wiens (1762-1864), a pioneer on Wirtschaft 7 in Schönau in 1804 (B. Baergen, 251 Simcoe St., Wpg. and Men. Genealogy Inc., Wpg., Man.). He was elected as a minister in 1825 and became Ältester of the Lichtenau "Rein" Flemish Gemeinde in 1842. Wiens was expelled from Russia at the orders of Johann Cornies in 1847. Heinrich died in Rosenort in 1872. In 1904 Heinrich Wiens' farewell address and letters were published by Old Colony printer, Abram Wolfe (1876-1945), Gnadenthal, P.O. Plum Coulee, Manitoba (see *Pres.*, No. 17, pages 48-52). Professor Cornelius Krahn has written that "....Wiens became the martyr hero for the conservative Mennonites, who published his account in Manitoba, whence it was taken to Mexico and there is cherished as an item of classic martyr literature....Wiens later returned to Russia where he lived as a private citizen preaching only on special occasions such as funerals," (ME 4, 949).

In 1911 Heinrich H. Wiens of Inman mentioned that Ältester Heinrich Wiens was his father's uncle (*Rundschau*, June 11, 1911). Heinrich Wiens had sons Gerhard (1829-1904) and Jakob (b. 1824), and daughter Katharina (b.1825), married to Claas Enns, Friedensdorf. Son Gerhard Wiens was born in Margenau. He married Eva Pankratz and at least one of their children was born in Paulsheim. Their son Heinrich G. Wiens (1860-1945) moved to Karpovka, Memrik Colony. They came to Manitoba in 1925 settling in Blumenort, near Gretna.

Johann Regier 1802-42.

Oberschulze (Vorsteher) Johann Regier was the son of Catharina Epp (b. 1764) and Johann "Hans" Regier (b. 1759) who settled in Kronsgarten near Ekaterinoslav shortly after 1800. Catharina was the daughter of Peter Epp (1725-89), renown Ältester of the Danziger Old Flemish Gemeinde who spearheaded the immigration to Russia in the 1780s. Another daughter Aganetha Regier (1793-1863) married Johann Klassen (1785-1841), Tiegerweide (originally Tiege), who served as Oberschulze of the Molotschna Colony from 1827-33. Aganetha and Johann Klassen had a daughter Aganetha married to David A. Friesen (1807-93), Halbstadt, Oberschulze of the Molotschna from 1848-65. Son Abraham Klassen (1828-1906) was a Kleine Gemeinde minister and eventually settled in Alexanderfeld, Ks. His descendants include Matt Groening, founder of the TV show "The Simpsons". Catharina Epp and Johann Regier had another daughter Katharina married to Martin J. Barkman (1796-1872), Rückenau. Their son Jakob (1824-75) was a Kleine Gemeinde minister who drowned in the Red River in 1875.

Johann Regier (1802-42) lived in Schönsee. He served as Oberschulze or district mayor of the Molotschna from 1833-41 succeeding his brother-in-law Klassen. Dr. James Urry has written: "...Johann Regier....even according to his opponents, was a competent administrator. Assisted by the district secretary appointed by the government, Regier was a keen supporter of the Agricultural Union as Cornies expanded its activities. But Regier had a dreadful weakness: he drank to excess. As his drinking problems increased he was called before his congregation and forced to repent his ways. Repentance, however, did not result in increased sobriety, and Warkentin, obviously faced with a dilemma if Regier was banned by his congregation yet remained district mayor, appealed to the other elders to assist him in a complaint to the Guardian's Committee which might result in Regier's removal. The other [pietistic] elders, no doubt suspicious of Warkentin's motives, refused to support such a move. They pointed out that the affairs of the District Office were all in order and that Regier's drinking did not interfere with his fulfilling the duties of office," (Urry, 127-128).

In spite of strong opposition Regier was elected for a third term in 1838. For the next term starting in 1842, Jakob Warkentin put up his own candidate for Oberschulze, namely, Peter Toews, of Tiege. In spite of his successful election Johann Regier continued to carry out the duties of Oberschulze even though his term had expired. Another election was ordered but Regier died before it was completed with the result that Peter Toews was elected with 800 votes (see *Golden Years*, 285).

Historian Henry Schapansky has speculated whether Johann Regier may also have been a pietist which would help explain why Cornies defended him so loyally: "His daughter and the Defehr relatives were among the first Brüdergemeinders."

The Dismissal of Ältester Jakob Warkentin, 1842

"Eine Geschichte die Absetzung des Aeltesten Jakob Warkentin, Altona, die Erhebung des weltlichen Gebiets=Vorstandes über die Diener und Lehrer der Gemeinde Gottes u. Christi Jesu, ähnlich wie die Päpste, die Könige u. Kaiser vor den Reformation" ("An account dealing with the dismissal of Ältester Jacob Warkentin, Altona, from his office and the self-elevation of the worldly Colony Government over the servants and teachers of the church of God and Christ Jesus, even as done by the popes, the kings and emperors before the Reformation"), Aufgezeichnet von Prediger Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort ("Recorded by Minister Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort").

Introduction.

During the year 1842, at the end of the month of April, Sr. Excellence v. Hahn, Privy Councillor and acting Head-Curator of the Guardianship Committee ("Fürsorge Komittee"), arrived here in Prischip at the Colonial Inspector, at which time the chairman of the Agricultural Society (Landwirthschaflichen Verein), Johann Cornies, also went there, or possibly may have also have been ordered to be present.

After the consultations with both of them, Cornies returned home. The Privy Councillor travelled to the Mariupol Colonies in order to drive through the villages there. Upon his return to our colonies he arrived in Rudnerweide on the 16th day of May and also stayed there overnight. On the 16th of May – namely, Sunday – he attended the church there. In the afternoon he departed from there and drove through a number of villages and for night he went to Johann Cornies' estate in Juschanlee.

Halbstadt, May 16, 1842.

On the 18th of May he drove from there via Rosenort to Altona to Ältester Jacob Warkentin and said to him whether he might kindly to come to Halbstadt the following day, the place to which the other Ältester had been summoned as well: However he should not come there too late, for he first wanted to speak with him alone before the other Ältester came, which request Ohm Warkentin complied with in the truly positive expectation that Hahn would wish to discuss certain matters with him also, seeing that Hahn had demonstrated himself to be so friendly and favourably disposed towards him in the Cömmität ("Guardianship Council").

But what happened? When Ohm Warkentin appeared before him, Sr. Excellence asked him: what complaints he had against the Colony Council (Gebietsamt) and the Agricultural Society? And whereupon Warkentin gave him the answer that although he did not want to indict anyone, that nonetheless he wished that Gebietsamt (Colony Administration) and the Society (Verein) might deal less harshly and dictatorially, which was not in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel and fundamentals of our faith, and also added thereto the words from Matt. 18; wherein the punishment between brother and brother[1] was dealt with. Whereupon Sr. His Excellence, the Privy Councillor, said to Ohm Warkentin with harsh words, that he was now dismissed from his office as Ältester and added thereto that he should keep silent and no longer participate in any more matters.

This happened at my brother Johann Neufeld's, Halbstadt, for here the Sr. Excellence had his quarters. The same, upon the recommendation of Cornies, had affirmed him as assistant chairman of the Gebietsamt without any majority vote of the Gemeinde to elect him into the office which normally sought to hold elections to fill such official positions.

After His Excellence had dismissed Ohm Warkentin from his Ältester position, he went to Gebietsamt offices, whereto the other Ältester had also been summoned. Who - as Ohm Lange, Ältester from Gnadenfeld said - learned with amazement, what they heard said by the Privy Councillor that he had removed Warkentin from his Ältester office. Nevertheless it was not completely a surprise for Ältester Bernhard Fast, as to what was to take place as he had already previously told the other Ältester that it appeared to him that today they would come to see His Excellency from another side, without him having first seen nor talked to them; wherefrom it can be concluded that the entire affair was not completely unbeknown to him.

Hermann Neufeld (1829-1909) and wife, Margaretha, nee Baerg (1829-1910). Herman was the son of Gerhard Neufeld (1795-1869), who had hosted Imperial Czar Nicholas I at his home in Lindenau in 1845. Photo courtesy of great-grandson, John Neufeld, former president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Firstly, Sr. Excellence was going to lay the matter upon the other Ältester that other Ältester be elected in the place of Ohm Warkentin. But since Ältester Lange from Gnadenfeld approached Sr. Excellence with the request to spare them from this, he said; He had answered that he could also do it in another way, although it caused him more writing. Consequently he delegated the matter to the Gebietsamt and the chairman of the Society, Johann Cornies, to see to it that Ältester would be elected in the Gemeinde to replace the dismissed Ältester Warkentin, who then accepted this responsibility.

Letter, May 1842.

To this end the Colony Administration sent a letter to David Huebert, teacher in Lindenau, and to the Chairman of the Society, Johann Cornies, which I have at hand, and which states as follows [2]:

From the Chairman, May, 1842 No. 57. Ohrloff. To the Church Lehrer, the Honourable Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort.

I have been commissioned by Sr. Excellence, the acting Head-Curator of the Colonists in South Russia, to notify you briefly regarding the decisions which have been made pertaining to your Gemeinde whose Ältester has been removed: Are they planning to divide into two or three Gemeinden and with a particular church Ältester elected for each? Or would they have the intention of distributing [their members] among the other Ältester. The Gemeinde is free to choose one of the two options. Should they, however, wish to come to other conclusions, they must first apply together with a detailed presentation to the Guardianship Committee [Fürsorge Kommität] over the foreign settlers in Russia. You will, therefore notify me before Saturday, the 30th of this month, at the latest, regarding your applicable resolution in this regard, so that I may discharge my responsibility to Sr. Excellence in reporting to him. "Joh. Cornies".

Heinrich Neufeld responds.

On the 24th of May, I had to present the Articles of Faith in the Lichtenauer house of prayer where the youth were presented for the last time. On the 25th of May we teachers (Lehrer) were all gathered together in the house of prayer in Margenau in order to discuss the election of new Ältester. On the 26th of May Ohm Heinrich Wiens from Gnadenheim, had the youth recite the catechism for him in the house of prayer held in Lichtenau. On the 27th of May a brotherhood meeting was held to discuss the election of two Ältester, at which time I conducted a meditation beforehand. On the 30th of May I brought a written report to Chairman Cornies, Ohrloff, which stated as follows:

To the Corresponding Member of the Learned Committee of the Ministry of State Domains, Joh. Cornies, Ohrloff:

I discharge my commission in the name of the Gemeinde and declare with this that the Gemeinde has concluded the decision to have two Ältester elected now and to allow them to be ordained. While this, however, is a work, which according to the teachings of [3] the apostles, must be carried through with fasting and prayer, therefore, it is our petition that you might want to allow us a period of time in order that the Gemeinde could prepare itself through prayer and supplication to God, so that God might wish to mark men for her who would lead and direct the Gemeinde according the will and pleasure of God. With undoubting confidence that we shall see our petition granted; subscribed hereto by your humble servant of the Gospel of the Lord, "Heinrich Neufeld," May 30, Rosenort.

On Sunday afternoon, the 31st of May, we Lehrer ("teachers of the Word or Prediger") from the Lichtenau and Petershagen Gemeinde, as was also the teacher Abr. Peters from Ladekopp, were all gathered together at Petershagen, in order to discuss what kind of an Ältester we might want to invite for ourselves, to serve us with the election of a new Ältester.

On Wednesday, the 3rd of June, we Lehrer were assembled in the house of prayer in Margenau where it was discussed to invite the two Ältester, Peter Schmidt, Waldheim, and Fr. Lange, Gnadenfeld. After conclusion of the aforesaid meeting, I and the other Lehrer, namely, Joh. Wiens, Rosenort; Heinrich Toews, Pordenau; and also Aron Penner from the same village, drove to the Lehrer Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim. In the afternoon all of us together went to Ältester Peter Schmidt, Waldheim, who, however, was not at home. We then immediately drove from there to Gnadenfeld to the Ältester Fr. Lange, whom we found at home, but who, however, did not wish to come to a decision in certain respects in our circumstances to be helpful to us, so that we again had to drive back without having found counsel and help.

Letter, June 3, 1842.

Upon my return home, I again had a letter from the chairman of the Verein Johann Cornies, Ohrloff, the content of which stated as follows:

From the member etc. etc. No. 68 June 3, 1842, Col. Ohrloff.

To the Church teacher [minister] the Honourable Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort:

Further to your report of May 30th I have completed my duty underdate the 2nd of this month. Sr. Excellence, the acting Head-Curator informs that the Gemeinde without an Ältester has reached the decision to divide into two churches and that within one month, and to have elected and ordained a church Ältester for each [4], and then to have both of these Gemeinden designated with the names Lichtenau and Margenau. The establishment of a third Gemeinde shall be made later but at the latest no later than January 1, 1843, and which is intended to be designated with the name Pordenau.

Hermann Neufeld. Presumably Hermann Jr., grandson of Hermann Sr. (1823-90) who took over the Halbstadt brewery from founder Johann Neufeld. Photo - Quiring, In the Fullness of Time, *page 73.*

As I am writing this to you I am asking you, after the two churches -Lichtenauer and Margenauer - have been properly organized with Ältester ordained, to provide me with further reports, as to how many Colonial villages - and, indeed, with their names - which will belong to each Gemeinde, and how many members will belong to each. Likewise let me know how many Colonial villages are tentatively designated to be included in the Pordenauer Gemeinde.

"Johann Cornies"

Ältester Election, June 18, 1842.

On June 12th I and Joh. Wiens drove to Gnadenheim to Ohm Heinrich Wiens, in order to discuss the election of an Ältester. On June 14 all of us Lehrer ("teachers of the Word") were together in the house of prayer in Margenau where it was discussed to have an Ältester election on the 18th of June which then also took place and Ohm Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim, was elected by a majority vote by our previously entire Gemeinde with 228 votes. On July 5th he was ordained into his office by the Ältester Peter Schmidt, Waldheim.

Letters, July 9 and 16.

On July 9th I again received another letter from the Chairman Joh. Cornies in which it was asked whether the election had been completed and in accordance with the report of May 30th, which is next following:

From the Corresponding Member, etc., etc. July 9, 1842. No. 67. Col. Ohrloff.

To the Honourable Church Teacher [Prediger] Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort. Following your report of May 30 of this year, I reported to Sr. Excellence etc., etc., the 2nd day of June, that within one month the Gemeinde which was now without an Ältester, would according to the said conclusions for the Lichtenauer and for the Margenauer Gemeinden, have elected and ordained Ältester, particularly for each Gemeinde, and that the arrangements for the establishment in Pordenau of the third Gemeinde would follow at the latest by January 1, 1843. Further to which I hereby bid that you shortly report to me in this regard, and that not later than the 13th of the month, whether the Gemeinden Lichtenauer and Margenauer were duly organized with an Ältester particularly elected and ordained for each in accordance with your report and how many Colonial villages and members have joined each so that I do not fall short regarding my responsibility to provide a thorough report to Sr. Excellence. "Joh. Cornies".

(Completely according to the ritual of the Pope).

To Corresponding Member, Johann Cornies, Ohrloff

From Church teacher Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort.

In response to your letter of July 9 whether the two newly elected Ältester had been elected, I inform you that although the report submitted by me to you of June 30 stated that the Gemeinde had reached the conclusion to elect and ordain three Ältester and to have the same ordained, that, nonetheless, only one has been elected and ordained up until now, namely: Ohm Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim, for whom the ordination took place on the past Sunday, July 5th by the Ältester Peter Schmidt, Waldheim. How many Colonial villages and how many members are to be counted to his Gemeinde has not yet been recorded.

Regarding the election of a second Ältester for the Lichtenauer Gemeinde, I cannot as yet say anything definite; rather we will first have to conduct a general conference. But since: firstly, the Ältester Heinrich Wiens is sickly exactly at the present time; and secondly, since everyone has their work with the harvest, I do not know how soon any of this can be completed.

Should you have further occasion to write again regarding matters with the Gemeinde, it would now be my wish and request that you would no longer write to me but would direct any further correspondence to the newly elected Ältester Heinrich Wiens in Gnadenheim.

Heinrich Neufeld, Church teacher of the Gemeinde in Lichtenau Rosenort, the 11th of July, 1842.

(Completely according to the ritual of the Pope).

Heinrich Neufeld.

On July 14th Abr. Friesen, Blumstein [Ältester of the Kleine Gemeinde and brother-in-law to Lehrer Neufeld], came to us and warned me that if we did not obey what Cornies and the Colony Administration [Gebiets-amt] had prescribed, namely, to elect other Ältester, then Ohm Jacob Warkentin would be expelled out the country, and Thun, Fürstenwerder, would be handed over to the military for service as a recruit.

(Just the way it was done to the followers of Christ during the time of the martyrs).

In the evening of that same day, I went to Peter Toews, Ohrloff, and brought him the news and that he should inform Ohm Warkentin of this.

On July 15, brother Johann Neufeld,

Advertisement from 1904

Advertisement for the Hermann Neufeld beer and vinegar factory in Neu-Halbstadt. Photo - Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *239.*

Halbstadt, came to us and asked what I had been thinking to send such a letter off to Cornies which would not only bring us but also Thun into great misfortune. And certainly not this letter only, but also when we would not carry out what we had been commanded. Yet I could not in the least way recollect anything which I had written that could have been so damaging. Cornies had ordered us that within the space of one month we should have elected two Ältester. And since he now demanded same of me - since the end of the month and somewhat more time had already elapsed - I sent him the answer of July 11, which can be read above.

On the evening of the same day, I however, personally drove there to Cornies, who also did not criticize my letter. He, however, only said that he greatly doubted whether Warkentin would be able to remain free and Thun, Fürstenwerder, would make himself highly unfortunate.

On August 13th all the Lehrer held a brotherhood meeting in the house of prayer in Margenau where it was discussed that Peter Toews, Tiege, and Thun Fürstenwerder, should go to the [Guardianship Council] Committee, which, however, did not take place. At a brotherhood meeting held on the 13th, I was given authority - in cases where members of the Gemeinde had conducted themselves somewhat punishably - to separate and to again accept the same; thereby functioning as a Ältester.

"Just the way it was done to the followers of Christ during the time of the martyrs."

On August 14th I and Peter Toews, Tiege and Thun, Fürstenwerder, as well as also the newly elected Ältester Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenfeld, drove to both of the two Ältester Fr. Lange, Gnadenfeld, and Benj. Ratzlaff, Rudnerweide, as we wished to discuss certain current issues with them. These, however, could in no way decide to be helpful to us in any respect.

(The fear of the Neronian government of Cornies was too great).

On August 17, I and the two teachers, David Hübert and Wilhelm Berg, Lindenau, drove to Halbstadt to the teacher Ab. Fröse, Halbstadt, and from there we went to the Ältester Bern. Fast in order to also talk with him, among other things, about whether he considered it to be appropriate to send a deputation to the Committee. Fast, however, gave us little advice in this regard, and so that we saw ourselves as helpless in every respect.

On August 31 a number of the Lehrer, as well as Peter Toews from Tiege, were together at our place and where the decision was reached to write the Minister for Spiritual Concerns, for which purpose we were again gathered together on September 7th in the house of prayer in Margenau to evaluate our writing which was to be sent away, but which, however, was not sent.

On the 9th day we again were gathered in the house of prayer in Margenau, were it was discussed that a letter to Sr. Excellence, Privy Councillor von Hahn was to be composed [7] and which was to be personally delivered to him seeing that he had already arrived at the [Colonial] Inspector in Prischip. But this also remained undone.

Gebietsamt, Sept. 10.

Then on September 10th I received again a writing from the Gebietsamt, which stated as follows:

To the church teacher Heinrich Neufeld in Rosenort:

According to the command of Sr. Excellence HE, Acting Head Guardian, you are herewith ordered forthwith upon receiving this to appear at the Gebietsamt in Halbstadt on 10 Sept. 1842. Gebiets Vorsteher Toews

Upon receiving this note, I left home at once and arrived at the home of my brother Johann Neufeld in Halbstadt towards evening at about 4:30 o'clock and where I stayed overnight. Cornies also came here during the evening and also remained for the night. The next day, Sept. 11, according to the command of Privy Councillor Hahn, I was ordered to the Gebietsamt, as it was called, to appear, and personally had to appear before him as well as in the presence of Cornies. Upon entering the judgment hall, the Honourable Privy Councillor appeared before me in a friendly way and said: he had heard or that someone had told him that I was a different man, and that I should tell him what the reason was that that which had been commanded and which had been accepted to be obeyed had not been carried out. Firstly, it had been represented that the newly elected one was sick, and that the harvest had not yet been completed. But now the harvest was completed, and so, what was holding things up that another Ältester had not yet been elected.

I now told him that the Gemeinde had not yet been able to make a decision regarding this, seeing that no particulars of the misdeeds of Ältester Warkentin had been made known which had necessitated his dismissal from his office.

To this he answered me and said that the government did not need to state anything to explain and whereupon he pressed upon me to give him names - as I would know who had been the instigators to put a stop to this work. But when I again took my stand on the Gemeinde, he was also satisfied with that, and asked me whether I would like to know why Warkentin had been dismissed from his office. When I answered in the affirmative, he enumerated three items which made him unworthy of his office.

One of these I would like to mention here which Sr. Excellence stated which had brought about Ohm Warkentin's dismissal. It had come to pass because a certain Klaassen from Münsterberg, a Schulze (village major) committed an offence against Joh. Cornies, who then accused him before the Committee without letting the ministerial know. Regarding which an accusation had come back from the Committee, that for this written exchange Klaassen should perform five days of punishment labour. When this was applied upon him, he had gone to Ohm Warkentin who took on the matter and according to his view found that Klaassen was innocent therein. Whereupon he directed himself to the Gebietsamt and asked that the written accusation against Klaassen be remanded, and also asked for a two months postponement of the punishment, which postponement was not granted on the part of the Gebietsamt, so that Klaassen instead of five days of penalty work now had to perform seven. When Ohm Warkentin now saw that matters with this punishment were serious, he felt responsible for the two extra days that Klaassen had been punished, which had been added because of the delay. [8]

For this reason he travelled that same day when Klaassen was commanded to do his penal

Postcard depicting the Hermann Neufeld beer and vinegar factory in Neu-Halbstadt. Photo - Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *239.*

work, to the Gemeinde sheep ranch ("Schäferei") to perform this two day penal work for Klaassen. The manager of the sheep ranch, however, had not accepted this work.

But already when I began my discussion with the Privy Councillor, the members of the Verein also entered the judgment hall: Gerhard Enns, Altona; Jacob Martens, Tiegenhagen; as well as the [members of the] Gebietsamt and also the secretary of the Gebietsamt Reimer, who seated himself on the table behind me with paper and pen and ink, as it seemed to me, to record that which I and Sr. Excellence spoke with each other. When the same had talked enough with me, the newly elected Ältester Hein. Wiens, who also had been ordered to be present, also had to appear before him. After the same had entered, he was interrogated regarding many things to which he provided an answer for everything. The Verein was transposed into scorn regarding him, so that many unsavoury matters about him were thrust forth before Sr. Excellence, whereby the same was enraged against him in that Cornies said to the Privy Councillor: that this Gemeinde stood in the insane thinking as if the authorities had no power or means of disposing a bishop.

(Which according to the Word of God is actually also true)

Whereupon, however, Sr. Excellence answered, "Now if that is what they believe, I will demonstrate this in myself."

In view of the fact that there were more Lehrer gathered together in Halbstadt at the home of the Lehrer Abr. Fröse, the same also had to come and hear what was commanded to us, namely, that within a time of three weeks we would have elected a new Ältester.

Letter, Sept. 14, 1842.

Regarding which I also received a letter from Cornies on September 14th, which stated as follows:

From Corresponding Member etc. etc. Sept. 14, 1842, No 78 Ohrloff.
To the Honourable Church Lehrer Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort.

Sr. Excellence HE, Acting Head Curator of the Colonists of South Russia has again commissioned and commanded me to inform the Lehrer and Gemeinde members of the former Warkentinsche Gemeinde that, if - in accordance with the promise - they would not have elected an Ältester for the Lichtenauer Gemeinde within three weeks, i.e. from the 11th day of the current month of September up to the 1st of October of this year, Warkentin as the main instigator of unrest would be expelled from the colonies without any further discussion and for which purpose the [Colonial] Inspector has been given all essential orders. And that in the future the teachers of this Gemeinde will in general - the way it has been done previously - have to refrain from instilling the Gemeinde with the idea that the government has no means of disposing a Ältester, who under the pretence of being holy, arouses resistance to the order and laws of the State and through concocted lies exerts himself to arouse

Hermann Neufeld (1850-1913), grandson of brewery founder Johann Neufeld (1801-55), Neu-Halbstadt. Photo - Quiring, In the Fullness of Time, *67.*

the Gemeinde in hatred against the State, whereof written documents speak, deeds testify and sufficiently confirm to depose him from office and to expel him from the colony as a harmful person. Likewise also the teachers in the future shall not allow themselves to call together in the house of prayer in the colony, two [or more] persons, whose evil intent they know, and under the pretence of a brotherhood meeting [meetings], to foster conspiracies against the regulations and laws. Rather that they conduct the brotherhood in such a manner and that [9] they invite the members in accordance with the confession of the Mennonite faith and following the church usages of the same which are known and which are also customary in the other Mennonite Gemeinden, so that everyone who is a brother in the Gemeinde, receives free access thereto in order to be able to counsel themselves regarding religious and ecclesiastical issues and to have the privilege of openly discussing the same, and generally certainly not to conduct gatherings in the house of worship in secret with particularly designated persons to discuss matters pertaining to the governmental regulations and to unite themselves in opposition thereto as it occurred in the Margenau church.

"[The Flemish Gemeinde was ordered] "....to refrain from [promoting] the idea that the government has no means of disposing a Ältester,..."

Now that I have hereby informed you of the commission and orders of Sr. Excellence which he has shared with me, I await from you a written report, whether the obedience has fully permeated your Gemeinde and that the Lehrer have honoured their promise which they have made in the official meeting in the judgment hall in the Gebiets-amt in Halbstadt on the 11th of this month to the person of the acting HE Head Curator and in the presence of the Verein and the Gebietsamt members and whether you are determined to bring this to a swift conclusion. And I expect to receive such a report from you within the expiration of a week in order that I may provide a report to Sr. Excellence. "Johann Cornies"

(Thus a completely papist attitude of a totally worldly-minded man raising himself above the concerns of the church, according to 2 Thess. 2:3-12).

"Thus a completely papist attitude of a totally worldly-minded man....2 Thess. 2:3-12."

Ältester Election, Sept. 22.

On the 15th of September a brotherhood meeting was held in the house of prayer in Lichtenau. A decision was made to have an Ältester election on the forthcoming 22nd which also followed on the said day through a majority vote. Lehrer Dirk Warkentin from Petershagen, was elected with 51 votes. The next highest with 42 votes was my insignificant self [H. Neufeld], Johann Wiens, Rosenort, with 30 votes, Abr. Fröse, Halbstadt, received 9 and Wilhelm Berg, Lichtenau, 3 votes.

On September 17th a brotherhood meeting was held in the house of prayer in Pordenau and concluded to have an Ältester election on the 29th of September which was also carried through on said day. And the majority of votes fell on Lehrer Heinrich Toews from there.

On September 18th I sent the chairman Cornies a report of the results of both the Ältester elections as follows:

To the Corresponding etc. etc. Johann Cornies, Ohrloff:

The same is herewith notified that at the brotherhood meeting of the 15th of this month, the Gemeinde in Lichtenau has concluded without objection to conduct a Ältester election during the first coming Tuesday, September 22, and the Gemeinde in Pordenau on the 29th of September. This I witness with my signature in the name of the Gemeinde. Heinrich Neufeld, Church-Lehrer of the Gemeinde at Lichtenau.

Thus far the report of the tragic situation of our Molotschna Mennonite Gemeinde which is still extent. The continuation has been lost.

Transcribed by Is. Peters, Henderson, Neb. near Inman, Kansas.

Acknowledgement:

Heinrich Neufeld, "Report Regarding the Deposition of Jakob Warkentin, Altona, Molotschna," as translated by Rev. Ben Hoeppner, Winnipeg, Man., 1992, and Delbert Plett, 2004. Received courtesy of James Urry, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, July 22, 1992. The original is in archives of MLA, Bethel College, North Newton, Ks.

A Further Examination of the Molotschna Conflict

"Eine Nachweisung im betreff der an den Molotschna Süd=Rußland ünter den Mennoniten Brüderschaft stadtgefundenen uneinigkeiten, u., besonders über die statt gefundenen Absetzung des Aeltesten Jakob Warkentin, Altona, u., den Landes Beweisung des Kirchenältesten Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim ("An examination with respect to the disunity which took place within the Mennonite Brotherhood in the Molotschna in South Russia, and especially those dealing with the deposition of Ältester Jacob Warkentin, Altona, and the exile of the Kirchen-Ältester Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim, from Russia.")

Johann Regier, Schönsee.

As these events were actually the results of incorrect occurrences which had taken place already in previous years, it is essential to first take note of the following.

In the years 1833 until 1842 the Molotschna Mennonite brotherhood had a man by the name of Johann Regier (1802-42) as Gebiets-Vorsteher (Chairman) of their Gebietsamt who according to his talents seemed very suitable for said office. Regrettably he later yielded himself to his desires and, in particular, to the excessive use of alcohol and in consequence of which he not only often offended the Gemeinde but also publicly brought himself into disgrace. In spite of this he understood how to ingratiate himself to Johann Cornies, the chairman of the Agricultural Society ("Landwirthschaflichen Verein"). The latter in association with the Gebietsamt demanded of the spiritual Kirchen-Konvent that they be given the freedom to execute corporal punishment of church members as they saw fit. The Kirchen-Ältester Bernhard Fast, Benjamin Ratzlaff and Fr. Lange agreed to this without deliberation and, in fact, gave their written approval thereto, which, however, very much displeased the Gemeinde. The Ältester Jacob Warkentin, however, did not agree to this, as the then developing circumstances already indicated that a damaging misuse of the spiritual church bann might arise therefrom.

Notation: What was really the reason that such was demanded in writing from the Kirchen-Ältester? Since times past the Gebietsamt had always punished those who were disobedient to their Ordnungen and against which no one had thus far objected to with any justification, that is to say, as long as any fundamental principles of the Mennonites were not wilfully rejected according to the Mennonite church regulations. However, in the latter situation, even our own designated guardians of church discipline would be subject thereto. For we confess in our confessions of faith that the disobedient and those who lead a disorderly life shall be punished by the Gemeinde, and such without respect of person".

After the aforesaid demand was agreed to, the punishments in the Gemeinde always became more frequent. That this was not always done in a righteous manner no one would dispute, as one knows that a drunkard is not in a position to evaluate matters correctly which certainly was frequently the case with Regier. But because of the fact that Regier was faithfully submitted to Cornies, he could, in spite of his open drunkenness, remain as Vorsteher in the Gebietsamt.

After he had already served two terms, namely, six years, almost everyone comforted himself thereby that in the near future the Gemeinden would obtain another Vorsteher for the Gebietsamt. But before proceeding to the election, the Head Curator-General Mr. Insow, wrote to all the collective Kirchen-Ältester that they should influence the Gemeinden to again elect the old Gebiets-Ältester. This transposed the Gemeinden into grief but regarding the wish of the Government as a command, they again elected the old members.

Johann Johann Braeul (1854-1916), teacher of the Ohrloff Secondary School from 1875 until 1916. He was the grandson of Jakob Johann Braeul (1803-66), who served as teacher for the village of Rudnerweide from 1824-58. Jakob Braeul was a very gifted teacher in arithmetic, singing and Schönschrieben, and was fluent in Russian. He was also a gifted furniture maker. As recognition his school was unilaterally raised to the status of a "Musterschule" (model school) equal to the Verein-Schule in Ohrloff. From this, it is evident that there were also gifted and genuine teachers among the Mennonites and not only those who tried to use their positions to spread false teachings such as Tobias Voth in Ohrloff, who was a fanatical adherent of Separatist-Pietist religious culture. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood, *726/ J. P. Dyck,* Braeul Genealogy *(Springstein, 1983), 23. Agi, wife of John P. Dyck was the granddaughter of Johann J. Braeul. Cf:* Diese Steine, *319.*

Notation: This Mr. Insow, whose mild and well-meaning views the colonies could thank for their prosperity, and who in the last years because of high age and sickness had travelled only little in the colonies, consequently did not know that the most shameful malice ruled here.

But now the truly difficult time only first began and the Gebiets Vorsteher Regier [1] raged forth in his drunkenness. Many a time he would mistreat the subjects given into his governance who appeared in the Gebietsamt in a rude way, so that certainly every right-thinking man was filled with dread when he had to appear in the Gebietsamt because of business. However, since Regier was a member of Warkentin's Kirchen-Gemeinde, Warkentin did not omit to often talk to him in accordance with his responsibility and to admonish him and to direct him in the right way although without any good results.

Regier resented this and sought sympathy from the other Kirchen-Ältester and falsely accused him. These, however, out of blind submission, and in spite of their knowledge of what kind of life Regier was leading, wrote a letter to Warkentin demanding that he stop this, with the comment that Regier was Vorsteher for all the collective Gemeinden and that therefore the same need not abide only by Warkentin's wishes, but rather only by the wishes of all the Ältester. Through this, naturally, Regier was strengthened in his evil ways. Warkentin as Ältester could not admonish him any more, and the other Ältester would not admonish him in his immoral behaviour and thus the evil greatly increased. Matters, were dealt with by the Gebietsamt which were highly punishable e.g. a man who had been separated from the Gemeinde for unethical living was summoned by the Gebietsamt where he had to subscribe to a protocol which contained false accusations directed against Ältester Jacob Warkentin, and thus, they finally had brought matters to the point where, according to the direction of the Guardianship Committee, Warkentin was made subservient to the oversight of the Ältester; and all of this on account of the purely groundless accusations, because he would not sympathize with the other Ältester with respect to such fanatical malice of the Gebietsamt.

Election, 1842.

Yet, in the midst of the manifold unseemly dealings, the three years came to an end, and the Gemeinde, as prescribed again proceeded to an election, and the majority of the vote fell on Peter Toews, Tiege. But, however, neither the Gebietsamt nor the Agricultural Society wanted him. On one occasion David Braun, at that time Gebiets Beisitzer said "Peter Toews could not become the Gebiets-Vorsteher because he would exact such an accurate financial account from us as we could never provide to him." The accounts of the Gebiet's treasury did not balance and the records (beerschaft) and that of the "Schnurbuches" did not nearly agree, although they were spared from the investigation of the Privy Councillor - for which the rich Wilhelm Martens contrib-

uted the money; according to the confession of his Book-keeper (Kausgeber?).

The first of January 1842 went by when the incumbent Vorsteher was to take over. Regier, however, still remained in office, and it appears as if he would seemingly also remain there. In this regard, however, the Gemeinde became restless since almost everyone had learned to realize that circumstances could not possibly continue any longer - not in this way. Consequently meetings were held among the spiritual ministerials and it seemed as if all the Gemeinden would become united, except that of Ältester Bernhard Fast, of which Kirchen-Gemeinde Cornies also belonged, who continued to exert all efforts to divide the Gemeinden into two factions. He with some other members of Fast's Gemeinde drew up an accusatory writing against the Warkentin's Gemeinde, directed to Ältester Bernhard Fast, signed by Cornies himself and 54 members of the Gemeinde, which can still be displayed.

Mennonite farmers and their Russian servants (the oldest man was still a serf), ca. 1910. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood, *178.*

All of this and many things more which would be too difficult to describe properly prompted our Gemeinde to earnestly entreat the Kirchen-Ältester Warkentin to travel to the Guardianship Counsel in this regard. In particular, the Gemeinde took courage because at that time the staff [Etat] of the Guardianship Council had recently been strengthened by Sr. Excellence HE, the Privy Councillor von Hahn in respect to whom Warkentin had the confidence to be able to discuss the matter and he departed for Odessa on February 2, 1842. [2]

At the same time the Gemeinde did not omit to bring a most humble and fully submissive petition to the Guardianship Committee regarding the acceptance of the newly elected Vorsteher of the Gebietsamt. Sr. Excellence, the Privy Councillor, accepted the presentation of the Ältester Warkentin, but said regarding the Vorsteher of the Gebietsamt that a second election had already been ordered as Peter Toews had been presented as too old and too weakly. At the same time, however, he declared further that the one who would be elected by the Gemeinde would also be the one whom the Committee would affirm regardless, whether it were Peter Toews or someone else.

But before Ältester Warkentin returned from Odessa, however, the Vorsteher of the Gebietsamt [Regier] suddenly died. The command of Guardianship Committees to hold a second election, however, had as yet not been publicized. But, little matter, for when it was learned that the Ältester Warkentin had received a favourable reception with the Guardianship Committee, the election was now pushed to an earlier date and instead of Peter Toews receiving 400 votes as in his first election, he now received 800 votes. It seemed as if our representative members of the Gebietsamt as well as those of the Verein became anxious and now started to make changes.

The at-the-time assistant substitutional Gebiets-Beisitzer Johann Neufeld sent word to the Ältester Warkentin and at the same time begging him to help at once to have the two Gebiets-Beisitzer Abr. Toews and David Braun removed from office, as he had detected such great unrighteousness in the Gebietsamt which could not be allowed to stand. Cornies himself came to the Ältester Warkentin and asked the same that he should help to set everything right and also asked for forgiveness in writing: the members of the Verein on April 27 and the members of the Gebietsamt on May 1. This can be proven by written documents.

Halbstadt, May 19, 1842.

Presently everyone rejoiced, that peace and calm would hereby again be restored and in consequence of which the Ältester Warkentin called a conference and invited all the Ältester and Lehrer for a discussion. Without a doubt a lasting peace would have been established if a little more time had been allowed for that purpose. However, it failed. Sr. Excellence, the Privy Councillor von Hahn arrived and came first of all to the Molotschna Colony of the [German] Colonists at the honourable Inspector [Prischip] and where Cornies also travelled to at the time. From here Sr. Excellence travelled to the Mariupolschen Plan, came back again, and then also visited the Ältester Warkentin in his house and notified the same to come to Halbstadt on the 19th of May for a discussion and for which purpose Warkentin also drove there. But then what happened?

The Ältester Warkentin promptly was dismissed from his office "under four eyes." And whereupon Sr. Excellence on the very same day also present this matter to the other Ältester although with the explanation that he no longer regarded Warkentin as any Ältester. A command of the Sr. Excellence was also circulated through the Schulzenamter (village mayoral offices) wherein the Gemeinde was commanded in the strongest way that in place of the deposed Ältester Warkentin two or three Ältester should be elected in the very near future and failing which harsh threats were made. The Gemeinde herein was not told in the least way why Warkentin was dismissed from his office (This command can still be proven with evidence).

Notation. Sad and without consolation a Kirchengemeinde now stood forsaken, although it counted over 1000 members, and even more so, as this occurred at a time when a youth group of over 164 souls [3] had prepared themselves for the Holy Baptism by the Ältester Warkentin. Who could think anything else but that this pained the Gemeinde unto its soul. And who carried the blame for this? No one else but Cornies with a small number of his followers and the inflammatory writing of the same with another 54 subscribers. At this time an attempt was made on the part of this Gemeinde to seek help from the Chortitzer Kirchen-Konvent (The Mennonite Colonies in Ekaterinoslawschen Government). But Cornies had already strongly forbidden them not to accept outsiders.

But as this Gemeinde could not so easily deal with the pain caused by the dismissal of their Ältester they tarried somewhat in electing new Ältester. That they did not want elect one no one would even have dared themselves to say for such a one would have been dealt with severely. This was clearly to be understood from the commands of Cornies which again hastily issued forth; regarding which, among other things, there was the threat that Warkentin would be completely banished from the colony (This command can still be proven to everyone at anytime). In light of such as well as other threats, the Gemeinde was forced for the time being to elect at least another Ältester. For which purpose then the Lehrer Heinrich Wiens, Gnadenheim, was elected, who also served the then prepared baptismal candidates with the Holy Baptism.

" Sad and without consolation a Kirchengemeinde now stood forsaken, although it counted over 1000 members,...."

Whippings.

With respect to the Gebiets-Ältester, the resident of Halbstadt Johann Neufeld, was installed as the Gebiets-Beisitzer and this without the prescribed election by the Gemeinde, but a new Gebiets-Vorsteher had to be elected. And those landowners (Wirthe) who did not elect the man who was nominated by the Guardianship Committee, but honoured the right of election which had existed since the founding of the Colony - a principle of free elections as they saw fit - and those who had elected Peter Toews, Tiege, a second time with a majority, who were somewhat over 70 in number, were condemned to be punished with many days of hard labour and one of them actually even a

village mayor, was to be punished with 50 lashes, which punishment was carried out under the supervision of Sr. Excellence Hahn when he returned again in fall.

(Completely according to the ritual of the papacy during the time of the martyrs).

At the same time Hahn also ordered the deposed Ältester Warkentin to appear again in the Gebietsamt where he spoke with him manipulatively, in part harshly and in part in a friendly way, demanding that Warkentin sign a written resignation of his office whereby Cornies was present also.

Warkentin explained that he was in no way able to do this, seeing that he had given his covenant before God and the Gemeinde to be faithful in his office for as long as he lived. This is also how the matter remained standing but he would remain as deposed.

"....even a village mayor, was to be punished with 50 lashes,...."

Mennonite Principles.

Notation: Warkentin had to remain as deposed and the twice elected Peter Toews could not become the Gebiets Vorsteher. And why not? It was claimed that he was too old and too feeble; but neither one of which was the case. Regarding Ältester Warkentin it was claimed that he had wanted to destroy the Agricultural Society according to Cornies' allegations. But Warkentin had never even entertained such thoughts, nor could this be proven. It was simply a fabricated untruth. Proof of Warkentin's loyalty is seen in his being among the first at all times to fulfil the regulations regarding plantings [of trees] which the Verein prescribed. Which one can see today.

But something entirely different, however, lay here as the reason. Warkentin wanted to preserve our Mennonite ecclesiastical regulations as they had been hitherto, which, however, Cornies could not endure. Rather he wanted to establish a regime like that of Risico Rehoboam, according to 1 Kings 12:8-11.

That this really was the case was proven by the events which followed when they are carefully analyzed [4].

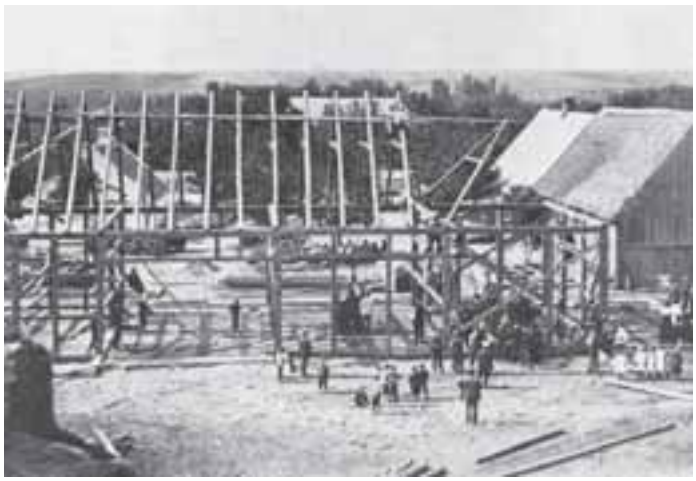
Following this, the newly elected Ältester Heinrich Wiens was also summoned to the Gebietsamt where he was also severely threatened by the Sr. Excellence, the Lord Privy Councillor, if he would not shortly have two more Ältester elected. As a result the Gemeinde was forced to hold elections. The northern part elected Dirk Warkentin in Petershagen and the southern part elected Heinrich Toews in Pordenau. And now the Grosse Gemeinde of the deposed Warkentin had three Ältester instead of one. The objective of this was that the Grosse Gemeinde, which had more members than all the others combined, should thereby become disunited and that the Gebietsamt and the Agricultural Society could more freely implement their Old Testament and Papist Regime.

In which, however, they did not succeed. The three Ältester remained united. But otherwise, following this, all matters in this Gemeinde went better according to the liking of Cornies. Physical punishments were now begun. Whereas formerly punishment consisted of fees and hard labour, they now consisted of corporal lashes with the whip.

Church Discipline, 1846.

In the month of June 1846, it happened that a Mennonite was teased and hurt by a Russian servant whereupon he was smitten by rage and smote the servant with a blow on the shoulder. The servant filed a complaint with Cornies. The Mennonite was punished with 12 lashes of the whip which punishment was implemented at the orders of Cornies by four local landowners upon the request of the village mayor of the Colony of Blumenort.

Three of these were members of the former Warkentin Gemeinde. But as it was contrary to the fundamental principles of our Mennonite faith to punish anyone physically, these three who had acted contrary to their own principle of non-resistance and who gave more obedience to the worldly authorities than their own confession of faith and God's Word according to Acts 5:29, were put before the Gemeinde. And since they did not demonstrate any genuine repentance, they were excommunicated according to the regulations of the Gemeinde. Later, however, when they demonstrated repentance they were again reaccepted into the Gemeinde.



A Mennonite barn raising "Bjarung" in Russia. Quiring, In the Fullness of Time, 88. *Cf:* Preservings, *No. 19, page 24.*

Mennonite Principles.

Notation: The one who is familiar with the fundamental principles of the Mennonites and who is willing and ready to serve God faithfully according to his confession, also realizes that he makes himself punishable against his own confession and his God, when he corporally punishes his fellow man. On the contrary, he leaves such punishment gladly to the government, which does not carry the sword in vain for the protection of the just and punishment of the evil. The question may arise here: If now the Mennonite principles prohibit corporal punishment, what must we then think of the instigators of such punishment who yet all maintain to be Mennonites? Unfortunately this question must be answered with sadness that such already were fallen away or never actually were true Mennonites, and that although they have the Mennonite name but their deeds betray the confession of their mouth. According to the teachings of our Confession of Faith as stated in Article 15 where it is stated word for word as follows: Since so many matters are encompassed in the offices of the worldly authority which stand in conflict with the non-resistant follower of Christ, it follows therefrom that all true disciples of Christ can in no way serve in any governmental office with all that which is thereby encompassed and rather far more would follow the example of Christ and His apostles in accordance with Matt. 10 v. 38 and 39 and chapter 16 v. 24 and 25, and among whose Gemeinden such offices [5] were not served.

If, however, an appointed leader or a Vorsteher of a Mennonite Gemeinde, in accordance with 1 Cor. 12 v. 28, considers himself as a government person and as such adheres to the laws and ordinances of the worldly government which are in conflict with the teachings of Christ, he is no Mennonite, and indeed, no true Christian.

Now, however, when Cornies and the Gebietsamt realized that our Gemeinde had excommunicated the three who had administered the corporal punishment to that Mennonite and had therefore been separated from the Gemeinde, it was alleged that we opposed the government which was actually not the case. For with reason and a good conscience we could maintain that the separation of the aforesaid three members did not occur from the basis that we wished to somewhat set ourselves against the government, or to somewhat hide the offence which the government deemed punishable, such is and remains foreign to us. Rather the Gemeinde is simply concerned to adhere to the church regulations and Confession of Faith which our forefathers have passed down to us and which are founded on God's Word. But to implement corporal punishment against anyone is to deal contrary to our confession and inherited faith and conscience. We also believe that when a government sentences someone to corporal punishment that the government at all times must utilize such persons who are willing to do so and who can do so without violating their faith, their confession and their conscience.

Gebietsamt, July 25, 1846.

When in July of the past year, 1846, the Lord President of the Guardianship Committee again travelled through the colonies, the matters above written were brought to his attention. The name of the individual who complained has remained unknown to us. But Ältester Heinrich Wiens who chaired the brotherhood meeting which excommunicated these three out of the Gemeinde, was ordered to appear in the Gebietsamt on July 25. Here Sr. Excellence accused the same of having made an intrusion into the jurisdiction of the worldly government and generally spoke in an extremely hard way.

Among other things he said, "If anyone is to be punished corporally by the government, and the village Schulz requires anyone from out of the Gemeinde to carry out this punishment, then that one has to do it, even if it were the Ältester Wiens of whom the Schulze required it - then even Wiens would have to do it."

To which Ältester Wiens replied, "Sr. Excellence, that Wiens would not do!"

In anger Sr. Excellence responded, "That I would force him to do so." [Und dann wurde ich dem Wiensen!]

In response, the Ältester Wiens referred to the most gracious Privilegium once granted to us at time of our emigration into Russia and whereby free religious exercise of our church regulations was granted to us and that according to the fundamental principles of our faith, no member of the Gemeinde would be allowed such, that one member would be able to punish another or anyone else by physically striking them.

Whereupon Sr. Excellence commanded him to remain silent and accepted no further explanation. Then he added thereto, "If the Privilegium had such a content that the government no longer has the liberty to command the disobedient subjects to be punished, then he would be the first to lobby the government to terminate such a Privilegium."

Following this, on August 30th, all the Ältester and Lehrer were summoned to the Gebietsamt where they were informed of an order issued by Sr. Excellence the Privy Councillor Hahn, dated Aug. 14th, No. 5108, which writing can still be shown as evidence.

Following this the Agricultural Society in conjunction with the Gebietsamt Administrations issued a writing to the Kirchen-Convent, dated the 7th of September, setting forth to them the dismissal of Ältester Heinrich Wiens from his office. The greater part of the Ältester and Lehrer did not endorse the deposition of the same [6]. But the Ältester Bernhard Fast and the Ältester Fr. Lange (who had actually already long ago made himself unworthy of his office by an illicit life's walk through a love affair with a young woman, on account of which he was separated from his wife), and the Ältester Benjamin Ratzlaff, who, however, was not personally present because of his sickness and who had commissioned one of his fellow servants [minister] to sign his signature on the condition that all the other Ältester and servants [ministers] would subscribe to this dismissal; who later, however, publicly bemoaned his action. In all only three Ältester and 14 Lehrer sent a writing to Ältester Wiens, issued in the church in Ohrloff on the 21st of September, 1846, whereby they declared the same unworthy for his office and forbade him to carry out any of the duties and obligations of his office, indeed, even threatening to report him before the highest authorities if he failed to comply.

Mennonite Church, Neu-Halbstadt, Molotschna, as it appeared ca. 1910. This church was built in 1858. This was presumably the worship house built by brewery founder Johann Neufeld (1801-55), Halbstadt, and which became the subject of bitter controversy until it was finally ceded to the Lichtenau-Petershagen Gemeinde by the Ohrloff Gemeinde. The building replaced the worship house in Petershagen which had been torn down in 1852. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood*, page 890.*

(Wholly like unto the operation of the Roman Church during the time of the martyrs).

Which writing could still be brought forth; to the contrary five Ältester with their Lehrer did not sign.

> "(Wholly like unto the operation of the Roman Church during the time of the martyrs)."

Persecution of the Gemeinde.

Also, at the time, a testimonial by eight witnesses, among whom there were even two false witnesses who were not present in the judgment hall when interrogation by Sr. Excel. of Ältester Wiens took place, was sent by the Gebietsamt to the Ältester wherein it dealt with an offensive insinuation in words which Ältester Wiens was to have made during their meeting with Sr. Excel. on July 25. Neither Ältester Wiens or Ältester Dirk Warkentin nor any of the others who were present, could, not in the least, remember anything like that having been said. Just like in 1 Kings 21:10 (And these also were relying on misunderstandings).

The Gebietsamt was by now well aware that the greatest part of the spiritual leadership did not endorse the dismissal of Ältester Wiens. It now ordered that those Ältester and Lehrer who did not endorse such action should now submit an explanation to the Gebietsamt which was then also done by our Lehrer as well as by the other Gemeinden. The explanation was sent by the Gebietsamt to the above mentioned three Ältester for examination, and asked them for a declaration refuting the same, which they also did. The sly and deceiving Fritz Wilh. Lange, also exerted his entire learnedness and demonstrated what spirit's child he was, and knew how to shamefully twist the simple writing of our Ältester and to misrepresent it. A further declaration was again requested of our ministerial which they sent in November 28th.

All of this occasioned open brotherhood meetings in our respective houses of worship in order to elect a deputation together with the ministerial to help work towards a peace regarding this persecution of the Gemeinde on the part of the local authorities. But it was not possible to bring this to pass, so that it would also be authorized in the name of the three Gemeinden to petition the highest government regarding preservation of our church regulations, which deputation was confirmed by the ministerial on October 12th. On October 17th the deputation wrote to Ältester Bernhard Fast, Halbstadt, declaring that the Gemeinde did not recognize the deposition of Ältester Wiens as lawful and as a result also did not recognize the same. Cornies and the Gebietsamt were enraged hereby and began to call the deputation instigators of rebellion. [7]

Cornies immediately accused Peter Toews, Tiege, who was one of the deputies, as one of these before the Gebietsamt, and he was summoned to appear in the Gebietsamt on November 21 where an accusative writing from Cornies was read to him. Wherein it stated , among other things, "This deputation has for its objective the complete disruption and destruction of all governmental authority in the colonies, since they travel around in the districts gathering signatures and to arouse the citizens against the government, etc."

All our Ältester certainly did not omit to declare to the Gebietsamt that such was absolutely and completely not the case and that Peter Toews together with five others members of the Gemeinde had been publicly elected to a deputation; only the Gebietsamt did not heed this, but instead even wrote Ältester Dirk Warkentin a letter and in a ridiculing way forbade such representations.

Appeal to Guardianship Committee.

As our Gemeinde in particular and the deputation were strongly threatened and one had to fear that the Colony leaders might falsely accuse the same before the government (which later also proved to be the case), consequently the deputation filed a request for protection to the Guardianship Committee on November 28

and from whom they asked for protection (which petition can still be shown as evidence today). Whereupon a decision was issued by the Guardianship Committee on December 14 under No. 2808 whereby the deputies were promised protection although they interpreted the request as evil and not only made any further efforts regarding the matter rather doubtful they also threatened them.

As, however, this decision was very long in forthcoming and the Gemeinde was under extreme duress, the deputation issued a second petition to the Guardianship Committee, dated the 12th of December, requesting that a thorough investigation of the dismissal of Ältester Wiens would be conducted, and explaining our fundamental principles of faith regarding corporal punishment within the Mennonite brotherhood, but in regard to which no response has been forthcoming to date.

In the meantime our Gemeinde waited with the greatest longing hoping that the Guardianship Committee would hear our petition and either itself establish a commission for the investigation of the aforesaid matter or would agree to the same. But unfortunately it was futile. Things occurred as they did long ago in Israel during the times of King Ahab and Jezebel, 1 Kings 21:8-15.

Diakonissenheim "Morija", Halbstadt, built in 1912. This was an institution for training nurses and closely associated with the hospitals in Muntau and Ohrloff, where the nurses did their practical training. Photo - Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *page 247.*

Ohrloff hospital, as it appeared ca. 1910. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood, *page 817.*

Deportation, 1847.

On March 12, 1847, Ältester Wiens was completely removed from the Mennonite colonies and placed under the scrutiny of the Inspector of Prischip, so that no one could have any contact with him and whereby the Gemeinde was turned even deeper into sorrow. This concern was made all the more acute through the rumour which was spreading that he was to be expelled from the country. This the Gemeinde found to be altogether unbelievable as it was totally against all the most highest affirmed laws and regulations, in accordance with which: 1) a person could be expelled in such a way only after judicial examination had first taken place and even then only when at least two-thirds of all the family heads in the Gemeinde had subscribed to the same; 2) As this was a fundamental matter of Mennonite faith and in no way a violation of any paragraph of the laws of the government, it was therefore unthinkable that our own Mennonite colony representatives with a small percentage of the spiritual leadership, if they had an iota of righteousness left in their hearts, out of pure [8] hatred and jealously (Gen. 37:11) against the Ältester Wiens and against our Gemeinde and their own - with our - mutually professed Confession of Faith and regulations of the church, which certainly every member at time of baptism and, in particular, every church Ältester at time of his ordination and blessing into office, covenanted before God and the Gemeinde to obey and practice, to discard and deal contrary to the same.

In this way many weeks passed by with fear and hope until the 16th of April at which time the arrested Ältester Heinrich Wiens was summoned to the [Colonial] Inspector of the Molotschna Colony. Here the verdict of Sr. Excellence, the Lord Privy Councillor v. Hahn, was read to him and in which ruling the Inspector was instructed according to the command of the Minister of State-Domains to provide all necessary assistance to expel Wiens outside of the borders [of Russia] as soon as possible.

Mennonite Principles.

This is, however, particularly doubtful since Ältester Wiens had been falsely accused before the high government only by our local Colonial representatives together with a small percentage of the ministerial leadership who were allied with them, namely, that he opposed the government which, in truth, neither Cornies nor any one else could in any way prove. It was only the case that he sought to preserve and to maintain aright the fundamentals and teachings of the Mennonite faith within our Mennonite fellowship. By comparison, however, said three Ältester and their Lehrer and the colony representatives wanted to completely set these aside, so as to operate a regime patterned after the Old Testament and Papist ritual and thereby fulfilling the words of the Apostle in Thess. 2:3-12, in that they themselves regarded themselves as the government, which according to our accepted Confession of Faith is not allowed to any true Mennonite.

For thus it is stated in Article 15 of our Mennonite Confession of Faith: "Since the office of the worldly authorities are contrary to the non-resistant follower of Christ, it follows therefore that all true followers of Christ can in no way serve the governmental office with all that it entails, but rather herein shall also much more follow the example of Christ and His Apostles, according to Math. 10:38, 39; and Chapter 16:24,25, and among whose Gemeinden such offices were not served. We are obligated to accept an office only when the office is not in conflict with our allegiance to God, our faith and our confession of faith. We read in 1 Cor. 12:28 which offices the true followers of Christ may occupy."

But here in this specific Mennonite Gemeinde the situation was such that these persons in our area who had been appointed as helpers and regulators, as worldly governors now considered themselves as the government and also ruled according to the worldly laws and not according to the teachings of Christ and the practices of His Apostles, which a true Mennonite and follower of Christ would not fully be able to obey, that which they command; likewise in and for which they were even supported by a small part of the spiritual church ministerial which had become lukewarm. Acts 4:17-19 and 5:29, Rev. 3 v. 14-18.

But our Lehrer however did not want to support all such things for according to our evangelical fundamental principles such [persons] separate themselves from the Mennonite brotherhood. And the true Gemeinde would also in every respect acknowledge these as a government and be subject unto them if they would want to punish anyone physically, provided that only individuals may be ordered to carry this out who have freedom of conscience in that regard [9].

"[Cornies wanted]...to operate a regime patterned after the Old Testament and Papist ritual...."

Deportation, 1847.

On June 3, 1847 the sentence of the Honourable Privy Councillor v. Hahn to operate a regime patterned after the Old Testament and Papist ritual was carried out and the Ältester Wiens had to depart on his journey, without knowing whereto. His destination simply was Prussia in Germany, but in his passport it was simply stated, "Prussian subject, foreigner Heinrich Wiens and his wife are going aboard via Radschiwilow etc." Clearly a completely falsified passport!

How could it state that Wiens was a Prussian subject? And a foreigner? For certainly he had emigrated to Russia as a young boy with his parents at the beginning of the century, had grown up there and settled there and from the beginning his name had stood recorded in the Revision [Census] as a Russian subject and

nor had he ever been a Prussian subject? And why was there no comment in the passport regarding an offence which would have justified the authorities in exiling him as is commonly done with such evildoers according to the laws of the land? Therefore a clear proof of how his entire matter was dealt with by the falsehoods and lies. The passport stipulated a duration of only three months.

Deceitful Process.

A printed order of Sr. Excel. Hahn was circulated through the Schulzenämter (village mayoral offices) which stated, among other things, that in the event of a possible subsequent appearance by Wiens he should not be afforded any reception, which order could still be shown as evidence. His passport was drawn up in such a way that Wiens should thereby come to his end. For even Cornies' own daughter is to have said that when she thought about what they had intended with Wiens, she could not sleep during the night.

This was also confirmed there on the Austrian border. When they arrived at the border, a cross beam blocked the crossing, as was usually the case, for all travellers needed to have their passports inspected here. When Ohm Wiens finally came up to the office with his passport, the elderly official noticed something in the passport and said, "He could not stamp this passport."

When he now sadly turned back, he met a Jew. The Jew asked him, "What is wrong? Why was he looking so sad?" After he had related to him about his circumstances, he asked further, "Would you not risk something?" Ohm Wiens replied, "I do not know whether I may offer the man something?" Together they back went back into the office, whereupon the Jew had a short discussion with the elderly official. Then he said to Ohm Wiens, "The approval of your passport will cost you 25 rubles." He gave the money and was immediately granted permission to continue his journey without any further difficulties into Austria and on towards Prussia in Germany.

Therefore this was the place where our representatives had determined that Ohm Wiens should come to his end. They, however, had here also not reckoned with the Lord - a Jew and 25 rubles had crossed a stroke through their plans. After a journey of nine weeks and six days, they finally arrived in Prussia, healthy and unviolated, where they were welcomed and accepted in a friendly way by our sister Gemeinden.

Also to be noted is that during their difficult journey they spent one night in a den of robbers. Evening had come and they did not have any expectation of reaching any other place of night lodging. Here they found only a woman present, but who did not want to accommodate them in any way. Finally after urgent begging she acquiesced. They themselves prepared their sleeping quarters on the earth floor and laid down to sleep. Finally at somewhat after mid-night the entire band of robbers came home. They drank and caroused about, but did not molest them. Early the next morning they got up while the others remained in the deepest sleep and again set forth on their journey. Here is evidence that they were carried upon their journey by many praying hearts. But unto those, however, who had forced them on the journey, the prophetic words of Isaiah are applicable, "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."

As they now established their home in Prussia, they still had to report to the government. But when Ohm Wiens [10] submitted his passport, the officials were surprised how they could have gotten through everywhere with this passport without difficulties. The passport was also then shown to the Russian Consul, who was certainly the most amazed, in that the whole contents of the passport showed that the entire matter with Ohm Wiens had proceeded through false eyes, and that those who had processed the passport apparently never gave it any thought that it might ever be read by other government officials. If the Consul had not died shortly thereafter, the matter of Ohm Wiens most likely would have been thoroughly investigated by higher authorities. This, however, remained undone, as no further efforts were set forth from that end. When, however, Cornies heard that Ohm Wiens had arrived safely in Prussia, he shortly died instantly.

Conclusion.

In respect to the deputation in the colonies, firstly, Peter Toews was dismissed from his office as village mayor (Dorfsschulze) in Altona, and later the same [the deputies] were publicly denounced in the colonies as unworthy [ränkwelle?] indecent men, with the added notation, that in the future none of the same were to be given access to any public offices (Just like Judas dealt with Christ and the Apostles, according to Math. 9:34 and 12:24). And with this the entire matter seemed to have ended.

But the Ältester Wiens will remain in the memory of the Gemeinde for a long time to come - grieved for - not only by our Gemeinde but also many from other Gemeinden as being innocent, except for a small group of blind followers of Cornies, who with his death have lost their power. We, however, hope that God will note in grace the multitude of tears which have flown as a result of the tyrannical dealings, and that in His time and through His help, which always rests in His almighty hand, He will wipe away those tears and that a time of His peace may again be established.

"Just like Judas dealt with Christ and the Apostles,...."

"Signed"
Ältester Dirk Warkentin, Petershagen
Ältester Heinrich Toews, Pordenau
Lehrer Heinrich Neufeld, Rosenort
Lehrer Bernhard Matties, Tiegerweide
Lehrer Abraham Peters, Ladekopp
Lehrer Abraham Fröse, Halbstadt
Lehrer Wilhelm Berg, Lindenau
Lehrer Jacob Woelk, Tiegerweide
Lehrer David Hiebert, Lindenau
Lehrer Johann Wiens, Rosenort
Lehrer Johann Kröger, Petershagen
Lehrer Isaak Braun, Konteniusfeld
Lehrer Jacob Sawatsky, Friedensdorf
Lehrer Jacob Fast, Landskron
Lehrer Jacob Warkentin, Ohrloff
Deacon Peter Enns, Altona
Deacon Johann Klaassen
Deacon Klaas Thiessen, Petershagen
Deacon Jacob Hildebrand, Tiegerweide.

NB. The two Ältester Warkentin and Wiens were expelled from the Gemeinde because they took a stand against corporal punishment, which was being implemented by the Gebietsamt and Agricultural Society and which, however, the other three Ältester and their fellow ministers promoted and also endorsed the persecution of the spiritual leaders of the non-resistant Mennonite Gemeinden. Yet they called themselves followers of Christ, much like the high priests who judged Christ, according to Math. 26: 65,66. Neufeld

Maria Deaf-Mute School in Tiege, Molotschna (street view), ca. 1910. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood, *page 811.*

Acknowledgement:

Heinrich Neufeld, "A Further Examination of the Molotschna Conflict," was translated by Rev. Ben Hoeppner, Winnipeg, Man., 1992, and Delbert Plett, 2004. Received courtesy of James Urry, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, July 22, 1992. The original is in archives of MLA, Bethel College, North Newton, Ks.

Farewell Address of Ältester Heinrich Wiens, 1847

Ein Abschied und Bericht wie es in der Molotschnaerkolonie in d. früh. Jahre zugegangen ist, und wie die Vorgesetzeten den ehr. Ältesten *Heinrich Wiens von Gnadenheim* aus dem Lande Verwiesen haben. Seine Rückehr nebst Beschreibung der ganzen Reise. ("The Farewell Address of the Honourable Kirchenältesten Heinrich Wiens (1800-72) from Gnadenheim, from both of the Ältester at Lichtenau and Pordenau, and the entire ministerial, as well as from the entire in Jesus dearly-loved Gemeinde, 1847.")

Introduction.

Mel. 74. Wenn meine Sünd mich kränken
Es sind noch wenig Tage,
So scheiden wir von hier
In's schöne Land; die Plage
Und Angst verlassen wir.
Wohlan, wohlan! Es ist behend',
Daß unser Weg von Plagen
So eilend nimmt ein End'.

100. Mel. Wie soll ich dich empfangen.
Wacht, Brüder! Betet alle,
Daß uns der letzte Tag
Nicht zu schnell überfalle,
Zu unserm Weh und Ach,
Der wie ein Fallstrick kommen
Als wie ein Dieb bei Nacht,
Die Bösen, nicht die Frommen,
Zum ewgen Weh und Ach.

This you're united in love Ältester wishes you in closing unto God above and unto eternal life and reach out my hands over you in blessing.

"Heinrich Wiens".

And unto you, my united in the name of Jesus, heartily loved brethren in service - in the name of the truth which is and must remain within us, unto the unending eternity, receive from me the blessing: "May the holiness, grace and compassion from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of the Father in truth and in love, be and remain with us all.

Now my beloved, I cannot do otherwise (if I somewhat wish to build myself up with you in love) but to come before you through a letter in that I – according to the appearance thereof - have been notified of my exile from this our Russian empire by virtue of a writing of the Honourable Inspector, and even so now as was also the case previously, absolutely no permission is to be granted to me for me to be able to get together personally with my fellow confessionalists; therefore, I must take my departure from you for this life in writing. And to see the same as a calling forth from God unto me, as this once occurred to Abraham, and if it has here also taken place regarding me through hatred and revenge and false accusations of my enemies and betrayal, then it would be exactly as stated there: "Go out of thy father's house unto a land which I will show you," Genesis 12.

Forsaking Hearth and Home.

I do not find it all difficult to forsake my outwardly homeland and Wirtschaft. But, ah - my brethren in the ministry and the children and the Gemeinde which lays so heavenly upon my heart which I have served faithfully and untiringly for 21 years although always in great weakness - it almost breaks my heart to leave the same in such a way at a time when the danger to the soul as it appears presses forth so strongly.

But what shall I say? Or what shall I complain? When it is once commanded by God, you shall go wherever I will sent you, according to Jeremiah 1 v. 7.

Therefore, I am also agreed to follow this calling which separation from the Gemeinde entrusted unto me, for the sake of my faith, was or shall be no less difficult for me than formerly, beginning some 21 years ago, as a worker in the Gemeinde, or five years ago, to take over the office of Ältester in such a troubled time. And following this, to conduct both the election and ordination for both of you fellow Ältester.

Therefore, with the help of the Good Shepherd, I will go wherever He will send me and shall submit myself unto His leading and not to become in the least mistrustful that He is demanding somewhat too much of me, but rather for the sake of our religion and the teachings of the Saviour, to depart from out of this land, from the Gemeinde and from my house, in accordance with the referenced words, and to go the way which God will show me and presently to comfort myself with that poet:

99. Mel. O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.
Weg' hat er allerwegen,
An Mitteln fehlts ihm nicht,
Sein Thun ist lauter Segen,
Sein Gang ist lauter Licht;
Sein Werk kann niemand hindern,
Sein Arbeit darf nicht ruh'n,
Wenn er was seinen Kindern
Ersprießlich ist, will thun.

Und ob gleich alle Teufel
Hie wollten wiederstehn,
So wird doch ohne Zweifel
Gott nicht zurücke gehen;
Was er sich vorgenommen
Und was er haben will,
Das muß doch endlich kommen
Zu seinem Zweck und Ziel.

Behold, according to the appearances our religion cannot remained spared from purification by God if it is to remain standing upon the true rock. Therefore, I also will most gladly allow myself to go this way with God. And now at my departure I do bid you also, do not be terrified thereby and remain steadfast in the faith, and care for the Gemeinde up until the Lord shall call you to come over [unto Him]. O! The great recompense which awaiteth that final hour of labour. Herdsmen, from the bottom of your hearts, have only concern for your flock over which the Holy Spirit hath appointed you as Bishops, to pasture the Gemeinde of God, and be awake in the calling: The bridegroom is near before the door. I commit the Gemeinde unto you, next to God - He who is mighty enough to hold me and you, and after

The Rudnerweider worship house built in 1822? in the old Prussian two-storey style. Photo - Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *pages 289-290.*

the pilgrimage here is completed (for the little work and exertion), to grant the inheritance together with all those already there in glory, carrying the palms of victory in their hands before the throne!

O! How gladly (do believe me) I would comfort your grieving hearts if only it were possible for me and yet, even without the same (I believe) I will not forget you, my beloved. Also do not blame yourselves for this my departure. I love you all from the heart and do not suffer yet too much, according to my thinking, for there was presently no other option if our religion was not instantly to be vanquished. Therefore, I also do not find it hard for the sake of the Gemeinde to take this road, and wish only that God might impart power enough unto you, to remain standing before this fizzure (Risz) and that the Gemeinde also might be strengthened in faith and be bound together in love; indeed, encourage yourselves with this as if I am speaking these things to you for the last time.

Since I realize that with this my departure I leave you behind in much heartfelt fear and many tears and whereby I burden all of you, and which I in fact would so gladly take away from you, if only it was possible before God who comforts us in all our sorrows, so that we can comfort also those who have troubles.

Therefore walk together in the spirit, and truly unite as one in the spirit and remain watchful in the faith to Jesus, Who - after all - once was and remains the victory over the world and all that subsists therein, and remain mindful that for 21 years, day and night, I have not slackened even once to admonish everyone with tears, which I still do and will continue to do for as long as I shall live. I know that I have done so only for the sake of the suffering of Christ and the same will not leave me without comfort either. Therefore claim also the words of Paul, "Whether we experience well being or trouble, it occurs for our good. If it be sorrow it occurs for the comfort and salvation of our souls, if you shall endure in patience. Therefore, remain steadfast in the faith, and remain united in love and hope." I bid you again, from the bottom of my heart, that you do not grow

weary, rather that you might battle for the faith, which is committed unto the saints, according to the letter to Jude, v 3.

Recall unto yourselves only the words which have been written thereto by the Apostle, which say, "That during the last days slanderers shall come who conduct themselves according to the Godless ways of their own cunning and who will not endure the salvation-yielding teachings, and who will appoint teachers unto themselves after whom their ears are longing, and shall turn fables." Paul says, "There shall be people who think much of themselves, selfish, gossipers, proud, slanderers, unspiritual, betrayers, gluttons, arrogant, lovers of self more than God, and thus departed from the words which have been given, from Christ, and lovers of the misleading spirits and teachings of the devil, even such as are pharisaical, speakers of lies and who have scars in their conscience, these are they who make mobs, fleshly without any spirit."

But you, my beloved, edify yourselves upon your most holy faith, through the Holy Spirit and prayer, and keep yourselves in the love of God, and await upon the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

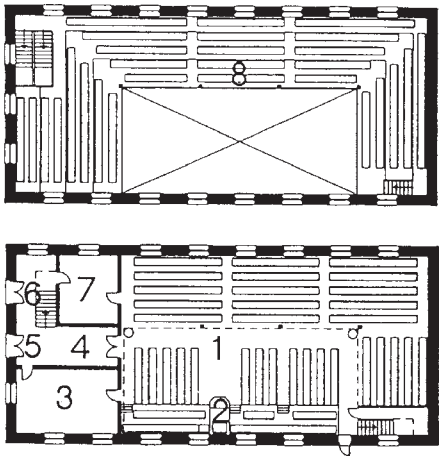
For the time is nigh, for the signs which have been recorded by the Saviour which shall first occur are manifesting themselves. Therefore, raise your heads upwards and let all of us be as servants who are awaiting their Lord.

Beloved brothers and sisters, do not sigh regarding my departure, for it must yet all be fulfilled. I am fully comforted in my heart. I have not knowingly wanted to do anyone any harm, and why I must walk upon this way, God alone knows best; but according to appearances it is occurring out of hatred. And as once the sons of Jacob sent Joseph out of his father's house - and how unwillingly according to his fleshly understanding did he go this way we can readily imagine - but he had to take hold of himself and depend on God and go there where God commanded him to go; therefore, I also commend myself and all of you together unto God and His leading with that well known poet:

80. Mel. Es ist gewißlich an der Zeit.
Die Heerde, die du hast erwählt,
Die setze du zum Segen
Und schenke was ihr annoch fehlt,
Zu gehen auf rechten Wegen;
Laß deine Treue, Aug' und Hand
Sein deinen Gliedern wohl bekannt,
Die deiner Güte trauen.

Ein Vater und ein Hirte meint
Es treulich mit den Seinen;
Du bist noch mehr als beide seind,
Du kannst's nicht böse meinen;
D'rum trauen wir allein auf dich:
Ach! Leite du uns väterlich
Nach deinem Rath und Willen.

Erbarme dich, o treuer Gott!
Der du die Welt geliebet,
Die Welt, die ganz in Sünden todt,
In Irrthum dich betrübet;
Gieb deinem werthen Worte Kraft,
Daß es in solchen Herzen haft',
Die hart sind, wie die Felsen.



The floor plan of the Rudnerweider church as drawn by architect Rudy Friesen, Winnipeg. This plan was typical of all the older two-storey style worship houses in Prussia and Russia. Photo - Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *page 290.*

Nor should any single one of you beloved blame yourselves on account of this my departure and think to themselves that had they only not done this or perhaps not done that, or spoken, or if only they had done this? Oh No! We do not want to do so; rather I forgive and also from the heart gladly want to submit myself unto going this way. Where it occurs because of my sins that God would only also forgive them and that God might hereby wish to release me from my sins. And should it in part also occur only for the testing of our faith, as I firmly believe, then do also be comforted that I as the shepherd go ahead, and offer my life for the sheep according to the words of Christ.

I have no concern regarding any temporal loss and Wirtshaft - of the same the Lord has already released me a long time ago. The most difficult for me is to leave behind the Gemeinde and the children (in this time of deception and sorrow, for the blessed salvation); but even unto the same, I will yield myself and the way that poet states:

80. Mel. Es ist gewißlich an der Zeit
Wo Jesus geht, da folge nach,
Wie und wohin er führet,
Wiel dich gewiß kein Ungemach,
Wenn er nicht will, berühret;
Ohn' ihn geschiehet die kein Leid,
Es steht ja unsere Lebenszeit
Allein in Gottes Händen.

Consequences.

Ah, I bid also again with this (to everyone to certainly depart from the paths of sin), the way I have formerly often done in weakness, and especially to all those to whom according to their opinions I might have said too much through my admonitions, I plead with you again, remember again, if it has not taken place until today than do allow yourselves that this may now go to your hearts as if I was presently standing before you with tears (beloved members and brethren, allow yourselves to be reconciled from hatred and unreconciliation), and to those of you who until this day have not renounced immoderate drinking as well as pride and arrogance, for the sake of God and your salvation, I plead with you, allow it to be sufficient, so that if you do now in penitence yet come [that it shall] cause rejoicing before God and His holy angels in heaven. Oh, but do not delay any longer to turn back, rather come unto Him in true heartfelt penitence, like the prodigal son:

Ach mein Vater darf ich's wagen?
Und zu dir mein Vater sagen?
Ich hab's übel angericht,
Ach mein Vater zürne nicht,
Daß ich mich noch unterstehe,
Und dir unter Augen gehe.
Ich bin nicht werth, dass ich wohl,
Fort dein Sohn mehr heißen soll.

Ach was soll ich nun anfangen,
Ist es möglich zu erlangen,
Daß ich vor dir kommen mag,
Und dir meinen Jammer klag?
Ja ich kenne dein Gemüthe,
Deine väterliche Güte;
Dein Herz bricht dir endlich doch,
Daß du mir mußt helfen noch.

Oh, I say again: I forgive and am also guaranteed, that the One who hath given me unto you as a watchman for a number of years, to serve you in love and filled with energy, completely without losing courage - O, He will also know how to furnish my path which is as yet unknown to me, that I might also walk the same with courage, since - according to my thoughts - this also takes place for the Gemeinde; wherefore, I now also venture forth upon this path without terror, and plead, do not weep over this my separation, rather think about how soon the reunion (if not in this life then there in that glory) can take place.

For:
Das Scheiden und Vereinen,
Hat beides seine Zeit.
Das Scheiden wirkt oft Weinen,
Das Wiederseh'n erfreut.
Drum lasst in guten Werken,
Uns Tag und Nacht,
Durch Hut und Macht,
Auf Christi Tag wohl merken.
Wenn er dann wird erstehen,
Das Seelen in der That,
Zur neuen Salemsstadt,
Wir freudig mit ihm gehen.

Indeed, might God so grant. This I would wish for us all. I find the departure to be very hard and yet not nearly as hard as I found it to come to the decision, as to what it was that I should or wanted to do. When I sought to spare my flesh, then the soul terror (Seelenangst)

came upon me, that God would punish and demonstrate His lack of grace unto me that I would not remain steadfast until the end, and in so far as I wish to sacrifice myself for the Gemeinde, I saw the hatred of my enemies and their scorn, the way the same is never spared in any matter, raise up over myself and my family.

Oh, behold, how hard and difficult this battle has been for my flesh and blood to overcome and conquer --- Unto God in heaven it is known! Nor do I wish it on anybody (if only one's salvation could be obtained by a different means). Nonetheless I assure you, my beloved, that my heartfelt love as well as also concern for your salvation hath still not decreased but has stepped higher. O! And if only I could save you from this physically harsh oppression as well as from the danger to the soul in these perilous times. Believe me, I will survive, if God grants me strength and support.

Another old church, identified as the church at Schönsee by Quiring and Bartel, In the Fullness of the Time, *page 80. However, Franz Isaak,* Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten, *pages 267-269, makes no mention of a church built at Schönsee, in the early years, but does mention a church built in Margenau in 1832 where Ältester Heinrich Wiens was ordained on July 5, 1842. Cf. with the photo of the Margenau worship house published in* Diese Steine, *page 299.*

I now commit myself and you, my beloved brothers and sisters, unto God, as the Creator of our souls. Who is there who can do us harm if we suffer according to the will of God, 1 Peter 4, and already here seek to do that which is good? When we suffer for righteousness sake we need fear no evil nor pay any heed to the temptations of the enemy, for if it is the will of God, it is better to suffer for goodness sake and not because of evil, although we know, how Christ our Saviour once also suffered for our sins, the righteous for the unrighteous. And since we know that Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, we, therefore, also have reason to emulate the same if we wish to be His disciples, for it has now come – the end of many things - so that the heat of persecution and trouble might not appear foreign unto us, for we experience something very special through this departure which I must do.

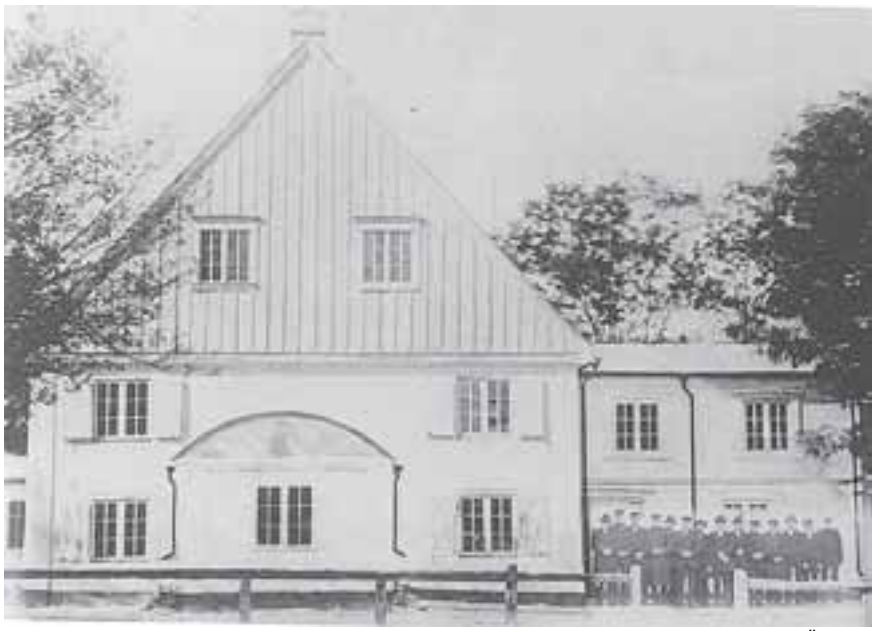
For it says, "Blessed are ye when you are slandered for the name of Christ, who is a spirit of glory and of God, indeed, persecuted by the world but which rests upon us." Because we suffer as Christians we are not ashamed, rather in such a case we honour God, says the apostle, and admonishes us to cling unto the confession of hope and not to falter. For the apostle Paul says, "He is true who hath promised you." Let us take this to heart among ourselves through striving for love and unto good works, and not to forsake our assemblies the way some like to do, rather to admonish each other, and that all the more as you can see that the day is drawing nigh, according to Hebrews 10 v. 25. For it is time, says Peter, the beginning of the Judgment on the house of God.

This, however, first with us, but what kind of an end will it bring unto those who do not believe the Gospel of God? And if the righteous shall hardly endure, where will the Godless and sinner appear? Therefore, those who suffer for the will of God shall commit their souls unto the true Shepherd in good works, 1 Peter 4 v. 17.

Therefore, all of you, do exert yourselves as much as possible to walk here in the fear of the Lord and with upright hearts to demonstrate yourselves unto everyone in true meekness and humility, so that in the end they shall all come to shame who have slandered our walk in Christ. For the eyes of the Lord see upon the righteous; therefore, continue in the true humility of the soul according to the commands of Jesus. For when we, says the apostle, pray unto the Father, who judges without respect of person, then conduct yourselves for as long as you live in the fear of God, and know that you are not redeemed from your vile deeds by perishable silver or gold as a father would do, rather by the precious blood of Christ as an innocent and unblemished lamb.

Indeed, my much beloved children in the Lord! Do not resist suffering for the will of Christ and His word, for behold, the Lord Jesus submitted Himself unto His path (under the pressing cross, amidst scorn and mockery, in order to rescue us from the jaws of Satan).

Why then should we hesitate to take His cross upon us and then to carry it for the flock entrusted unto us, amongst scorn and ridicule, like forsaking house and everything here and to set forth upon an unfamiliar road? In so far as we all know very well that there is no enduring city for us here. In my weakness, I have sought to comfort many when they have encountered sorrow. O! How will not the One to whom I have given myself, and whose compassion prevails over everything, not know how to also comfort me in this sorrow? No one will take that from me:



*The worship house of the Mennonite Gemeinde at Margenau. Standing to the far left is Ältester Gerhard Plett, Ältester of the Margenau Gemeinde since 1907. Photo - Tina Mathies, Coaldale, Alberta/*Diese Steine, *page 299.*

Denn wer ihn kann in
Glauben fassen,
Der werd nicht
Wenn's gebricht
Von ihm sein verlassen.

Wherefore, I also do not need to be afraid of travelling and all of you need not be grieving over me; indeed, it only presses [upon the heart [?]. But it occurs out of love, and thus, let it be.

I bid you also in love with the words of the past!

Laßt euch die Welt nicht
blenden,
Ein jeder von den
meinen
Erkenne frei und
offenbar,

By the last quarter of the 19th century, Mennonites in Russia were converting themselves more and more to Germanization and Separatist-Pietist religious culture. These changes were also reflected in their church architecture. This is the Petershagen church built in 1892 where the sanctuary was already oriented towards the narrow end of the church with the council and pulpit at the south end. Photo - Quiring and Bartel, In the Fullness of the Time, *page 80. In 1999 the church was restored and renovated and is again in use as a house of worship by Mennonites. Cf:* Diese Steine, *page 282, and* Pres., *No. 18, page 52, No. 16, page 50, and an article and photo of the Petershagen and Schönsee churches in 1994 by Orlando Hiebert, in* Pres., *No. 7, pages 26-27.*

Des großen Gottes Namen.
Fürch't ihm zur Ehre, hier kein Gefahr,
Schlägts augenblicklich auch zusammen.
Ja halt't euch fest an Jesum Christ,
Der euch zum Heil geworden ist.
Seid eifrig sein' Bekenner,
Von seiner Lehr in dieser Welt,
Laßt nichts euch davon schrecken,
Und seid im Glauben fest gestellt,
Ihm nach zu geh'n auf Hecken.

Do not think that this time of suffering is not worth the glory which Christ shall bestow upon us there. Wherefore the apostle also reminds us of same, that all who wish to live godly in the faith must suffer persecution, 2 Tim. 3 v. 12. Sirach, the teacher of traditions, says "If you wish to be a servant of God, you must suffer temptations, neither to yield to nor avoid the same, and rather to endure all suffering in patience," following the example of the patriarchs, when he says, "Take note of them, for who hath ever come unto shame who hath remained in the fear of God, or who hath ever been scorned, who hath called out unto Him.

Indeed, and who likewise calls forth unto us, "You, you who fear the Lord, trust unto all good from Him and unto you shall be imparted grace and comfort. For the Lord is gracious and compassionate, forgiving the sins and helping amidst tribulation. Wherefore, cling fast unto God, and depart not from Him, so that you might always grow stronger. For as the gold is purified by fire, so also shall they, who are pleasing unto God, be preserved through the fire of tribulation.

Therefore, why shall we then also apparently marvel or sorrow that I must depart from you in such a way? For Paul says: "All things must serve for the best unto those who love God and consider the ridicule for the sake of Christ a much greater wealth than to have all the wealth of this world. Thereby directing unto Moses: After he had grown up he no longer

The Alexanderwohl worship house built in 1865. "It was a large two storey structure generally based on traditional Mennonite design," Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *pages 208-209.*

wanted to be known as a son of Pharaoh, but rather to endure discomfort with the people of God, than to possess the temporal idolatry of sin. He considered the recompense and forsook Egypt, neither did he fear the wrath of the king, for he held unto them whom he did not see as steadfast in faith as he saw him.

Alas, behold, my beloved! What more can I mention for your strengthening and more. O! For the time would certainly be too short and our edification would find no end.

Closing.

Wherefore, in closing now take to heart the words of Paul that he did not consider worthy the suffering of this time compared to the glory which shall be revealed unto us and the words of our beloved Saviour when He says through the Evangelist Luke, "Blessed are they who are hated among men and when they separate you and slander you, and trod down your name as an evil doer for the sake of the son of God. Rejoice therefore and be glad, for behold your recompense is great in heaven. Your fathers, the prophets did likewise. Nor is the servant greater than his master. For if they have likened the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more will they not do likewise unto His house companions." "Therefore, be not afraid," says Christ. "For they who confess me before people, I shall likewise confess before my heavenly Father. And He who does not take my cross upon himself and follows me, is not worthy of me," Math 10.

Ach Jesu waffne unsre Sinn,
Dasz unser Kampf den Sieg gewinn,
Und treu bis Ende bleiben.

As also the first Christians suffered everything for the faith, satisfying the revenge of the lion's and extinguishing the power of the fire, they persevered through faith, and sacrificed body and life. Which is also our obligation, but for which, however, we are not capable of our own strength. Therefore, let us step forward with loving hearts and humility in this misery before our God.
Ja zum Gnadenthrone,
Uns zuversichtlich gehen,
Er läßt in seinem Sohne,
Aus Gnad uns Hülf' geschehen.
Gott führet seine Kinder,
Mit Zucht die Kreuzesbahn;
Doch aber auch nicht minder,
Zuletzt noch Himmelan.
Weil er in seinem Sohne,
Ein Vorbild uns gestellt,
Der uns die Freudenkrone,
Durch Leiden zugestellt.

With heart filled with hope, I now take my leave of you and hug all of you together with my spiritual arms of love. O, might that the Almighty would unite all of you in love that the great might of Satan would not tear you apart.

This is my wish composed by me unto you. Now adieu! And should we not see each other again here in this life, then, however, that God would grant that we would see each other again there in the happy eternity where no more suffering shall cause us sorrow.

Full of faith, I journey to that destination which is my true Fatherland. Do also follow me in that faith, where I hope to find no cross nor suffering.

May God grant you His blessing and preserve you in His grace and truth unto eternal life and spread His grace like wings over us! Whereby the testimony of Jesus within us would also not cease in persecution, rather that His peace might at all times fill us. And herewith we wish to depart from each other and comfort ourselves with our Lord Jesus.
Wenn die Not am allergrößten,
Ist er gegen seine Kinder,
Mehr als väterlich gesinnt.
Trotz dem Teufel, trotz dem Drachen,
Will ich ihre Macht belachen,
Trotz dem schweren Kreuze auch,
Gott mein Vater lebet noch.
Trotz der bittern Todeszähren,
Trotz der Welt und alle denen,
Die mir ohn' Ursach' Feind,
Gott im Himmel ist mein Freund.

Laßt Cornies nur immer neiden
Und mich länger hier nicht leiden.
Hört, so frag ich nichts danach,
Gott ist Richter uns'rer Sach.
Thut er gleich von hier mich treiben,
Wird mir doch der Himmel bleiben,
Und wenn ich nur diesen Krieg,
Hab ich ja, was mir vergnügt.
Ich will dies hier gern verlassen,
Da sie mich ohn' Ursach hassen.
Sie behalt'n nur Erd und Koth,
Ich reis' fort mit meinem Gott.

Sollt es noch bisweilen scheinen
Als wenn Gott verlässt die Seinen,
O! so glaub und weiß ich dies,
Gott hilft und verlässt mich nicht.

With a heartfelt greeting and best wishes, and all humanly-possible good fortune in body and soul, I remain your friend and fellow-pilgrim, bonded unto you in love.

"Heinrich Wiens."

Travel Report of Ältesten Heinrich Wiens (1800-72)

Travel Report of the Honourable Ältesten Heinrich Wiens (1800-72), Gnadenheim, 1847.

Heartily beloved friends, children and siblings, indeed, all beloved fellow servants and the Gemeinde, which have remained behind in the Molotschna in Russia.

After firstly wishing you from the bottom of my heart, everything good from the inexhaustible well of Jesus' grace, here temporally and there spiritually, and since every hour - daily, you continue to await for a writing regarding our trip, therefore, I am presently hurrying to the same as quickly as I can.

Saturday, at 7 o'clock in the morning, namely, the 26th of July (our time there) we arrived well in Marienburg, and at 7 o'clock at Gurben, at the aged Honourable Ältesten Abraham Reger. [According to] God's [ways] there are never unfamiliar ways, places and people. Until now, however, everything remains unfamiliar. Alas, most worthy friends, children and relatives! The direction in our passports, to travel by way of Radsiwilow into the foreign land, very much protracted our trip and made it more expensive, so that as a result we had to travel for six weeks and four days, an additional six days we had to wait in Odessa for the Old Colonists' passes; the [actual] travelling was exactly five weeks and five days from the Old Colony. We also had much expenditure for feed; at one occasion I actually had to pay one Prussian Thaler for four "Metzen" of hay and usually the shovel [full] was two Thaler in Osterrich and Prussia; consequently the journey became very expensive for us and also far and difficult; nonetheless, we made it to here very fortunately, with good health. The horses have certainly become quite emaciated but all three remained healthy. Otherwise we had no hindernesses with horses and wagon except that [when we were] one day past the Old Colony we broke our hitch (Deichsel) and one day before Marienburg an "Ortsschiede" tore in the morning dew.

It was 70 miles from Odessa up to Rodsiwilow. The city was called Brode, the aged Hl. noted something in our pass, but it went quite well. We had no inspections nor difficulties at any borders. It was 15 miles from Brode to Lenberg, where we were almost lost, for hardly anyone here knew the way to the place where we wanted to go. They directed us to travel to Warsaw, that was the next road. But the [border] office said that we would not get over the border there, and that instead we had to cross the border into Prussia at Krakau. It was 38 miles, but another nine miles from there over the border. Indeed, everything went well and without danger to travel into Prussia - 67 miles up to Marienburg.

And thus the time passed by and from Prischip we have spent seven weeks and four days underway. Further I cannot yet write, rather must wait for the direction of God.

My brother Johann Wiens, possibly with Cornelius Friesen from Altona, may want to come and remain here for a little while. How soon, however, they will want to depart cannot be reported, but certainly in the month of August and then I will write you again. I bid that you heartily greet the members of the beloved Gemeinde and thanks for all the demonstrated deeds and love. You have had many worries regarding our journey, and have wondered why no news or writing came from us. I did write from Odessa but do not know if it arrived there.

Now, however, might God grant that you receive this [letter]. We are alive and all three are fine. I have never had opportunity to write along the way because everything was unfamiliar and foreign. For I believe that of our people none has ever yet travelled this way before nor apparently would anyone want to travel the same. Quite often in the midst of woods or among the hills with valleys [the words] come to me: Are you then the scapegoat selected by God who must carry the sins of the people in the wilderness, then surely all sins will thereby remain away from the Molotschna and never find there way back. Now, I close with the heartfelt greeting and thank God for everything as often as I think of you and bid that you would inform everyone of my writing. And friend Hein will presumably pay the postage.

My beloved children! Should we not see you face and you not ours again in this life, do hold God in your hearts and before your eyes for your entire life. Indeed, beware of sins and pray in faith unto Jesus, so that through faith we might personally arrive there to see, where there will be no more suffering, separations and reunions. Be watchful regarding the love and do not allow the bond of the same to become extinguished or torn apart in your marriage or among yourselves, whereof, as you all know, I have always advised and still continue to do so.

Good wishes! Good wishes!

May the Lord preserve you in His grace and truth. We remain unforgettably your parents and near relatives unto our deaths. "Heinrich Wiens" Heubuden, July 27th, 1847.

The beloved, elderly, honourable Ältester Abraham Reger sends a heartfelt greeting to all Ältesten and Lehrer [minister] there. He has demonstrated his friendship to us.

Arrived in Prischip, August 20th, 10 o'clock in the evening. Copied by me Johann Wall, Neuhorst, on February 21, 1850.

First Letter, 1847.

This is the first letter by the Honourable Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he sent from Prussia back here to the Molotschna after his exile.

Very much beloved – indeed, bonded together in Jesus – fellow servants! After I have, from my heart, collectively wished all of you and so far distant [friends], all goodness from Jesus, the inexhaustible well of grace, here temporally as well as there for eternity: In heartfelt love I hereby report to you herewith that - filled with love from us unto you - we have received news [of you] and have completed the extensive journey safe and sound and therefore only first arrived at Gurke on July 26th at one o'clock after dinner at Ohm Abraham's, the most beloved and honourable Ältesten.

I have written twice but do not know whether they have arrived there; but now, however, I hope this will get there. I wish that it might find all of you, together with spouses and children, alive and well. As concerns us, we are well in the body. We have also found a friendly reception here. For the winter we will apparently stay with the widow Reger at Klein-Heubuden, if we live and further I cannot yet report. On August 10th I preached at Heubuden and on August 17th at Tiegenhagen which I had not done for almost five months already; might the Lord in grace grant His blessing thereto that it might serve unto His glory and that it might yield and bring forth fruits unto all our eternal salvation.

Certainly everything is very foreign for us and yet not as difficult as it was there to endure the grievous accusations and written denunciations. Ah, that all of us might hereby be strengthened in our faith and offices and that we might have also been drawn closer to the Saviour full of love, who, after all, has been and is and remains the beginning and the finisher of everything for us, in faith as well as in slander and persecution, and who has personally had to experience the power of Satan.

Ah, that certainly all of us would only seek to work for His honour and that armed with the full power of our faith we might stand against Satan's might, and as servants who are awaiting their master, when He will break forth from His wedding:

O lasset euch die Müh nicht reuen,
Glaubt es liebste Seelen doch,
Wollet ihr das Kruze schauen,
O das sanfte Jesus Joch
Ist das Mittel zu besiegen
Und bring herrliches Vergnügen.

For behold, my journey has certainly been very far and difficult, and it was painful to leave you there, but alas, only according to the flesh, for the conscience does not complain. I have peace and contentment within myself regarding all the accusations, all of which certainly were motivated only by jealousy and evil, for I have done no evil either knowingly or intentionally, nor have I ever wanted to do so as God is my witness. And might He also grant that not one of those who have directed this towards me might have to pass over from this world unto the next in such blindness, rather that all of them might have their eyes opened here.

Alas, indeed, when I think of how they are the fault for my deportation from the country and God for that reason hereafter will reject them from the eternal kingdom of Grace; Oh, how anxious I become and according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture, it cannot fail to take place if they remain without feeling and repentant penitence, for Jesus is the door and the way to the Father, and what is done here

unto the least of His, He will perceive it as if it was done unto Himself and it is more likely that heaven and earth shall vanish than that one title of His law will fail. For with the measure, says the beloved Saviour, that you have judged, you yourself shall be judged. Oh, therefore, might everyone guard themselves against unrighteousness, for an uncompassionate judgment shall also come to pass over all those who commit unrighteousness.

Alas, and might God also grant, if we are not to see each other here again in this life, that after this life and after this so painful farewell that we shall see each other again in heaven's joy in eternity. Indeed, for this reason, your love can and should never forget to bid together with the poet:

Sucht doch nicht auszuweichen
Dem Kreuz, was Gott geschickt;
Weil nichts ist zu vergleichen
Dem Wohl, das dort beglückt;
Drum faß Geduld (das beste),
Wenn Kreuz sich offenbart,
Dort glänzen alle Geste
Von Lammes edler Art.

Which contemplation, however, our opponent, the devil, as Peter calls him, generally cannot tolerate and therefore also seeks to destroy the same within the entire Christendom, seeking to exalt pride and revenge, for the apostle says; be sober and watchful, for your enemy daily goeth about the people, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can ensnare; him resist firmly in faith.

Ah, how so often I am together with you there in my thoughts, and in my present talk with one or the other person; and very much also the same from you unto us; that the Ohms there so frequently speak of us on Sunday is in one way so urgent and inspiring as if I hear it, and yet, we are so very far apart from each other. Indeed, how so many a mountain and valley lies between us and how many concerns have you and the beloved Gemeinde not had over us, and behold, how well the Lord hath preserved us, for upon the so very distant and unfamiliar journey we have not even once noticed, whether anyone has gazed upon us with evil intentions - everyone was amazed how we travelled here in the starved-out Galacia.

Ah, when I recall unto myself, the love us toward of the left behind Gemeinde. I could perish in tears, when from the other side I recognize how a number of Ältester and Lehrer have so little respect for the flock entrusted unto them, which certainly the experiences of our opponents there has already often demonstrated, who do not seek to pasture their flock without recompense as directed by their hearts, but rather to rule, and [they] much more love the renown and adoration of the world, and cherish the regard of person. But this is not how we want to [conduct ourselves] my beloved Ohms; rather to build ourselves up in the most Holy faith, praying through the Holy Spirit, that He might keep us in the love of God and to await in patience upon the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Amen.

I also do not complain in any way that too much has happened to me, since for the sake of the Gemeinde according to our [high] calling, I would have gladly wished to suffer even much more than this to preserve the same: and now, my beloved fellow servants, I can no longer help you in your work and so the Gemeinde remains entrusted unto you, and may God grant you courage and fearlessness to pasture the flock of Christ here [on earth] upon good and wholesome pastures, so that after your journey is completed you might come to the true Shepherd and to receive from Him the crown of peace.

I conclude and ask that you greet the beloved Gemeinde and thank you for all the good deeds which you have demonstrated unto me. I remain unforgettably your Ältester, bonded together with all of you in love. "Heinrich Wiens"

Greet the Gemeinde at Pordenau, Margenau and Schönsee, Petershagen and Lichtenau, and forgive me for not writing to anyone by name, it is because of the reason, but you can think it yourself and bless you. But do not forget those so far distant, I will never forget you. "Heinrich Wiens" 1847.

Copied by me, Johann Wall, Neuhorst, on February 22, 1850.

Second Letter, 1848.

This is the second letter from the honourable Ältester Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he wrote from Prussia here to the Molotschna after his deportation.

Klein-Heubuden,
February 14, 1848, new calendar.

Dearly beloved brother in Jesus, Johann Wiens in Gnadenheim! After I have from the heart wished you and your beloved children every only self imaginable well-being in body and soul, and, therefore, now have the hope that [this writing] might find you alive, I cannot omit to report to you what incorrect thoughts we humans often have here. For behold, beloved brother, heavily you left from my wife and myself and most every evening since your departure, my wife and I have talked about you; I always only wish for myself to have a few hours in the evening in your company, and my wife, how she would so gladly make you the coffee in the mornings. Indeed, and take note, this is how we counted almost every evening until we believed now you could already be there alive and well. Oh what a joy, and how you would receive so many visitors there, but how very different things turned out! You beloved one, got sick on your journey. This was tragic news for us! My wife now only wished if only she might have been able to save you but this also was in vain. Yet we expected to hear news of your death but instead it struck our daughter Sara. And thus it also says, my thoughts are not your thoughts.

And so fervently you lie upon my heart. Often while driving, when I sat with you, I often could not restrain myself for love, that I did not grab you and hug you until I was satisfied and then thought to myself: so you beloved, you accompany me in this way, and who knows which of the two of us will be the first to travel to heaven. My wife and I are still alive and thank you for your loyalty which you have demonstrated to us. How long this will continue is known only to God, may His name be praised.

I have read the writing from Abraham Dyck from Altona and seen [therefrom] that you are somewhat improved and perhaps you will again become well. Nonetheless death continues to stand before us and drains us forth from out of this world, as it finds us and God permits. Comfort where you can the weak, be manly and strong in the faith, for the Lord can work anything: He alone is to be trusted.

We often speak with the Sandhöfer siblings about you - they ask to greet you and all friends. Heinrich Peters is wondering that none of the two Peters writes to him. He asks that they all be greeted there. He and his wife and both children are already well. Cornelius Epp and his wife from Gnadenheim, as well as their beloved mother from Blumenort, their sister Classen and her husband, they have already visited us once and bid that we greet you there.

Now I and my wife bid that the friends there all be heartily greeted from us as well as all our neighbours in Gnadenheim. And also with you my beloved brother Jakob Wiens together with your beloved wife and children; and with Johann Braun with his wife and children, I have to talk - how are things? Are you still alive? I and my wife are still alive and are well but in our thoughts we are often there with you.

Oh, how precious for us were the hours when we got together, but how hard the final parting: God, my God, how it pressed upon me and inflected such wounds in our hearts. Great was our love, hard was the pain, to bear it all upon which my heart alone was fixed - the children and the Lehrer and the Gemeinde, without exception - and the two siblings from the large family remained standing there in tears, but our passports arrived and the journey had to occur.

Oh, my beloved brother, do strengthen that which wishes to die and be watchful at all times. It is certainly hard to suffer in the flesh. But remain comforted; he who wants to inherit the kingdom of God and His gifts must also have suffering here - many experience persecution. That shall only bring us peace. Only wait a short time, the Lord shall soon appear; His help is no longer far.

Thus I close and greet our loved ones and our friends who think of us.

The slanderous writings have also followed us and we do not know if it is already the last whereby Satan expects to bury us or will he still be able to achieve more? I myself am only for war, and behold, how my Lord Jesus waves the flag.

I continue to remain not without friends, but likewise, not without enemies; it is always my prayer, that God might also wish to grant me this, that I might be able to distinguish the enemy from friends and so that I would not somehow forget myself in my duty and thereby experience damage unto myself.

Therefore also unto you, my beloved, remain watchful at all times. And as you have now accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, so walk in

Him and be rooted and built up in Him and be firm in your faith as you have been taught.

All the best and do not forget us in prayer. May the Lord be and continue with you all. Amen. "Heinrich Wiens"

Copied by me, Johann Wall, Neuhorst, on March 14, 1850.

Fourth Letter 1849.

This is the fourth letter of the honourable Church Ältester Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he wrote after his exile from Prussia back to the Molotschna.

Klein-Heuboden,

April 7, 1849

Dear beloved Cousin Jacob Wall!

Firstly I wish unto you, your wife and your children and all our beloved friends and acquaintances all the blessings of God and all self-experienced goodness on body and soul from out of the inexhaustible well of the grace of Jesus. Simultaneously I make note that I and my wife are alive and well. I also report hereby that I have received your letter, so full of love, of August 31, 1848, but which only arrived on January 23, 1849, old calendar.

I immediately read the letter with newly inflamed love and read therein of your life and health and that of your siblings. I myself also feel fully obliged as soon as possible to come to greet the love you have demonstrated to us with a letter. Certainly it has remained undone for almost too long and therefore it does not thereby extinguish the love demonstrated toward us and for this I hereby ask for forgiveness.

It would be a heartfelt joy for me and my wife if this simple writing would find you and your beloved wife and children as well as our friends and acquaintances there in good well-being. Much beloved cousin and all beloved friends, with living and health we have again survived a winter and with God's help the spring is drawing nigh which in so many ways inspires us to raise our senses and lift up our voices in praise that the cold winter is over and that spring has come which will renew everything.

Would that the All-mighty God might abundantly allow His rich in grace spring to become truly great and inspired in the entire Christendom; might He in the future also preserve us from the cold winter, which has already taken hold of so many a heart here in and among our people; and presently through the warm spring to awake all those who had died alive in faith in Jesus our Saviour, so that certainly not one single person might have to hear that statement without comfort: Go out you cursed into the eternal fire.

Your question, my heartfelt friend, regarding our living conditions, in what we make our living here, I answer by saying it is still our old way, here by the very beloved widow Reger at Klein-Heuboden. She is a woman in the 76th year of her life and my wife fills her womanly place in the Wirtshaft together with two maids and until now it is still going very good. I must see to it how I also occupy my time. Quite frequently I get together with our beloved friends at Sandhoff and continue to have not the slightest interest in this unpeaceful time regarding a physical Wirtschaft which hopefully, would also be hard to find here as long as my thoughts are still so firmly fixed upon my people there in Russia. But [given that] my end might already also be quite near this possibly might be the reason.

Since the time, however, that my friend Cornies died I have been filled with many new thoughts, as you can well imagine. For I readily know that if God had not allowed it to happen it would not be possible. But the entire [matter] for a long time already was driven by Cornies, and therefore, he is also the one on account of whom I was deported. But not yet by God and my most beloved Saviour, who is my entire firm mountain and hope, and I also firmly hope, will also remain, and never deny me His help and assistance – so far he has never yet done so. Indeed, according to the flesh the road for me which I must walk has already been very hard but in the spirit I have also often enjoyed the heavenly sweet glimpses. As you, beloved, also quote in a verse in your loving writing, which the blind world does not know: It will sweeten your cross, that you shall have to confess. Therefore, according to your wish, as it is also mine, if God would allow it, that we could personally talk; but if this is not to be - which is quite possible – since I have only now entered into my 50th year of my life - and yet possibly may not complete the same; I therefore wish that all of us together might meet before the throne of God, which is where our true Fatherland is, among the multitude of the blessed, and where no earthly difficulties can anymore disperse us or separate us. Now in this sense, we shall also only walk here to defend the faith, in order that our beloved Saviour might not be ashamed of us on that day.

Now finally, all of you together are hereby greeted many times from me and my beloved wife, with the most precious peace of our Lord Jesus. I remain your friend who never forgets you and your fellow pilgrim unto Zion. "Heinrich Wiens" Copied by me Johann Wall, Neuhorst, this 14th of March, 1850.

Fifth Letter, 1849.

This is the fifth letter by the honourable church Ältesten Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he wrote from Prussia here to Russia after his deportation.

Kleine Heuboden, November 21, 1849

To Jakob Wall, Neuendorf, Chortitzer Colony!

Dearly loved cousin together with your wife and children as well as all our blood relatives, friends and acquaintances, receive from us so far distinct a wish of grace, peace, salvation and blessing from God the Father in the co-working power of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

After this greeting of love from my wife and myself, I report to you, most intimately and bonded together beloved cousin and brother in Jesus, that we received your most loving letter of October 10, here on the 5th of November, old calendar, and with joy we saw therefrom about your living and health and certainly also about your many difficulties which you made for yourself through the sale of the mill and how cousin Cornelius Wall still has to suffer, whose condition is painful. Nonetheless it was a most precious writing for us. We also wish from the heart that this insignificant writing from us might awaken joy in you and that it might find you alive and in health.

We are still here on our old place by the most beloved Mrs. Reger and are truly chipper and healthy, which we also recognize as a great gift of God and must be thankful for the same. Of our friends who are also yours, there remains only the one branch at Sandhof from our Oheim Corneils Wall with whom we get together quite frequently. They are still their six together: two married, four of them are in the paternal [house] which also belongs to the four singles. The name of the man of the oldest sister is Reimer and they live in Grosz Mausendorf, they have a good living and two children alive. The name of the man of the youngest sister is Nikel and live on the Klein-Schordau. They have suffered much from water flooding and also on account of break-ins by thieves and have their difficulties making ends meet. The four in the paternal home are doing very well. The oldest brother of them is called Abraham, the youngest Cornelius, the oldest sister is Maria and the youngest is Sara. I am to greet you from them all.

The harvest here has done very well, the prices are not high; yet, if things remain in peace, matters are going very well in the outwardly; God knows regarding the eternal. Things seem quite dark to me as if hardly any spirit therefore is still at hand, and when I think thereon that we are not to seek for equality with the world, rather to allow our light to shine in humble love, I most almost completely wonder regarding the enormous pride which already could not be practised and displayed any higher in clothes, such as riding and travelling harness, then as is presently occurring.

May God be gracious unto us and also know how to keep me in order that also here I might conduct my walk unto the honour of His holy name and in which anxiety I often counsel in this way, which He knows the best. Oh, do forgive me that I do not express myself further in this regard. If I could speak with you in person, I would declare myself further and more lovingly in this regard. My beloved, pray, however, for us, and pray for the entire Christendom and also each one for himself; presently we can still do so, presently God still gives us time for that, now He will still receive penitence for sins, but for how much longer this will still be the case, we do not know.

I might well refer to the so-familiar evening song, the 11th verse, and from song 241, the last three verses, and the Revelation of St. John 14 v.7. Yet, my outlook remains firmly standing according to the words of Paul in 2 Thess., chapter 2, and truly what Peter says in his second epistle in chapter three from verses 9 to the end.

Wherefore I give you my heartfelt wish that you might confess and remain true until the death; that is my heartfelt wish. Amen.

Now, my beloved cousin, about that which you write to have heard about your very be-

loved brother Klaas Wall, that as I understand it, he belongs there in the Bergthaler Colony; do not believe ours that they had fault in my deportation, but I through a writing which was sent from here to the [Guardianship] Committee, apparently made our return more difficult, regarding which I have otherwise not yet heard anything. It also gave me a real boost of my heart that I read such, but what shall I say thereto. From here I wrote to the Lord Privy Councillor Barcho v Rosen. The children had already often pleaded with me, I should write to him, however I hesitated. Finally I got such drive to do so and simultaneously such a great trust in this Lord, that after I in my weakness had spoken to God in my prayers and asked for permission as well as for words, that He might give them to me for that purpose, that without two moments hesitation I wrote it out exactly as it came to me. I also felt myself compelled because of your somewhat expressed concern there, to send a copy to the beloved honourable Ältester Jakob Dyck. At the first opportunity, my beloved, travel to him; he might read it to you and also let you copy it; otherwise I would well wish for this to remain among you, for the world is full of deceit and cunning.

And should I have thereby omitted something or made an error that our moving back is thereby weakened, what shall I say? It has already happened, and if it then only falls back on us and not on anyone else, then God be praised - upon whom my hope is firmly placed - and their accusations before the world will not stand before God, for His Word remains constant and unbreakable: that which you have done to the least of them here on earth, you have done unto me. Yet I would wish that everyone in this time of grace might have their eyes opened in that regard and that no one would take it over into eternity, what they have carried out not only against me, but the anger which they have already executed for years, is horrible. Indeed, when I so truly reflect in that regard, my senses almost remain motionless, regarding people who supposedly have attired themselves in Christ's blood and righteousness and stand there to preach His word, that they have allowed themselves to be torn that way so far. Lord, do not remember them for their sins; help me Lord Jesus to be able to speak in truth. Amen.

Otherwise, I do not know much more to report to you for this time my beloved friends, other than this much my beloved cousin, with the petition I also send you our passports as Prussian subjects, as well as the circular, which also lay in every village office - I think also in your colony - already before our departure from there, for the purpose that it was to truly bring us into disrepute here as well, in order that you might also show the same to the Privy Councillor. For during the first winter here I travelled to Danzig to the Russian Consul and presented our matter to him and also showed him our passport and the same writing. He was astonished by the same and advised me to immediately appeal to the Russian Czar through the Prussian government. Upon my request to him, to rather go through him instead of the Prussian government, it was, however, manifestly apparent from looking at my passport, whether I was a Prussian, and when this became evident, that no inquiries in that regard were possible. This Consul died and thus the entire matter remained in abeyance, which was very painful for me, for this gentlemen demonstrated very great compassion for us, and said, that in as far as he knew, the Mennonites were held in high regard by the Czar.

Finally, a most heartfelt greeting of love from me and my wife unto you all who are our friends and relatives. I will remain bonded with you in love until the death and will never forget you. God bless! Amen. "Heinrich Wiens"

Copied by me, Johann Wall, Neuhorst, March 16, 1850.

Sixth Letter, 1849.

This is the sixth letter by the honourable Ältester Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he wrote to Prussia here to Russia after his deportation.

Kleine Heuboden, November 21, 1849

To the Church-Ältester Jakob Dyck, Rosenthal, Chortitzer Colony!

Most worthy champion of battle and colleague in service in Christ! After firstly wishing you all of God's blessing unto body and soul from the inexhaustible well of the grace of Jesus out of true and heartfelt love, and simultaneously notifying you of the health of my beloved wife and myself, I report that we have received your loving letter of August 1 here on September 3, and the joyous reference regarding the previous health of the beloved friend Wall, according to his writing of November 5, and for which we pass on our heartfelt thanks unto you, honourable [Ohm], together with the wish that the health remained at the best, and that this unworthy writing might find you alive and in good well-being.

Ohm Abr. Regier was quite moved by the little note regarding yourself and for this reason I am also to pass on a heartfelt greeting and thanks. He finds himself more-or-less well.

There is still no news to report regarding the journey of the Ältesten to Berlin. In order to nurse the wounded soldiers, all the Gemeinden together have made a joint collection of 3,000 Thaler cash, in respect of which they also received a very loving acknowledgement. How things will turn out otherwise, no one can really say. May the Lord uphold us all in His wisdom. Generally, though, things do seem rather dark to me and I would so dearly like to speak to you, beloved, regarding so many circumstances, and also regarding the situation here, if it would be possible. For I say again, things look very dark to me.

A heartfelt joy was awakened within me when I perceived from your letter that you had been visited by the Molotschna brethren, asking you to come to help bring about a reconciliation there. Oh, if only our Ohms there would not intermingle themselves with the others without you, as it will grieve me for my lifetime if they with their arrogant prohibitionary writings should have torn our bond with you. I certainly more than wish for a reconciliation but not without you, beloved. With a bended disposition I extend my hand in brotherhood, but only with you and with my entire being, according to Galatians 5, verse 14, 15, so that I too can forgive from the heart. Whether or not those - as I have understood from Wall's writing - excuse themselves regarding my exile out of the country, the question remains: will they thereby also be able to excuse themselves before God, or whether their dealings as manifested as against me shall ever be able to stand before God? I regard this [aspect] as much more serious than the banishment.

Yet, everything certainly remains under the Lord's sovereignty and His holy name is glorified by me. As a Father He concerns Himself abundantly over us here in this foreign land. Although I perceive from the few lines in the writing to friend Wall, that he had read them and that possibly doubts and anxieties had arisen within him as to what kind of a letter I had sent to the *Comite*, I cannot do otherwise than to send you an exact copy in the quickest way possible [so that you yourself can determine] the contents of the same.

The circular, which came to all the village offices [Schulzenämter] already while we were still there [Russia], was not at first sent to the Honourable Ältesten Abr. Reger, rather [it was sent] to those who were wholly agreed and the same was passed on to him, and he wrote out a copy for himself. That I have - at least as indicated in friend Wall's writing - made a return [to Russia] more difficult, was certainly not my intention, nor was it that I thereby got too [dangerously] close to an important personage. Rather, in so doing I had such trust to write to the most worthy Privy Counsellor v. Rosen - almost as if I was writing to you, beloved; also, he will quickly surmise [from my letter] that I am no [customary] writer of petitions, and because of my poor [hand] writing, I had it properly rewritten by a young person who is together with us here.

But until the present day I have not experienced nor heard anything regarding what I wrote. I wrote in that regard to the delegates, that if they should happen to come to speak to the prince [Herrn], they should certainly seek to ascertain if errors were made therein; and should it thereby, as indicated, not have been beneficial with respect to our eventual return, I would hereby bid you, most beloved, that you would want to support us in any possible way as best you know how.

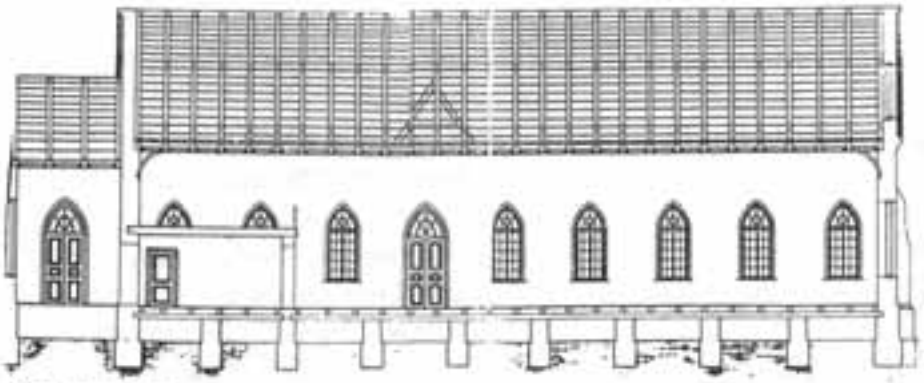
Also please make friend Wall familiar with this copy. It is my wish that the Lord might immediately erase any existing anxieties regarding the writing.

With another similar greeting of love unto you from my wife and myself, we remain your unforgetting friends and fellow pilgrims bonded until we see each other again.

Amen! I commit you unto the grace of God. Best wishes unto you, so far distant fellow-servant in the Gospel. Amen.

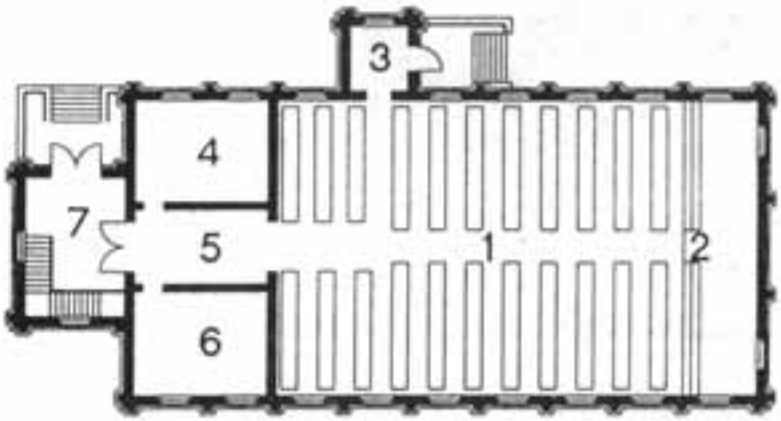
"Heinrich Wiens"

Copied by me, Johann Wall, Neuhorst, March 16, 1850. This is the sixth letter from the Honourable Ältesten Heinrich Wiens from the Molotschna which he wrote here to Russia after his exile to Prussia.

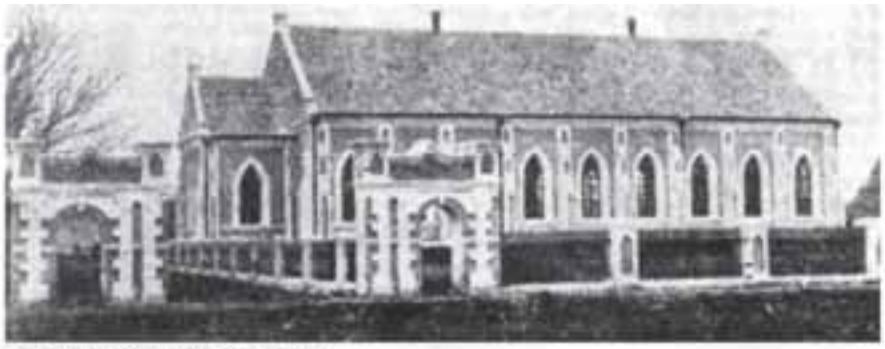


Cross section

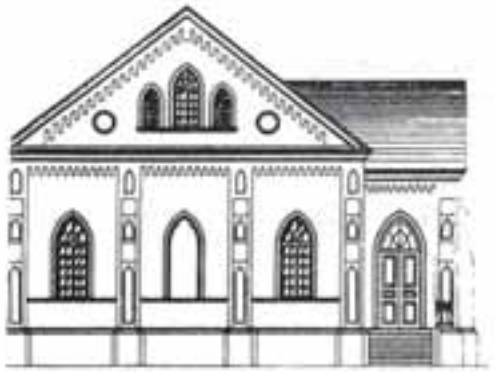
Side entrance extension



1. SANCTUARY
2. PULPIT
3. SIDE ENTRANCE
4. MINISTERS' ROOM
5. COATS
6. WOMEN'S ROOM
7. ENTRANCE FOYER



Schönsee Church building



West elevation

The Schönsee worship house, Molotschna. In 1909 a petition was filed for permission to build the Schönsee worship house. Government approval was granted and the church built shortly thereafter. Rudy Friesen writes that the "Schönsee church building was one of the most ornate Mennonite churches in Russia. It was built in a neo-Gothic style complete with Gothic shaped windows and buttresses between the windows.....It was placed parallel to the street with the pulpit/platform at one end of the long rectangular sanctuary. At the other end of the building....was an extension which was the main entrance....There was another extension along the main wall facing the yard, which was the side entrance....The seating capacity of the building was 700. The interior had a fresco ceiling painted by an Italian artist. After the civil war the building was turned into a granary and then into a club," from Into the Past, *pages 292-293. For an article and photo of the Petershagen and Schönsee churches in 1994 by Orlando Hiebert, see* Pres., *No. 7, pages 26-27. See* Diese Steine, *pp. 276-279, for additional photos of the Schönsee church. The old style with the council/pulpit on the long side reflected the long-standing tradition of equality and democracy of the Flemish Mennonites, which Ältester Heinrich Wiens had fought so hard to protect. The Prediger or Fah'moona, was an equal chosen from among the brethren to admonish them in the ways of the Gospel. Having the minister standing in front at the narrow end reflected a more Protestant way of organizing the church where the pastor had become part of a paid educated elite telling the parishioners what theology to hold, what to think, etc. The prayers were now spoken out loud by the clergy whereby the prayer concerns of the parishioners were mediated to God by the clergy. Praying was no longer a communal sighing of the spirit by equals before God.*

The Hutterian Brethren in the Molochna, 1842-74

"Struggle for Identity and Confession. The Hutterian Brethren in the Molochna Colony, South Russia, 1842-74,"
by Astrid Von Schlacta, 20/10 Fürstenweg, 6020 Insbruck, Austria (011-43-676-3327310).

Introduction.

The time the Hutterites spent in the Molochna - 30 years during the 19th century - is a short time compared to nearly 500 years of Hutterian history in general. But these 30 years constitute an important period of the Hutterite story and they proved to be very crucial for the Hutterites to find their identity - a process whose consequences radiate into the 21st century. It was an epoch of struggle for identity and confession, the aftermath of a tension between old Anabaptist traditions and new influences. But before taking a closer look on the Hutterites in the Molochna, we have to have a glimpse on the Hutterites before the Molochna.

Historical Background.

Hutterite origin lay in Moravia in the 16th century where a lot of persecuted Anabaptists found refuge due to a tolerant climate provided by local nobles and landlords. Jakob Huter after whom the group later was named, stemmed from the village Moos in the Pustertal valley in Tyrol. Because of the strong persecution of Anabaptists in their home lands he organized the emigration of his fellow believers to Moravia. Here, they founded early communities sharing all property. The Moravian nobles welcomed on their estates emigrants from Tyrol, Württemberg, Bavaria and other parts of the Empire.

In this first period of Hutterite history the community found its specific identity based on Anabaptist principles such as believers' baptism, pacifism, separation and, specifically Hutterite, community of goods. Church, social and spiritual life was being organized - the Hutterites had and still have a tremendous corpus on church writings, as ordinances, letters, sermons and historical reports - and the community prospered, especially economically. But Hutterite fate changed with the beginning of the Thirty Years' War (1618), when all Non-Catholics had to leave Moravia.

The Hutterites continued their migration and found refuge in Upper Hungary and Transsylvania where they settled until the late 18th century. But in the late 17th and early 18th century new phases of recatholization struck the areas of Hutterite settlement. Pressure on the Anabaptists was intensified due to Jesuit missionaries who tried to recatholize the remaining non-Catholic subjects of the Habsburg Empire. The Hutterites in Upper Hungary were forced to adopt childs' baptism. Furthermore they gave up community of goods. Within the following decades Hutterites in this area were more and more assimilated into the surrounding society.

Only in Transsylvania, which continued as a tolerant region within the Habsburg Empire, was a life for non-Catholic subjects still possible. Here a small, declining remnant of Hutterites survived until the 18th century. During the 1750s this small Hutterite group, which only consisted of a few families and which certainly would have disappeared, was joined by persecuted Protestants from Carinthia (South Austria). These Protestants had to leave their homelands after the Empress Maria Theresia had ordered the deportation of all Protestants in her Hereditary Lands to Transsylvania.

Some of these deported Protestants became interested in the Hutterite faith and finally got baptized. They built up their own "Bruderhof" and started a life in community of goods - and brought "fresh blood" into the old Anabaptist Hutterites. With these conversions a time within the Hutterite community started which was characterized by a tense dualism between the old Hutterite Anabaptist tradition and the new Protestant influences.

Johannes Waldner.

But by the 1760s the situation in Transsylvania got more and more difficult since Jesuit missionaries also reached these regions in order to continue their work of recatholization. The Hutterites decided to immigrate to Walachia and further on to the Northern parts of the Ukraine where they established a colony of about 200 members in Radiceva. Here Johannes Waldner became the leading person within the Hutterite community. His name stands for a very interesting period of Hutterite history. Johannes Waldner was of Carinthian background; as a young boy he had been among the deported Protestants. In 1794 he was elected as Elder of the whole community; his contribution among others was the continuation of the Hutterite Chronicle - the Austrian historian Johann Loserth called him "the only true historian of the Hutterites".

Johannes Waldner started a very intensive correspondence with Pietistic groups, especially with the Herrnhut Brüdergemeine. He showed a deep interest in their ideas, a curiosity for non-Anabaptist thinking; he was open to discussions about questions of theology and practical Christian living. Waldner's correspondence stands for a significant change of the Hutterites position from separation to a more open-minded spirit. But this spirit was not met with general approval by all community members, so that his time was characterized by a sort of clash between the old Anabaptist tradition and teaching and the new Protestant-Pietistic thinking; this clash reached into the Hutterite community and caused a tension between tradition and renewal.

Community of Property.

When Johannes Waldner died in 1824 the crisis among the Hutterites could not be denied. In 1818 a dispute between two elders about the necessity of community of goods had led to a serious confrontation - economic problems had caused the dispute. The Hutterites split and one group went to South Russia to find new possibilities of living close to the Mennonite settlements around Chortitza. This group of nearly 30 families with its leader Jacob Walther, who had argued for giving up community of goods, was integrated in the Molochnan Mennonite villages for one winter. The parting from their former fellow believers did not proceed without difficulties because the Walther group trying to start a new life in private property, demanded its part of the financial resources of the community. Furthermore the best craftsmen went with Jacob Walther.

The situation changed again when a short time later a fire destroyed the colony in Radiceva. The chances for the Walachian Hutterite group which still lived in community of goods to survive tended to be almost zero.

Therefore, Jacob Walther and his fellow believers in Chortitza decided to return to Walachia in order to help and prevent a total decline of the church. Although a complete reunion of both groups did not take place, for the following years they lived in neighbouring villages. Nevertheless, the spiritual and economic decline of the Hutterite church, which was yet another decline in their history, could not be delayed.

Molotschna, 1842.

A solution and a way out for a new beginning opened up in the move to the Molochna where contacts with the Mennonites had been maintained and where the Hutterites were encouraged by the guarantee of help from the outside. But only after several years of waiting and the intervention of Johann Cornies had the government at last allowed the settlement of the Hutterites. Cornies had to promise to integrate the Hutterian group into the economic and social life of the Mennonite villages. He also had to confirm that the costs of the settlement would be fully met by local resources. The first settlement of the financially and spiritually impoverished Hutterites in the Gouvernement Taurien was Huttertal. Later on, when the Hutterite community grew larger, the villages Johannesruh, Neu-Hutterdorf and Dobritscha, were founded. The Hutterites stayed in South Russia from 1842 to 1874.

Approximately 50 families of Hutterites arrived in the newly established village Hutterthal (Gouvernement Taurien) in 1842. They started living in private property, since community of goods had finally been given up in Radiceva. Hutterite agriculture in the Molochna was organized according to the Mennonite model; social and political structures within the villages also corresponded to the common self-administration. Already by 1852, the community had grown large enough to found a second colony, Johannesruh.

New Identity.

In contrast to the outward very positive and promising development leading to prosperity,

Astrid von Schlacta at Molotschna 2004 conference, June 6, 2004. Photo - Adina Reger.

the inner condition of the Hutterite church during the times of resettlement as well as during the following years presented itself in a constant and ongoing situation of crisis and conflict. The reasons were the already mentioned different lines of tradition, the Anabaptist and the Carinthian-Protestant, which also had caused the conflicts in Radiceva. Additionally, in the Molochna the Hutterites were confronted with several more questions that led to discussions and splits: the question of political participation and discussions around reinstating community of goods.

Although destructive in the beginning, these problems in the end helped the Hutterites to find their old - new identity; they helped to shape and reorganize Hutterite community after nearly one century of turmoil. The process of finding a new and strengthened confessional identity was paved with splits and schisms. But the result of this process was the basis for another period of prosperity and growth in the North American Dakota Territories and in Canada which eventually lasted into the 21st century. From a retrospective perspective the importance of the "Molochnan climate" becomes obvious; for the Hutterites it was like going through the desert (steppe) to find their identity.

Three topics were fundamental for the Hutterite crisis in the Molochna: communal living, political participation (civil authority) and community of goods. The first problem arose out of the fact that the political and social structures in Hutterthal, a typical South Russian street village, were oriented on the model of self-administration which had been granted to the Mennonites decades earlier. Therefore, the Hutterites had to appoint a "Dorfschulze" and two "Beisitzer" as political authority - this appointment was followed by conflicts that were similar to those the Mennonites had to face in Prussia when they had to find their position towards questions of political participation. The Grosse Gemeinde also went through the same process before the schism in 1842.

Civil Authority.

The appointment of the "Dorfschulze" and the "Beisitzer" conflicted with internal church structures which had grown over centuries, based upon clear hierarchies and containing fixed mechanisms of sanctions for non-conformist behaviour. Consequently, a discussion within the Hutterite community started as to whether Hutterites should and were allowed to participate in a "worldly" political administration. Since the 16th century Hutterites had refused this participation due to the teaching that no Christian should hold a political office. In South Russia the Hutterites now were forced to elect one man out of their midst for the office of the "Schulze", and they had to transfer political authority and jurisdiction from the ecclesiastical area into the general public - before this, authority and jurisdiction had been the responsibility of the church elders. They had been the authority; it had been their power to decide about the politics of the church and e.g. about matters of punishment and ban.

A long report - "The decline of the church in Russia and whose fault it is" - paints a colourful and detailed picture of the internal difficulties the Hutterites had with the submission of the church

European Hutterian Communities, 16th-19th Centuries.

members under the authority of the "Dorfschulze". The report is anonymous, but most likely and obviously written by a Hutterite of the faction which wanted to stick to the old ways and cling to the old ordinances. The "Schulze" for example was accused of "clinging to the world" and generally holding too much power. The critic notes that the Schulzen would even judge, mock and beat the elders who had previously been the highest authority. His conclusion was that "God has departed from the Schulzenamt." And to extend the argument: the Mennonites and, particularly, Johann Cornies were not led by God because they stood behind the Schulzenamt as the highest authority.

Community of Goods.

Besides these questions of political participation the Hutterites had to deal with a second fundamental problem. For a long time of their history the Hutterite church had been characterized by community of goods. But this special Hutterite teaching and practice had been given up in Radiceva and in the Molotchna the church members continued living with private property. Due to the economic upturn the Hutterites now experienced the mostly unknown situation of different standards of living within their community. Rich Hutterites stood side by side with poor ones who had to earn their money as loan workers - an inequality which caused further conflicts.

The subsequent discussions awakened the memory of the "good old times" in some Hutterites when the church lived a "peaceful" life in community of goods and when the old hierarchies still functioned and regulated the social and spiritual life. The desire grew to reinstate community of goods as the right path shown by Jesus for his disciples. But this wish was met with resistance not only by the authorities, the welfare office, the Agricultural Society and the Mennonites, but also within the Hutterite church itself. Two church members, Jakob Walter and Jörg Waldner, which fought for re-establishing community of goods, asked in a letter to the welfare office for foreign colonists in South Russia in 1848 "that we would be allowed to go back to our former conditions and establish a 'Bruderhof' on this behalf. Due to the hostility not only among our brothers but also among the elders we ask the welfare office for help,"[Note 1].

To make the first preparations for communal living a group around Jörg Waldner separated from the other church members and gathered for their own meetings in Johannes Stahl's house where they would hold services and pray. Finally, in some existing villages and in some newly founded daughter colonies, community of goods was established: in Hutterdorf (1857), in Neu-Hutterthal and Johannesruh (1864), in Scheromet (1868). The internal Hutterite writings from the 16th and 17th century which propagated community of goods and the example of the first church in Jerusalem as the only way of living for the disciples of Jesus Christ proved to be basic for reinstating community of goods.

The Mennonites and, especially, Johann Cornies have to be noted as being of great importance for the Hutterites in South Russia and of having a significant impact on their social and spiritual development. This influence not only concerned the provision of a model of economic and political structures in the first years of their settlement and their recommendation to the authorities, but also extended over Hutterite social and spiritual life. Among others, under the guidance of Johann Cornies the school system in the Hutterite colonies was reorganized. Further on, Cornies brought the old Hutterite tradition to an end that the marriage of a woman to a man was arranged by the elders. Obviously, these intrusions into old traditions added to the discussions and conflicts within the Hutterian church, but also in their relationship to the Mennonites.

Conclusions.

As can be seen, the Hutterite settlements in the Gouvernement Taurien were integrated into the Mennonite political, social and economic village structures from the very beginning. With time going on the Hutterites though tried to free themselves from these structures in order to again introduce traditions which had been handed down by their own history and through their spiritual and church writings. Accordingly, they tried to practice separation more strictly - from the local aspect by founding new colonies, practicing community of goods, outwardly e.g. by special clothing ordinances.

The advantage of the Hutterites was their corpus of church writings and ordinances stemming from the 16th and 17th century. Here the foundation of Hutterite life had been set down and in every church crisis the Hutterites could base their reorganisation on century-old and proven principles.

Thus, the time in South Russia for the Hutterite church or for the three communal groups which later separately settled in the Dakota Territories - the Schmiede-, Darius- and Lehrerleut - proved to be an important phase of identity building pointing the way into the 20th and 21st century. The circumstances of living in the Molotschna, the influences coming from the outside and the internal discussions, became a catalyst for the formation of a new, old Hutterite identity.

Endnotes:

Note 1: A. J. F. Ziegschmid (Hg.), *Das Klein-Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder*, Philadelphia 1947, p. 443.

Further Reading:

Astrid von Schlacta, "`Searching through the Nations': tasks and problems of sixteenth-century Hutterian mission," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Jan. 2000, pages 27-49.

Oberschulz vs. Vorsteher.

An interesting aside that arose during the research for this Molotschna bicentennial issue is that the earlier Russian Mennonite historical works, e.g. Franz Isaak (1906) and P. M. Friesen (1910), and the documentation published therein, used the term "Vorsteher" in referring to the head of the Gebietsamt (the civil authority in the Mennonite community) and not Oberschulze. The exception, however, is D. H. Epp (1889), who uses the term "Oberschulze" relative to the head of the civic authority (pp. 75-76) although he uses the term "Vorsteher" relative to the civic leader in the Fürstenland Colony (p. 91). Franz Doerksen writes that the six Fürstenlandt villages "...had to elect a man from their midst who was then presented to the Oberverwalter. The latter then affirmed him as Vorsteher over the six colonies," *Diese Steine*, pages 438-9.

The *Mennonite Encyclopedia* article (Vol IV, pages 14-15) simply explains that "Oberschulze (German for mayor or executive official) was the highest officer of the district or county." One assumption is that the term "Vorsteher" was the traditional word used by the Flemish Mennonites in the Vistula delta during the 18th century as head of the civic or material functions of the Gemeinde, e.g. managing church properties, cemeteries, fire insurance, etc., as opposed to spiritual matters which were the responsibility of the Ältester. Presumably the term was slowly replaced with Oberschulze as Germanization advanced among the Russian Mennonites during the 19th century. However, Professor S. Voolstra, Amsterdam, states he is not aware of any precedent for the term "Vorsteher" in the Dutch context, and suggests that the term may have Low German origins. Hutterites also used the term "Vorsteher" (Cf: Horst Penner, pp. 106 and 166).

James Urry writes "I have found the Khortitza Mennonites using the term `Oberschulze' in 1848 where the single historical report is signed by Bartsch as Oberschulze" (Woltner, *Gemeindeberichten*, page 28). Urry adds that the "...Guardian's Committee regulations (i.e.1875) [in their]....official regulations for Gebietsverwaltung used the term Gebietsvorsteher NOT Oberschulze." E. K. Francis (*In Search of Utopia*) consistently uses only the term "Oberschulze". In the case of the East Reserve Bergthaler, the reference is always to Oberschulze, although the Bergthaler were unique among the Mennonite emigrating to Manitoba in that for them the concept of Gemeinde and Gebietsamt was co-terminous.

According to Peter Zacharias (*Reinland*, page 58), the conservative Old Colonists emigrating to Manitoba in the 1870s used the term Vorsteher to express their dissatisfaction with the fact that the Oberschulzen in Russia, technically had power over the Ältester, the head of the church community around which all of life was to be structured. One can possibly conclude then that the origins of the Old Colonist distaste for Oberschulze originated in the strong arm power associated with the office in Russia while at the same time the largest single component of their community came from Fürstenland where their civic leaders, the "Vorsteher" had significantly lessor powers. For the Old Colonists the word Vorsteher signified that the head of the civil authority within their community had a different and somewhat less powerful status in their Gemeinde, always subject to the supreme authority of the church.

American Civil Religion and the New Religious Right

"Civil Religion, the American Dream and the New Religious Right: A Study in Confusion and Tension," by Robert D. Linder, Department of History, Eisenhower Hall, Kansas State University, Manhatten, Kansas, U.S.A., 66506.

Introduction.

"The American Dream" is an illusive concept, yet most of those who live in the United States believe there is such a thing (Note One). Roughly speaking, it has something to do with freedom and equality of opportunity. In the political realm, it involves the shared dream of a free and equal society. The fact that the reality does not fit the dream is probably well known, for no society can be both free and equal at the same time. Even in a relatively open and mobile nation like the USA, there are still relatively few at the top of the heap, many more in the middle, and some at or near the bottom.

John Winthrop.

Nevertheless, in the United States, even those who have the most reason to deny its reality still cling to its promise, if not for themselves at least for their children. In any event, it can be said of the American Dream, in the words of sociologist W. Lloyd Warner, that "…though some of it is false, by virtue of our firm belief in it, we have made some of it true," (Note Two). What is operative in the case of the American Dream and society-at-large also seems to be operative in the realm of religion and the Dream (Note Three).

Puritan John Winthrop's oft-cited and well-known 1630 metaphor of "A City upon a Hill" and sometime Baptist and Seeker Roger Williams' less known but equally hallowed vision of a country in which, as he observed in 1644, "God requireth not an uniformity of Religion to be inacted and inforced in any civil state…" provide the background for understanding the historic tension between two aspects of the American Dream in the realm of religion. Over the years, the Puritan sense of cosmic mission as God's New Israel eventually became part of America's national identity and the radical stand for religious freedom developed into the American ideal of religious and cultural pluralism. And so the two dreams of Americans for a religiously harmonious nation and a religiously free nation have existed side-by-side down to the present - sometimes in relative peace but often in turmoil and tension (Note Four).

Roger Williams.

"....the Puritan sense of cosmic mission as God's New Israel eventually became part of America's national identity...."

The First American Dream and Religion: Puritan Reformers vs. Radical Restorationists

The Puritans who gave the country its rich imagery of America as a City on a Hill and as a second Israel lived with a great deal of tension themselves. They were, by self-definition, elect spirits, segregated from the mass of humankind by an experience of conversion, fired by the sense that God was using them to revolutionize human history, and committed to the execution of his will. As such, they constituted a crusading force of immense energy. However, in reality, it was an energy that was often incapable of united action because the Puritan saints formed different conceptions of what the divine will entailed for themselves, their churches, and the unregenerate world-at-large. Nevertheless, they were certain of their mission in the New World: to be an example of how a covenanted community of heartfelt believers could function. Thus, in New England the relation of church and state was to be a harmonious partnership, for church and state alike were to be dominated by the saints (Note Five).

"....church and state alike were to be dominated by the saints..."

This arrangement worked fairly well for the first American Puritans, but in the second and third generations the tension began to mount between the concept of a New Israel composed only of elect saints on the one hand and the Puritan conviction that true Christians were those who had experienced a genuine conversion to Christ on the other. Everything in the New Israel depended on the saints. They were the church and they ruled the state. But what if the second generation did not respond to the call for conversion and the supply of saints ran out?

The answer was eventually to establish an arrangement, usually called the halfway covenant, whereby those who of the second generation who did not experience conversion in the Puritan mold could be admitted to church membership after making a profession of communal obedience which, in turn, allowed them to have their children baptized in order to place them under the covenant. In short, the Puritans had discovered how difficult it was to make certain that the second and third generations were soundly converted and thus qualified to keep the City on the Hill operating properly according to the ordinances of God.

In any event, the Puritans maintained their sense of destiny and purpose by means of this patch-work scheme. However, the concept of New England as God's New Israel was given new impetus during the First Great Awakening in the first half of the seventeenth century. American theologian and Congregational minister Jonathan Edwards, for one, saw the hand of God at work in the awakening, in both a theological and social sense. Edwards believed that there would be a golden age for the church on earth achieved through the faithful preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. The world thus would be led by the American example of faithful preaching, impressive conversions and godly living into the establishment of the millennium. In so doing, the New Englanders were surely God's chosen people, his New Israel (Note Six).

As most people know, the millennium did not come in Edwards' day or even immediately thereafter. Instead the First Great Awakening died out and the original theistically-oriented chosen nation theme was metamorphosed into a civil millennialism. This occurred in the period between the end of the awakening in the 1740s and the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775. It was in this era that the transferal of the central concepts of seventeenth-century Puritan ideology to the future American republic, including the New Israel motif, took place.

Disappointed that the great revival did not result in the dawning of the millennium, many colonial preachers turned their apocalyptic expectations elsewhere. In short, when the First Awakening tailed off, many evangelical leaders attempted to reinterpret the millennial hope it had spawned. In the process, the clergy, in a subtle but profound shift in religious values, redefined the ultimate goal of apocalyptic hope. The old expectation of the conversion of all nations to Christianity became diluted with, and often subordinated to, the commitment to America as the new seat of liberty. First France and then England became the archenemies of freedom, both civil and religious.

The Pilgrims.

In his insightful study of this development, historian Nathan Hatch concludes: "The civil millennialism of the Revolutionary era, expressed by the rationalists as well as pietists, grew out of the politicizing of Puritan millennial history in the two decades before the Stamp Act crisis….Civil millennialism advanced freedom as the cause of God, defined the primary enemy as the antichrist of civil oppression rather than that of formal religion, traced the myths of its past through political developments rather than through the vital religion of the forefathers, and turned its vision toward the privileges of Britons rather than to a heritage exclusive to New England," (Note Seven).

Thus, the First Great Awakening was not only a significant religious event, but also a popular movement with wide-ranging political and ideological implications that laid the groundwork for an emotional and future-oriented American civil religion. The revolutionary generation began to build an American nation based upon the religious foundations of evangelical revivalism. The latter-day New England Puritans were joined by many other American Protestants in seeing themselves as jointly commissioned to awaken and to guide the nation into the coming period of millennial fulfillment.

But in the process, where the churches moved out, the nation moved in. Gradually, the nation emerged in the thinking of most Americans as the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history. They began to bestow on their new nation a catholicity of destiny similar to that which theology usually attributes to the universal church. Thus, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution became the covenants that bound together the people of the nation and secured to them God's blessing, protection, and call to historic mission. Most important, the United States itself became the covenanted community and God's New Israel, destined to spread real freedom and true religion to the rest of the world (Note Eight).

In the nineteenth-century, this transmutation of the millennial ideal resulted in what became known as "Manifest Destiny." Coined by journalist John L. Sullivan in 1845, Manifest Destiny came to mean for countless Americans that Almighty God had "destined" them to spread over the entire North American continent. And as they did, they would take with them their uplifting and ennobling political and religious institutions (Note Nine).

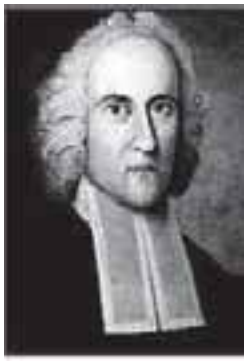
But there was another religious dream abroad in the land that did not rest upon the model of a City on a Hill or God's New Israel. This was the belief in religious liberty that had grown out of the Protestant left, generally known as the Radical Reformation. This view originally stood alongside of and in many cases opposed to the idea that New England was God's New Israel. The classic spokesperson for this second concept was Roger Williams, founder of the Rhode Island colony - the first real haven for religious dissidents on American soil.

As already mentioned, Williams rejected the Puritan notion of a religiously covenant community that could exercise political power. He valued religious liberty and religious individualism more than religious uniformity and religious communitarianism. In fact, he stoutly resisted the Puritan teaching that New England was God's New Israel and asserted that: "The State of the Land of Israel, the Kings and people thereof in Peace and War, is proven figurative and ceremoniall, and no patterne nor president for any Kingdome or civille state in the world to follow, (Note Ten).

In sum, Williams boldly declared his basic premises that civil magistrates are to rule only in civil and never in religious matters, and that persecution of religion had no sanction in the teachings of Jesus, thus undercutting the whole ideological foundation for the Puritan goal of creating a Christian state that would be a City on a Hill.

Quaker William Penn was also in this radical tradition. In both Baptist Rhode Island and Quaker Pennsylvania, religious liberty resulted in religious pluralism. This was all right with Williams and Penn, for both believed that true faith could not be coerced. Jesus must be freely accepted by the individual. That was the New Testament way. But how could God's New Israel survive such a cacophony of spiritual voices? How could the religious mosaic that soon emerged in the new nation be reconciled with the view that America was God's chosen nation? How could any semblance of religious unity be achieved if religious liberty prevailed? In short, how could this religious smorgasbord ever be regarded as a covenanted community?

The answer lay in the willingness of Enlightenment figures like Thomas Jefferson to reach out to the New Israel exponents on the right and the religious liberty champions on the left in order to create an American civil religion. Jefferson, the great champion of religious liberty and political individualism, also embraced the imagery of the United States as a second Israel. In his second inaugural address on 4 March 1805, Jefferson told the American people that during his second term as their national leader, he would need: "the favor of that Being in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life; who has covered our infancy with His providence and our riper years with His wisdom and power, and to whose goodness I ask you to join in supplications with me that He will so enlighten the minds of your servants, guide their councils, and prosper their measures that whatsoever they do shall result in your good, and shall secure to you the peace, friendship, and approbation of all nations," (Note Eleven). Jefferson thus articulated the belief held by most Americans of that day that the United States and not just New England was a City on a Hill.



Jonathan Edwards.

"....Jefferson....reached out to the New Israel exponents on the right and the religious liberty champions on the left in order to create an American civil religion...."

The American Amalgam: Civil Religion

Exactly what was the civil religion that was able to subsume, for a time at least, these two divergent strands of the American Dream? Briefly stated, civil religion (some call it public religion) is that use of consensus religious sentiments, concepts and symbols by the state - either directly or indirectly - for its own purposes. Those purposes may be noble or debased, depending on the kind of civil religion (prophetic, pastoral or priestly) and the historical context. Civil religion involves the mixing of traditional religion with national life until it is difficult to distinguish between the two, and usually leads to a blurring of religion and patriotism and of religious values and national values. In the United States, it became a rather elaborate matrix of beliefs and practices born of the nation's historic experience and constituting the only real religion of millions of its citizens (Note Twelve).

"....Civil religion involves the mixing of traditional religion with national life until it is difficult to distinguish between the two,..."

During the newly proclaimed National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, President Bush addresses the congregation at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Sept. 14, 2001.

The Bush family and the Clinton families at the Washington Prayer service on Sept. 14, 2001 at the National Cathedral.

The nation's intellectuals - mostly children of the Enlightenment - and the country's Christians - mostly Bible-believing evangelicals - both supported the first American civil religion. Intellectuals like Jefferson encouraged it because it was general enough to include the vast majority of Americans and because it provided the moral glue for the body politic created by the social contract. Evangelicals embraced it because it appeared to be compatible (and perhaps even identical) with biblical Christianity. In any case, the initial American civil religion emerged from this confluence of the Enlightenment and biblical Christianity to promote both the concept of religious liberty and the notion that America was God's New Israel! (Note Thirteen).

Under the aegis of American civil religion, the idea of the City on a Hill and God's New Israel was advanced to that of the "redeemer nation" with a manifest destiny. In other words, gradually, the old Puritan notion was infused with secular as well as religious meaning, and joined with political as well as religious goals. This was accomplished in the course of American expansion and by means of political rhetoric and McGuffey's Reader. The Reader, in particular, almost universally taught American public school children between 1836 and 1920 that a good citizen was someone who loved God, neighbor and country (Note Fourteen).

The result of these developments is perhaps best illustrated by the story of President William McKinley's decision to annex the Philippines following the Spanish-American War in 1898. In November of the following year, McKinley, himself a devout Methodist layman, revealed to a group of visiting clergymen just how he came to sign the bill of annexation following a excruciating period of soul-searching and prayer: "I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I…went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance…. And one night late it came to me this way - (1) That we should not give them back to Spain - that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France or Germany - our commercial rivals in the Orient - that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves - they were unfit for self-government - and they would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them…. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep and slept soundly," (Note Fifteen).

In short, McKinley said that destiny and duty made it inevitable that the Americans should bring civilization and light - democratic civilization and biblical light - to the poor Filipinos. Manifest destiny had led God's New Israel down the primrose path of imperialism!

The concept that the United States is God's New Israel and a chosen nation is hardly dead. In his 1980 acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in Kansas City, presidential nominee Ronald Reagan declared: "Can we doubt that only a Divine Providence placed this land, this island of freedom, here as a refuge for all those people in the world who yearn to breathe free? Jews and Christians enduring persecution behind the Iron Curtain; the boat people of Southeast Asia, Cuba and of Haiti; the victims of drought and famine in Africa, the freedom fighters in Afghanistan…. God Bless America!" (Note Sixteen).

In many ways, Reagan's words in this instance extended the concept from America as a City on a Hill to America as a Cosmic Hotel, from the nation as a Model of Merit to the nation as a Magnet to the Masses.

Reagan also used the City on a Hill/Manifest Destiny motif with telling effect on many occasions during his presidency. For example, in September 1982, he received roaring approval from a large crowd at Kansas State University when he asserted: "But be proud of the red, white, and blue, and believe in her mission…. America remains mankind's best hope. The eyes of mankind are on us…remember that we are one Nation under God, believing in liberty and justice for all," (Note Seventeen). In March 1983, Reagan brought cheering evangelicals to their feet in Orlando, Florida, when he proclaimed to the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals: "America is great because America is good" and reiterated that the United States was "the last best hope of man," (Note Eighteen).

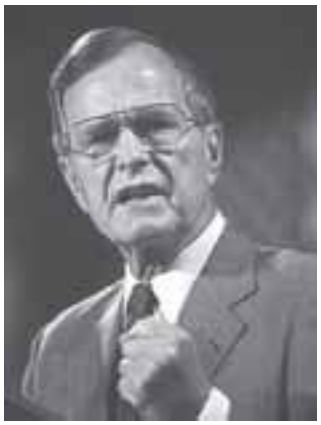
These themes of an elect nation and American spiritual exceptionalism continued throughout the presidencies of George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. The civil religion of the elder Bush was much like that of Reagan, his political mentor, as he spoke of God's help in winning both the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991. He also reiterated the City on a Hill imagery when in January 1992, he thanked the National Religious Broadcasters at their annual meeting for their help in overcoming the threats of Communism and Saddam Hussein in the late twentieth century as America continued to be "a light unto the world," (Note Nineteen).

However, Clinton and the younger Bush introduced startling new elements in the civil religion practiced by the American people when they enlarged the tents of the national faith to include new peoples and purposes. First, Clinton extended his civil religious concerns to include all of the people in the world as he used his bully pulpit and personal ministrations to become a "universal pastor" of a world flock (Note Twenty). Second, George W. Bush embraced an imperialist civil religion as he built upon Clinton's claim to universal pastoral oversight and asserted America's worldwide responsibility for maintaining not only the correct political order (freedom) and economic philosophy (capitalism) but also the right moral values (America's moral concerns). As he told graduating West Point Cadets on 1 June 2002, "The United States Military Academy is the guardian of values that have shaped the soldiers who have shaped the history of the world," (Note Twenty-One).

In addition, the second Bush internationalized civil religion to fit the new American Empire when he presided over the memorial service for the seven fallen crew members of the Space Shuttle Columbia in Houston, Texas, on 4 February 2003. On that occasion, the president not

President Ronald Regan.

President Dwight Eisenhoweer..



President George Bush Sr..

President George W. Bush Jr..

only assured the audience that they would some day be reunited with their deceased loved ones in heaven but also noted that the people of both India (her native land) and the United States (her adopted country) were grateful to Hindu astronaut Kalpana Chawla for her service to the United States and the world community (Note Twenty-Two).

As the former Puritan concept of a City on a Hill and God's New Israel evolved over the years from an evangelical, communitarian application to a religious, national one, there was a parallel development from religious liberty to cultural pluralism. Originally, religious liberty meant that the various denominations were free to spread the Gospel, as they understood it, without intrusion by either the government or a state church. In this context, an evangelical Protestant consensus emerged that made the United States in the nineteenth century into what historian William G. McLoughlin called "a unified, pietistic-perfectionist nation" and "the most religious people in the world," (Note Twenty-Three). However, that consensus began to crack near the end of the century as new immigrants from non-Protestant churches or no churches at all flowed into the country and as the secularizing forces associated with Darwinism, urbanization, and industrialization made their presence felt in American society. Moreover, as the country became more diverse, that diversity was protected - some would even say encouraged - by the nation's commitment to religious liberty. In this manner, slowly but surely, religious freedom was translated into cultural pluralism.

However, by the post-World War II period, this cultural pluralism was beginning to strain the bonds of national unity. It was a time of increasing tension and confusion. Looking back on the period 1945-1960, the late Paul Goodman lamented: "Our case is astounding. For the first time in recorded history, the mention of country, community, place has lost its power to animate. Nobody but a scoundrel even tries it. Our rejection of false patriotism is, of course, itself a badge of honor. But the positive loss is tragic and I cannot resign myself to it. A man has only one life and if during it he has no great environment, no community, he has been irreparably robbed of a human right," (Note Twenty-Four).

Goodman's analysis was not only a modern jeremiad, however; it was also a plea for the emergence of a modern unifying concept that would serve to hold the republic together. The destruction of the old evangelical Protestant consensus and with it the original American civil religion, and the emergence of cultural pluralism based on the American doctrine of religious liberty - and now reinforced by the melting pot myth - spelled out the need for a new civil religion based on the new facts of American life.

Rev. Billy Graham delivers the sermon during the national day of prayer and remembrance service at the National Cathedral in Washington, Friday, Sept. 11, 2001.

Ironically enough, during the very period when Goodman's observations most closely applied, a rejuvenated civil faith was, in fact, emerging. The new civil religion took shape during the Eisenhower presidency and it was as amiable and ambiguous as Ike himself, who acted as the nation's chief civil pastor. It was now a civil religion that had been enlarged to include not only the three major faiths of the land - Protestant, Catholic, Jew - but also anyone else who acknowledged a Supreme Being who cared to participate. The national mood of the 1950s was congenial to an outpouring of religiosity, and examples of it abounded: national days of prayer, the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag in 1954, the authorization to place "in God we trust" on all currency and coins and the adoption of the same phrase as the national motto in 1956 are a few examples.

Interestingly enough, hard on the heels of the new upsurge of civil religion in the 1950s came a time of great socio-political turmoil and widespread religious renewal in the 1960s. It was in this context that the New Religious Right (NRR) emerged in the 1970s - galvanized by its hostility to theological and political liberalism alike. In many ways, this New Religious Right resembled the old Puritanism as it began to interact with American civil religion. The NRR's first order of business was to purify church and state, to restore old values and old ideals, and, if possible, to put an end to the confusion and tension of the age.

American Civil Religion in the Hands of the New Religious Right: The Confusion and Tension Heightened.

The leaders of the NRR of the 1970s and 1980s found a civil religion that invested the civil officers of the country with a certain religious mystique; one that linked the social order to a higher and truer realm; one that provided religious motivation and sanction for civil virtue; one that, in short, served the functions of an established religion - and they liked it! It was a public religion that gave the majority of Americans an over-arching common spiritual heritage in which the entire nation supposedly shared. Because it did not appear to contradict their understanding of the American past nor their commitment to Bible Christianity, and because they did not have a profound understanding of civil religion or American history, and, further, because civil religion seemed suited to their goal of restoring America's spiritual vigor, NRR leaders embraced the American civil religion as they found it.

They did not seem to be aware of or under-

stand one perplexing feature of the American public faith, pointed out by historian Sidney E. Mead and others - namely, that it included a central doctrine of separation of church and state. This concept is, of course, a legacy of the historic American emphasis on religious liberty. As such, it greatly complicates the operation of civil religion in America and provides the public faith with a substantial element of self-contradiction. In any event, the leaders of the NRR hardly noticed this in the beginning. Consequently, they were often perplexed by those, especially many fellow evangelicals, who refused to go along with such parts of the NRR's program as the attempt to restore state initiated prayer in the public schools - a perfectly logical civil religion activity - because of the principle of religious liberty and its corollary separation of church and state (Note Twenty-Five).

"....Belief in America as a City on a Hill and as God's New Israel requires a postmillennial eschatology..."

But this last point illustrates the fact that the appearance of the NRR in the 1970s exacerbated the old tensions associated with the two religious components of the American Dream. Most of the adherents of the NRR came from traditions that accepted the doctrine of religious liberty, but the

Jerry Falwell, leader of the new religious right.

movement wholeheartedly embraced that part of American civil religion that emphasized America's national mission as God's New Israel. How can a nation that is so culturally diverse speak in terms of a national mission? Unfortunately, NRR leaders of the 1970s and 1980s did not seem to acknowledge the reality of that cultural diversity but preferred to think of America as it was throughout most of the nineteenth century - a religiously homogeneous nation.

Moreover, the NRR's millennial vision for America seemed to be inconsistent and confused. Belief in America as a City on a Hill and as God's New Israel requires a postmillennial eschatology - the view that the Kingdom of God is extended through Christian preaching and teaching as a result of which the world will be Christianized and will enjoy a long period of peace and righteousness called the millennium. During the nineteenth century, postmillennial views of the destiny of America played a vital role in justifying national expansion. Though there were other explanations for the nation's growth, the idea of a Christian republic marching toward a golden age appealed to many people. Millennial nationalism was attractive because it harmonized the republic with religious values. Thus, America became the hope of the nations - destined to uphold Christian and democratic principles that eventually would bring spiritual and political freedom to the world (Note Twenty-Six).

This is exactly what the leaders of the NRR, men like TV evangelist Jerry Falwell and best-selling author Tim LaHaye, believe. Falwell declares that the various activities of the Founding Fathers indicate that they "…were putting together God's country, God's republic, and for that reason God has blessed her for two glorious centuries," (Note Twenty-Seven). He has written approvingly: "Any diligent student of American history finds that our great nation was founded by godly men upon godly principles to be a Christian nation…. Our Founding Fathers firmly believed that America had a special destiny in the world," (Note Twenty-Eight). LaHaye proclaims that: "America is the human hope of the world, and Jesus Christ is the hope of America," (Note Twenty-Nine).

The only problem with all of this is that Falwell, LaHaye and many other leaders of the NRR are also premillennialists - adherents of that view of the future that claims that Jesus' return will be followed by a period of peace and righteousness before the last judgment, during which time Christ will reign as king in person or through a select group of people. This kingdom will not be established by the conversion of individuals over a long period of time, but suddenly and by overwhelming power. During the millennial kingdom, Christ will rule with a rod of iron and hold evil in check. Further, premillennialists believe that this kingdom will be preceded by a period of steady decline and by certain signs such as great tribulation, apostasy, wars, famines, earthquakes, and the appearance of the antichrist.

"....Falwell, LaHaye and many other leaders of the NRR are also premillennialists...."

By way of contrast, nineteenth-century premillennialists, who then constituted only a minority of American Christians, did not believe that their nation was a recipient of God's special favor but was rather just another Gentile world power. In short, they did not support the view that the United States was God's New Israel. Moreover, premillennialists today still maintain a rather gloomy scenario of the future, including the concept of a time of great decline immediately preceding the second coming of Christ (Note Thirty).

Tim LeHaye, leader of the new religious right and co-author of the popular "left behind" books.

There has always been inconsistency on the part of premillennialists with regard to their interpretation of world events and their desire to be patriotic Americans. This is particularly marked in the current New Religious Right Movement (Note Thirty-One). Individuals like Falwell and LaHaye have felt called to enter the social and political arena, but they do not have a consistent eschatological base for such activities. In essence, they want to support a certain type of postmillennial vision for America while maintaining a premillennial eschatology.

In fact, much of the NRR's program seems to be contradictory and inconsistent. Perhaps this is because of its confused eschatology. A further problem with its millennialism is its encouragement of the new American civil religion with its emphasis on the chosen nation theme and its incitement to empire while ignoring its constantly expanding theological canopy and the growing cultural pluralism in the United States today. There seems to be something bizarre about attempts to advocate any scheme to spread American political, cultural, and religious values to the world when there is so much debate among American intellectual elites over what those values are supposed to be. All of this has been complicated further by the government-endorsed policy of multiculturalism that emerged in full force in the 1990s. Moreover, much that is proposed by the NRR appears to contradict the historic American Dream of religious liberty - especially in terms of its drive to introduce state-sponsored prayers into public schools, its advocacy of tax credits and/or school vouchers for those who send their children to parochial schools, its insistence on a large, standing, professional army, and its fervent support of the policies of the New American Empire (Note Thirty-Two).

"....much that is proposed by the NRR appears to contradict the historic American Dream of religious liberty..."

Conclusions

There are many similarities between the adherents of the New Religious Right and the Puri-

God bless America."

tans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both seem to be movements composed of self-confessed godly people determined to change the moral and religious climate of their day. There also appear to be many of the same tensions in the two respective movements - especially the desire, on the one hand, for heartfelt religion to prevail and the wish, on the other, to impose a certain level of morality on society in general. There is, if you will, a perplexing contradiction in the two movements that made them want to create some kind of state church (or a common national religion) composed only of "true believers." As the Puritans discovered, it is impossible to combine the two elements in any meaningful way because true faith cannot be imposed by coercion, either directly or indirectly, especially in the context of religious freedom. It appears historically impossible to achieve the Puritan goals of an elect society composed entirely of genuine believers while at the same time allowing for religious liberty that, in turn, makes the conversion experience meaningful. Moreover, the New Testament to which so many adherents of the NRR claim to give allegiance teaches that morality likewise cannot be forced. That was the Puritan dilemma and it may well be the dilemma of the New Religious Right as well.

What happened to the Puritans when they tried to impose their values - no matter how high-minded and uplifting to humanity they may have been - on a larger society? They met first with frustration, then with disillusionment, and finally with the prospect of either acquiescing to a new regime or going into exile. After three generations of attempting to bring godly government to England and after fighting and winning a civil war, Oxford don and Puritan divine Dr. John Owen in 1652 could only survey the Cromwellian regime and lament: "Now, those that ponder these things, their spirits are grieved in the midst of their bodies; - the visions of their heads trouble them. They looked for other things from them that professed Christ; but the summer is ended, and the harvest is past, and we are not refreshed," (Note Thirty-Three).

"Faith in America."

In the end, what will happen to the New Religious Right as its political influence wanes and its participation in the political process comes to naught, as seems to be the case at the dawn of the twenty-first century? What will come of its vision and its participation in the American Dream? If the concept of a New Israel and a covenanted community could not be implemented and maintained in a country like seventeenth-century England or in a place like colonial New England with their culturally and religiously homogeneous populations, how can anyone expect such an idea to be successfully realized in an increasingly multicultural, multinational empire like the U.S. of A. in the new millennium?

The New Religious Right, like the Puritan movement of old, may have to learn the hard way that the best that Christians can hope for in a largely unconverted and sinful world is genuine religious freedom in which to practice the Faith and preach the Gospel. That part of the American Dream is still meaningful, precious, and possible. The live question of this generation is: can it be preserved? For more than thirty years now, adherents of the New Religious Right have been trying to save the American Dream. But how ironic it would be if, in the process, they have helped to destroy it!

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Robert Linder is a native of Salina, Kansas. He is a former semi-pro baseball and fastball player. Received his PhD in History, University of Iowa, 1963 and pursued advanced studies at the Universities of Geneva, Oxford and Cambridge.

Robert Linder is the author or editor of 15 books and more than 100 articles in historical and religion journals. Co-author with R. V. Pierard, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1988). Forthcoming in 2005, *Between Heaven and Hell: A History of Australian Evangelical Christianity, 1788-2000*

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Robert Linder, Professor Kansas State University and prolific writer regarding Evangelical Christianity and the North American religious scene.

Further Reading;

Plett, "A History of Christianity," in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875-2000* (Steinbach, 2001), pages 35-44 (available on our website at: www:hshs.mb.ca).

Endnotes:

Note One: This essay is a revised version of an article which first appeared in *Mennonite Life*, 38, no. 4 (December 1983), 17-22. "Canadian Dreamers" no doubt share much in common with their American cousins south of the border.

Note Two: W. Lloyd Warner, *Social Class in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), v-vi.

Note Three: Christopher F. Mooney, *Religion and the American Dream: The Search for Freedom Under God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977). This collection of essays focuses on the "power and force of religion in civil affairs" and notes many of the contradictions and tensions in this aspect of the American Dream.

Note Four: John Winthrop, *Papers*, A. B. Forbes, ed. (5 vols., Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1929-1947), 2:295; and Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (London: n.p., 1644), Introduction. Also see Anson Phelps Stokes, *Church and State in the United States* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950); Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State and Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953); Loren Baritz, *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America* (New York: John Wiley, 1964); Ernest L. Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Conrad Cherry, ed., *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971); John F. Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979); Richard V. Pierard and Robert D. Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988); and Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Note Five: Alan Simpson, *Puritanism in Old and New England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 19-38; Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch and George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America*, expanded ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989), 31-36; and Noll, *America's God*, 33-42.

Note Six: Jonathan Edwards, *Apocalyptic Writings*, ed. Stephan J. Stein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

Note Seven: Nathan O. Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France and the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 31 (July 1974): 429. Also see Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Millennial Thought in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); John F. Berens, *Providence and Patriotism in Early America, 1640-1815* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978), 51-80; and Noll, *America's God*, 48-50.

Note Eight: John E. Smylie, "National Ethos and the Church," *Theology Today*, 20 (October 1963): 314; and Berens, *Providence and Patriotism in Early America*, 81-111.

Note Nine: Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 31-2.

Note Ten: Williams, *The Bloudy Tenet of Persecution*, Introduction.

Note Eleven: *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), 21.

Note Twelve: The basis for this definition of civil religion is found in the following: Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in

America," *Daedalus*, No. 96 (Winter 1967): 1-21; D. Elton Trueblood, *The Future of the Christian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 83-102; Will Herberg, "American Civil Religion: What It Is and Whence It Comes," in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 76-88; and Pierard and Linder, *Civil Religion and the Presidency*, 20-9. For an evaluation of civil religion from two different but complementary points of view, see Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture* and Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard, *Twilight of the Saints: Biblical Christianity and Civil Religion in America* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978).

Note Thirteen: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, ed. G. D. H. Cole (New York: Dutton, 1950), 139; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Completes, Du Contrat Social*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (4 vols., Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 3: 368-75, 468; Ralph H. Gabriel, *The Course of American Democratic Thought, 2nd ed.* (New York: Ronald Press, 1956), 14-25; Sidney E. Mead, *The Nation With the Soul of a Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 56-7; and Seymour M. Lipset, *The First New Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 61-98.

Note Fourteen: Robert W. Lynn, "Civil Catechetics in Mid-Victorian America: Some Notes About American Civil Religion, Past and Present," *Religious Education*, No. 48 (January-February 1973): 5-27; and John H. Westerhoff III, *McGuffey and His Readers: Piety, Morality, and Education in Nineteenth-Century America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 74-110.

Note Fifteen: *The Christian Advocate*, 22 January 1903, 1-2. Also see Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley* (2 vols., New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 2: 109-11.

Note Sixteen: Ronald W. Reagan, "Acceptance Address: Republican National Convention Presidential Nomination," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 46, No. 21 (15 August 1980): 646.

Note Seventeen: Ronald W. Reagan, "Believe in Her Mission," Landon Lecture at Kansas State University, 9 September 1982, cited in Robert D. Linder, "Reagan at Kansas State: Civil Religion in the Service of the New Right," *The Reformed Journal*, vol. 32, No. 12 (December 1982): 14.

Note Eighteen: Text of the Remarks of President Ronald W. Reagan to the Forty-First Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, 8 March 1983, Sheraton Twin Towers Hotel, Orlando, Florida, released by the Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, Washington, DC, 1. Also see the report of the speech in *The New York Times*, 9 March 1983, 1 and 11. For more on Reagan's use of civil religion, see Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard, "Ronald Reagan, Civil Religion and the New Religious Right in America," *Fides et Historia*, 23, No. 3 (Fall 1991): 57-73.

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Note Twenty: Robert D. Linder, "Universal Pastor: President Bill Clinton's Civil Religion," *Journal of Church and State*, 38, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 733-49.

Note Twenty-One: George W. Bush, "Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York," 1 June 2002, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 38, no. 23, 944.

Note Twenty-Two: George W. Bush, "Remarks at a Memorial Service for the STS-107 Crew of the Space Shuttle Columbia," 4 February 2003, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 39, no. 6, 156.

Note Twenty-Three: William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 1.

Note Twenty-Four: Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd* (New York: Random House, 1960), 97.

Note Twenty-five: Mead, *The Nation With the Soul of a Church*, 78-113; and Alfred Balitzer, "Some Thoughts About Civil Religion," *Journal of Church and State*, 16, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 36-7.

Note Twenty-Six: Noll, *America's God*, 73-113.

Note Twenty-Seven: Jerry Falwell, *America Can Be Saved* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1979), 23.

Note Twenty-Eight: Jerry Falwell, *Listen America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 29.

Note Twenty-Nine: Tim LaHaye, *The Bible's Influence on American History* (San Diego: Master Books, 1976), 59.

Note Thirty: For a discussion of this view, see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millennialism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); and Robert G. Clouse, *The Meaning of the Millennium* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 17-40.

Note Thirty-One: For a first-rate examination of this particular problem, see Robert G. Clouse, "The New Christian Right, America, and the Kingdom of God," *Christian Scholar's Review*, 12, no. 1 (1983): 3-16.

Note Thirty-Two: For a discussion of the tensions created by the NRR's support of a large, standing professional army, see Robert D. Linder, "Militarism in Nazi Thought and in the American New Religious Right," *Journal of Church and State, 24*, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 263-279, esp. 276, n. 38.

Note Thirty-Three: John Owen, "Christ's Kingdom and the Magistrate's Power," sermon published in *The Works of John Owen* (24 vols., Edinburgh: T. Clark, 1850-853), 8: 381. For the scriptural basis for Owen's allusion, see Jeremiah 8:20.

Theology that loves creation

Theology that loves creation: What on Earth? by Joe Blowers.

Some Christians love to speculate about the future. "Are we in the last days?" they ask. It's natural to ask such questions. Jesus cautions us, however, not to let our speculation get out of hand. Some of us have chosen to ignore this warning.

The church I grew up in held a view of the end times known as premillennial dispensationalism. That view is best exemplified today in the *Left Behind* novels (see *Pres*., No. 23, pages 134-5).

It reminds me of a scheme dreamed up by Rube Goldberg. It cobbles together questionable biblical interpretations with creative guesswork and a selective view of history.

Since it conveniently assigns Christ's teachings about the kingdom to a different "dispensation," adherents can set aside any saying of Jesus that makes them uncomfortable. In my opinion, it's a teetering house of cards.

This is clearer to me now than when I was 19. At the time, I believed it to be the gospel truth. Later, I almost lost my faith over it. I have only God to thank that I didn't.

Before I was introduced to dispensationalism. God the Creator often touched me as I played in the farm grove or in grandma's backyard. Under his tutelage I learned where the spiderwort blooms and how the boxelder grows.

With some help from Grandma, I began to keep a list of birds, to nurture irises and to transplant young trees. By the age of 12, I had become, in one sense, an environmentalist. I was acutely aware of and in love with God's creation.

This did not sit well with my neighbours, who were as likely to shoot a hawk as to admire it. My 4-H club leaders were dumbfounded when I requested a tree identification class instead of a livestock project.

Members of my church viewed creation as a divine object lesson and as a means to a livelihood but looked with suspicion on anyone expressing love toward nature.

Creation, they were sure, was going to burn. Only humans would be ushered into the New Jerusalem. Evidently, they didn't agree with God's own evaluation of creation. They certainly didn't believe that creation is awaiting God's deliverance.

They could comprehend the metaphor of being at war with nature but Paul's teaching of God making peace with nature "through the blood of his cross" was foreign to them.

My love for nature and my allegiance to my church were headed for some serious collisions. The first crash came during my sophomore year at a fundamentalist Bible college.

I explained to a classmate that if God called the world good, then it must be God's will that Christians act to protect the world from further damage.

His response is burned into my memory, 30 years later. Creation is important, he replied, but not nearly as important as winning souls for Christ. There, in a nutshell, was the problem. If I chose to expend energy caring for creation, I would forever be a second-class Christian in his eyes. Clearly, my values were clashing with the teachings of my church.

It took me a few more years to realize that the church's teachings would have to go. Fortunately, my faith in Jesus did not go with them - almost, but not quite. I eventually found my way into the Mennonite church.

Over the years its people have helped me understand that "worship and work are one," that there is no dividing line between creation and Christianity.

It's not a question of only doing evangelism or only caring for the Earth. It's both.

In the words of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*: "The church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God…demonstrating…the justice, righteousness, love and peace of the age to come."

Finally, a place where I can follow Christ and follow my heart.

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Joe Blowers.

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President's Report

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Deep unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. (George Eliot)

As a family therapist I encounter human suffering every day. This encounter is the essence of my profession. It is not an easy task, and I try my best to honour it, and pray for God's grace to help me. It is not just a matter of sitting in the same room with the sufferer (though just being able to do that is sometimes a great challenge) but also a matter of listening empathically, of "being with." I also know that, whatever I feel, I do not actually feel the pain of the other person. That is something they bear alone.

As a people, Mennonites are deeply marked by suffering - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Our story begins in torture and blood, in the persecution of the Anabaptist martyrs of the 16th century. The accounts in the Martyr's Mirror show us men and woman brave beyond our imagining, testifying to the truth of their spiritual journey. While most of these stories emphasize faithfulness, we are also told that some of the Anabaptists, under pressure of persecution and the threat of death, recanted. Not all of them could bear the savage treatment they were given.

In the last century, Mennonites were caught up with many others in the wrenching turmoil of European conflicts, and modern day martyrs were created, many killed by Makhno and his followers during the Russian Revolution, while others suffered imprisonment, exile and starvation under the regime of Stalin.

As Mennonites we have been singled out; we have suffered not just randomly, but because we were Mennonites. Our beliefs, our way of life, and perhaps our wealth and apparent goodness rankled some enough to render us targets.

Part of our suffering has also come about through being a pioneering people, separate from the world. Whether it was in the swampy, stony land of the East Reserve in Manitoba in the 19th century or the even more inhospitable environment of some parts of Paraguay or Mexico in the 20th, Mennonite bodies have bent and sometimes broken under the strain of building a new commonwealth.

For many of us who were raised in a post-pioneer, industrialized, wealthy North American environment, these experiences of a suffering people are something of an abstraction. We may read about them and occasionally come into contact with someone who has directly experienced such suffering, or whose parents have - but for the most part we are insulated from the direct pain. In fact, we may not want to acknowledge it at all; we may not even want to think of ourselves as a suffering people. That is a victim identity, after all, and we prefer to be masters, pursuing our various exceptional accomplishments in business, education, medicine, culture, and the different professions.

None of this mastery, however, shields us from our own individual suffering, or the suffering of friends and loved ones. Whatever else contemporary health technologies can do for us, they cannot exempt us from pain. Even if the clamour of our bodily pain can be muted by pharmaceutical agents, the pain of life itself, of broken relationships, or the knowledge of the transient nature of all things, including ourselves, breaks in.

If we are bound to suffer, and even more if we come from a tradition in which suffering held a prominent place, then we are invited to formulate a response. What does our suffering mean? For our ancestors, and perhaps for us as well, the first answer is already given: our suffering, as the quotation from George Eliot at the head of this report suggests, is in some way meant to teach us, so that we will emerge from it changed, improved, refined.

That is certainly the premise of an exceptional article which appears in the June 19, 1935 issue of the *Steinbach Post*. It is written by Judith Kroeker, nee Judith Wiebe (b. 1888). She was a daughter of schoolteacher Jacob and Katharina Wiebe of the village of Bergfeld near Gruenthal, Manitoba. She married Cornelius T. Kroeker (1888 - 1960), son of prominent Steinbach oil dealer C. P. Kroeker (1862-1942) and Katharina R. Toews (1866-1938) and grandson of pioneers the Franz Kroekers. Judith had two sisters who also married into the Kleine Gemeinde and moved to Steinbach; they were the wives of sons of the pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer.

Her children, with their birth dates in parentheses, were: Jakob (1913), Aaron (1915), Isaak (1916), Cornelius (1918), Gerhard (1920), Levina (1922), Judith (1924), Angelina (1927) and John (1929). At the time of the incident she describes she was 45, with nine children, ranging in age from 4 to 20. The article itself appears two years after the accident she describes.

One night in March, 1933, Judith dreamt of heaven. But there was a disturbing element to her dream that prompted her to think it might somehow be a predictor of her own demise. The day after, when she was making soap in a large kettle, she poured some gasoline into the soap mixture, which exploded and caused deep burns to her hands, neck and face.

There commenced an extended period of excruciating pain for Judith. She bore her suffering with astonishing fortitude. She was given a strong sedative by Dr. Schilstra, but the sedative wore off and the pain hit her with full force. She tried not to cry out. When her thoughts were sufficiently coherent she sang, "Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow" in German. Her sons gathered around her, trying to help in whatever way they could. When the pain became too great she cried out, "Oh God, what shall we do? For my children's sake, help us!" Even in such extremity she prayed for her children. The burned skin of her face stiffened so that her eyes and mouth closed. At one point she had a vision of a ladder to heaven; she was near death but pulled herself back into consciousness.

God's answer was eminently practical: "Bran and ice." Judith let her husband know that he and the boys were to crush ice, mix it with bran, and apply the mixture to her face. They did so, and the pain lessened. Dr. Schilstra visited again and declared: "No one can comfort her; she knows all of the Scripture by heart."

In retrospect, reflecting on her experience, Judith wrote: "I know that it was God's will that I suffer, but to what end, or whether that end was reached, I do not know. I do not write this in order to evoke pity, but rather to show what God has done with me.... I believe that I suffered to the extent that God found necessary to keep me humble....I had to become blind in order to see the glory of God, for our fleshly eyes would not be able to endure such clarity."

Judith concludes her article by saying that she was never afraid and her goal was always certain: "It is marvelous to walk hand in hand with Jesus." She signs herself as "the least of God's handmaidens."

Had it not been for her Christian faith, it is hard to imagine Judith Kroeker coming through her suffering at all, much less coming through with the attitude of humility and gratitude she exhibits. She suggests that her pride was too great, and the accident was God's way of chastening her, teaching her. Such an idea does not stand up to logical scrutiny (how could this Mennonite woman, living in simplicity and Demutigkeit, possibly have possessed a pride so monstrous as to warrant such a harsh "teaching"?). Yet her faith helped her through her ordeal, just as her ancestors' faith were helped through their trials by the same kind of faith.

Through intense suffering we are changed. Through faith, we have the possibility of seeing this change as a new state, even a regeneration. This is part of the heritage given to us by our grandmothers and grandfathers.

Kornelius T. Kroeker and wife nee, Judith Wiebe, Steinbach, Manitoba. Photo - courtesy of granddaughter Doris Klassen, Box 1, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1M1.

Guest Essays

Watching Out For The End of Days

By Robert Rhodes, republished with permission from *Mennonite Weekly Review*, May 31, 2004, page 4.

Ever since Jesus of Nazareth vanished in the clouds over Palestine 2,000 years ago, debate has focused nearly nonstop on when he would return, and whether the cataclysmic events expected to precede the Second Coming lie just ahead.

Such uncertain and often misguided speculation has caused blood, and tears, to be shed many times over ensuing centuries. And today, in part because of the heresy of Christian-American triumphalism, some believe they can "expedite" prophecy and speed the plow of judgment by influencing U.S. policy in Israel.

Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, authors of the "Left Behind" omni-franchise, don't believe God is enslaved to the whims and triggers of American politics. But the fearsome dreams they weave in their incredibly lucrative series of end-times techno-thrillers (more than 62 million sold, with the latest installment's debut featured on a recent *Newsweek* cover) run on some of the same fuel. Zionist domination of the Holy Land, demonizing of non-Christians and an ultra-militaristic approach to ushering in the kingdom of God are only a few disturbing fragments of this addled equation.

Several books in the past decade have set out to debunk the "Left Behind" theology of the Rapture and its reliance on what is, at best, an imaginative interpretation of Scripture. At its worst, however, "Left Behind" is nationalistic fear-mongering, for which the war in Iraq and the continuing bloodshed in Israel and Palestine could have been tailormade.

Those who have this kind of Christo-political outlook believe, typically, that the United States is God's anointed choice to lead the world and make it fit for holy habitation, even if that requires lethal force and violence on the grandest scale. LaHaye and Jenkins don't exactly extol these anti-virtues outright, but they don't deny their seductive power, or their pragmatic usefulness, either.

These deceptions are exactly what "Left Behind," and two companion serials written with political and military storylines, trade in. To look at the leftbehind.com website is to see the myth of American triumphalism at its most market-friendly — flag-wrapped, patriotic and bristling with military, and moral, supremacy.

The problem is, none of this has any cogent biblical base. Jesus doesn't need American-style firepower to prevail over evil. The only means of conquest in his arsenal was, and is, love.

Why then do so many believe Jesus needs an arms-laden "Tribulation Force," driving humvees and wielding high-tech munitions, to do his bidding? Perhaps it is our need to believe that good ultimately will prevail in this world, or that our addiction to military might is endorsed from above.

Though Jesus promised to save the world from itself, he also taught a gospel of nonviolence and deep repentance that bears little resemblance to the "gospel" found in "Left Behind."

Loren Johns, academic dean at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., has compiled a web page of resources on the "Left Behind" series, where he evaluates the books from an Anabaptist viewpoint.

"Although the main characters in the [series] become Christians, very little is said about actually following Christ in life," Johns wrote. "Nothing is said in this series about embracing the way of the cross as those who are left behind face the years of Tribulation....

"The way of the cross.... is not just an individual thing, but as John Howard Yoder showed, represents the heart of God's revelation in Jesus Christ that God is in control of history through the way of love. And despite appearances, that way of love will win out in the end. There is no sense of the way of love in this series and no willingness to consider the possibility that the way of love could have cosmic significance."

When Christ returns to this world in glory, he will do so not out of revenge on evil but out of love for his people. With all its reliance on biblical soothsaying and Scriptural sleight of hand, this is one lesson that "Left Behind" seems to have missed. Robert Rhodes

Robert Rhodes of Newton, Kansas, is assistant editor of Mennonite Weekly Review. He and his wife and three children attend Sharon Mennonite Church in Newton. The family lived at Starland Hutterite Colony from 1995 to 2002.

Theologian: Prayer affects God's action

"Theologian: Prayer affects God's action - Speaker defends `open theism,'" by Steve Shenk, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio.

Bluffton, Ohio - Soon after John Sanders became a Christian, people in his church taught him to pray. Later at Bible college, he was taught that God never changes and that prayer will not affect God's decisions....

The people who told Sanders that prayer doesn't affect God also said that the death of Sander's brother in a motorcycle accident was planned by God as a way to bring Sanders to Christ. This view of God didn't sit well with Sanders, either.

Today Sanders is a theology professor at Huntington (Ind.) College, a successful author and a leading proponent of what is called "open theism" - a view that emphasizes a "dynamic give-and-take relationship between God and people." It is a controversial view among Evangelical Christians.

Sanders was the speaker for Bluffton College's weekly Forum series Nov. 4 [2003]. His topic was "What Is Open Theism and Why Are Some Evangelicals So Upset About It?"

Many Evangelicals are influenced by the thinking of 16th century theologian John Calvin, Sanders said. They believe God exercises tight control over every detail of everyone's life and that each event in life - good and bad - is specifically "ordained" by God.

Sanders noted that, traditionally, Mennonites have not subscribed to Calvinist views. They believe that people freely choose whether or not to follow Jesus, that prayer can influence God and that evil is permitted but not wanted by God. And that thinking, Sanders said, is close to open theism.

"God does not have a blueprint for our lives regarding college choice, career and marriage," Sanders said. "Rather, we cooperate with God to decide what our future will be."

He also rejected the Calvinist notion that God chooses who will be saved and who will be damned.

Open theism affects his daily Christian life, Sanders said, in that he can go to God in prayer, knowing that God sometimes intervenes and even changes his mind. There are many examples of that in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, he said. Open theism also allows Christians to believe that they can make a difference in the world - and that life situations, like poverty and war are not predetermined by God.

Some evangelicals think open theism borders on heresy. In fact, the Evangelical Theological Society, which holds its annual meeting Nov. 19-21 in Atlanta, may vote on whether to expel proponents of open theism. At last year's conference, Sanders and another theologian were singled out as the main advocates of open theism.

"The amount of anger and opposition from evangelicals has surprised me," Sanders told his Bluffton audience. "But I just cannot accept their contention that God has exhaustive definite knowledge of what will happen in each of our lives."

Sanders said God has a general plan for the future, but even God can't know the future choices made by people with free will.

"What people decide to do determines what God will do," he said.

Reprinted from *Men. Weekly Review*, Nov. 17, 2003, page 7.

Editorial - The Battle for the Faith

"Battle for the Faith ("Kampf um die Gemeinde"): 500 Years of Persecution and Survival," by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1N5 (e-mail lhsa@shaw.ca) websites: "www.hshs.mb.ca" and "www.mts.net/~delplett"

"Kampf um die Gemeinde."

The story of the Flemish Mennonites from the beginnings in the martyr fires of the Reformation in Brabant and Flanders, to the arrival of the first Anabaptists in the Vistula delta in the 1530s, and on to Russia in 1788, can best be understood in terms of the "Kampf um die Gemeinde", literally, the battle for the faith. The visible, discipled Church of God without spot and wrinkle was engaged in a constant battle for purity of faith, doctrine and practice as well as survival.

From the perspective of Reformation spiritualists such as David Joris or Hans Denck, the striving of the peaceful Anabaptists under Menno Simons (1496-1561) to establish purity of doctrine as well as faith lived in practice, was a senseless waste of time over man-made rules and Ordnungen. For Hans de Ries, the articulate leader of the spiritualistic Waterlanders, the constant striving for a "Reine" (pure) Gemeinde, amounted to little more than a senseless squabbling over "buttons and hooks." To Kellerite historians like Peter M. Friesen, the entire Flemish Mennonite faith was corrupted and the striving for communal standards of discipline and discipleship together with the resulting splits and schisms were dismissed as nothing more than the despicable "Anabaptist disease" (p. 31).

The following rhythm might well have been composed by the enemies of the Danziger Old Flemish in the Dutch Netherlands to mock or spite them:

"Hacken en Eisen, wout Gott erliesen, kjeinpen und taschen, wird er verlasen."

"Hooks and bows, God will redeem, bottons and pockets, will be forsaken."

From the standpoint of the Church of God, it was important that the community of saints (and sinners) be governed by the canon of the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, with the details defined by the brotherhood (and later sisters also) through a democratic process under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It mattered not so much whether one wore buttons or hooks but rather whether the community had found the same acceptable and in keeping with the proper apparel and demeanour of a humble follower of Christ. It was important that the individual be yielded to the will of the brotherhood, namely, community spirit over individualism.

This was a constant battle among the Flemish Mennonite Gemeinden whether in the Dutch Netherlands, Polish-Prussia, Russia, Canada or Latin America. Over the years, thousands left the Gemeinde when they could not agree with the particulars of various Ordnungen, be it automobiles or springs on buggies, but always the Gemeinde survived and continued to grow. Almost without exception, it was the conservative, traditionalist Gemeinden that grew in size and through whom the Flemish Russian Mennonite diaspora has now blossomed to around 600-800,000 souls.

Spiritualism vs. Confessionalism.

In his new book, *Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith*, Dr. Karl Koop refers to two streams within the Flemish-Dutch Anabaptist-Mennonite movement which have co-existed since the Reformation, often in fierce competition. Menno Simons (1492-1561) articulated a vision of a visible, disciplined Gemeinde "without spot and wrinkle." His opponents such as David Joris, Hans Denck and, later, Hans de Ries, stressed a spiritualistic more inwardly religion marked by disdain for church discipline and the "Ordnung".

Dr. Karl Koop, summarizes the situation as follows: "....yet, Dutch historians clearly championed the individual conscience of the believer arguing that this tradition was genuinely Anabaptist. In looking beyond the confessional period, this emphasis on the individual and `inner' dimension of the Christian life won the day among Dutch Mennonites. A similar but more conservative stream among pietistically-minded Anabaptists also surfaced in South Germany and Switzerland, as well as among the Mennonite Brethren in 19th-century Russia."

"Another stream in the Mennonite story, however, championed the more communal and `outer' dimensions of the Christian life. This particular emphasis bore fruit for a time in the environs of Hamburg and Prussia and took hold especially in Russia. A concern for the communal and `outer' also became characteristic of Swiss Anabaptism, especially among the Amish, who based their perspectives on the Dortrecht confession. In both the Dutch and Swiss contexts, these differing understandings of the church and religious life led to open conflict. In the Dutch context the clash culminated with the `War of the Lambs'; in the Swiss context the clash lead to the Amish schism," Koop. *Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith* (Waterloo, 2004), page 134.

From within the conservative Mennonite tradition this conflict is understood as a "battle for the faith" ("Kampf um die Gemeinde) where the steadfast followers of the New Testament tradition of following Jesus (as articulated by Menno Simons) constantly had to engage in battle with the modernizationists seeking assimilation with the world, whether by progressivism in a material sense, or by those abandoning the faith, usually by conversion to an alternate religious culture such as Calvinism (Hans de Ries in the 17th century Netherlands), Separatist-Pietism (the Secessionists in 19th Imperial Russia), or Evangelicalism (American Fundamentalism) in the 20th century.

Private vs. Public Confession.

James Urry discusses these inherently conflicting tendencies in terms of salvation: "Where once the personal experience of faith had been private and subordinated to an external community ethic, now expressions of faith had become increasingly public and individualized" (*None But Saints*, page 22). The response of the conservatives was predictable: "To counteract the appeals of progress they reaffirmed what they believed to be the essential basis of tradition by articulating a set of strategies that aimed at maintenance, conservation, and continuance of established ideas....But other[s], encouraged....by Russian officialdom, promoted change through their support of progressive ideas and practices. Mennonite communities became polarized between the promoters of progress and the guardians of tradition," (NBS, page 23).

A confession of faith once meant a public commitment to a community through learning the catechism and committing oneself to public scrutiny in everyday life and personal faith involved a silent covenant between believer and God. In the spiritualist tradition, a confession of faith meant a personal statement of the certainty of one's faith announced publicly. What had remained private in the old order became public and what had been part of the public covenant now became a matter of private morals. To shout one's faith from the balcony - or worse, to claim absolute knowledge of salvation - was pride, a grievous sin. What was important was the public life of faith lived in the hope of salvation. Salvation was to depend on a person's life as lived, separate from the world and in accordance with the teachings of Jesus.

People lived in social grouping and it was within the community that believers sought salvation, not by personal experience or by withdrawal from society (as in extreme monasticism). To achieve salvation, a person needed the support of a community to maintain purity and to walk the narrow path. Salvation was known only to God and would become manifest on the day of judgement. The early Anabaptists believed they were living in the endtimes. The world was degenerating; Christ had come to show mankind the way to redemption. The Constantinian church had betrayed Christ's message and the Apostles by having the church mediate salvation for all. The Anabaptists claimed that under the rubble of centuries of neglect they had rediscovered the biblical way to live in order to possess the hope of salvation.

Among the individualistic pietists, old ideas of a degeneration of society gave way to views of progress and modernization. People wanted to be sure of their salvation and wanted it immediately. The individual pietistic faith promised instant salvation, with that knowledge immediately available to the believer in the here and now. "Experience" became the key to salvation and with believers discovering they were already perfect individuals, not just members of a community of saints which allowed for the failings of a

fallen creation. People wanted to become God rather than to follow Christ. They could "know" immediately that they were saved and heaven was their sure inheritance.

"For the old order, earthly existence was centered on the present community of the saints and a sense of non-social being was to be in the age to come. For the new spiritualists, the individualized faith was here and now, but the ideal community was in heaven."

Modernization.

Modernization in its widest sense has been the dominant theme in Western civilization since the Reformation, associated with great thinkers and artists such as Shakespeare, Bacon, Montaigne, Rembrandt, Galileo and Descarte. Modernity was shaped by the 18th century movement known as the "Enlightenment", given voice by the brilliant French philosophers, Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean Baptist Rousseau (1671-1741). In essence, modernization was based on the idea that all decisions and activities should be based on human reason, not on religious beliefs, culture or traditions. The time of the Enlightenment was also known as the "Age of Reason".

Political power shifted from autocratic monarchies to democratically elected Parliaments and political assemblies, starting in the French Revolution. The basic ideals and vision of the Founding Fathers of the United States in 1776 were directly inspired by Enlightenment thinkers such as these. Incidently, it is noteworthy that "grassroots democracy" was one of the fundamental premises of Flemish Mennonites thought, a principle permeating every aspect and compartment of their social and cultural paradigm.

In the material sphere, modernization was represented by Adam Smith and "*laissez-faire*" economics. The value of any product - and even the selection of a product for production - was governed by what the buyer would pay on the open market and not by autocratic degrees or government regulations.

A modern world view also implicitly assumed the superiority of the latest and newest ideas. New concepts, institutions, methods, etc. based on human reason and observed experience were seen as inherently good, liberating and beneficial. The social systems, culture and thinking of the past were seen as evil, corrupted and decayed, deserving only of quick extinction.

A traditional or pre-modern society, on the other hand, respected and defended the existing institutions and values as good and worthy of preservation. Tradition was the accumulated good and wisdom of the past, which needed to be mediated and handed down from one generation to the next. For example, the Catholic Church, for the most part, saw modernization as a threat and as an attack against its very foundations.

Mennonites and Modernity.

In his *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (Vol 5, 598-600) article on "Modernity" Denis Martin writes that "Most Mennonites, however, relinquished traditionalism and embraced modernity in different degrees and at differing pace in Europe and North America. The Dutch and North German Mennonites were among the first to become acculturated to many aspects of modern Western culture.....Mennonites in Russia, because of their autonomy and self-government, in many ways lived in traditional villages societies. Once they left those villages, however, they have embraced modern North American culture more readily than their Swiss -Pennsylvania cousins...."

Among the Danziger Old Flemish tradition was appreciated and respected. At the same time, however, they were progressive farmers and merchants who welcomed new innovations when they made their farming and business life easier. Even the most isolated Flemish Mennonite farmer in the deltas of the Vistula River, to some extent, became a modernizationist as soon as he picked up a spade to dig a drainage ditch or built a windmill to drain the water.

Modernization became a powerful force among the Mennonites in 19th century Russia. Johann Cornies (1789-1848) was the central figure in any study of modernization within Mennonite society. As is evident from the articles in this issue of *Preservings*, Johann Cornies went to extreme lengths to suppress and even extinguish the existing Flemish institutions such as the Gemeinde and the traditional position of the Ältester. The Flemish Mennonites agreed with many of his innovations but certainly disagreed with the strong-arm tactics he used to implement these changes.

Because Modernizationists and Pietists shared the same goal - the destruction of traditional Mennonite society - they often worked in alliance. Professor John Staples has concluded in his study that Cornies underwent a conversion experience to Separatist-Pietist religious culture in Hernhut in 1827. It is clear that Johann Cornies aided and allied himself with other Pietists whose objective similarly was to destroy traditional Mennonite religious society and to replace the same with the more modern institutions and teachings of Pietism. In Johann Cornies, Pietism and modernization combined in a powerful alliance which permanently crippled the conservative majority in the Molotschna.

The battle for the Gemeinde ("Kampf um die Gemeinde"), therefore, often flared up under the guise of a struggle between modernization vs. tradition. However, as Dr. Staples has correctly pointed out, the Flemish Mennonites in the Molotschna were not necessarily anti-modernizationists, but they were certainly anti-Pietists.

The Anabaptist Disease.

The 17th century Doopsgezinde in the Low Countries refused any association with the name Mennonite. The spiritualistic and liberal Anabaptists in what later became the Dutch Netherlands were referred to as "Waterlanders" (and after 1811 as "Doopsgezindte"). From within the progressivistic Doopsgezinde, the struggle of the Danziger Old Flemish for the integrity of their faith was characterized as the senseless clinging to the past of a hopelessly dead and archaic culture, focused on useless and counterproductive rites and rituals by a power hungry leadership, to maintain dictatorial control over their flocks.

Kellerite historians (see *Preservings*, No. 22, pages 46-49) such as Peter M. Friesen write disparagingly about "hooks and bottons" and "the Anabaptist illness". Friesen is of the view that the "The twilight of his life [Menno Simons] coincides with the decline of the first and only general `golden age' of the old evangelical-Anabaptist congregations bearing his name." In Friesen's view "the splintering of the Anabaptist movement begun during Menno's lifetime, continued after his death. In the end five or more important factions emerged: the Flemish, the Frisians, the High Germans (South Germans), the Waterlanders, the Old Flemish..... The strictest, the `best' or `most precise' were the Flemish, the most latitudinarian, the Waterlanders who never adopted the name Mennonite" (page 31).

Instead of recognizing the courageous battle for the faith being engaged by the Flemish and particularly the Old Flemish and Old Frisians, against the inroads of assimilationism and spiritualism which had existed in the Anabaptist movement from the beginning, P. M. Friesen disparaged the Flemish for "dissipat[ing] in dissension." It was Friesen's view that: "Under the guise of `cleansing' the church, they threw their brother out of the house because his beard was either too long or too short, because of a button or hood, because of a shibboleth or `Sib'" (page 13).

In answering these charges one would refer first to the banning and counterbanning found in the early Brüdergemeinde in Russia after 1860 and even the denial of salvation to those who had not undergone the prescribed ritualized conversion experience and/or immersion baptism. The same do not appear to be much of an improvement over what Friesen is complaining about among the 16th century Anabaptists. Friesen is also wrong in stating that divisions emerged, since the groups referred to came from separate geographical areas and naturally had developed largely independently during the Reformation. It would have been unusual to expect that these groups would ever have amalgamated given their independent pre-Reformation histories. To imply that there was something inherently wrong in Anabaptist teaching or culture because separate branches or manifestations of Anabaptism should develop independently is pure nonsense. In fact, it would have been most unusual should these disparate groups with their separate histories and development have ever united.

Development Period.

In his book *Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith*, Professor Karl Koop makes the point that much research has been done regarding the Anabaptist roots of the Mennonites while the "development period" thereafter has simply been ignored (page 21). Koop quotes John Roth as follows: "....historians of the past have idealized 16th century Anabaptism and have simply ignored the later years....[and] the intervening years became a literal `middle ages'. Or worse it became `the dark ages' a period characterized first and foremost by what it was not: by its retreat from the power of ideas into the routineity of structure, by its apostasy from the discipline

of *Nachfolge* into the blissful devotion of *Gelassenheit*. Stripped of its idealism, and hence its pedagogical value for the present, the story of the Anabaptists after 1550 simply became uninteresting" (page 27).

Historians such as P. M. Friesen have taken such sentiments and created a historical narrative which saw simply a present reformed era, preceded by a period of darkness and falleness, but with the original 16th century Reformation being "the golden age". Studies such as those by Dr. Koop show that such conclusions are far too simplistic and that the period of confessionalization and denominalization which followed the Reformation, was an important period in Mennonite history, equally deserving of study and research and worthy of our respect.

The Brüdergemeinde Thesis, 1860.

It was the Brüdergemeinde view that the Flemish Mennonite community in Russia in 1860 was corrupted, fallen, and completely beyond redemption, which made a separation from the whore of Babylon (as the secessionists called the existing Gemeinden) the only biblically valid alternative and the only reasonable response.

Professor James Urry has described the letter of secession by the Brüdergemeinders as follows: "On January 6, 1860, the leaders of the Molochnaja congregations received a pretentious declaration that was signed by 18 Mennonites. It condemned the `entire corrupt Mennonite brotherhood' and announced their withdrawal to form a new congregation. They cited as reason for their withdrawal the lack of spiritual life in the colony, the sinful practices of colonists, and the failure of religious leaders to maintain proper discipline. The only true Mennonites they claimed were those whose baptism confirmed a true experience of faith and salvation. Anyone not so redeemed was to be denied communion and social contact with those possessed of the spirit. They alone were the elect and capable of forming an exclusive fellowship of true believers. They had placed themselves beyond the discipline of the established congregations whom they had condemned and in a sense banned" (NBS, page 179-180).

Surprisingly, some 145 years later, the website of the Mennonite Brethren Church still makes some of the same false and equally untrue statements. Of the church in Russia it is stated: "Baptism was extended to those who completed a catechism class, without insistence on personal commitment to Jesus Christ." Response: Everybody who has taken the traditional Mennonite catechism class in any church will recall that the same constituted a through study of the scripture, dealing, in fact, with the totality of Christian life and salvation, and that throughout the program and at their baptism candidates acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. To make a general statement that those who had completed the traditional catechism course had not made a personal commitment to Christ is simply a barefaced lie.

A further statement is made that "Divisions between wealthy members and the impoverished landless class deepened." It this regard it has already been proven in the article in this issue of *Preservings* by Dr. John Staples that there was

During the 19th century, the Zemstva - the regional governements beyond the Volosts - had their own postage stamps. The Molotschna Volosts were part of the Berdiansk Zemstva. This picture shows the Berdiansk Zemstva stamp. It contains the symbols for the agricutural hinterland - the plough (for agriculture); the honey hive (for prosperity and productivity); and the anchor, of course for the seaport of Berdiansk. Photo - courtesy of James Urry.

no battle between the Mennonite Vollwirt class and the landless. The battle was between landless and the "Gutsbesitzer" who had leased all the reserve land of the Molotschna colony and were renting the same at 10 times the price to the landless. The problem with the Brüdergemeinde allegation is that these "Gutsbesitzer" were mostly also pietists such as Johann Cornies and Peter Schmidt.

The website alleges that "Public drunkenness, gambling and moral decadence were undisciplined." In the first place, not every person residing on the colony was a church member and subject to discipline. The Bible also makes positive references to drinking and so the moral position stated by the M.B. website is not totally correct. In fact, it is my understanding that the majority of M.B.ers in the modern-day would enjoy a glass of wine now and again (as well they should). Secondly, the Brüder have equally often complained that the ban is used too often and too forcefully against members. Please make up you mind which way the Kirchlichen are to go.

The website makes the blanket statement that "The Russian Mennonites faced social, economic, intellectual and spiritual stagnation. They were in need of renewal." Where in the world the Brüdergemeinders would come up with such a ridiculous, nonsensical statement is beyond me. To the best of my knowledge the Mennonite Colonies in Czarist Russia were always regarded as model settlements as is evidenced by the visits and reports of many dignitaries and travellers.

Another statement made by the website is that "Many who were weary of lifeless formalism were drawn by his [Wuest's] message into a vibrant spiritual relationship with God and each other." Again, to state or imply that Mennonite spiritual life under the conservative Flemish congregations was a "lifeless formalism," is mere meaningless hyperbole. The truth is that the conservative Mennonites lived a rich spiritual life, blessed by large and extended family clans, and their working of the land. To suggest that the spirituality of the Wuest Brethren - with their senseless jumping and shrieking around - was any richer than that of the humble simple Flemish peasants, is simply nonsense.

Let us briefly recap some of the evidence. Contemporary journals such as Johann Wall and David Epp, show that those indulging in immorality, drinking and false dealing in the colonies were a small minority. The unpaid ministerial met frequently to deal with such issues and did so in love, compassion, and with common sense. In his letters of 1872 Evangelist Bernhard Harder has stated that morality in the Brüdergemeinde at the time was no better then that of the Kirchliche Gemeinden and that for that reason he would never consider changing churches.

These are just a few of the many false statements made by the M.B. website. The allegation of a fallen and corrupted Mennonite Church is absolute nonsense. I find it insulting to the extreme that such false charges are being publicly displayed on a website by a reputable and highly respected denomination as the Mennonite Brethren Church. I can understand these charges being made in the heated atmosphere and intense emotions of the actual separation in 1860 by landless fanatics who had converted themselves to Separatist-Pietist religious culture, but see no excuse for the continuation of such falsehoods and slander 145 years later.

Conclusion.

What is traditional Mennonite faith? According to Soujke Voolstra the teachings of Menno Simons were centered on the idea of penitence. From genuine penitence arose faith. Penitence was the foundation of true faith. According to Voolstra, Martin Luther had artificially reversed these biblical teachings to come up with a doctrinal paradigm in which faith came first, before penitence. According to Luther, the sinner first had to have faith, from which penitence might or might not arise. It was not critical in any case, as for Luther, redemption followed from faith and faith alone (see *Preservings*, No. 23, pages 30-41).

Several attempts have been made earlier in this article and elsewhere in this issue of *Preservings* to define traditional Mennonite faith or at least to describe it, even if very inadequately. The important point, in any case, is that all of us should work together to create a Flemish-Russian Mennonite world where both streams - traditionalists and modernizationists and/or spiritualists and confessionalists - can sit down at the same table in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. We should be striving for a community where Old Colonists can sit on boards of inter-Mennonite organizations and not have to fear that the "Evangelical" members only see them as targets for conversion or that they are, indeed, already conniving behind their backs to alienate their children from them. We should build a world in which both streams of belief are treated justly and honourably by the other.

As we enter the 21rst century already marred by the ugly spectre of war and countless innocent deaths, the need for a Mennonite community united in a witness of peace is vital. The battle for the Gemeinde was a high calling, to press towards the mark. Through the grace of God, the conservative Flemish Mennonites have not only survived but have grown and - on occasion - have even blossomed.

Let us learn to love and respect each other and to be proud of each others' accomplishments. But let us focus also on our higher calling, that of being a testimony for the teachings of Jesus in a troubled world. **The Editor.**

Letters

We welcome letters to the editor and appreciate feedback from our readers, critical or otherwise. We will assume that all letters and e-mails can be published, unless the contrary is indicated. We reserve the right to edit, discard and/or not to publish any letter/e-mail and/or not to respond. E-mails should not contain attachments. All letters and e-mails should contain the writer's name, address and home phone number. Letters should be short (preferably under 300 words) and to the point.

42 Campbell Ct., 502
Stratford, Ont., N5A 7K2

The enclosed cheque is for a subscription to *Preservings*. I have received several copies in the past after ordering the publication *Diese Steine* and found the journal/magazine very interesting. Although my family (Hoemsen, Heidebrecht, Driedger) was originally from the Molotschna settlement, any information or history of the Mennonites in general helps me in understanding my family background.

I was on a tour of the former U.S.S.R. in 1987 which aroused my interest in Mennonite and Russian history and has given me a focus for reading and study since retirement. I found the December/02 on borrowed words in the Low German language of special interest. Although I may not agree with the intent and content of some articles, they are all worth reading with an open mind.

Mrs. Marge Silver.

Dec. 22.03
Box 502, Morris
Manitoba, R0G 1K0

Please find enclosed a cheque for $20.00 for one year subscription to *Preservings*. Your magazine is a great source of information about my heritage.

I too am a member of a Conservative Church and find it refreshing to hear our side of a story told. But let us not close our eyes to our own errors and failures, least we become as self-righteous as the so-called "Separatist-Pietists".

Sincerely, Peter G. Unrau

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12 Jan 2004

Subject: Your Old Colony Issue of Preservings.

Your December 2003 issue featuring the Old Colony Mennonites was informative and an important corrective to our modernizing and assimilationist assumptions. As one who grew up among the Old Order Amish and conservative Mennonites, I've admired their commitment to Christian faithfulness.

Levi Miller, Herald Press, Mennonite Publishing Network, 616 Walnut Avenue, Scottdale, PA 15683, Levi@mph.org

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Box 1194, Watrous
Sask., S0K 4T0
Dec. 29, 2003

Re: Mother Teresa, Issue 22, pages 56-61.

As one who has spent many years in India, I was gratified to read the tribute paid to Mother Teresa. I had the privilege of visiting her Home for the Destitute and Dying in Calcutta, and was deeply impressed by the respect and dignity, and cultural sensitivity Mother Teresa and her staff expressed to these homeless and "off the street" persons. They made it possible for them to die in a clean surrounding, and, very important, to die on a bed instead of on the ground. It was beautiful!

I am enclosing herewith my 2004 subscription to *Preservings* and best wishes for the year ahead.

Sincerely, "Helen Kornelsen"

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don_fehr@telus.net
782 Wright Ave.
Port Coquitlam,
B.C., V3B 5M7
Dec. 30, 2003

Please fine enclosed my cheque for $100.00 to cover my *Preservings* renewal and also a donation to the Society.

Keep up the great work you have been doing. It is most informative especially to someone like myself who is not totally familiar with Mennonite history.

Thanks, Don Fehr.

Box 491, Station Main
Winkler, Manitoba
R6W 4A7
Nov. 30, 2003

Thank you very much for the shipment of the book, "Das Mennonitentum in Russland," by Adolf Ehrt.

It contains a wealth of information and statistical data about the life of our forefathers in Russia. It is a valuable addition to the study of our Mennonite heritage. Thank you again

Sincerely, Jake Hildebrandt.

P.S. I will distribute the books among my friends and relatives.

Box 89, Warman
Sask., S0K 4S0
Jan. 9, 2004

I very much appreciate the info in "Preservings" on conservative Menn. background and history. Faithful Christians often need defenders who are able to properly articulate a credible defense in a spirit of love and grace, even to our accusers. Thank you for the many insightful articles in the magazine. May the Lord grant us all grace to live as He lived.

Enclosed is my donation and membership cheque.

Sincerely, "Peter Doell"

From: <curtis.b.rempel@monsanto.com>
Subject: Preservings Dec 2003, No. 23

Good issue. Really enjoyed the guest editorial and your editorial as well. Focusing on one paragraph..."the Gospel-centricism of traditional Catholic theology, Erasmus and Christian humanism,....". A colleague of mine who is not Mennonite once remarked to me that Erasmus was particularly fascinated by the early Anabaptists. To this end I have been searching for a copy of "Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission" by Abraham Friesen. Eerdmans, copyright 1998. Have you ever come across a copy of this book?

Regards, "Curtis"

Curtis B. Rempel MBA, PhD, PAg
148 Harvest Drive
Steinbach, MB
R5G 2C7

Editor's Note: The book you mentioned should be available through Mennonite Books, 67 Flett Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba. Ph. 1-800-465-6564.

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91 Chancery Bay
Winnipeg, Man., R2N 2R3

Your organization is to be commended for the excellent work being done to preserve a record of Mennonite history, and I do look forward to reading each issue of *Preservings.*

Sincerely, "Peter J. Suderman"

Jan. 15, 2004
Box 684, Heins Creek
Alberta, T0H 2A0

....Ja nun will ich mich noch von Herzen bedanken fuer die *Preservings*, haben sie richtig zu seiner Zeit bekommen....Ich will mich bemuehen um diese Buecher an Entersante Leser weiter zu teilen. Darum so bedanke ich mich noch einmal.....

von David D. Janzen

Pathway Publications
Route 4, Aylmer
Ont., N5H 2R3
March 1, 2004

Apparently you sent sample copies of the new book *The Mennonite Old Colony Vision* to our office here at Aylmer, as David Luthy handed me a copy for review.

I have read it, and I am favourably impressed.

Moreover, I found the book to be fascinating reading. I can remember when the first Old Colony people from Mexico showed up in this area 50 years ago, soon after our own arrival in this community. By now, of course, our township has a very large representation of Mennonites from Mexico. They are our neighbours, and we encounter them frequently.

Please mail 10 copies at this time to our Aylmer office and bill us for them. We will use several copies for further review with the possibility that we can add this book to our 2005 Pathway Book catalogue. The other copies we will offer for resale in our bookstore here.

Thanks, sincerely, Joseph Stoll.

———

Penco Construction,
Blumenort, MB R0A 0C0
April 2, 2004

Dear Delbert,

I came home late last night from an 8 week stay in Florida when I heard you were ill. I am saddened to hear this.

Since Linda and I are planning to back track our historical ancestors, by going to Ukraine in May, I had selected my reading material for my winter holidays appropriately. One of my selections was your 125th Anniversary ...*Preservings*. I had planned on meeting you to discuss certain issues. How do you define, in a historical context, what distinguishes the Flemmish from Friesiens and are these traits (that what distinguishes them) still evident today.....

Delbert, you have made, as yet far from fully realized, a massive contribution to the self worth of a people often looked upon with curiosity by the greater society. The present generation of Mennonites, by and large, I believe, do not realize their indebtedness to their ancestors for the quality of life they enjoy today. Will they respect the time honored traditions and core values that have served them well? You have in a duty full way given them an awareness and the opportunity to do so if they so choose.

You have greatly enhanced my awareness by educating me as to the attributes of my ancestors. I have a deep appreciation for my ancestors and what you have done to enlighten me in this regards.

While I as yet do not fully concur with all of the positions that you take, this all pales in light of the overall enrichment you have provided to me and my family.

Hang in there, Good luck and God bless.

With gratitude- Respectfully yours as always,
"Ernie G. Penner"

———

215-1643 East 3rd Ave.
Van., BC, V5N 5R6,
March 27/04

Dear Delbert,

Ralph has told me of your illness, your surgery. I wish you the best. Healing, if at all possible.

I remember our conversations at The Steak Loft (I think that was it). I know your insatiable curiosity about where we've come from, what it all means, and you've done invaluable work in pursuit of this curiosity. I know the work that is involved in such work, the dedication. For this I thank you.

We share some blood. It was distant enough that I didn't realize this until I was gone from Steinbach. Our grandfathers being brothers. I have a photo of the two of them. Your grandfather, Martin, with his sunglasses on, looking like a Mennonite hitman, or something. I love the photo.

I know you have disagreed with me, with what is within some of my books, but that is only part of natural discourse. We continue, as best we can, in that process of understanding, looking always for that flash of recognition of what seems true. Trying always for integrity. It's how we were brought up, isn't it? Though, even with that question, I hold doubts. Our people, where we've come from, a complex matter. Not all good, not all bad. The usual human mess of good intentions, frailties and effort.

It comes down to the individual spirit, no matter what the community. Delbert, I wish, inadequately, the best for you. Be of good spirit.

"Best Patrick" [Friesen]

Editor's Note: When your "The Shunning" came out in 1980 I felt it focused (as did Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*) solely on one negative aspect of the Mennonite pioneering experience. There was little or no recognition that institutions such as the Gemeinde and the village became "arks" through which our people survived a hostile environment and eventually triumphed over their enemies. One should consider, also, the fundamental principles of the Flemish Mennonites in grassroots democracy and equality, values they had gleaned from their Bibles almost 500 years ago. The survival instincts and irrepressible vitality of our conservative forebears (including the modern Old Colonists) was birthed in the blood of the martyrs in Flemish fields - the heaviest toll of any Anabaptist group in the Reformation.

Over the expanse of time, these very same Ältesten (and by implication all Ohms, Meums, midwives, and civic leaders) who were pilloried by these books gave freely of their time and energy in order to create a better life for the marginalized and underprivileged in their communities. By comparison, their Anglo neighbours on the prairies, isolated with only their own resources on their primitive homesteads, could only gaze on in envy as their Mennonites advanced in giant steps in a few short decades.

Since 1980 the *corpus* of Mennonite literature (English) has matured and blossomed, and among others, I mention the novel of Al Reimer, *My Harp is Turned to Mourning* (1985), Armin Wiebe's *The Salvation of Yasch Simens* (1984), and, of course, in 2001, the twin Canadian best sellers, Rudy Wiebe's *Sweeter than all the World*, and Sandra Birdsell's, *The Russländer*.

In the meantime, also, a number of historians (including Peter Zacharias, Henry Schapansky, John J. Friesen, S. Zijlstra, Piet Visser, Sjouke Voolstra and Royden Loewen, and myself, to

Rudy Wiebe speaking to the closing session of the Molotschna '04 conference held in Potemkin's Palace, Dnepropetrovsk, June 7, 2004. Photo - Johannes Dyck.

mention a few) have written about the conservative (as opposed to the more "individualistic" and "spiritualistic") stream within Flemish-Russian Mennonite historiography, recognizing that those who remained faithful to the Gospel as envisioned by Menno have equally legitimate roots in the Reformation and that their "developing tradition" is worthy of study and pride (see Karl Koop, *Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith*, page 134).

Thus the Mennonite canon has matured and blossomed creating a rich and diverse literary landscape. Hopefully this will result in new levels of understanding within the Mennonite community and between the two - often divergent - streams. Within this context we need and value books such as "The Shunning" which point also to the blotches in our past. I want to thank you publicly for having the courage, back in 1980, to write as you did. I think our twin grandfathers would be proud.

Potemkin's Palace in Dnepropetrovsk (formerly Ekaterinoslav). Photo - Johannes Dyck.

News

Bicentennial - Molotschna/Molochansk June 6, 2004

Bicentennial Events - Halbstadt, Molotschna Colony, formerly South Russia/Molochansk, Ukraine, June 6, 2004, report by Sheila Reid Penner, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Worship Service.

The sky reflects the occasion.

Gray splotches with some promise of rain. Mild, windless, and pensive.

People have gathered here in Halbstadt (Molochansk), Ukraine, to mark the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the first Mennonite settlers to the Molotschna Colony (Halbstadt was the original county-Municipal seat of the Molotschna Colony). We are the Canadian part of the gatherers. There are many others. From Holland, South America, Germany, and from different areas of Ukraine.

We stream ourselves into the church service, held in what used to be the Mennonite Zentralschule. Today would be the first time a church service would have been held here since the days when the Mennonites fled westward with the retreating Wehrmacht in 1943. These days the large building is used as a Teacher Training College.

Once inside, we look around at each other, wondering. Strangers all, but from where? And why here, today? Are some of us related to each other because of that time 200 years ago? What stories have they heard about that time?

Then we are asked to stand and sing from the hymn sheets that had been handed out. But in what language, we wonder? Then the tune is played and we all know it, each in our own language - German, Russian, English and Spanish. That great and powerful reminder of the Creator of all of us "How Great Thou Art". And we raise our voices together in that universal language of The Hymn. It is a stirring moment and sets the tone for the service ahead. All of us so far from home, yet drawn back, each for our own reasons, to our common roots. There follows prayers, songs from the choir, spiritual messages, and a benediction.

Dr. Marlyce Friesen, Abbotsford, B.C., and Molotschna student (right) unveiling the Settlers' Monument in Molochansk (Halbstadt, Molotschna) during the bi-centennial celebration, June 6, 2004. The monument is shaped like a threshing stone with the names of the old villages being honoured carved into the bars. Dr. Marlyce Friesen and her husband Dr. Art Friesen, are physicians from Abbotsford, B.C. (practising in New Westminster) who have organized medical seminars at the Mennonite Center in Halbstadt. They are also involved with updating former Mennonite hospitals with new and recycled hospital equipment. Photo Johannes Dyck, courtesy of Walter Unger.

Bicentennial Commemoration.

Outside, under a still uncertain sky, we move ourselves into the large central square for the rest of the ceremony.

MCC Chairman, Steve Shirk, opens this part of the memorial service.

Then we are officially greeted by the Mayor of Molochansk (Halbstadt), Anatoliy Grigoryevich Smerdov. His greetings include a warm invitation for us all to return to this land that our ancestors had built and carry on their work. He guaranteed us equality this time around.

It is time for the unveiling of the monument to the settlers, appropriately by a Mennonite woman and a Ukrainian child. Three Mennonite hymns by the choir and folk orchestra from Melitopol accompany the unveiling.

The inscription on the monument is read in Ukrainian by Ekaterina Ostapenko and in German by Gerhard Ratzlaff. Then Toronto designer, Paul Epp, describes the symbolism of the monument. On the six upright marble bars are the names of the different villages within the larger colony - many familiar to the Mennonite towns in Manitoba now, such as Steinbach, Altona, Blumenort. These bars stand on a large round marble base that tells the story of the settlers in both German and Ukrainian. The symbols of the anchor and the rose are used to suggest the strength of the Mennonite faith and their belief in peace.

Greetings.

Greetings from the Ukrainian State Committee on Religion are given by Nikolai Romanovich Novichenko, First Deputy Chair.

Historian John Staples presents some answers to the question Why are we gathered here? He reminds us of the circumstances that brought the Mennonites here in the first place, what forced them to leave, and the legacy they left the area while they were here.

Governor Vladimir Petrovich Berezovskii of Zaporohse Oblast brings greetings from the State and issues the second invitation of the day for us all to return as equals to this land built by our Mennonite settlers.

As the rain starts to sprinkle upon the audience like a blessing, the Tokmak-Molochansk Orthodox Choir fills the tree-lined square with their music.

The Canadian Ambassador, Andrew Robinson, who brought a gift from the Canadian Government to help fund the construction of a much needed medical centre for the area, honours the contribution of the Mennonite settlers to the Ukrainian community. This message receives a rousing applause from the Ukrainians and the foreigners alike in the audience.

The last words of the program are given to author Peter Klassen from Filadelphia, Paraguay, who has chosen a very timely theme for all of the many contingencies there. "This is the time for forgiveness."

A light spring rain accompanies the Mennonite hymns by the Choir of Melitopol University, as flowers are laid at the foot of the monument by various groups. Appropriately they are the flowers growing in the many gardens we have seen along the streets of the villages.

Bright peonies that would have been the flowers of choice planted in the gardens of the Mennonite settlers.

Lichtenau Train Station Memorial, June 5, 2004

Peonies had also been chosen to decorate the two-part memorial unveiled at the Lichtenau (Svetlodolinskoje) train station on June 5, 2004 which we also attended.

Another memorial designed by Paul Epp from Toronto. He had been there to present and explain the symbolism. He had created two marble benches for this special place. "The bench seemed to be the best way to depict the waiting the Mennonites had to do at this station to catch the train and make their escape from the persecution they were facing. This waiting meant leaving loved ones behind and taking great risks to resettle in new countries far away."

The rose and the anchor were used in these memorials as well to commemorate the Mennonites' great strength of faith, and their keeping of the peace despite the high costs. By Sheila Reid Penner

The editor, Delbert Plett was deeply honoured to be chosen to unveil the bench memorial. Prior to the unveiling he read the script (translated from German): "Railway station Svetlodolinskoje/Lichtenau. In 1804 Mennonites settled this village and in 1910 they built the railway. Originally a point of arrival and departure for those leaving to study and serving in the Forestry and Alternative Services, it also became a meeting point for visiting families. Later the railway station bore witness of painful separations: from here 1000s of Mennonites emigrated to the West during the 1920s. Between 1930 and 1941 1000s of others were deported to the east. `The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Psalms 27, 1.' Erected by the village council and the Mennonite Historical Committee." Photo - George Schroeder, Steinbach, Canada.

Conference participants formed a choir to sing the familiar hymns "Wehrlos und verlassen" and "So nimm denn meine Hände." This latter song was often sung as a farewell both by the departing Mennonites and their loved ones who remained behind. Photo - A. Reger.

Frank Wall, grandson of one of the co-founders of the railway in 1910. Photo - A. Reger.

Designer Paul Epp, Toronto, explains the significance of the benches as memorials. Photo - A. Reger.

Lichtenau train station, view from the west (street side). "When the railway line was built through the Molotschna in 1910, Lichtenau became one of three stations within the colony....The station was located northeast of the village," Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, *pages 266-267. See Lohrenz,* In the Fullness of Time, *page 74, for photo of the investment syndicate that built the railway.*

Quite appropriately, a train rumbles by the station during the dedication of the memorial benches, bringing thoughts of our ancestors as they waited for wagons to flee westward in 1943. To the right of the photo is teacher, Paulhans Klassen, Fernheim Colony, Paraguay, brother of Peter P. Klassen, the reknown Mennonite historian.

Lichtenau train station, view from the east (railway side), June 6, 2004. Photo Adina Reger, Germany.

Molochansk Mennonite Conference, June 2-5, 2004

Molochna/Molochansk - 2004: Mennonites and Their Neighbours (1804-2004).
An International Scholarly Conference, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, 2 - 5 June 2004,"
by Dr. Peter Letkemann, 5-1110 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 1L1 (lblpeter@mb.sympatico.ca).

Introduction.

The year 2004 marks the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Molochna Mennonite settlement in southern Russia (present-day Ukraine). To mark this historic anniversary, scholars from eight countries on four continents gathered in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine from 2 - 5 June for an academic conference entitled - "Molochna - 2004: Mennonites and Their Neighbours (1804-2004)".

The first nine villages of the Molochna Settlement were founded in the spring of 1804; by 1809 there were already 19 villages. From 1819 to 1848 (the year of Johann Cornies' death) another 27 villages were founded; between 1851 and 1863 another 11 were added - making a total of 57 villages.

The settlement also included a number of large private estates, including Juschanlee (1811 - J. Cornies), Steinbach (1812 - Klaas Wiens) and Felsenthal (1820 - David Reimer). By 1914, the settlement had a population of 27,127 and covered an area of over 306,000 acres - it was the largest Mennonite colony in Tsarist Russia.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place in the city of Melitopol (pop. 200,000), located some 150 km south of Zaporizhzhia and only a few kilometres south of the original Molochna Settlement. A serious fire, accompanied by large explosions, at a huge munitions dump just 30 km northwest of Melitopol - and a few kilometres across the Molochnaia River from the former Mennonite village of Lichtenau (Svyetlodolinsk) - led to the shift of location from Melitopol to Zaporizhzhia, just two weeks prior to the opening.

Another complication was the sudden illness of the main conference organizer, Prof. Harvey Dyck from the University of Toronto, who had to be flown back to Toronto for treatment in mid-May. Other members of the organizing committee, including John Staples (New York State University at Fredonia), Nikolai Krylov (University of Melitopol), Svetlana Bobyleva (Director of the Institute of Ukrainian-German Studies at the National University of Dnepropetrovsk), travel coordinators Walter and Marina Unger (Toronto) and members of the Zaporizhzhia Intourist staff, led by Larissa Goryacheva, stepped into the breach. All arrangements for the last minute transition were taken care of efficiently. The conference ran smoothly and associated events took place as scheduled.

Scholars came from Austria, Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Paraguay, Russia, Ukraine and the United States to explore a wide spectrum of subjects on all aspects of the history of the Molochna Mennonites and their interactions with their non-German neighbours. Sadly, there were no representatives from Bethel College, Canadian Mennonite University, or Conrad Grebel College - all former centres of Russian Mennonite studies here in North America. It is a sad commentary on the deplorable state of Russian Mennonite studies in these and other North American Mennonite institutions!

Part of the crowd gathering for the Bi-centennial celebrations in the square in front of the former Mennonite Zentralschule, June 6, 2004. The building is currently being used as a Teacher Training College. Photo -Johannes Dyck, Bielefeld, Germany. June 6, 2004.

The Zentralschule as it stood in 1910. Photo - P. M. Friesen, Mennonite Brotherhood, *726. It was the only Mennonite building in Russia to use the Greek temple design. "Four large (almost Doric) columns with a pediment create a canopy over the front steps," Rudy Friesen,* Into the past, *243.*

Opening, June 2.

The conference began on Wednesday evening, 2 June, with an official opening dinner in the newly-renovated banquet room of the Intourist Hotel in Zaporizhzhia. Special guests and dignitaries included Nikolai Novichenko, First Deputy Chair of the Ukrainian State Committee on Religion, Anatolii Striuk, Deputy Chair of the Zaporizhzhia Oblast Administration, and Natalia Derkach, Chief Administrator of Nationalities, Immigration and Religion, Zaporizhzhia Oblast Administration.

John Staples, acting chair of the conference, presented the keynote address: "Putting `Russia' back into Russian Mennonite History: The Crimean War, Emancipation and the Molochna Mennonite Landlessness Crisis." He began with statement: "Mennonite historians....have told and retold this story countless times, but even the best of them have told it as an exclusively Mennonite story. The landlessness crisis might just as well have happened in Kansas, or Manitoba, or Paraguay, so little does the broader context of Tsarist Russia intrude. Staples emphasized that the crisis was not only a "Mennonite event" brought on by "internal, religious, social and political struggles, but rather part of a much larger economic and social crisis in southern Ukraine as a whole" brought on by "external" factors such as the Crimean War and the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

The Conference Program listed a total of 37 papers in 13 sessions, some of which were held concurrently. Several scholars, in addition to Harvey Dyck, did not show up, and in the final analysis only 33 papers were presented. The level of scholarship was generally quite high. Over two-thirds of the papers (23 in all) were given by Ukrainian scholars from Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia and Dnepropetrovsk and Russian scholars from as far away as St. Petersburg, Stavropol (Caucasus) and Omsk (Siberia). The contributions of these non-Mennonite scholars from Eastern Europe, based largely on their study of primary archival docu-

ments, have added new insights and perspectives to the Russian Mennonite story.

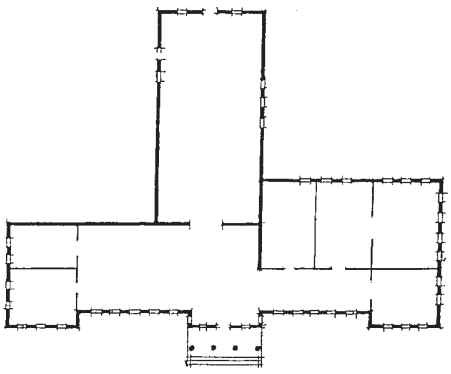
The Conference booklet provided 2-3 page summaries in Russian and English of most papers, so that all could follow the general content of the presentations. The subsequent question and discussion period of each session was conducted in both languages, with the help of an excellent team of translators. A selection of 10-12 papers is scheduled for publication in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

Conference proceedings began at 8:45 on Thursday morning, 3 June with papers on "The Molochna Mennonite School Council" (Plesskaia) and "The Role of Mennonites in the Intensification of Steppe Forestry in the first half of the 19th Century" (Rudchenko).

After the coffee break, two sessions were held concurrently. I attended the session which dealt with "Medical Care and Humanitarian Aid." Dr. Art Friesen (Vancouver) presented a detailed survey of the medical institutions developed by Mennonites in south central Ukraine prior to World War I. Dr. V. Reznik (Melitopol) reported on "Historical and Medical-Hygienic Aspects in the Establishment and Development of Mennonite Schools." He noted that Mennonite schools and classrooms "were the most spacious in the region," and "ventilation in Mennonite Schools was better than in other schools." But Mennonite schools did not meet government standards on lighting "which led to conditions such as scoliosis, short-sightedness and fatigue" nor did their school desks correspond to the standards of the period "most students sat a long tables, rather that in two-seat or one-seat desks, as recommended by many educators."

Dr. Piet Visser (Amsterdam) closed the session with a paper that provided valuable new insights into the history of Dutch aid to Russian Mennonites during the years of famine in the early 1920s. Concurrently, Natalia Ostasheva-Venger, Marina Belikova and K. Lyakh presented papers on various aspects of Mennonite economic, industrial and agricultural development.

The view from the council during the Sunday morning bi-centennial memorial service. Seated in the second row. l.-r.: John Staples, Co-chair of the Conference, Hans Dürksen, editor of the Mennoblatt, *Fernheim, Paraguay, Adina Reger, writer of Weißenthurm, Germany, Delbert Plett, and Peter Letkeman. Photo - Johannes Dyck.*



Floor plan of the Halbstadt Zentralschule. The school had eight classrooms and a large auditorium extending out of the back. Rudy Friesen, Into the past, *243. It was a real coupe for the Conference organizing committee to be able to hold the bicentennial events, including the worship service, in this historic building.*

June 3, Thursday.

On Thursday afternoon, I attended the session dealing with the Revolution and Civil War Period. David Sudermann (USA) presented an excellent paper on "The Halbstadt Days (February 1918)" - providing for the first time a comprehensive and detailed look at events leading up to the brutal murder of five Mennonite men and one Russian youth by sailors from the Black Sea fleet and members of the local Red Guard on the weekend of 16-18 February 1918. The Red Guard included a number of Mennonite men, including a certain Kroeker who was identified as one of the triggermen. Alexander Tedeev, Director of the Zaporizhzhia Regional State Archives, responded to the paper by presenting additional evidence of Mennonite involvement in the Red Guard from the files of men such as Abram Neufeld, Jakob Derksen and Johann Peter Kroeker.

Svetlana Bobyleva spoke on the causes, character and outcome of the tragic events of the Civil War in Mennonite settlements of Southern Ukraine. She urged that the history of these tragic years must be studied and analyzed anew, using sources that illuminate both sides of the story. A concrete example was the brutal massacre that occurred in the village of Eichenfeld on 26 October [8 Nov] 1919. We have a host of sources describing this tragic event from the Mennonite perspective. But what about the Ukrainian perspective? In the Spring of 2001, prior to the dedication of the Eichenfeld Memorial, Bobyleva and her students from Dnepropetrovsk University interviewed some two dozen elderly Ukrainian residents of the region to get their viewpoint of the event. The general consensus was that members of the Yazykovo Mennonite "Selbstschutz" provoked real hatred by their actions, which led to this terrible act of revenge. [Excerpts from these interviews can be found in Nestor Makno and the Eichenfeld Massacre, published earlier this year by Pandora Press]

Concurrently, three papers were presented in the neighbouring room: V. Babkova, a graduate student from Stavropol University, presented her paper on "Russian Understanding of Mennonites in the North Caucasus in the 1860s" which dealt with the first Mennonite settlement in the Kuban region. Irina Cherkazianova from St. Petersburg presented a paper on "Central Schools: discourse on the russification and self-isolation of Germans in southern Ukraine." Sergei Shevchuk concluded with a paper on "Johann Cornies' Educational and Scientific Activities in the Molochna Region." He noted that with the support of the Russian civil servant Peter Koeppen, Cornies was named a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1837. In this capacity he submitted a study of wells in the Molochna district, reports on the development of fruit orchards and tree plantations, an archaeological report on the excavation of 13 ancient burial mounds, and ethnographical studies of the Nogai and Duchobors.

June 4, Melitopol.

Early Friday morning, 4 June, conference participants boarded two busses for the two hour trip to Melitopol University, where nine papers were presented. The first six focussed on various religious themes. John Staples presented a stimulating paper on "Pietism and Progress in the Molochna: The `Great Awakening' of Johann Cornies." Staples noted that "Pietism afforded Cornies access to an entirely new world view....[It] provided a vital mechanism to free Cornies from the constraints of his conservative Mennonite mentality and paved the way for dramatic economic growth." His contacts to the Moravian Brethren and to the German "Erweckungsbewegung" of the early 19th Century led to increased contact with the secular world - including the economic world of his Russian environment. The creation of the Agricultural Society must be considered in the light of this religious awakening.

Oksana Besnosova asked the provocative question: "What die P.M. Friesen Leave Out? Mennonites and the Orthodox Church in the Late 19th Century." She noted that P.M. Friesen was "notably silent [in his history book] on the subject of relations between Mennonites and the Orthodox Church, and particularly the subject of Mennonite influence on Orthodox people." In the early 1890s, Friesen himself was ordered to appear in court to answer charges of evangelistic activity among Orthodox inhabitants of the region. Besnosova also noted that Mennonites made the strongest impression on the Orthodox not so much through

their preaching, but rather by their sober and prudent life-style, their literacy and their singing. The choral festivals ["Sängerfeste"] which became a regular feature of Mennonite community life in the 1890s, were of particular concern to the authorities and came under regular police surveillance as early as 1895....A Police report from 1905 states: "Russian sectarians have fallen under the influence of the Mennonites." The effects of this influence were already demonstrated in the 1897 Census, when 647 "non-German" men declared themselves to be "Mennonites." In the years leading up to World War I, the Orthodox Church took advantage of anti-German policies to accuse its ideological opponents of exerting a "German influence" on the Orthodox population and turned the Tsarist police and the popular press against Mennonites, Baptists, Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals. Some preachers were exiled to Siberia, publishing houses were closed, and government plans to restrict the religious rights of Mennonites were formulated. Under such conditions, P.M. Friesen "who tried to portray Mennonites as loyal subjects of the Tsar was compelled to hide the true scale of Mennonite [Brethren] missionary activities. She concluded that "the study of archival records, which are still far from exhausted, shows that Mennonites had a much greater influence than is generally thought.

The University of Melitopol choir performing on the steps of the Zentralschule in Neu-Halbstadt during the afternoon bicentennial memorial services. Seated, front, left, is Lisa Heller, Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy to Ukraine; two above her is John Staples, Co-chair of the Conference Committee, seated front left, is Dr. I. P. Anosow President of the University of Melitopol, and two above, face visible to the left, is Steve Shirk, MCC director for Ukraine and Russia. Historian Dr. Peter P. Klassen, Fernheim, Paraguay, gave a moving keynote address, stressing the need for forgiveness. Photo - Johannes Dyck.

Sergei Zhuk expanded on this theme by illuminating the cultural dialogue between Molochna Mennonites and local peasant dissenters called the Shalaputs during the 1860s. He characterized the Shalaputs as representatives of a type of Radical Reformation among Russian and Ukrainian peasants that influenced up to twenty percent of the rural population of southern Russia. They became the first pioneers of the Protestant ethic on the southern frontier, and laid a foundation for future anti-dissident practices and discourse, including the later Stundist movement.

Johannes Dyck (Oerlinghausen), showed how "the structure of the Russian Baptist congregations has a strong proto-type in the Anabaptist/Mennonite Church structure as put into practice by generations of Mennonites." L.I. Sennikova reported on the effects of Soviet religious legislation from 1917-41 on Mennonites in Western Siberia. She concluded that "Mennonites posed the greatest challenge of all German-speaking settlements in Siberia to Bolshevik policies of Sovietization and Russification.

Astrid von Schlachta, a specialist on Hutterite history from Innsbruck, presented the findings of her research on the relationship between Hutterites and the Molochna Mennonites. The Hutterites settled in Huttertal, near the Molochna Settlement, in 1842. They had already given up community of goods earlier in their settlement at Radushcheva, north of Kiev, and in Huttertal they were integrated into the Mennonites political, social and economic village structures. The unprecedented prosperity experienced by the best farmers soon stood in stark contrast to the poverty of their fellow craftsmen and wage labourers, and produced bitter tensions in the community. As a result, they decided to return to their "former conditions" and establish a "Bruderhof." The traditional community of goods was reinstated in Hutterdorf in 1857, and in Johannesruh and Neu-Hutterthal in 1864. In the 1870s all Hutterites left Russia and emigrated to North America.

June 5, Zaporozhe.

The final session of the day dealt with topics of Geography and Inter-Ethnic Relations: "The Role of Molochna Mennonites in the Formation of the Settlement Network of the Zaporizhzhe/Azov Region" (Nikolai Krylov); "Mennonite Landownership in Melitopol Uezd, 1889-1914" (A.N. Krylova), and "Bulgarians and Mennonites in the Northern Azov Region: Pages of a Common History" (S.I. Pachev).

In the evening participants attended the opening of Paul Toews' (Fresno) exhibition of 139 historical photos of the Molochna Region in the Melitopol Regional History Museum.

The final eight papers of the conference were presented in three sessions on Saturday morning. In the first session, Tatiana Plokhotniuk (Stavropol, Caucasus) reported on her discovery of the NKVD interrogation records of Jakob Aron Rempel from the year 1936. He and some 20 other Mennonite men from the Trakehn Settlement were accused of "founding a counter revolutionary organization and promoting anti-soviet and religious propaganda." The interrogation records from 20-27 November 1936 present the Soviet [NKVD] interpretation of Rempel's activities as Ältester of the Neu-Chortitza Mennoniten Gemeinde [Shlakhtin-Baratov, Borozenko and Nepluyevka settlements] and as chairman of the "Kommission für Kirchliche Angelegenheiten" [KfK] of the Mennonite General Conference in the 1920s. He was accused of being a leader of the Moscow emigration movement in 1929, and of encouraging the Mennonites and particularly their youth, to resist the Soviet atheistic ideology. He was forced to make a confession of his resistance to the destructiveness of the Soviet state. In April 1937, Rempel and several others were condemned to death, but his sentence was later commuted to 10 years in prison. Unfortunately, Ms. Plokhotniuk had only limited access to German and Canadian sources on Rempel's life [especially Hermann Heidebrecht's excellent new life story of Rempel "Auf dem Gipfel des Lebens] and was unable to give a complete picture of the remarkable contributions of this great leader. She was also unable to report that he was shot in 1941, as German forces approached the city of Orel, where he had been imprisoned for sev-

Pastor Jakob Tiessen of the Mennonite Church in Kutusowka (Petershagen), Molotschna, speaks to the Sunday morning memorial worship service, June 6, 2004. Photo - J. Dyck.

John Staples, Conference Co-chair, and Dr. I. P. Anosow, President of the Melitopol University, enjoy lunch during the academic session held June 4, on the university campus in Melitopol. The luncheon guests were treated to a rousing demonstration of Ukrainian folk dancing by a professional dance ensemble from the university. Photo - Adina Reger.

Fresno historian Paul Toews (currently Fullbright scholar to the Ukraine, see Pres.*, No. 23, page 60), and, left, Peoples' Deputy and Musuem Director, Sachatzkaja Valentina Mefodievna, in front of the Mennonite photo exhibition at the Melitopol Museum of Regional Studies. Tour guide Olga Schmakin, right. Photo - J. Dyck.*

Some of the participants of the Academic conference in Melitopol pose for a photograph: second row, at left side is Dr. Paul Toews, Fresno, California; tall man, rear, second from the left is Archivist Petr Viebe, Omsk, Siberia. The six individuals in front row, starting from the right, are, Irina Tscherkazjaniva, unknown, Franz Wall, Dr. I. P. Anosow, John Staples and Natasha Wenger. Photo - Adina Reger.

eral years.

Viktor Klets (Dnepropetrovsk) presented a thought-provoking paper on "Ukrainian Mennonites during the German Occupation of World War II," which examined various levels of Mennonite collaboration with Nazi Occupation forces during the years 1941 - 1945. This sensitive and controversial topic is rarely mentioned in the memoirs of Mennonites from the period, although we know that many Mennonite men joined the German army voluntarily, while others volunteered to serve as interpreters, or to take on administrative and secretarial positions in the German military administration of the region. Kletz claimed that "some documents evidence Mennonite service as overseers in the Dnepropetrovsk concentration camp." He concluded that "the largest part of the [Mennonite] population had a neutral attitude toward the new regime.... Mennonites in this group did not collaborate with the invaders, but at the same time did not struggle against them, even in a passive way." It is clear that much more research needs to be done on this area.

In a concurrent session, L.I. Moskaliuk presented a paper on "Socio-Demographic Factors determining Speech Behaviour among Ethnic Germans"; while Gerhard Ratzlaff (Paraguay) reported on the "Continuation of the Mennonite Commonwealth in Paraguay: Parallels and Contrasts with Russia"; and Peter Vibe (Omsk) spoke on "Mennonites in Siberia."

Historians Sergei Zhuk, Ball University, Muncie, Indiana (left), and Piet Visser, Amsterdam (see Pres.*, No. 23, page 56), enjoy lunch at the academic conference Melitopol University, June 4, 2004. Photo - Adina Reger.*

The final conference session was dedicated to topics of musical and literary culture. I presented a paper on "Heinrich Franz and the origins of the Ziffernsystem", which he introduced into the musical instruction in Mennonite schools in 1835, and which became compulsory in all Mennonite schools through Johann Cornies' curriculum reform of 1846. Tatiana Martyniuk (Melitopol) spoke on music education in general among the Slavic and German populations of the region, including music education in Mennonite schools.

Rudy Wiebe.

The closing word was given to the well known Mennonite novelist Rudy Wiebe. As a young boy growing up in northern Saskatchewan he remembered wondering "what it would be like if one day, just as I turned the corner of the pasture with the cows, a huge car would wheel into our yard, Joseph Stalin would emerge and from under his moustache tell my father he could have his farm back in Russia, if he wanted it." Later on the open prairie of southern Alberta Wiebe felt that "to touch this land with words requires an architectural structure; to break into the space of the readers' mind....you must build a structure of fiction like an engineer builds a bridge or a skyscraper over and into space." Wiebe himself has been a leading contributor to this "structure of fiction", along with Al Reimer and Sandra Birdsell, and with Arnold Dyck, Johannes Harder, Dietrich Neufeld, and Peter Epp from an earlier generation.

David Sudermann (Northfield, Minnesota) responded to these three papers and offered the following concluding observations: 1) Both of the Krylov's papers and Rudy Wiebe's call us back to the fundamental importance of place, of land and physical environment. 2) It is absolutely critical for us to look carefully at the relation between the actual landscapes and the landscapes of mind and memory, for once registered in memory landscapes tend to shrink and lose a larger context. The first edition of Schroeder's and Huebert's *Historical Atlas*, for example, left out of the Molochna map everything west of the Molochnaia (thirty plus German settlements) and south of the Juschanlee. Ms. Martyniuk's paper reminds us that the Lutherans in Prischib were also concerned with choral music. [There was, in fact, a pipe organ in the Prischib Lutheran church up on the Kolonistenberg, and Mennonites from Halbstadt found pleasure in hearing that instrument.] But did the Orthodox church in Halbstadt have its liturgical choir? That we do not yet know. John Staples's work, among others, is stretching back the landscape of memory to reintegrate the full range of environmental, ethnic, and cultural layers. 3) Finally, the contracted landscape of memory may omit entire layers of the cultural landscape. These might include dress, photographic images, food, spirituality, inter-ethnic relations. These and similar omissions from the full landscape might well form topics for our next conference.

Lichtenau Dedication.

The Conference closed officially at 11:45, and by 12:00 participants were on the buses heading for the Dedication Ceremony of two Mennonite memorial benches at the Lichtenau (Svietlodolinsk) Train Station. The dedication ceremony was attended by well over 120 residents of Svietlodolinsk (including several dozen school children, all waving Canadian flags!), together with some 60 or more conference participants and several groups of visitors from Canada, USA and Paraguay. The mayor of Svietlodolinsk and other regional government officials welcomed those in attendance; Paul Toews (Fresno) and Walter Unger (Toronto) gave short speeches, and Paul Epp (Toronto) explained the symbolic significance

The proceedings at the Academic Conference June 5, 2005, at the University of Melitopol. Seated in the foreground, middle, is Abe Dueck, M.B. archivist Winnipeg, Manitoba, retired. Photo - J. Dyck.

The proceedings at the Academic Conference held June 4, at the Intourist Hotel, Zaporozhe. Seated at the table, l.-r., Irina Tscherkazjaniva, St. Petersburg, Russia, Natasha Wenger, unknown, and Svetlana Bobyleva, Director, Centre for German-Ukrainian Studies, Dnipropetrosk State University. Photo - J. Dyck.

of the benches. A young man from the community sang a moving Ukrainian song, while Conference participants formed a choir to sing the familiar hymns "Wehrlos und verlassen" and "So nimm denn meine Hände." This latter song was often sung as a farewell both by the departing Mennonites and their loved ones who remained behind. The tour group from Paraguay, led by Peter Klassen, sang the song "Glaube der Väter" [Faith of our Fathers]. All in all, it was a deeply moving service.

Many Mennonites left from the Lichtenau station for Canada in the years after 1924, and beginning in 1929 hundreds of families departed from the same station for an uncertain future in the labour camps and exile settlements in Siberia or the Far North. Two granite benches recall these two vastly differing fates. The benches were designed by Paul Epp from Toronto, whose own father left from Lichtenau station for Canada as a young boy in 1924. The text on the benches [one in Ukrainian, the other in German] reads: "Mennoniten legten 1804 das Dorf Lichtenau an und bauten 1910 die [Tokmak] Eisenbahn, Ursprünglich Abfahrts- und Ankunftsort für Studierende, Sanitäter und Ersatzdienstleistende, sowie Treffpunkt bei Familienbesuchen, wurde der Bahnhof später Zeuge schmerzhafter Trennungen. Von hier emigrierten in die 1920ger Jahren Tausende Mennoniten in den Westen. Zwischen 1930 und 1941 wurden weitere Tausende in den Osten deportiert. Der Herr ist meines Lebens Kraft, vor wem sollte mir grauen? (Psalm 27,1). Errichtet 2004 vom Dorfrat und dem Mennonitischen Gedächtniskomitee."

Geographer Nikolai Krylov, Co-Chair of the Molotschna '04 Conference. Dr. Krylov is head of the Geography Department at the University of Melitopol and has himself written a book regarding the Mennonite settlements in the region. Photo - J. Dyck.

Rev. Johannes Dyck, Bielefeld, Germany, who preached the sermon simultaneously in German and Russian at the Sunday morning worship services in Neu-Halbstadt, June 6, 2004. He also took most of the excellent photographs for this article. Johannes Dyck is Chair of "The Society for Research and Nurture of the cultural inheritance of the Russian German Mennonites," Detmoldstr. 8, 33813 Oerlinghausen, Germany, e-mail: jdyck@t-online.de

Paul Epp included the traditional symbol of the anchor [found on many Mennonite gravestones in Ukraine] circumscribed by a compass rose in his design. He writes, "In this case, the anchor within the compass is a reference to how faith [symbolized by the anchor] gives us our spiritual direction, just as a compass gives us our physical direction. Apart from the text, the other most significant symbolism is the placement of the two benches - separate but equal, facing the same direction; German and Russian - side by side, so to speak, going forward.

This rail station was located on the Tokmak Railway line - a line built designed and built by Mennonites in 1910. One of the builders of the railway was the prominent industrialist Franz Wall. Several of Wall's grandsons were on hand to present a commemorative photo album of the railway to the mayor of Svietlodolinsk (Lichtenau).

After the ceremony we returned to Zaporizhzhia for the evening. The next day, we left early again to attend the Sunday morning worship service and Dedication Ceremony in Molochansk - Halbstadt.

Bicentennial Service.

The morning began with a worship service in the auditorium of the former Mennonite Zentralschule [now serving as a "Culture Palace" - community hall for Molochansk]. This proved to be a momentous and moving occasion, since it was the first religious service to be held in this auditorium since the Mennonites left over 60 years ago in the fall of 1943! The service was led by Jakob Tiessen, pastor of the nearby Kutuzovka (Petershagen) Mennonite Church, who spoke in Russian and in German. The packed auditorium included many local residents, members of the Zaporizhzhia and Kutuzovka Mennonite congregations,

Conference participants, and visitors from Canada, USA, Paraguay and Germany, along with regional state dignitaries and the Canadian Ambassador to Ukraine, Andrew Robinson. Johannes Dyck spoke on the "love and hope of our Christian faith." Five familiar hymns - "How Great Thou Art," "Great is Thy Faithfulness," "Nun danket alle Gott," "Gott ist die Liebe," and "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" - were sung in German, English and Russian [simultaneously].

Following the service, a dedication ceremony was held on the steps of the former Zentralschule for the Settlers' Monument - erected in memory of the Mennonite settlers who founded the 57 Molochna Mennonite villages in the years after 1804. A large crowd of local residents and guests (I would estimate at least 500-600 persons) had gathered for the occasion.

The Memorial was designed by Paul Epp and constructed out of granite by local craftsmen. The monument is in the form of a common threshing stone, turned on its end and set on a pedestal. Epp spoke of the meaning and symbolism of the monument: "One of the most important roles of art is to make the common appear special.... Tools are common, humble. This is especially true of agricultural tools. What I have done here is to take the humble, the typically overlooked and make it special through its presentation.... Mennonites in Ukraine were identified by their agriculture.... What better symbol of Mennonite agriculture than a threshing stone, where by the fruit of labour, the grain, was turned into a form that would not only make life sustainable, but whereby it could be celebrated [in the communion service]. The names of the villages have been inscribed on the facets of the stone....this encourages the viewer to approach the monument and to walk around it - searching for a village name....this circular movement is a symbol of the circular nature of life and history - constant change and returning to the beginning. Our return here, for the conference, is a circle from the presence here, earlier, of our ancestors."

A choir from the music department at the University of Melitopol sang well known chorales and "Kernlieder" - "Großer Gott wir loben dich," "Nun danket alle Gott," "Wehrlos und verlassen," "So nimm denn meine Hände, and "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" - accompanied by a small folk orchestra (violins, flute, trumpet, trombone, accordions, electric bass and percussion).

Local and regional government representatives acknowledged the historical contribution of Mennonites to the economic and cultural life of the region, and gave thanks for the humanitarian aid and community support being offered through the Mennonite Centre, recently organized in the newly-renovated former Girls' School of Halbstadt. The Canadian government was represented by Ambassador Andrew Robinson from Kiev. He announced a contribution of several thousand dollars towards the humanitarian and medical work being carried out by the Mennonite Centre. He also made some forceful and critical comments on election irregularities in the upcoming Ukrainian state elections. Canadian representatives have been appointed to chair an international commission to oversee election procedures.

Part of the Melitopol University Campus where the Molotschna '04 proceedings were held on June 4, 2004. Photo - J. Dyck.

Mennonite representatives from Canada, USA and Paraguay also spoke. The whole service was chaired by Steve Shirk, MCC representative in Ukraine. It was a day which the residents of Molochansk will long remember.

Memorialization.

On Monday afternoon, the recently discovered tombstone of Samuel Contenius, friend of the Mennonites and Johann Cornies, and former head of the Guardians Committee was unveiled in the Yavarnitzky Museum in Dnepropetrovsk.

Other memorials were dedicated in Vladovka (Waldheim) and Bogdanovka (Gnadenfeld). One plaque placed at the entrance of the former Mennonite hospital of Waldheim recalls the role played by Agnes and Cornelius Warkentin in the establishment of this hospital. Another plaque was dedicated at the local high school, which occupies the site of the former Isaak Neufeld factory in Waldheim. In Gnadenfeld a monument was placed at the site of the former Mennonite cemetery.

About the Author:

The Dr. Peter Letkeman is an organist and historian living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His doctoral dissertation on "Hymnody and Choral Music of Mennonites in Russia 1789-1915," 860 pages, was completed at the University of Toronto in 1985.

Dr. Letkeman is currently preparing his documentation of Mennonite victims of Soviet terror and repression from 1918 to 1956 for publication under the title, "A Book of Remembrance", see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 10-11. He is also working about the origins and development of the hymn tunes of the *Gesangbuch*. For an earlier article by Dr. Letkeman "The German Hymnody of the Russian Mennonites: A Tale of Two Gesangbücher," see *Pres.*, No. 18, pages 120-130.

Commentary,

Ukrainians speak of this spring as unusually beautiful. The landscape is green, spring rains have watered the steppe, the wild flowers are brilliant in their colour. After the winter the renewal of the spring is a metaphor for what is happening to the Mennonite story and to Mennonite-Ukrainian relationships. The Mennonite story, long suppressed, is being rediscovered as a vital part of the history of south Ukraine. The values that shaped the Mennonite story are being embraced as necessary for the renewal of Ukrainian society. The admiration for Mennonites as a people of memory, for having a sense of tradition that anchors them in changing times was repeatedly invoked. Both Ukrainian and the returning Mennonites from Paraguay, United States, Canada and Germany were moved by the mutual embrace and the kinship that such historic celebrations rekindle. By Dr. Paul Toews, Fresno, California, and Walter Unger, Toronto.

Piet Visser.

Noted Dutch historian, Piet Visser of Amsterdam, summarized the early June events in this manner: "The conference was well organized and featured papers from different angles and disciplines. The level of scholarship was good. What struck me most dramatically was the substantial amount of work contributed by Ukrainian and Russian scholars. This is very promising for the future of Mennonite studies. I think it is vitally important that non-Mennonite scholars in eastern Europe bring new research to the story, allowing for new insights and perspectives. During my time at the conference I also enjoyed moments of great psychological or spiritual impact. In particular I recall a long discussion with a Ukrainian teacher associated with the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine at Halbstadt, whom I admire so much for her courage in difficult personal circumstances, itself surely a paradigm for present day Ukraine, plus my unexpected visit with other Mennonites to the massacre site at Eichenfeld and its evocative memorial erected in 2001. It is such moments and golden silences that will remain with me. "

Harvey Dyck: Man of Vision and Molotschna '04

"Harvey Dyck: Man of Vision and Molotschna 04," a tribute by Dr. John Staples, Co-Chair, Molotschna Bicenennial Conference and Professor of Russian and Soviet History at State University of New York, Fredonia, New York, U.S.A. staples@fredonia.edu

For Harvey L. Dyck, Director of the Research Program in Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite Studies at the University of Toronto's Centre for Russian and East European Studies, this year's Molochna Mennonite Bicentennial celebrations in Ukraine mark the culmination of 15 years of painstaking and dedicated work. Along the way, he has fundamentally transformed the study of Mennonites in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union.

The Molochna '04 celebrations described in this edition of *Preservings* saw the largest ever gathering of specialists on Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite history. Papers on all aspects of Molochna Mennonite history, delivered by experts from around the world, proved that this academic subfield has grown and matured into a scholarly discipline in its own right. The presence of Canadian Ambassador Andrew Robinson, accompanied by dignitaries from the Ukrainian central and regional governments, showed that Mennonites are now recognized in Ukraine as major contributors to that country's past.

All of this would have been unimaginable just 15 years ago when Professor Dyck began his work in southern Ukraine. In 1989 only a handful of professional historians studied Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite history. Their work was sharply limited by their lack of access to Soviet archives; of necessity they based their findings on a small, well-thumbed collection of German-language sources, mostly written in the West or exported from Russia before the 1917 Revolution.

For this to change, three things had to happen. First, we needed the opening up of the archival treasure-troves locked away in Soviet Archives. Second, we needed the development of a larger group of historians to sift through that treasure trove, applying broader perspectives rooted in broader training in order to produce a full, nuanced interpretation. And third, we needed someone with the experience, knowledge, energy and vision to put all of this in motion and force it forward.

It is here that Harvey Dyck entered the story. A Columbia-educated professional historian, he was already established as a Professor of Russian and Soviet history at the University of Toronto. Almost uniquely among Mennonite historians, he possessed the necessary languages to work in the Soviet (and soon, post-Soviet) archives. He was broadly educated in both Tsarist and Soviet history, and had published on subjects varying from inter-war German-Soviet relations to 18th-century Russian diplomacy. Finally, he was a Mennonite, the son of a prominent Mennonite educator, and raised on a diet rich in traditional Mennonite stories of a Russian past.

In 1989, in the midst of Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost, Professor Dyck found himself working in the Odessa Regional State Archives. Not-quite-by-accident he stumbled across the lost Peter J. Braun Archives, and overwhelmed by their dramatic potential for reinterpreting Mennonite history, he launched himself into a new field. By 1991 Harvey Dyck had negotiated and overseen the microfilming of 130,000 pages of documents in Odessa, had personally carried them home, and had thrown open the doors to the complete rewriting of the Tsarist Mennonite past. Collaborating with Ingrid I. Epp he catalogued the collection and distributed it to key repositories in the West.

The full impact of the Braun Archive is just being felt today. In the coming few years the publication of a three-volume collection of the papers of Johann Cornies, translated into English by Ingrid Epp and edited by Dyck, Epp, and John Staples, will make major portions of the Braun collection available to a broad audience and further demonstrate the vital importance of this discovery.

As Professor Dyck worked to recover the documentary record of Mennonites in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, he also made contact with a community of historians in Ukraine who were eager to engage Western colleagues and pursue their own research in this field. He recognized the need to encourage and support this group, and equally, he saw their potential to bring valuable new perspectives to Mennonite history. His goal of nurturing this Russian and Ukrainian community, and of promoting and popularizing Mennonite history as part of mainstream Tsarist and Soviet history, crystallized into a project that is now recognized as a cornerstone event in the new Mennonite history: Khortitsa '99.

In close collaboration with scholars and administrators from Canada, the United States, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia, Harvey Dyck played the central role in planning and carrying out Khortitsa '99. He conceived of it as a scholarly conference, a memorial event to permanently mark and honour the Mennonite past in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, and a public event to return the Mennonite story to prominence in Ukraine (see *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 65-68).

As a scholarly conference, Khortitsa '99 was a major success. It gathered together for the first time an academic community from around the world, putting on display the work of historians, archivists, and museologists from East and West. Most importantly, it opened lines of communication between Russian and Ukrainian scholars and their Western colleagues that continue to bear fruits today.

One of the most significant by-products of the conference was the creation of the Khortitsa '99 Mennonite Studies Grants. These grants grew out of the recognition by Western participants in Khortitsa '99 of the need to provide material support to Russian and Ukrainian scholars. This program, spearheaded by Harvey Dyck and funded by contributions from a number of Western institutions and individuals, has provided grants to scholars and institutions across the Former Soviet Union. The work of many grant recipients was on public display at Molochna '04, proving the effectiveness of this project.

As a memorial event Khortitsa '99 was dramatic and compelling. No one who was present at the unveiling of the Nieder Khortitsa cemetery memorial will soon forget that solemn and moving ceremony. The memorial element of Khortitsa '99 has also left an important legacy: the formation of an "International Mennonite Memorial Committee", chaired by Harvey Dyck. In the years following Khortitsa '99 this committee erected memorials to Mennonite victims of Civil War massacres in Ebenfeld and Eichenfeld. The unveiling of a monument to the Molochna Mennonite Settlement was the high note of the Molochna '04 celebrations in June.

As a public event Khortitsa '99 was equally successful. It received national television, radio, and newspaper coverage in Ukraine, introducing Mennonites to many Ukrainians for the first time. Today Mennonites even appear in Ukrainian high-school history textbooks, and this is a direct consequence of Khortisa '99.

Khortitsa '99 has had at least one further significant outgrowth: it was the driving impetus in the establishment of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine. In Spring 2000 Professor Dyck visited Molochansk, where the mayor offered him the opportunity to buy the one-time Mennonite Girls School. He returned to Canada brimming with enthusiasm, knowing that the Mennonite community would eagerly support the opportunity to provide humanitarian aid to the former Mennonite regions of Ukraine. A June 2000 consultation hosted at the University of Toronto proved him right, and the Centre, supported by the "Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine", is today a shining example of Mennonite humanitarian accomplishments.

The Molochna '04 bicentennial celebrations were built upon the foundations of Harvey Dyck's 15 years of groundwork in Ukraine. Conference papers, based on the Braun Archives, the Zaporozhe Archives, and the work of scholars funded by Khortitsa '99 Grants, revealed the new face of Mennonite scholarship. Memorial events in Molochansk and other one-time Mennonite villages were made possible by the experience of years of work with regional administrators.

Mennonite dedication to humanitarian aid was on display in every corner of the former Molochna Mennonite settlement. Harvey Dyck's energy and enthusiasm for Tsarist and Soviet Mennonite studies is unabated. He is Chair of the Editorial Committee of the planned multi-volume Documentary History of Mennonites in the Soviet Union and his own contribution to that series, a translated edition of the writings of Jacob Neufeld, is close to completion. The Johann Cornies papers will soon be moving into their final stages. A groundbreaking history of Mennonites under Soviet rule is in the offing. The future of Mennonite studies, built upon such firm foundations, is rich with promise.

Harvey Dyck. Photo - Pres., *No. 13, page 2.*

A. E. van Vogt, Star Trek - The Mennonite Connection

A. E. van Vogt, Star Trek - The Mennonite Connection, by Andrew Buun, 215 Horton Ave., Winnipeg, R2C 2G2.

It is well known that the science fiction writer Alfred E. van Vogt, who passed away in January, 2000, was born in the West Reserve, specifically in Edenburg, Manitoba, the son of Henry and Agnes van Vogt. Henry was a lawyer who practised in Neville, Saskatchewan, and later moved his family to Morden, and then Winnipeg. It is less well known that Alfred van Vogt (who wrote under the name A.E. van Vogt) contributed to the worldwide cultural phenomenon known as Star Trek.

Most people in Canada and the U.S., not to mention the rest of the world, are very familiar with Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and the other characters of the TV series *Star Trek*. Members of the baby boom generation grew up with the original show, which was originally broadcast in the 1960's. Subsequent generations continue to follow the show and its many spin-off shows, such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, as well as the many Star Trek movies, books, fan activities, and conventions. The original show continues to be shown in reruns, and interest in the Star Trek universe continues to be strong. The show's formula of interstellar travel and adventure appeals to our innate sense of wonder, but few of its fans are aware of the role played by A.E. van Vogt in the late 1930's in preparing the way for its popularity.

In 1939, van Vogt was a struggling science-fiction writer in Winnipeg looking for his first sale to the science-fiction magazine *Astounding*. His first story, "Vault of the Beast", had been returned to him by the then-editor of the magazine, John W. Campbell, with the suggestion that it needed a few changes. However, van Vogt was not discouraged. He submitted another story, "Black Destroyer", which was published in the July, 1939 issue of *Astounding* as the cover story. That issue is regarded by some to have ushered in what is referred to as "the Golden Age of Science-Fiction".

The really different thing about the story "Black Destroyer" was that it told the story of a crew of men from Earth travelling through the galaxy in an interstellar survey ship, encountering strange life-forms and monsters and overcoming many difficulties on their voyage. Does this sound very similar to the premise of *Star Trek*? Of course, most of us today recognize this storyline. However, in 1939, it was something entirely new.

About the Author:

Andrew Bunn is a Winnipeg educator and trainer with an interest in literature and science fiction in particular. He has written stories and articles for local publications and is presently working on a collection of short stories.

Left: Robert Wise, the director of "Star Trek: The Motion Picture", with Alfred van Vogt, middle, and Gene Roddenberry, right. The photo was apparently taken on the movie set.

Later, van Vogt was to weave this story together with another story, "Discord in Scarlet" and other material into the novel *Voyage of the Space Beagle*.

A.E. van Vogt's popularity reached an all-time high during the late 1940's, when he was regarded as one of the leading science-fiction writers in the world, on the same level as Robert A. Heinlein and Isaac Asimov. However, during the fifties, he left the writing of science fiction to pursue his interests in Dianetics and other studies of the mind, and never regained the same position in the field.

In the meantime, a former LAPD police officer, and later Hollywood screenwriter, Gene Roddenberry, had discovered van Vogt's early work and grew fascinated with the idea of an interstellar survey team searching the cosmos for new forms of life. Roddenberry saw that this concept carried strong possibilities for a dramatic series, provided it was done correctly. In the mid-sixties, he was able to sell the concept to NBC, and the rest is history. The series in its various forms shows no sign of abating after almost forty years.

Alfred van Vogt could possibly have sued for copyright infringement. Indeed, later he did receive a modest settlement from the producers of the movie *Alien* as compensation for their having used the concept from the story "Discord in Scarlet", which told the story of an alien lifeform stalking the crew of an interstellar spaceship. However, Roddenberry had reached out to van Vogt, keeping in communication with him and later inviting him to the set of the first *Star Trek* movie as a consultant, and thereby apparently earned van Vogt's respect. Alfred was never a man given to disputes, preferring to follow his personal philosophy of cooperation as outlined in many of his stories. It appears he was satisfied that some of his early concepts were at last receiving wider public exposure through the medium of the *Star Trek* series.

The reputation of the late A.E. van Vogt as a writer of unusual vision has been revived in recent years, with his receipt of the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America in 1996, and the recent publication of a book about his works, *A.E. van Vogt: Science Fantasy's Icon*, by H. L. Drake. Perhaps it is also fitting at this time to recall that the ideas of this son of the West Reserve helped to launch one of the greatest popular cultural phenomena of our day.

Alfred van Vogt - Order of Manitoba.

Alfred van Vogt is probably one of the most prominent writers coming out of the Mennonite community and the Province of Manitoba. Anyone interested in the works of van Vogt and in having him named posthumously to the Order of Manitoba, please write to the Premier at: The Honourable Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba, Legislative Building, 204-450 Broadway, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 0V8, Fax: 1(204) 949-1484.

Sources:

Dyck, John, "Alfred van Vogt: Science Fiction Master", *Preservings* No. 10, Part II. (June, 1997), p. 66.

Panshin, Alexei and Cory, *The World Beyond the Hill*, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1989, pp. 445-519.

Alexander, David, *Star Trek Creator*, Penguin Books USA Inc., 1994.

Evangelist slanders Old Colonists.

Aggressive religions seemingly find it to their advantage to slander the communities they are targeting for proselytization. In a brochure distributed in Winnipeg churches in 2004, Evangelist Jakob Funk, Winnipeg, slandered the Old Colony Mennonites, stating they "....were religious but nonetheless lost," and "that they were religious, but nonetheless without Jesus Christ, and living in spiritual darkness." Funk's brochure makes the further slanderous statement that "approximately half are unbelievers."

Funk has already lied and slandered Old Colonists previously. On one occasion it was against the Mexican Mennonites (see *Pres.*, No. 19, page 77). It is clear that Evangelist Funk is in great spiritual darkness. Let us pray for Evangelist Funk that he too may come to a saving knowledge of God's grace and seek forgiveness for the evil he has done before it is eternally too late.

Goshen exhibit to honour Dutch-born illustrator

He is a painter, illustrator and photographer; he is a storyteller, tour guide, slide lecturer and Mennonite historian; and he is an environmentalist, train lover and humorist.

The wide interests and passions Jan Gleysteen expressed through his life's work will all be on display in the upcoming exhibit, "Jan Gleysteen: Life Work," in the Goshen College Library Gallery. The exhibit will open with a reception at 2 p.m. Jan. 4. The display will continue through Feb. 22.

The show will feature Gleysteen's pen and ink drawings, watercolour and oil paintings, calligraphy, book designs, model trains and documentary photography.

"Jan is well-known in the Mennonite church for all his years as an illustrator with Mennonite Publishing House, and later as a slide lecturer on Mennonite history," said Ervin Beck, Goshen College professor emeritus of English.

Gleysteen was born in 1931 in Amsterdam, Holland. He and his family attended the historic Singel Mennonite Church that traces its roots back to 1608.

After living through the five-year Nazi occupation of his country and then connecting with American and Canadian Mennonite relief workers and church leaders during the reconstruction period, Gleysteen travelled to the United States to attend Goshen college at the invitation of H.S. Bender.

He attended Goshen and then Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Va., each for a year, before working full-time at the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottdale, Pa.

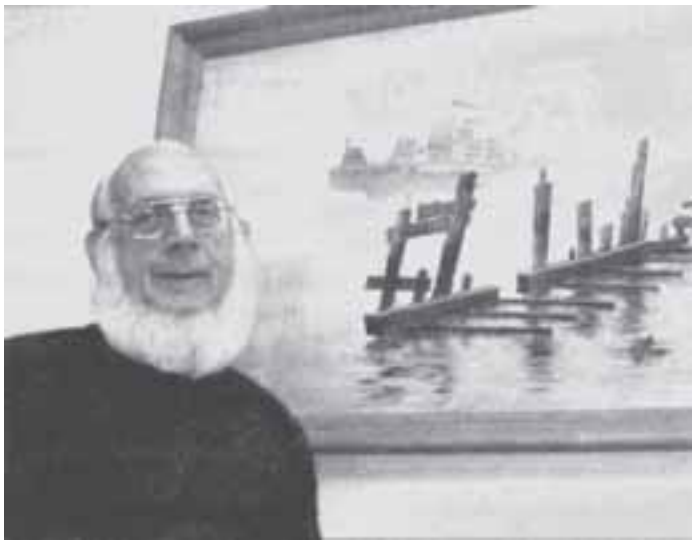
Having studied art in Amsterdam at the Municipal School for Fine and Applied Arts and the Royal Academy, Gleysteen began his lifelong career of illustrating, designing books and editing.

"I haven't used a computer yet for designing – my work is all done by hand," Gleysteen said.

Gwen Stamm, a former designer for Mennonite Publishing House who worked with Gleysteen for 20 years, said, "Beneath Jan's sense of humour, quick wit and ability to tell a captivating story, I learned that he possessed a refined sense of what comprises quality."

After extensive travel in Europe and photographically documenting Mennonite historical sites, Gleysteen contributed to the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* and wrote *The Mennonite Tour Guide to Western Europe*. Gleysteen is co-founder of TourMagination, personally leading more than 60 tours through Europe.

And from the 1970s to 1990s, he carried his well-worn slide projector to many churches around the country giving illustrated lectures on Mennonite history.



Jan Gleysteen with his award-winning painting, ""Fog Bound Ferry," based on memories from his childhood in Amsterdam. An exhibit of Gleysteen's art will be featured starting Jan. 4 at Goshen (Ind.) College. Photo - Jodi H. Beyeler/Goshen College. Men. Weekly Review, *Dec. 29/03, page 11.*

His 200,000 slides of nature, travels and Mennonite history are all housed in his basement, colour-coded and easily accessible.

Goshen College.

From *Men. Weekly Review*, Dec. 29/04, page 11.

Der Bote Editor Retires.

Justina Heese, executive secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Formation, presents an engraved mug to Isbrand Hiebert in recognition of his work with the German-language publication *Der Bote*. Hiebert served as editor for seven years, overseeing the change from a newspaper to a bi-weekly magazine in 2002. Ingrid Janzen Lamp from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, who has been interim editor since January 1, 2003, was named editor in May. - From MC Canada release. Courtesy of *Canadian Mennonite*, July 12, 2004, page 38.

H. E. Plett Awards

Henry E. Plett Awards for Family Histories. The winners of this year's awards were both from W. C. Miller Colligiate in Altona, Manitoba. The first prize was awarded to Andrew Giesbrecht for his paper entitled "Helena (Heinrichs) Schroeder (1892-1996)." The winner of the second prize was Kathleen Penner for her paper entitled John Nickel (1926-96)." The contest is administered by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society - Genealogy Committee and is aimed at Manitoba high school students to encourage research and writing on a family history subject. For additional details see: http://www.mmhs.org/plett.htm

By Alf Redekopp, Chair

Genealogy Committee, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Inc.

Andrew Giesbrecht, first prize winner.

Kathleen Penner, second prize winner.

Amish - The Simple Life

"Amish - The Simple Life: Farewell, Atkins and Pilates - the Amish workout is where it's at," by Jeannine Stein, from the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, January 17, 2004.

Forget the standard health and fitness resolutions that include joining a gym, going to yoga and trading meatball subs for white-meat turkey. It may just be that the best way to get in shape is to plow the back 40, toss a few bales of hay and wash buckets of wet clothes by hand.

Call it the Amish paradox. An exercise science professor has discovered that a pocket of Old Order Amish folks in Ontario has stunningly low obesity levels, despite a diet high in fat, calories and refined sugar – exactly the stuff doctors tell us not to eat.

They're at a paltry four per cent obesity rate, compared to a whopping 31 per cent in the general U.S. population, which, as we all know, is getting fatter by the minute. This group of Amish manages to keep its overweight levels low despite a diet that includes meat, potatoes, gravy, cakes, pies and eggs. So what's their secret? Exercise, people. Exercise.

For starters, of the 98 Amish pedometer-wearing adults surveyed over a week, men averaged about 18,000 steps a day, women about 14,000. Most of us don't come anywhere close to that, struggling to get in the recommended 10,000 steps a day.

Amish men spent about 10 hours a week doing vigorous activities, women about 3 ½ hours (heavy lifting, shovelling or digging, shoeing horses, tossing straw bales). Men averaged 43 hours of moderate activity a week, women about 39 hours (gardening, feeding farm animals, doing laundry). We feel virtuous if we manage to eke out half an hour a day on the StairMaster.

Lead researcher David R. Bassett Jr., professor of exercise science at the University of Tennessee, conducted the study to look at changes in physical activity from a historical perspective. His findings were published in January's *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, a journal of the American College of Sports Medicine.

He chose this population of Amish for their adherence to a physically demanding farming lifestyle and rejection of things technical, such as automobiles and electricity. They are something of an artifact of how we lived 150 years ago.

The findings of the Old Order Amish, Bassett believes, serve to put our current slothful lives in perspective. "It can provide a sense of what we ought to be doing," he says. "It's a little ridiculous – we drive to work, then go to the gym to walk on a treadmill. We go to great lengths to remove activity from our daily lives, and then we go to great lengths to put it back in. The Amish have done a better job than anybody of consciously thinking what impact technology will have on their lives."

The findings of the Old Order Amish serve to put our current slothful lives in perspective.

From *The Globe and Mail*, courtesy of Sid Barkman.

Reality show targets Amish teens

Los Angeles - The UPN television network is preparing a reality series that follows Amish teenagers having their first experiences with modern conveniences and outside society, part of a religious rite of passage that tests their faith.

Network executives are informally calling it "Amish in the City", although they said the title will likely change.

"To have people who don't have television walk down Rodeo Drive and be freaked out by what they see, I think will be interesting television," said CBS chairman Leslie Moonves, who also oversees UPN. "It will not be denigrating to the Amish."

Members of the Amish religious sect dress simply and shun most technology. Rural Pennsylvania and Ohio are home to large Amish communities, where their horse-drawn black buggies appear on country roads.

At age 16, Amish youngsters are allowed to break free of the religion's strict code of conduct to decide whether they want to be baptized as adults. During the period of "rumspringa", a Pennsylvania Dutch term that means "running around," they often date, drink, drive cars and move away from their homes.

The majority return to the faith.

The show will be about culture shock, not religion, and he said it would be like a reverse version of Fox's *The Simple Life*, where socialites Parish Hilton and Nicole Richie lived for a time on an Arkansas farm.

"Where were all the people writing about *The Simple Life*?" Moonves said. "Did it make fun of the family they were living with? Did it make fun of the two girls? It was fun."

Associated Press. From the *Free Press*, Feb. 04.

U.S. Terror Fears Strands Amish Man

"U.S. Terror fears strand Amish man in Canadian Village. Refuses to have picture taken. Cannot cross the border to return home without green card," by Jennifer Chen.

Ottawa - An Amish man from Alymer, Ont., cannot return to the United States, where he has been living, because his religion prevents him from taking a photograph required for a green card.

When Daniel Zehr heard his father was undergoing open heart surgery in December, the 29-year-old travelled to an Amish community near London with his wife and daughter, who are both American.

"We haven't tried to go back because of warning that we've had from the border that they won't let us across," he said.

Mr. Zehr said one U.S. border official told him that without photographic identification, authorities would not allow him to cross, and they could even bar him from the country from five to 10 years. "I don't know what's true and what's not. That's what keeps me shaking in my shoes," he said. "I was trying not to do anything illegal," he added.

Although Mr. Zehr applied for a green card in 2002, he was denied for not providing a photographic image. Mr. Zehr said he would be willing to notify the U.S. government in advance everytime he wanted to cross into Canada, or go through extra steps, if that is what it takes. "I don't care if it's a lot of headache to do it, because I understand that they're doing something they normally don't do."

His father-in-law is working with an attorney in the United States to help him find a way back to Licking Township, Pa., where Mr. Zehr has a farm. The community has also contacted their congressman and senator for help "to see if there's some way the policy can be adjusted," Mik Robertson, a town supervisor, said....Licking Township has more that 400 residents and about 10% of the rural community is Amish....

The Amish refuse to have their photograph taken because of a "direct biblical injunction not to make graven images," or images for worship, said Abe Harms, who works with the Amish community in Aylmer as the Mennonite Central Committee programs regional manager.

They also believe in retaining their own decision-making powers by rejecting technology, he added.

It is more of an issue now, Mr. Harms said, "simply because of security being beefed up" since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

According to *The Clarion News* in Licking County, Amish community members had previously been granted green cards without photographs, but apparently not after the attacks.

The problem will have to be addressed on the policy-making level, not at the border, said Greg Palmore, a Customs and Board Protection spokesman.

At this point, he added, Mr. Zehr will not be allowed back into the United States without photographic proof of his identity.

From *National Post*. March 5, page A5.

Sommerfelder Worship Services - Dec. 7, 2003

On Sunday, December 7, 2003, Dr. Jack Thiessen, attended the Sunday worship services of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde at New Bothwell, Manitoba. He filed the following report:

When Ken Reddig recently recommended attending the Sommerfelder church, if at all, I pricked my slouchy ears. But today I went.

The church is just down the road towards the dreaded Tjleenjemeenda and Holdemanna while to the other side are the Chortitzer, an ambitious lot of instant salvation and tradition and eager proselytizers, recently worked over by American gospel, now ready to take on the world.

The Sommerfelder Mennonite Church at New Bothwell (East Reserve), Manitoba. Photo - Jack Thiessen.

This Sommerfelder church is large and simple in the extreme and totally uncompetitive. The only luxuries are electricity and carpeting. However, when one is repeatedly summoned to kneel-pray the carpeting becomes a necessity.

The women sit to the right, men to the left. Klock Tien twelve men dressed in dark shades walk solemnly to that elevated part behind and to the side of the pulpit and sit down on accord. They bow their heads for a breath of prayer and then one of several V'asenja announces a song in Low German. For once, even God pricks up his ears.

After verse or stanza six draws to a close, my wonderment is great and complete. Number one: how do these precentors remember the melodies to hundreds of songs, with not a note to guide them? Second: who wrote these thousands of verses of holy doggerel in High German?

Then the minister, no cravat but with a conservative Schwaulmsrocktje, speaks on the meaning of advent in Low German and while my language is considerably superior to his, my faith is not. He did well.

Then we are back on our knees and another song, five stanzas of monotone, accapella, of course, mounts to the rafters and beyond.

The second portion of the sermon is delivered by the same minister but this time his text is Old Testament. Again, the preacher finds no biblical pastures on which to exercise missionary ambitions, no justification for going to all the world and teaching them the virtues of consumption, the justification for indulgence, the sowing of seeds of entitlement.

Suddenly our world, small but self-sufficient, makes sense and minding our own business keeps us busy enough. And it is all so shamelessly affordable.

Prior to the benediction, the minister announces that the Young People's Piggy Bank could do with some fattening up but no collection plates come spinning my way by the competitive dozen.

On my way out I still fail to see any evidence of the usual cashiers and their toothy insistence.

Also not a single soul asks me how I am or invites me back.

They don't have to.

Etj feehld mie mol wada gaunz tusijch.

Kleine Gemeinde Bücherabend

The Kleine Gemeinde, headquartered in Jagueyes, Mexico, makes a strong effort to distribute Bibles and devotional literature through its publishing house "Centro Escolar Evangelico (see Pres*, No. 19, pp. 116-120). In this regard they feature "Bücherabends" (literally, "book evenings") in various colonies where books are displayed, sold and distributed. Here l.-r., Eddy Plett, Gerhard Bergen, La Honda, Abraham Bergen, La Honda, and Cornelius Penner, Quellen Colony, gather at the Crossway Publications Inc., book table to look at the latest offerings. Photo - Eddy Plett. For more information regarding Kleine Gemeinde publications write Apdo 502, Cd. Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico, 31500.*

Chortitza Old Colony Atlas

"Chortitza Old Colony Atlas," published by Heinz Bergen Ed., Regina, Saskatchewan.

Comprehensive, 130 pages, over 65 maps. 30 maps from the year 1865 in full colour. Introduction by Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, "The Khortitza Colony in New Russia."

Order from Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan, 110 LaRonge Rd., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7K 7H8. Canadian cost $35.00 plus shipping and handling.

Heinz Bergen, compiler and editor of the Chortitza Old Colony Atlas is showing it to Professor Ted Regehr (right) during the Annual meeting. Photo - Susan Braun, Sask. Men. Historian, Vol. X, No. 1, April 2004, page 19.

Remembering Our Mennonite Heritage”

Remembering Our Mennonite Heritage” - Film by Otto Klassen, reviewed by
Dr. Peter Letkemann, 5-1110 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 1L1 (lblpeter@mb.sympatico.ca).

The film director Otto Klassen is widely known in the Mennonite world for his many film documentaries on the history of Mennonites in Paraguay, Mexico, Canada and Russia. For more than 30 years he has dedicated himself, mostly at his own expense, to the production of these films.

His latest production - “Remembering Our Mennonite Heritage” - was premiered on Sunday, 2 May 2004 at the Douglas Ave. Mennonite Church in Winnipeg. Klassen originally planned the film for his children and grandchildren, in order to give them a brief insight into the history of their ancestors in Russia. After the children had viewed the film, they suggested that it would also be of general interest to a wider Mennonite audience. They were correct in this.

The church was filled to capacity and many people had to be turned away at the door - unmistakable evidence of a continued interest in the history of Mennonites in Russia, and a powerful testimony to the quality of Otto Klassen’s films, which have repeatedly been well received by audiences and critics alike.

Otto Klassen’s own script was read by his daughter Charlotte (Klassen) DeFehr. In 45 minutes the film presents the historical background and development of Mennonite settlement in Russia to the year 1914.

Through intensive and extensive self-study Otto Klassen has acquired an excellent understanding of all aspects of Mennonite history. In its more recent episodes he also knows this history from personal experience - he was born in Ukraine, came to Germany during the Second World War, emigrated to Paraguay in 1947 and helped to establish the new pioneer settlement of Volendam. In the 1950s he moved to Winnipeg, where he worked as a mason, bricklayer and building contractor for many years.

His artistic temperament led him to devote much of his free time to film making. Through many years of experience this multi-talented devotee of Mennonite history has acquired expertise in all aspects of film. He fulfils the role of producer, director, writer, camera man and is actively involved in editing, sound and even in the selection of the music for the soundtrack. In recent years he has kept up with the latest developments in computer and digital technology - so that this latest production was produced in digital format.

Otto Klassen, Premiere Mennonite film producer, has made an invaluable contribution to Mennonite life, culture and faith. Photo - Peter Letkeman.

It is impossible to say everything in 45 minutes, but Otto Klassen is able to illuminate all of the main themes of Russian Mennonite history in Tsarist Russia in a simple yet comprehensive manner - including the immigration from Prussia and the many difficulties associated with this, the relationship of Mennonites to the state, the spiritual, cultural and economic life of the community.

One sees that Mr. Klassen is proud of his people and his heritage, but he does not deny that there are dark sides to the story as well. He knows the dark sides all too well - especially the repeated religious controversies of the 19th century. But he chooses to emphasize the positive achievements - especially the economic achievements in agriculture (sheep herding and cattle production, grain, etc.), in industry (factories for the production of agricultural implements and mills and oil presses), as well as the social and charitable endeavours (including schools, hospitals, old folks homes, orphanages, and many more). It was these economic and social contributions which were recognized and rewarded by the Tsar and his officials.

At its premiere, the film was presented in English, but a German version - narrated by Pastor James Schellenberg - is now available as well. Both versions can be obtained by contacting Otto Klassen, who deserves our heartfelt gratitude for his many years of dedicated service to the Mennonite people and their history.

Presidents Visit Chaco, April 15, 2004

The Presidents of Bolivia, Carlos Mesa Gisbert, and Paraguay, Nicanor Duarte Frutos, met on April 15, 2004, at Fort Boqueron. It was apparently the first time since the Chaco War of 72 years ago that these two one-time foes and neighbouring countries met on one of the former and most significant killing fields of the Chaco War.

The Oberschulzen of the colonies had also received an invitation to this historic occasion. The Oberschulzen and the Governor of Boqueron greeted the esteemed visitors at the airport in Neuland and accompanied them to the Ex. Fort Boqueron. Here the program was presented as planned. Greetings were given by the Governor Mr. David Sawatzky, and short speeches by each of the Presidents of Bolivia and Paraguay. Both emphasized the importance of the meeting and that the war of 70 years ago had been absurd. The obligation now was to look to the future and to work together.

The “Boqueron Declaration” was signed whereby both Presidents renewed a commitment to the brotherliness of both countries and committed themselves to the physical union of the two countries through the “biozeanische” connection: Paraguay for its part will asphalt the “Ruta Transchaco” up to the border, which President Frutos announced at this occasion, and Bolivia will secure the stretch from the border up to Villa Montes. Earlier in the day, President Mesa Gisbert had already signed a degree and deposited the same at the promised location, which governed the financing of the stretch between Villa Montes and the border marker 94....

Left, the President of Bolivia, Prof. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, and Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of Paraguay. Photo - Menno Informiert, *April 2004, page 27.*

As the high point and conclusion of the ceremony, a memorial with a commemorative inscription for those who fell in the Chaco War was unveiled by the Presidents of Bolivia and Paraguay....On April 16, the two Presidents flew to Asuncion in order the discuss various items of political and economic concerns.

Report written according to information from Oberschulz Cornelius Sawatzky and the national press, by Andreas F. Sawatzky. Reprinted from *Menno Informiert*, April 2004, page 27.

Mennonite Rock Singer Casts Aside Tradition

The following article appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, Toronto, May 29, 2003.

By Luis Rojas Miena, from *Esfuerzos Unidos, Mexico.*

Each time Mexican rocker Martin Thulin appears on stage he is defying 500-years of tradition.

Mr. Thulin, 30, was born into the religious community of the Mennonites, known for their austere lifestyle and distrust of the modern world.

Named after a 16th century Dutch Christian reformer, Menno Simons, many of the one million or so Mennonites around the world live in simple agricultural communities where they travel by horse and cart, not motor vehicles.

Their beliefs forbid any non-religious music, never mind Mr. Thulin's blend of electropop, punk and rock.

His debut CD, *Rock Menonita*, came out in Mexico earlier this year. Although he does not practice the religion, blond blue-eyed Mr. Thulin flaunts his Mennonite roots when he performs, wearing traditional dress including denim overalls and a wide-brimmed hat.

His CD, a collection of 12 songs in English with titles such as *Kill, Kill, Kill* and *Disco Rat* is likely to shock the Mennonite community.

Mr. Thulin said the traditional lifestyle of Mexico's 80,000 Mennonites is already changing.

There is a kind of a opening; people wanting to live like normal people and having normal lives.

Mexico's Mennonites began arriving in the country's arid north from Canada in the 1920s and quickly earned a reputation as hard-working, thrifty farmers who produce top-quality cheese.

Now many of the communities youngsters travel to Mexico's biggest cities for business, picking up urban habits.

Mr. Thulin spent much of his childhood in Sweden. He does not play to audiences in Mennonite areas, preferring the more cosmopolitan Mexico City.

Like Mr. Thulin, younger members of the community are turning their backs on the ways of their elders.

"Because they go out sometimes, have days off, they do what they can't do here. Young people have hidden music. Our religion doesn't allow [non-religious] music but there are young people who have it," said Guillermo Lopez, head of a Mennonite community in the Mexican state of Durango.

Mr. Thulin, who sings and sometimes plays keyboards, said he hopes to break the stereotype of quiet, conservative Mennonites.

"I'm not trying to be the Mennonite ambassador," he said. "But maybe my voice can make a little difference."

Reuters News Agency.

Submitted by Harry Loewen, 4870 Parkridge Place, Kelowna, B.C., V1W 3A1.

"Toronto Blessing" now decade old

By Ron Scillag, Religion News Service.

Ten years ago this month, worshipers at a small church a stone's throw from this city's airport began laughing uncontrollably.

They also made animal noises – braying, barking, howling and roaring. They collapsed to the floor, staggered about as if drunk, shook and jerked; wept, wailed and yelped. Faces contorted with tics. Groans and guffaws hung in the air. Bodies lay prone on the carpet.

To the uninitiated, this was eerie stuff, resembling mass hysteria more than religious worship. But to regulars at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church (now the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, or TACF), this was the work of the Holy Spirit, and the genesis of worldwide revival in the charismatic and Pentecostal movements.

The phenomenon was first noticed on Jan. 20, 1994, and dubbed the Toronto Blessing by a glowing British press that acclaimed the strange signs and wonders at the church near the airport of Canada's largest city.

"British Airways Flight 092 took off from Toronto Airport on Thursday evening just at the Holy Spirit was landing on a small building 100 yards from the end of the runway," enthused one widely circulated report.

Regardless of what one may think of the claim that the Holy Spirit regularly disembarks at a church near Pearson International Airport, there's no doubt the Toronto Blessing represents one of the most intriguing – and contentious – stories in recent years.

"Holy laughter" has since been exported around the world, but the TACF remains ground zero for the phenomenon. The church has drawn some 4 million Christians from five dozen nations over the past decade, all eager to experience the blessing and the wild bodily manifestations that accompany it. Airlines and major hotels around the airport offer discounts to pilgrims journeying to Toronto to be – in the movement's parlance – slain in the spirit.

Now in a cavernous former convention center near the airport that can house up to 3,500 worshipers, the fellowship intended 10 years ago simply to start a series of four revival meetings led by Randy Clark, a visiting pastor from St. Louis.

But something happened that wintry Thursday night. The four meetings turned into regular services, and the TACF now hosts them every night of the week except Monday. The ministry is aided by a trained, 45-member team.

But some Christians have charged the Toronto Blessing exhibits false teaching and bizarre behavior incompatible with the Holy Spirit.

In his 1996 book, *Counterfeit Revival*, Hank Hanegraaff, head of the evangelical Christian Research Institute in California, denounced Arnott and the Toronto Blessing as a fraud. That same year, the TACF was kicked out of the charismatic Vineyard movement for being too extreme.

From *Mennonite Weekly Review*, Jan. 5/04, page 3.

Conservative Conference seeking resources

Like many Christian faith groups, the Conservative Mennonite Conference is on the lookout for study resources for pastors and members that match its churches' theology.

The search has been so challenging that conference leaders plan to take the matter into their own hands.

The conference will hold its annual meeting July 24-27 at Hartville, Ohio.

"We are searching for study material for pastors and congregations that represent Conservative Mennonite Conference theology," said Steve Swartz, general secretary-elect of the conference.

"Many resources are available from the larger evangelical world - Vineyard, Willow Creek, Focus on the Family - but in those materials are themes of God and country, Calvinism, American consumerism, that disturb us."

Headquartered at Irvin, Ohio, the conference includes 108 congregations with 10,704 members. Among other ministries, the conference sponsors Rosedale Bible College and Rosedale Mennonite Missions, which has about 120 workers in 17 countries.

With the church growing, the need for appropriate study resources has become acute.

"In an effort to generate materials that reflect our Anabaptist, evangelical, Mennonite and conservative theology, we approved a new position within the CMC office known as a secretary of congregational resources," Swartz said.

The conference is still working to fill that position, ideally by Jan. 1, Swartz said. The person hired would be charged with either finding or developing appropriate materials for the conference to use.

To be held at the Lake Center Christian School, the conference's annual meeting will focus on the theme "The Lordship of Jesus."

Programs are planned for women, men, ministers, youth and children, in addition to the gathering's general business sessions.

Among the speakers will be George Verwer, founder and international coordinator of Operation Mobilization. Verwer will speak four times on global education and missions, Swartz said.

Lavern Nissley, associate pastor of Vineyard Church of Northridge in Springfield, Ohio, will be the main speaker for the youth gathering.

By Robert Rhodes, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, June 23, page 14.

His Holiness - Pope John Paul II

"His Holiness - Pope John Paul II - Behold the greatest man of our time,"
by Eric Margolis in *The Winnipeg Sun*, Sunday October 19, 2003, page C4.

After covering world affairs for the past 20 years. I (a non-Catholic) believe the greatest man of our era has been His Holiness, Pope John Paul II.

This past week, the most remarkable pope since the Middle Ages commemorated his 25th anniversajy as both leader of the world's Roman Catholics. and the defender of the world's oppressed peoples - no matter what their religion.

The first pope since the l6th century who was not Italian, Polish-born Karol Wojtvla quickly confirmed his countrymen's deserved reputation for courage and audacity by shaking up and revitalizing the Vatican bureaucracy and worldwide Catholic priesthood, which were afflicted by low morale, loss of faith, poor leadership and often shocking corruption.

His Holiness - Pope John Paul II. Pope John Paul helped the U.S. fight Soviet communism, but then warned that unbridled capitalism could become as great an evil. Photo - Winnipeg Sun, *Oct. 19, 2003, page C4.*

John Paul purged the Church, notably its Latin American branches, of Marxist priests preaching "liberation theology", one of the graver recent challenges to Catholicism. The Polish Pope reasserted the authority of Rome over the Church, parts of which, in many nations. had grown unresponsive, indifferent or outright rebellious to papal authority.

In short, John Paul reinvigorated the Catholic faith by insisting its tenets be faithfully observed, even when strictures against contraception, abortion, or divorce ran sharply counter to social trends.

Dogmatic rigour.

The cost of this dogmatic rigour was high, particularly in Europe: large numbers of Catholics dropped from the Church. But the alternative was worse: to become like Britain's dying Anglican Church, which, by embracing every trend, from tambourine playing services to homosexual clergy, has ended up standing for nothing, becoming meaningless and irrelevant.

John Paul was also a modern warrior pope. Branding communism the greatest evil the world had seen, he launched a personal crusade against the Soviet Union in secret alliance with the United States. Vatican money. channeled through Latin America, funded Poland's Solidarity Movement, which ignited the rebellion against Soviet rule that led to the final collapse of what was truly an evil empire.

The Kremlin knew the Polish Pope was its most dangerous enemy: he commanded no divisions, but he inspired the hearts and minds of Eastern Europe's peoples, and ignited their uprising against Soviet imperial rule. John Paul became their liberator. As a result, the Soviets tried to assassinate him.

But John Paul was not just spiritual father of East Europeans. His raised his mighty voice and mobilized the Church to defend the world's oppressed, voiceless peoples. No one became a stronger defender of the five million suffering Palestinians than John Paul II. When the Muslim world forgot the Palestinians plight, the Catholic Pope reminded them. He ceaselessly called for a just peace between Arabs and Jews based on a viable Palestinian homeland.

When the Muslim world turned its back on the slaughter and rape of Bosnia's Muslims by neo-Nazi savages calling themselves Christians, John Paul demanded the western powers rescue the Bosnians.

John Paul ceaselessly commanded Catholics to purge their faith and minds of that two millennium-old evil, anti-Semitism, calling for true amity between Catholics and Jews, and between Catholics and Muslims.

As soon as the Cold War ended. John Paul urged the victorious West to temper its capitalist system by protecting the poor, the downtrodden, the helpless. Unbridled capitalism could be as great a danger as communism, warned the Pope. But in the post-Cold War get-rich-quick scramble, few in the West heeded his pleas for social justice.

When President George Bush and British PM Tony Blair decided to invade Iraq, Pope John Paul repeatedly accused them of preparing to wage an illegal, immoral war of aggression. In this, the Pope spoke for much of the world, urging the U.S. and U.K. to work through the United Nations and enhance the power and authority of the world body. But Bush and Blair ignored him. and are now paying the price of their arrogance, folly and greed.

Critics of Pope John Paul charge he failed to adapt the Church to the times. But no great institution can long survive that shifts course to every change in the social winds. Under John Paul, the Roman Catholic Church has declined in adherents. but it has grown stronger and more vital. The Pope's sweeping reforms and newly appointed cardinals will perpetuate his monumental works long after his death, and maintain the Church as a rock of faith in the stormy seas of life. The Church will survive its recent shameful sex scandals, as it has survived so many past disasters.

Ironically, orthodox Muslims and Jews understand much better than many western Christians how important it is for a great, cardinal faith that spans mankind's history to keep firm its moorings and resist the siren calls of modernization and accommodation, no matter how inconvenient.

It is heartbreaking to see this redoubtable Pope and profound humanist, this "great spirit". as Hindus would say. increasingly crippled by grave ailments and nearing his end. But each time I see Pope John Paul. my spirit lifts with the knowledge there is indeed objective good, and that a man of great heart, courage and deep compassion can change for the better this often sordid world.

By Eric Margolis, Sun columnist, reprinted from the *Winnipeg Sun,* Oct. 19, 2003, page C4.

Eric Margolis. Winnipeg Sun columnist. Photo - Winnipeg Sun, *Oct. 19, 2003, page C4.*

Amish talk with President.

Lancaster, Pa. President Bush met privately with a group of Old Order Amish during a campaign visit to Lancaster County on July 9. He discussed their farms and their hats and his religion, and got a pledge for prayers if not votes....Bush had tears in his eyes, when he replied, according to an Amishman who was present. Bush reportedly said he needs the prayers of the Amish and that having a strong faith in God is the only way he can do his job.

Sam Stoltzfus of Gordonville, an Old Order historian...recounted the private meeting with the president, saying the Amish "caught Bush's heart."

The 20 minute meeting occurred after the president addressed an audience at Lapp Electric Service in Smoketown. An Amish woman had presented a quilt to the president that morning....The Secret Service invited the family to meet the president...and the entire assembly eventually numbered about 60....

"It took a while to get them through the metal detectors, as these were farmers and shop men, with vise-grips, pocket knives and nuts and bolts in their pockets..." When the Amish were found not to be a serious threat to national security" Stoltzfus said, they were allowed inside the offices....

"Suddenly the president and five Secret Service men stepped into the room, Stoltzfus said. "One housewife said, `Are you George Bush?'" The president replied in the affirmative and shook hands all around....

By Jack Brubaker, *Lancaster New Era*, excerpted from *Men. Weekly Review*, Aug. 2, 2004, page 1-2.

Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Family Center

"Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Family Center,"
by Tony Driedger, Winnipeg, Manitoba, and member of the Bethania board of directors,

On May 30, 2004 a group of 21 embarked on an excursion to the Ukraine and Poland to explore their Mennonite roots. One of the travelers, Tony Driedger a board member of The Bethania Group, had extended an invitation for this group to visit the Family Center in Zaporoshye. The Family Center is a project of the Mennonite Benevolent Society im Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Bethania Group assists the Benevolent Society in carrying out this project. Also cooperating in the project is the Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Church.

The project now occupies one suite in an apartment built to house people who were evacuated from the Chernoble nuclear disaster. The suite has been remodeled to make it more suitable for the services provided. Next to this suite is a suite that is owned by the Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Church.

The project offers a number of different services for seniors including home care, short term respite, some day care and training for home care workers. Home care clients can choose to come to the center for a bath. Clients are chosen from a list recommended by churches and other social contacts.

All 21 of us chose to make this an important part of our trip. We arrived at the Center just in time for a delicious lunch of soup and sandwiches. Half the group had lunch in the Center while the other half met in the Church's suite, making us all comfortable. We were introduced to the dedicated staff members by the director Ann Goertzen. Ann gave us a detailed account of the beginning of the Center and its present goals and objectives. We were impressed by the passion of the staff in serving the elderly and with the remodeled facilities.

Clients and staff members of the Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Family Centre. Photo - Tony Driedger.

After hearing from the staff, a number of the clients gave us moving stories about their particular situations. Olga, our tour guide, provided the translations. We met clients who were there for respite, home care clients and some who had come there because they were ill and needed the support to get back on their feet. Each one explained how they were benefiting from the services they were receiving at the center. The stories were heart wrenching and it was difficult for us to realize that things could be so difficult for them. It made us realize how fortunate we were to have the health system we have. Let's not complain.

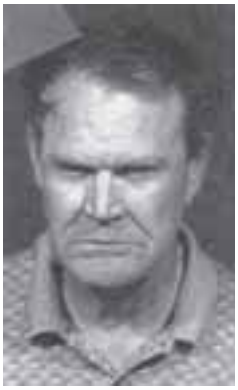
Ann Goertzen, director of the Family Centre, left, with Boris Letkeman, chairman of the Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Church. Photo - Tony Driedger.

This small care facility is a light in a system where care for the elderly is almost non-existent. There is only one other facility in all of Zaporizhzhya. A facility for the "lonely"; people who absolutely have no other relative who might be able to give some attention and care.

Plans are under way to increase the size of the operation to improve the efficiency. At the time of this writing two major events have occurred that will further this project. An eight passenger van has been purchased to provide transportation for the home care workers and clients. This was made possible by a large donation from Concordia Hospital. The second event is that the Mennonite Benevolent Society has been able to purchase the suite next to the Center from the Zaporizhzhya Mennonite Church. Renovations are currently underway to make the suite more suitable for use.

Persons interested in this project and wanting to make donations should contact Louie Sawatzky at 204-253-3631 or Anita Kampen at Bethania.

"Glen's Bender - Evangelical Christian"



Glen's Bender. Photo - *Time*, Dec, 8, 2003, page 63.

By the time Glen Campbell got to Phoenix, he was soused. And medicated. The Rhinestone Cowboy was arrested last week for "extreme drunken driving" after a collision in Phoenix, Arizona. Police say Campbell became enraged while in custory and kneed an officer. The evangelical Christian says he forgot that the anti-anxiety medication he was taking shouldn't be mixed with alcohol.

"Even at my age, I learned a valuable lesson," Campbell said in a statement. Which was....dab on a little styling mousse before your mug shot?

From *Time*, Dec, 8, 2003, page 63.

News from the Gemeinden

News of interest to Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Kleine Gemeinde and Reinländer Mennonites in North and South America. Satan is working zealously to slander and denigrate the traditionalist and conservative Mennonites, steadfast descendants of the Flemish Anabaptist martyrs, valiantly faithful to the tradition of following Jesus. All Gemeinden and denominations have their calling from God and have made important contributions to the Kingdom of Christ (the community of non-resistant saints), which are deserving of acknowledgment and celebration.

Vorsteher Offices.

The Vorsteher offices in the colony administrative building have a secretary and business hours. The occupation of the new offices for the Vorsteher of the Manitoba Colony at Lowe Farm is an historical event for the Mennonites in Mexico. Cornelius Wiebe of Hoffnungsfeld has been hired between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. from Monday to Friday to serve the people of the colony in various ways. He is prepared, for example, to help with applications for "Procampo" as well as other government support programs (such as nets for apple orchards), and to complete documents for wells. For some time already the building has been utilized for various gatherings such as funerals, Verlobungen (betrothal receptions), and special evening schools, but now the offices are also ready. Six rooms have been built for offices, a large hall for gatherings, and two smaller ones for evening school. The offices are intended for the Waisenamt, Brandordnung, etc. and evidently will later also be used by these organizations.

The telephone numbers for the offices are 586 5261 and 586 5263.

Many a person has commented that such a facility was needed for a long time already since the colony consists of more than 60 villages. Until now, taxpayers also had to locate the Vorsteher at their home if something was needed to be worked out. When there was a change in the Vorsteher all the documents had to be taken to the house of the new Vorsteher. In many respect the new facilities should make the administration of the colony easier (see *Pres*., No. 20, page 78).

Report by J.Reimer from *K.N.*, Oct. 3/*Die Post*, Oct.17/03, pages 16-17.

Corn Bales for the Needy.

There are a number of men in the Swift Colony, who have taken it upon themselves and have organized themselves to help those who are short of corn straw bales. Currently inquiries have been made in the Manzahillas and Santa Clara Colonies. The Vorstehers of those colonies are looking after taking a census in order to determine how many are in need of corn bales.

Since the Vorstehers of the Swift Colony are not planning to take part as to how the farmers can obtain the corn straw here, the group of men have agreed to do this, and in fact, not merely for the mentioned colonies but also for the Ejidos and ranches. Some 120,000 bales are needed for the colonies and some 100,000 for the ranches.

The organization feels they have been blessed this year with good corn prices and good support from the government (Procampo, subsidies, cheaper diesel) so that it is their duty to help those in need. If one does not help in such a situation, is one then not like the Levite or the Pharisee, who walks by the beaten man along the way to Jericho?

We can see, that many will have to sell their cattle or other possessions if they do not receive help, in order to stay alive or actually have to sell everything and emigrate. From - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Nov. 3, 2003, page 3.

Ruben Dyck, Campo 106 1/2 starts with the corn harvest. From one field Dyck harvested 6.5 ton per acre, but from the field immediately adjacent, a lot less. The difference apparently was the application of fertilizer at the right time on one field.....The straw from this field was available to those in need of feed. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, *Nov. 3, 2003, page 3.*

Unipro Buys Neuendorf Granery.

In one of the largest, and possibly even the biggest - business transactions in the colonies around Cuauhtemoc - Unipro has purchased the facilities of the Agricultores Unidos de Cuauhtemoc, commonly known as the granery at Neuendorf. The contract provides that Unipro will pay $3,115,000.00 U.S., advises Unipro President Peter Wiebe Schellenberg. One third is payable immediately, one-third at the beginning of 2005 and one-third at the beginning of 2006.

The price is calculated based on the per tonne capacity of the granary at $52.50 US per tonne. The grainery has a capacity of 60,000 tonnes....

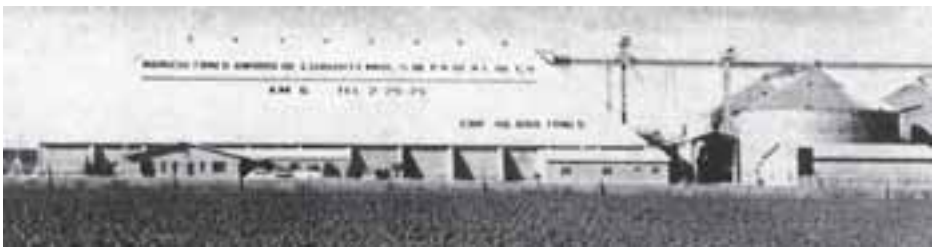
How does Unipro justify such a transaction? It can certainly be said that it deals with a lot of money. But it is cheap in the sense that Unipro will save itself a lot of money.

One example, is the freight price to Guadalajara. Unipro is in the process of settling a contract to sell 150,000 tonnes of corn to buyers from Guadalajara. This corn would be shipped by train. The railway company only allows 24 hours time at the reduced price for loading the cars. The current facilities only allow for loading 50 wagons a day. And in that case the freight is 280 pesos per tonne.

Now Unipro wants to develop facilites that can load 110 wagons in 12 hours. Since a larger train can now be sent, the freight price falls to 220 pesos per tonne. Peter Wiebe says that on the one transaction alone, Unipro will save 9 million pesos [approximately $800,000.00 US]. One can therefore say that the facilities will pay for themselves with the money that is saved.....

Since the border is always more open for competition from the U.S.A. one must always search for ways in which to remain competitive with the big corporations from the north. The more one works in a big scale, the better one can compete.

From - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, June 7, 2004, page 5.



The granery at Neuendorf. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, *June 7, 2004, page 5. This is where the Mexican Mennonite 75th anniversary celebrations were held in 1997 (see* Pres., *No. 11, pp. 22-27).*

Five Ambassadors Visit the Mennonites, June 11, 2004

"Five Ambassadors from Europe and Asia Visit the Mennonites at Cuauhtemoc, June 11, 2004, visiting the Centro Cultural y Museo Menonita, A.C.," written in the name of the Executive of the Centro Cultural y Museo Menonita A.C., by Peter Rempel.

The German Ambassador to Mexico, Dr. Eberhard Kölsch, who hails from the City of Köln in Germany, wanted to get to know Chihuahua, the largest State in Mexico. He invited four other Ambassadors from foreign lands to travel with him [Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and India]. Prof. Abram Schmitt Fehr, President of Centro Cultural y Museo Menonita A.C. received the news by telephone....that they [also] wanted to visit out museum.

It was planned that they would visit the school, the Museum, the cheese factory in Gnadenfeld, and the largest apple packing plant of our land, "La Nortenita" belonging to Mr. Salvador Corral. And then at 3 pm there was to be a late lunch banquette at the ranch "Sans Souci" of Mr. Salvador Corral (which formerly was the ranch of Mr. Walter Schmidehaus)....

Having arrived at the museum, we led the group through the rooms faster than normal and we had to be very brief with our explanations. Back in the gift shop a number of guests also wrote their names in the guestbook. The women each received a black traditional head kerchief with the beautiful flowers and long tassels....

I was invited to accompany the group [to the ranch] on the bus. The wife of the Ambassador from India invited me to sit beside her. She was very moved by what she had heard earlier already about the Mennonites and about what she had heard today....Among other things she said, "how good it would be if there would only be more of the diligent and peaceful Mennonites all over the world, for the world so desperately needs such peaceful and hard working people...."

From - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, July 5, 2004, page 5.

The German Ambassador Dr. Eberhard Kölsch subscribing his name as a visitor in the guestbook of our museum. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, *July 5, 2004, page 5 (see page 139 for additional photographs of this event).*

"Flour Mill, `Harina Bergthal', Paraguay"

"Flour Mill, `Harina Bergthal', Paraguay," written by Kennert Giesbrecht and reprinted with permission from *Die Mennonitische Post*, June 18, 2004, page 4.

Colony Bergthal, Paraguay. Last year this colony built its own wheat mill or flour mill, which received the name "Harina Bergthal" ["Harina" means flour in Spanish]. For approximately the past half year, flour is being made here day and night. The mill is operational 24 hours a day; production is only halted on Sundays.

The wheat that is processed here, for the most part, comes from the farmers of the colony. The factory belongs to the "Sociedad Cooperative Bergthal" and Billy Peters was appointed as the manager. The mill was built right besides the giant receiving station for soya beans. Consequently, this locations has become the most important meeting place for the farmers where they deliver their wheat and their soya beans.

The workers in the factory are all Mennonites. The colony has thereby also created employment opportunities for its young people. By the developement of such facilities, a colony can kill three birds with one stone. The colony itself can buy the crops and is not dependant on the broker or middle man. The colony itself can process the raw product (the wheat) and is better able to market the end product (the flour), and jobs are created for the residents of the colony.

In the last months the colony has also purchased additional land in order to satisfy demand for more land. Many farmers, and especially the young, want to plant more wheat and soya and hardly know where they can get the land.

*New flour mill "Harina Bergthal", Bergthal Colony, East Paraguay. Photo - Kennert Giesbrecht/*Men. Post, *June 18, 2004, page 4.*

Lamesa - Grand Opening, Campo 70

Lamesa - Grand Opening, Campo 70. September 19 was a significant day for the approximately 1800 shareholders of Lacateos Mennonitas de Chihuahua S.A. de C.V. The milk processing plant was officially opened. Although it is initially only equipped to be used as cheese factory, the ground work has been laid that it can also be used for milk processing.

Many guests were in attendance. Almost 1500 persons may have been present. The guests waited patiently for the arrival of the Governor Patricio Martinez. He was supposed to arrive a 12:00 noon....but his helicopter only arrived around 2 p.m. After President Heinrich Loewen from Lamesa and the Governor had each presented a speech, and the ribbon for the official opening was cut, the guests enjoyed a lunch. After the wait, the meal tasted very good.

The organizers had exerted much effort so that everything was well planned. A large roof consisting of a tarpaulin had been set up for the event. This was much appreciated for a hot sun shone down on the people for most of the day.

The governor, government officials, and reporters were given a complete tour of the facilities. The visit of the reporters in some respect is just as important as the visit of the government officials, for then they can report first hand in the entire State how well equipped Lamesa is. They were very impressed by the general cleanliness. If they now report this in their newspapers and T.V. people will be more ready to buy the products.

The government of Chihuahua offered the reporters a ride with the helicopters in order that they could inspect the entire grounds and surrounding facilities by air, and thereby to obtain a more positive impression. This is a small matter for the government and yet in this way they are indirectly supporting good advertising for the firm. From - *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Okt. 6, 2004, page 6.

Governor Patricio Martinez was accompanied by his wife when he came for the grand opening of Lamesa, Campo 70, on September 19, 2004. Photo - Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, *Okt. 6, 2004, page 12.*

Paul Buhler - Bolivia Beating, 1996

Paul Buhler - Bolivia Beating, Missionary Jakob Fehr and Gospel Missionary Union, Winnipeg, ca. 1996, by Ron Banman, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Introduction.

The enemies of the Holy Gospel are delighted to use the slightest incident to attack and denigrate the conservative Mennonites and to try to prove that their culture and faith are corrupted and fallen and that they must convert themselves to Evangelical religion if they wish to obtain salvation as narrowly defined by them. Evangelical forces seek nothing less than to impose their religion upon the entire world thereby establishing a new regime ruled out of Jerusalem. In 1996 an Evangelical organization operating under the name Gospel Missionary Union used an incident of an extremely rebellious youth being disciplined in an attempt to have the rights and privileges of the Mennonites in Bolivia taken away from them. It is also lamentable when foreign operatives become so brazen as to counsel children to turn against their parents and communities (In this instance, the lad was brainwashed into telling his father he was bound for hell. How despicable can people get?) But here too, the Holy Saviour held up His hand and did not allow these evil plans to come to fruition. In this short article, former MCC worker Ron Banman, recalls the incident and the results of his own investigation. The Editor.

The Paul Buhler Incident, 1996.

My family and I lived in Bolivia from 1998 to 2001. As a group from MCC, we decided to investigate what was called the Buhler beating incident in the Cupesi colony. According to news accounts, the beating had taken place as a result of a young man having worn sneakers and professing personal salvation in Christ. It was alleged that he was being told by colony members to recant his faith position. This incident was broadcast to Canadian News Papers and made headlines in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

When I went to talk to Paul Buhler, the young man in the centre of the story, one of the first things he mentioned was that he felt uncomfortable about a recent article in the GMU paper where the beating story had been resurrected. However, he said that if God could somehow use the story then it was probably okay. He also asked me if I believed that there were any Christians in the Mennonite colonies. He thought there might be a few if any.

Paul, who grew up on the Cupesi Colony, explained that he had been a very rebellious youth beginning in his early teens. He recalled that he had deliberately disobeyed many things that his father asked him to do - like cutting his hair, not behaving in church, and listening to tape players. He had also been involved with drinking alcohol as a minor and participated in other activities which were contrary to the law. His father became frustrated and asked others to help him discipline his son. Initially no one was interested. (Paul mentioned that his father was a devout man for whom he had a lot of respect.) As time went on, relations between father and son got worse and the father continued to feel helpless and frustrated when his own attempts at discipline failed. Paul mentioned that he was actually curious to see if it would be possible to get a licking like the kind he had heard was given to disobedient youth.

When Paul was 15, at the request of his father, a group of men from the Cupesi Colony drove to his home and tried to reason with him. When he showed no interest in discussing his behaviour, he was blindfolded and taken out to a field. He was tied around a fuel drum and given one hit with a belt over the buttocks approximately once every half hour. In between hits he was admonished for approximately half an hour. At first he refused to respond but said that after about three of four hits it began to hurt and that he began to tell the men what they wanted to hear and more. He then mentioned that he was surprised how gullible these people were to have believed what he was telling them because most of it was contrived.

A short while after this incident he had made a decision, in the privacy of his room, to change his life. He made a personal commitment to Christ. He then went to his father and confessed that he had stolen money from him and had also bought a tape player, something not permitted by his father nor the colony. The father, however, had gone to the Bishop and had asked for advice as to how to respond to his son's confessions. The Bishop had told Mr. Buhler that if his son had confessed, he should be forgiven unconditionally. At this time I asked Paul if he thought that the bishop had an understanding of grace. He replied no. Paul also had challenged his father to see if he was assured of his own absolute salvation. His father according to Paul had wavered on this question. Paul had told him that if he did not know absolutely that he was saved, he was then going to hell along with the rest of the people in his family and the colony.

Paul decided to live with relatives in a different colony. Later his father brought him back home but their relationship did not improve. Around the age of 16, Paul, who had recently broken up with a girl friend, was approached by a man from the Valle Esperanza Colony. This man asked him to come and live at his farm. He was also having difficulties with his own colony and shared the view that there were few or no Christians in the colonies. He too had recently been "saved" and believed that most of the people in the colonies were eternally lost.

Paul moved onto the Valle Esperanza Colony into a home with three teenage girls (one of whom he later married). After living in Valle Esperanza for some time, the mother in the home began feeling uncomfortable about Paul being there with her daughters. The Old Colony leaders from Valle Esperanza requested that the Cupesi Colony should come and take him back. As a result he was physically removed from the house where he was staying. Along the way, cordial discussions were held, but upon arriving at the colony he was tied down to two benches and blindfolded. He received one hit on the buttocks and then was spoken to for approximately half an hour. He continued to get up to 12 hits over a period of approximately six hours before he was released.

Shortly after this incident, an individual from the GMU (Gospel Missionary Union) wrote a letter to Canada stating that this case would be brought to the highest court in the land. It further claimed that, as a result of this incident, the State of Bolivia would rescind the rights and privileges of the Mennonite colonies. Their internal structures would there by break down resulting in thousands of people being saved and then there would be no more problems like this.

During this time, a Bolivian group of approximately 20 or so reporters, children's aid workers and police showed up at the bishop's house in the Cupesi Colony. Charges were laid against a number of individuals. These charges were later dropped. The incident was brought up in the Canadian Parliament and MCC Canada was called by CIDA to see to see if any funding that MCC was receiving from them had gone to this work in Bolivia. There was outrage expressed in the Canadian media, and the director of MCC Bolivia at that time was fielding questions from Canadian reporters regarding the incident.

MCC Canada wrote a letter to all the colonies in Bolivia expressing, in a brotherly way, their concerns about the form of discipline. Designated leaders from more than 25 colonies responded by expressing some of their feelings of frustration by way of a letter to MCC Canada. (MCC Canada did not respond at that time, however, in 2000, they drafted a letter in an attempt to rebuild the relationship and address some of the concerns expressed by the Bishops.) The colony leaders in Bolivia, felt that they had been misrepresented and misunderstood by the media and by Christian organizations. A bishop wondered why there was such commotion in Canada whereas Paul had been seen riding a horse within a day or two of the incident. The question had been raised by some bishops, should we be handing over our youth to the Bolivian Authorities when serious infractions occur?

According to an eye witness, a meeting was held a number of days after the incident with a lawyer from Santa Cruz. Paul was asked to remove his clothing while the lawyer and those present searched for marks on his body in an attempt to build their case. Apparently there were none that were visible so the lawyer had looked around the room, and without saying anything, had then used a felt marker to mark Paul's body. A reporter took a picture which appeared in the Santa Cruz newspapers showing marks on his back. I talked to Paul about this later and he said the marker had been used to highlight where there had been an outline of a mark on him a number of days before.

I asked Paul if he thought that the story had been manipulated by the people who were using it. He replied yes. I better understood at that time what he had communicated to me when I first spoke to him - when he told me that he felt uncomfortable with how his story was being used but that perhaps God could use it anyway. Paul left the Cupesi colony and continues to live with his wife in the general area.

As recalled by Ron Banman, former MCC worker, Santa Cruz. Bolivia. Aug. 2004.

Articles

The Molochna Mennonite Landlessness Crisis

"Putting 'Russia' Back into Russian Mennonite History : The Crimean War, Emancipation, and the Molochna Mennonite Landlessness Crisis." Excerpts from the Keynote Address of the Opening Ceremony of the International Scholarly Conference "Molochna `04: Mennonites and their Neighbours, 1804-2004," June 2, 2004, by Professor of Russian and Soviet History at State University of New York, Fredonia, New York, U.S.A. E-mail: staples@fredonia.edu.

Introduction.

The Molochna Mennonite landlessness crisis was a watershed event in Tsarist Mennonite history. By the 1860s a small minority of Mennonites owned land and were wealthy, while the majority leased land, or worked as agricultural labourers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, or merchants. In a bitter and divisive confrontation in the 1860s the landless demanded their fair share of community land. In 1867 the Tsarist state intervened to force a settlement, but the damage was done. The dispute left permanent scars on Mennonite society that were revealed in religious, economic, social and cultural fissures. Or this, at least, is how the story is conventionally told.

Mennonite historians have told and retold this story countless times, but even the best of them have told it as an exclusively Mennonite story. The landlessness crisis might just as well have happened in Kansas, or Manitoba, or Paraguay, so little does the broader context of Tsarist Russia intrude.

This 200th anniversary of the founding of the Molochna Mennonite Settlement seems to me to be a very good place to put Tsarist Russia back into this vitally important Mennonite story. What I would like to suggest is that the landlessness crisis is not a Mennonite story - or at least not exclusively or even primarily so. Mennonites were Tsarist subjects. Moreover - and this is a very significant element of the story - they were part of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-national southern Ukrainian region of the Tsarist Empire. To understand the landlessness crisis, we must understand the history of the Molochna River Basin, the history of Ukraine, and the history of the Tsarist Empire. Turning this on its head, to understand the history of the Tsarist Empire, of Ukraine, and of the Molochna, we must also understand the history of the Mennonites.

My intention, then, is to reconstrue the outbreak of the landlessness crisis - a critical event in Mennonite history - as part of two critical events in Tsarist Russian history: the Crimean War of 1853-55, and the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. I will argue that the local economic effects of the war on Mennonites and their neighbours, combined with the broader effects of the emancipation of Ukrainian peasants to the North of the Molochna, coincided to provoke a crisis in the Molochna Mennonite Settlement.

In 1862 landless Mennonites, supported by some influential Mennonite landowners and merchants, launched a campaign to force the more equitable distribution of Mennonite land, and therefore of political power. The landless and their supporters demanded that village authorities give them the small remaining supply of the Settlement's surplus land. Opponents and proponents of this proposal engaged in heated disputes in the German-language press as well as in a battle of appeals to the Russian state. Ultimately the crisis was resolved when the state ordered landed Mennonites to grant a number of concessions to the landless.

For Mennonites the crisis has long been seen as a black mark that challenges their perceptions of their own society as just and egalitarian. In this tradition, in the early 20th Century the great Mennonite historian P.M. Friesen wrote: "Like a misfortune [the crisis] lies on the soul of the community because there has not taken place a thorough cleansing of the corporate body through conscious repenting." More recently, Mennonite historians have come to regard the crisis as a watershed event after which social and economic differentiation within Mennonite society became dominant forces. Such historians have not escaped the moralizing tone of earlier writers. David Rempel, whose pioneering work in the 1960s-1980s revitalized the study of Russian Mennonite history, characterized the actions of the landed as "unconscionable." For other historians the landlessness crisis has been seized upon as a particularly clear instance of class conflict in an industrializing society. James Urry, whose *None But Saints* is the standard work on the first century of Mennonite settlement in Russia, writes that the "land struggles revealed the ugly and unacceptable face of the economic and social transformations that had occurred since first settlement in Russia."

Placing the crisis in its larger Tsarist context serves to make clear that the root problem was not Mennonite, but Tsarist. If the crisis is not construed as Mennonite, then we are no longer stuck with the prevailing paradigm of post-Emancipation Mennonite society as a society in crisis. This opens the door to a total reconsideration of the basic nature of Tsarist Mennonite society after emancipation. But that is another subject: for the present, let us be content to reconsider the causes of the crisis itself.

Crimean War.

It will come as no surprise to students of Tsarist Russian history that the Crimean War provides a starting place for this reconsideration. That war exposed the fundamental weaknesses of the Tsarist state. In its wake, Russia's role in the international community, its ability to maintain domestic stability, and its economic policies were all brought into question. It is one of the basic weaknesses of Mennonite historiography that it has remained so utterly oblivious to this watershed event.

The economic problems created by the Crimean War were vitally important for the Molochna region. Beginning in the 1830s, Mennonites, other German-speaking colonists, and Ukrainian peasants in the region had begun to shift from a pastoral to a grain-based economy. Only the large Nogai Tatar population had resisted the trend.

In 1847-48 a livestock epidemic decimated Nogai herds, and plunged the Nogai into crisis. Left without sheep, but unwilling to become grain growers, many Nogai instead became landlords, and by the eve of the Crimean war significant tracts of Nogai land were being leased by the increasingly numerous Mennonite landless.

The Crimean War changed this equation. Wartime demand for grain, and rapid inflation after the war, drove grain prices sharply upward. Mennonite renters, who held long-term, fixed-price leases on Nogai land, consequently enjoyed a brief, remarkable golden era of high prices and low rents. Nogai landlords, of course, had the opposite experience: they found themselves in the position of having to buy grain, grown on their own land, at prices that exceeded their rental income.

I would like to particularly reemphasize the situation of landless Mennonites in this period. Past interpretations of the Landlessness Crisis have taken it for granted that the Crisis reflected deep-rooted long term socio-economic divisions in Mennonite society. There has never been evidence of any such divide before the Crisis itself, but, seeing as everyone knows that crises cannot emerge out of nothing, the Landlessness Crisis itself has been employed as proof of the pre-existing divisions. What I am suggesting is that this assumption of a pre-existing crisis is patently untrue. The reason that there is no explicit evidence of such a crisis is that it did not exist. Landless Mennonites entered the 1860s in very good economic shape. The Crisis would arise, not out of internal struggles, but due to external forces.

Nogai Tartars.

When the crisis came, it was a product of problems in the neighbouring Nogai commu-

nity. While landless Mennonites, as renters, certainly contributed to that problem, at heart it was rooted in the specific circumstances of the post-Crimean War Tsarist economy.

The economic problems of the Nogai Tatars, and more broadly of the Crimean Tatars, led to the great Tatar exodus of 1860. That summer, some 35,000 Nogai abandoned their land and fled to Turkey. By October 1860 only 105 Nogai remained in the entire region.

This could have been good news for landless Mennonites. Certainly Molochna Mennonite leaders immediately applied to the state to have the newly-vacated land - much of it already leased by landless Mennonites - formally ceded to the Mennonite settlement. But of course, the Nogai exodus came in the midst of one of the greatest social engineering projects of the nineteenth century: the emancipation of the serfs. As with the Crimean War, this seminal event in Tsarist history has gone almost completely unmentioned by historians who focus narrowly on Mennonite history. Clearly this will not do.

The Tsarist administration had no intention of handing large tracts of land over to what it justifiably identified as a prosperous Mennonite community. Instead, the vacated Nogai land was designated for reassignment to more needy peasants, and in particular, to Bulgarians. Not only did Mennonites not gain ownership of the Nogai land; Mennonite renters of that land were evicted to make way for the new settlers.

Emancipation.

If this sudden reversal were not enough to provoke a crisis, a further, unintended consequence of the Emancipation would almost immediately exacerbate the problems of the Mennonite landless. In the wake of emancipation, the Molochna region was inundated with Ukrainian peasants. Such peasant migrants did not wait for the terms of the emancipation to take effect: they reacted to the promise of freedom by spontaneously abandoning their homes and heading south, pursuing their own dreams of acquiring vacated Tatar land. Between 1861 and 1864, 10,000 peasants arrived in Berdiansk Uezd. Upon arrival, they competed with the Mennonite landless for jobs and for land. As a consequence, wages fell and land prices rose.

It would be a miracle indeed had the combined effects of losing their leased land, and the sharp increase in competition for land and jobs, not provoked a crisis for the Molochna Mennonite landless. I have elsewhere written about the ways that Mennonites reacted to this crisis. This is a large subject that demands a full study of its own, but briefly the elements of the resolution of the crisis that have traditionally been most emphasized are: 1) the redistribution of Mennonite land; 2) the state's controversial role in imposing this redistribution.

The Landless.

It is important to note that what placated the landless was not an end to the Mennonite system that placed such great emphasis on land owning, but rather their hope of inclusion in that system. In essence, this was a vote by the landless for the continuation of the system in a modified form. It is equally important to note that the solutions were fully in keeping with policies toward the landless that were already well-established before the crisis occurred.

The role of the state in forcing these reforms cannot be dismissed lightly. Many Mennonites clearly saw this as a dramatic violation of traditional Mennonite internal autonomy, and it caused great unrest in Mennonite society. But here, too, there is cause for caution, for the state did not force Mennonites into an economic straightjacket. Rather, while the state forced the Mennonites to act, the solutions were modeled on Mennonite experience dating back to the time of Johann Cornies. And of course, Cornies himself had never operated free of state intervention. The Tsarist state had always set strict limits on Mennonite independence, and it is a tribute to Cornies that he found so much room for flexibility within those limits.

Looking past specific reactions to the crisis, I would like to speculate briefly on other possible consequences. I say "speculate," because these are not yet the product of research; but they point the way to research that I think might be very revealing for historians concerned with the common history of Tsarist Russia and the Mennnonites.

One important avenue for research is into the industrialization of southern Ukraine. This region, of course, was at the forefront of Russia's industrial growth in the 19th century, and Mennonite historians have justifiably asserted that Mennonites took a leading role in the process. There is already a body of work on wealthy Mennonite industrialists. An important unanswered question is about the nature of capital accumulation and investment. There has been some speculation about how Mennonite inheritance practices, and the indivisibility of land allotments, affected accumulation and investment, but it bears close investigation whether or not the events that precipitated the landlessness crisis were also central to this process. After all, from 1853-1860 landless Mennonites experienced large profits, and suddenly, in 1861, they had to find new outlets for their economic activities. To what degree did this dynamic, of growth and crisis, contribute to industrialization? And by corollary, to what extent was Mennonite economic success a consequence, however unintended, of the Tsarist state's policies? Put another way, is not the economic history of Mennonites in southern Ukraine a topic in the history of the Great Reforms?

A second question regarding industrialization pertains to labour markets. Landless Mennonites, of course, would provide labour for Mennonite industry, but as we know from later industrial records, the bulk of labourers in Mennonite industry by the end of the 19th century were Ukrainian peasants. What effect did the large influx of Ukrainian peasants following emancipation have on this market? Did this new supply of cheap labour stimulate investment? And, by corollary, could Mennonite industrialization have succeeded so astonishingly without the process of emancipation? Again, is not the economic history of Mennonites in southern Ukraine a topic in the history of the Great Reforms?

Conclusion.

Beyond the contribution of the Tsarist state, and Ukrainian peasants, to Mennonite industrial success, the acknowledgement of a significant economic arena of interaction between Mennonites and their neighbours also raises important questions about the evolution of Mennonite religious beliefs. This is, after all, precisely the period when the Mennonite Brethren crystallized into an important new Mennonite movement. But it is also a period in which some Ukrainian peasants in this region began to explore alternatives to Orthodoxy. To what extent was Mennonite religious ferment and Ukrainian religious ferment the product of a common leavening?

Putting the Crimean War and the emancipation of the serfs together, the outcome for Molochna Mennonites was: a brief period of prosperity and attendant hope for the landless; a sudden loss of land, prosperity, and hope; sharp competition for the remaining land, aggravated by an influx of Ukrainian migrants; sharp competition for jobs, also aggravated by the influx of Ukrainian migrants; and a sharp drop in real wages. As I have suggested, it is very difficult to conceive of a way that this confluence of circumstances might not have provoked a crisis.

But if we accept that the crisis was stimulated, to a significant degree, by forces outside the Mennonite community, then we open the door to the possibility that the result was not exclusively divisive, or exclusively negative. Mennonites bemoan state interference: but this presupposes that it their problems were internal, and susceptible to internal solutions. In fact, the landlessness crisis was a state problem, arising out of war and emancipation, and too large for Mennonites to handle: state intervention was necessary.

This emphasizes the point that Molochna Mennonites were a part of the state, affected by its policies - and affected by the actions of other state subjects such as Nogais and Ukrainian peasants - whether they liked it or not. The actions of Nogais and Ukrainians and Mennonites and the state caused the crisis. Meanwhile Mennonites helped cause the actions of Nogais and Ukrainians and the state. The crisis itself forced the state to formulate polices regarding religion, land ownership, and ultimately things like military service, and such policies affected Nogais, and Ukrainians, and Mennonites. In the end, this is one history; and it is not a Mennonite history, but a history of many peoples living together in Tsarist Russia. To try to understand it in any other way is to misunderstand it.

Ältester Johann Harder (1811-75), Blumstein

Ältester Johann Harder (1811-71), Blumstein, Molotschna, by Dr. Leland Harder, Box 363, North Newton, Kansas, U.S.A., 67117,
as published in the *Johann Plett Family Saga* (Steinbach, 2003), pages 106-120.

Introduction.

Johann Johann Harder (1811-75), Blumstein, Molotschna Colony, was the son of Johann Harder (1789-1847) and Elisabeth Plett (b. 1790), pioneers in the village of Blumstein, Molotschna Colony, in 1804. The following biography of Ältester Johann Harder (1811-75) was written by historian Leland Harder and first published in the *Harder Family Review* (Note One) and subsequently in the *Blumstein Legacy* (Note Two), and was reprinted by permission in the *Johann Plett: A Mennonite Family Saga* (Steinbach, 2003), pages 106-120, with some modifications. Ältester Johann Harder is sometimes referred to as Johann III, to distinguish him from his father, Johann II (1789-1847), and his son, Johann IV.

Johann Harder was born and raised on the family Wirtschaft # 14 (village farm homestead) in Blumstein, Molotschna. He was fortunate in that Johann Cornies gave him a three-year all-expense paid scholarship to attend the Ohrloff Verein School where he also learned the trade of a tailor. His teacher here was Tobias Voth, a devoted adherent to the teachings of Separatist-Pietism.

Johann was baptized in 1833 and the next year he married Justina Schulz, daughter of Georg Schulz from Friedensruh (Note Three). She was born in Tusch, near Gradenz, West Prussia. Although her father was raised Catholic, he had joined his wife's state-established Lutheran Church (Note Four). Justina's parents eventually joined the Mennonite immigration to Russia. Many of the post-Napoleonic War immigrants were heavily influenced by Separatist-Pietism. It speaks well for the upbringing received by Johann that he was able to resist such influences and remained a devout and committed Mennonite leader throughout his life.

Son Abraham J. Harder has written about Justina's faith and piety: "In the heart of my mother, many religious teachings had found their lodging. Her parents were very pious and gave their children a strong Christian nurture. This helped my mother through many dark hours in her life. She felt that she was not good enough to stand before God in His holiness on her own merit and always prayed that God would purify her whole being so that she might be made worthy to appear before Him and that her whole life might be directed for Him. If He could not achieve His purposes in her life otherwise, perhaps He would achieve it through allowing her to go through trial and suffering, whatever be His will."

"Several times sickness came to both of my parents at the same time. One time Father went to Mother's bed to shake up her pillows, and he fainted in doing so. This frightened Mother, and I cannot express the feelings I experienced as a child in that moment" (Note Five).

Son Johann J. Harder later described the Christian environment of the Harder home: "In the evening during the time of his ministry, father would often read to us children from some book, and on such occasions he would say to us, `Children, some day you will be grateful to me that I did not permit you to go out nights to get into mischief like some of the village youth. Sins are committed at the darkness of night that would not happen in the light of day.' When we were sick, he would come to our bedside to talk to our conscience that we should totally yield ourselves to the Lord so that death would not be a messenger of dread for us" (Note Six).

Johann III had learned the trade of tailoring, probably through an apprenticeship. Following his marriage to Justina, he worked as a tailor in addition to the shared work on the family farm. They lived on the homestead in Blumstein but in a small accessory house which Johann had built for himself prior to his marriage. After Johann took over the family Wirtschaft and moved into the main house, Justina' widowed father came to live in the accessory house. Between 1835 and 1840, four children were born to Johann III and Justina, two of whom died in infancy:

In about 1840 he "built a dwelling house, with attached stable and shop across the street. His mother had died and so his father moved into this Anwohner property and he presumably bought the Wirtschaft in 1841" (Note Seven). Upon mutual agreement, Johann III took over the management of the farm. Now both of their fathers lived nearby. Leland Harder notes that "Thus three generations of Johann Harders had lived successively on this Wirtschaft and made their living" (Note Eight).

Son Abraham described the entrepreneurial skills of his father: "My father [Johann III] was a serious, conscientious man, but with a good sense of humour. At his work he was fast and clever. Because he had such good luck in relation to agricultural handicrafts, father was able to remodel the whole Wirtschaft [farm] within five years."

Village Councillor.

Meanwhile, Johann gained respect in Blumstein as a manager of affairs and a community leader. He was elected to the village council, which dealt with various matters of judicial concern, such as the following: "One day a group of young men had committed a destructive deed. The fathers of these boys were brought before the Council. Father upheld the punishment meted out to the boys by the Schulze [village mayor], which was digging sod out of a field and carrying it away with wheelbarrows. One of the fathers said to my father, `You don't know what your own sons might do.' Father replied, `If my sons would do something like that, this punishment would have been too lenient. I would have punished them myself and more severely.' In his village council work Johann Harder was undoubtedly influenced by individuals like Jakob W. Friesen (1808-89), later a Kleine Gemeinde deacon, who served as Schulze of Blumstein at about this time (Note Nine).

The Ministry.

In 1855 Johann was elected to the ministry of the Ohrloff Gemeinde, along with his good friend, Franz Isaac, the historian and social activist. Johann felt great apprehension at the call to the ministry with a deep sense of the grave responsibility carried by the Ohms or ministers. His cousin, Bernhard Harder, later a renowned Evangelist among the Russian Mennonites, responded to Johann's concerns. "When his cousin began to show the usual signs of lament and foreboding about getting such a sacred call from the church, Bernhard injected a note of humour into the otherwise depressed atmosphere with his comment, `When Jesus calls, the angels laugh'" (Note Ten). Unlike his young cousin, Bernhard Harder, the Evangelist, who felt a strong inner call to preach. Johann's propensities had always related to managing his Wirtschaft and his leadership on the village council. What resources he had for the ministry came from observing the pastoral performances of Ältester Bernhard Fast, who always prepared his sermons for reading....In his sermons Fast often said to his congregation with tears flowing down his cheeks, "Some day I will have to give an account for your souls." The thought of preparing biblical sermons for reading to the congregation must have seemed formidable at this stage of Johann's life.

Johann preached his first sermon on September 19, 1855; and years later he looked back and said to his children that he was sorry he had not begun to preach freely at the time of his ordination, for he always laboriously copied and read his sermons from the pulpit. Son Abraham made the following interesting observation: "The acceptance of the ministry gave my father a sober outlook on life and its responsibilities. Where before, he occasionally indulged in smoking tobacco and reading magazines, at the disapproval of my mother, now he gave up these indulgences. He said that by reading magazines a person neglected to read the Word of God, and instead of spiritual growth, doubt entered a person's soul."

Death of Justina.

On March 8, 1856, after 21 years of marriage, Justina Schulz Harder died following nine days of sickness. The following comment about her death was written by son Abraham: "One time when she was sure that God had placed her on a sick bed, she confessed with joy that she had found the Lord as her Redeemer, and the words of the Psalmist, `Be still and know that I am God' had come to her. Her last prayer was, `Come, Lord Jesus!' As the pallor of death spread over her face and with the last whisper of `Come, oh come!', her soul went to meet her master."

"Her passing made a profound impression on me, a 15 year-old boy. The world had lost its attraction to me. After mother's passing, no loving mother eye could I see, and her loving heart had stopped beating. When my older brother [Johann

IV] experienced conversion, she had called us to her bedside and exhorted the rest of us to follow his example and accept the Lord as our personal Saviour."

"My mother had been a very busy woman. Her hands had never lain idle in her lap. She had served as a midwife in the community. She had made many a herb tea from different plants for sick people. We did not have doctors in those days as we have now. On winter evenings when she was knitting or sewing, I had to read to her out of a doctor's book or health book. She was loved and respected by the women of the community. On her death bed, many came to visit her" (Note Eleven).

Remarriage.

Ministers were supposed to be married, and Johann undoubtedly felt some pressure from the church to find a second wife as soon as possible. His youngest child, Justina, was still an infant. On July 1, 1856, barely four months after her mother's death, Johann, then 44 years of age, married Katharina Schulz, who had not yet reached her 17th birthday. Katharina was the niece of his first wife, the daughter of Justina's older brother, Johann Schulz (Note Twelve). She was the eighth of 10 children and had lost both of her parents.

The marriage of Katherina and Johann III was probably a marriage of convenience for both of them, in more ways than one. Between 1857 and 1872, they had nine children of their own, five of whom died in infancy or childhood.

There is evidence that the older children of Johann III had some negative feelings when their father remarried barely four month after their mother died. Johann IV was actually three years older and Abraham only one year younger than their new stepmother. Some years later Abraham wrote the following about their father's remarriage: "After Father's second marriage, he had very few happy hours. My stepmother was often sick and in bed; and with this added to his pastoral duties, it was a hard time for him."

Ältestership.

After serving as a minister for five years, Johann was elected as Ältester (182 votes to 110) on January 3, 1860 to succeed Bernhard Fast. He was ordained 14 days later by the retiring Ältester in the Ohrloff house of worship (Note Thirteen). Now in addition to the duties of preaching and teaching the Word of God in association with other ministers, he had the total overseer responsibilities at the Ohrloff Gemeinde, including baptisms and communion services. Moreover, he was now a member of the Molotschna Council of Ältesten, responsible for resolving problems in the entire Colony. A lot of political as well as ecclesiastical power was vested in the Council of Ältesten to the point that it was a vested hierarchy in the Russian Mennonite Church. The establishment of the Council of Ältesten can also be seen as a first rudimentary step in establishing conference-type institutions, and comparable to some of the Ältester committees found among 16th century Mennonites (Note Fourteen).

When the Ältesten met, they were known as the Kirchenkonvent (Conference of Churches). The recommendations of the Ältester were usually accepted without questioning at congregational meetings. To speak against an Ältester was considered a grave offense. In 1860 there were seven Ältesten in the Kirchenkonvent: Johann Harder of the Ohrloff Gemeinde, Benjamin Ratzlaff of the Rudnerweide Gemeinde, Peter Wedel of the Alexanderwohl Gemeinde, August Lenzman of the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde, Johann Friesen of the Kleine Gemeinde, Dirk Warkentin of the Petershagen Gemeinde, and Heinrich Toews of the Pordenau Gemeinde.

On many issues, Harder and Friesen acted together in opposition to the others, who were considered reactionary by some and sometimes called "the five Ältesten." Johann Harder III opposed corruption, resisted power and hierarchy in the church and worked earnestly for continued biblical renewal. Following his election Johann said to his 20 year-old son Abraham, "Make another cradle! We can expect a lot of company, and I know that the rest of my life will be spent in worry and sorrow." With considerable reluctance as before, he accepted the call as a mandate from the majority of the members who voted for him. He was ordained by Fast, whose health was failing. "Ohm Behrend" as Fast was affectionately called by his friends, died several months later.

One of the first acts that Johann performed in his new duties was to baptize the young people whom Fast had prepared in his catechism class. Among the candidates was Johann's son Abraham, who wrote that as Ohm Behrend stood before his class, he would exhort them with tears in his eyes to turn from the "way of evil and follow the Lord." Fast promised Johann that he would try to perform the baptismal service, and Abraham looked forward to being baptised by the same Ältester who had baptized his father; but it was not to be. He did, however, have the privilege of marrying Fast's daughter, Anna.

Ohrloff Zentralschule.

The first issue Johann faced as Ältester concerned policies for the Zentralschule (central School) at Ohrloff. This secondary school had been started in 1822 under the auspices of an Educational Association headed by Johann Cornies. The first teachers were Tobias Voth (1822-29) and Heinrich Heese (1829-42), both of whom had received their training in Germany. A problem that emerged with each succession of teachers was the introduction of doctrines that seemed to undermine the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite vision, for instance, the strident advocacy of Voth of the teachings of Separatist-Pietism, and the pro-Russian patriotism of Heese during the Crimean War.

Conflict over this resulted in Heese's resignation and replacement with his son-in-law Martin Huebert, who was known for his effective teaching of the Russian language. In 1847, however, the Ohrloff school burned down and was not rebuilt for 13 years.

In 1860 an all new school building was dedicated and a new teacher, Herman Janzen, installed. Ältester Johann Harder was the main speaker for the occasion. Knowing the up and down history of the school, he saw the occasion as an opportunity to call the teachers and the community back to a sound Anabaptist perspective. Here is a brief excerpt from his address:

"My hope is that through this school efforts will be made not only to impart earthly knowledge (which, though useful, is of lesser profit according to the Apostle Paul), but also true godliness, which is profitable for all things. O that the Lord would send us teachers who, as poor pardoned sinners, become models for their little flock, so that the fruit of their labours might be a rich blessing for our children and children's children..."

"Woe to those educational institutions and teachers who restrict themselves solely to the knowledge and sciences of this world and attempt to give to this knowledge and these sciences a direction which brings them into contradiction with the Word of God!" (Note Fifteen).

Barley Land Dispute.

The documents telling the story of Johann's leadership in the Colony are mostly in the nature of official ecclesiastical minutes and correspondence. One issue that the Ältester had to deal with concerned the so-called Barley Land Dispute. In the Spring of 1858, a dispute arose in Ohrloff between two men over a piece of rented land that the one had seeded into barley and the other had harvested (Note Sixteen). Both had what they felt was a valid rental contract, but the owner confessed to the Ohrloff ministers that he had really rented the land to the first man. Ältester Fast, who would have better used his pastoral authority to resolve the conflict locally, had turned the dispute over to David A. Friesen, the Colony Oberschulze (Overseer) in Halbstadt. The Oberschulze ruled that the second renter could harvest the barley but should reimburse the first for his seed and labour.

The dispute raged on for two year and got embroiled in the larger unresolved conflict between the Ohrloff and Lichtenau (Grosse Gemeinde) congregations. By this time the most neutral and objective Ältester in the Kirchenkonvent was Johann Friesen of the Kleine Gemeinde. On June 26, 1860, he sent a long letter of appeal to the two churches to stop their disputing and let the old wounds heal. Johann Harder agreed entirely and wrote the following resolution on behalf of the Ältesten:

"Resolution of Peace:

"All the divisions which originated from the Ohrloff land dispute are hereby ended, and we Ältesten want to forgive and forget everything that has occurred in connection with this matter, and in the name of the Lord to mutually build and plant in love. To which we give witness by signing our names."

"August 5th, 1860, the Ältesters of the Gemeinden: Benjamin Ratzlaff, Peter Wedel, Dirk Warkentin, Heinrich Toews, Johann Harder, August Lenzman and Johann Friesen" (Note Seventeen).

Ohrloff Church Dispute.

By 1858 the Ohrloff church building, erected in 1809, had deteriorated to the extend that it had to be replaced. A wealthy member who lived in the village of Neu-Halbstadt proposed that if the new church would be built in his village, he would pay

for the building materials above a certain minimum cost. Without authorization he ordered the foundation laid out on a scale larger than anyone anticipated. Nevertheless, the new church was built and dedicated on December 28, 1858.

When the donor submitted his bill, including the exorbitant sum of 200 rubles for the transportation of materials, the Ohrloff congregation refused to pay more than the amount in the original verbal agreement. Meanwhile the donor had sided with the dissenters in the Barley dispute and jointed the Lichtenau Church. His plan now was to take the building away from the Ohrloff Church and utilize it for the Lichtenau Church.

The dispute was then referred to the Russian Board of Guardians in Odessa for arbitration. The Russian supervisors ruled that the building belonged to the Ohrloff Church but that the donor should be reimbursed two-thirds of his costs. Ältester Johann Harder was glad to do so; but when the payment was offered, the donor refused it, saying that he would rather have the church. Franz Isaac's history of *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* contains a total of 13 letters written by Ältester Harder concerning this matter together with memoranda from the Council of Ältester, the Colony Oberschulze, and the Board of Guardians (Note Eighteen).

Finally in August of 1862, the matter was resolved when Johann Harder indicated the willingness of the Ohrloff Church and let the donor have the church building, and the matter was dropped.

Brüdergemeinde Secession.

The crisis represented by the Brüdergemeinde schism may have been influenced by the conditions under which the West Prussian Mennonites settled on the Russian steppes. Here for the first time they had responsibility not only for the reestablishment of their church but also for the establishment of law and order within their own territory or colony, which now included saints and sinners with the same ethnic community. Moral lapse and the failure to share the economic resources of the land created a climate conducive to renewal movements which refused to continue with the status quo in the old compromised church, the Grosse Gemeinde (large church), later despairingly called the "Kirchliche" (ecclesiastics).

[We have already related how the Kleine Gemeinde (small church) withdrew in 1812 in protest to the apparent abandonment of traditionalist Mennonite ideals and teachings, such as the purity of the communion, grass roots democracy, the way physical punishment was used to enforce conformity, etc. The Brüdergemeinde was founded in 1860 by those converting themselves to Separatist Pietist teachings. Although there is little actual evidence to support their claims, the secession allegedly was also in protest to other specific forms of moral dishonesty in business dealing, unseemly disputing, disregard for the landless, and the lack of fear of God's judgments. The Brethren preached about the need for radical conversions (as ritualized in Separatist Pietist religious culture) which they themselves had come to experience through the revivalistic preaching of men like Bernhard Harder, Johann's cousin. Presumably their complaint was that the Flemish Gemeinden in the Molotschna were not strict enough in enforcing moral standards against their members. At the same time, they also criticized them when excommunication was finally implemented against miscreants and those who slandered the Holy Spirit by denigrating the integrity of the Gemeinde, an integral part of the universal Church of God. In understanding the allegations of the Brüdergemeinde movement, one must remember the great disparity in understanding of issues such as morality and ethics between traditionalist Mennonites and Separatist Pietist religious culture. The Separatist Pietists saw morality largely in terms of personal behaviour such as drinking, dancing, and later also smoking, regarding which they developed an extremely legalistic regime of punishment. The Flemish Mennonites, on the other hand, saw morality more in terms of following the teachings of Jesus, particularly as found in the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, and in terms of communal ethics, structuring their society to incorporate these ideals. Thus, the Brüder, were incensed that the Grosse Gemeinde congregations indulged some social drinking or dancing, which they punished harshly (notwithstanding that they did initially dance vigorously in their church services, hence the name "Hüpfer"), but had little or no concern over morality in a wider business and ethical sense, or regarding the waging of war, moral issues of great abhorrence to traditionalist Mennonites. Paragraph added by D. Plett, editor].

In 1859 a group of Brethren in the Gnadenfeld Church asked their Ältester to give them communion separately because they could no longer partake of the Lord's Supper with unrepentant members. When their request was denied, they went to a private home to have Communion by themselves. When word of this got around, there were immediate repercussions, especially among the five Ältester of the Kirchenkonvent, because only Ältesten, not even the ministers and especially not the laity, were authorized to administer communion.

Several of the Brethren were excommunicated and the others were forbidden to hold any more private meetings, an order they could not obey. On January 6, 1860, their leader drafted a document of secession which they addressed to the Council of Ältesten, lamenting the "open godless living" of church members, reporting their separation from "this fallen church," summarizing their articles of belief, and declaring their intention to return to the teachings of Menno Simons and the Bible. In fact, however, "the Hüpfer", as the early Brethren were known for their enthusiastic forms of worship, had largely adopted the doctrines of Separatist-Pietism and the German Baptists. In assessing the claims of the Brethren that they were unjustly treated, it should also be remembered that they were often rather strident in their view that the communion of the existing Gemeinden was a fallen "devil's service" (Note Nineteen), and that "They alone were the elect and capable of forming an exclusive fellowship of true believers" (Note Twenty).

The Brüdergemeinde (Brethren Church) was not simply a movement for the gradual renewal of the Anabaptist vision of the church. To the five Ältester and other colony leaders it looked like a revolt. They feared that this dissension, on top of the others, would give the Russian authorities an excuse for abolishing their immigration privileges and require their full integration into Russian society. After trying to admonish the Brethren to cease and desist from their schismatic activities the five Ältesten turned to their own colony authorities, centred in David A. Friesen, the Colony Oberschulze, an authoritative governor with headquarters in Halbstadt.

Although the Brethren were harassed and threatened with banishment to Siberia by Oberschulze Friesen, their movement could not be thwarted. In fact, some very able leaders among the Brethren appealed to the imperial court at St. Petersburg and finally secured official recognition. Moreover, they secured a land grant to establish several new settlements of some of their people on the Kuban River in the upper Caucasus. [Of this settlement, J. J. Hildebrand writes: "The establishment of this Gemeinde in the Molotschna caused incomparably more difficulties, writings, journeys and conferences than the barley dispute and church building dispute together. Mile-long petitions were written in the name of this new Gemeinde and directed to the Guardians' Committee and to the Crown in Petersburg. And yet, now the adherents of this direction had gone so far that they were able to have a separate settlement district alone for themselves, and where not a single one from the `devil-serving Babylonian church' had a right to settle and where they without any hindrance could now work their salvation in all peace and brotherly unity. However, after a number of like-minded were present together here [Kuban], it turned out completely differently. It became clear that the roots of the evil - which they had until now believed to be in the `devil-serving Babylonian church' - were within themselves as well and grew rapidly here on the Kuban."] (Note Twenty-One).

In all of the difficult confrontations over the period of several years, the two tolerant Ältester, Johann Harder and Johann Friesen, tried to use their influence to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict. At least seven of Harder's letters on the subject have been preserved. The first, dated February 11, 1860, was a letter of support and admonition to Heinrich Huebert, a member of the Ohrloff Church, who had joined the brethren to become one of their ministers. Following is the Ältester's expression of concern:

"But that you wish to leave us causes us grief, for the church whose condition is in fact as you describe it in your letter needs members like you who recognize the decadence, seek to improve matters, and pray for us" (Note Twenty-Two).

To the Colony Oberschulze,....[understandably concerned about the social unrest caused by the disruptive tactics] of the Brethren, Johann wrote as follows on March 25, March 29, and November 12, 1860:

"Since all of us will surely be eager to oppose the decay of true Christianity on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, it should be possible in consequence of this fellowship's own statement signed by 33 of its members to resolve this matter in a

different [peaceful] way...."

"The aspiration of these people finds expression in the desire to establish their own church on the foundation and confession of all other Mennonite churches, and in keeping with our highly esteemed religious freedom, to live according to their faith in the midst of the other churches in the hope that thus they will be able to establish a better church discipline. If they will pursue this goal, the consequences need not be detrimental to the whole..."

"Since upon investigation these secessionists declared their confession to be the same as ours, namely the Confession of Faith of the United Flemish, Frisian, and High German Anabaptist Mennonite Church…, the Ohrloff Halbstadt Church sees no hindrances to recognizing these Mennonites as a Church" (Note Twenty-Three).

There was apparently another letter, no longer extant, which Johann wrote to a Russian official in Odessa, Eduard von Hahn, head of the Russian Board of Guardians appointed to supervise the foreign colonies. After some years of service at the imperial court in St. Petersburg, Hahn was appointed to this office by Czar Nikolas I, and he used his authority with a firm hand, removing three of the Mennonite Ältesten from office for unwarranted interference in civil jurisdictional matters. After the struggle of the leadership of the Brüdergemeinde to gain recognition, the Board of Guardians in consultation with the Imperial Court overturned the decision of the Oberschulze in Halbstadt and granted official status to the Brethren. As he delivered the decision to the Brethren leader, Johann Claasen, Hahn said "You have Ältester Harder to thank for your deliverance."

The Landless Dispute.

By 1860 only about a third of the Molotschna Mennonites were Vollwirten, i.e., fully landed farmers. The remaining families were subsistence farmers or disenfranchised landless Anwohner who lived on small lots at the end of each village. During the 1860s a powerful movement led by Ohrloff ministers Franz Isaak and Bernhard Harder arose on behalf of the landless demanding that the surplus lands reserved in each village be distributed to them in accordance with the original intention. Franz Isaak wrote that "the landless were not prepared to be condemned in perpetuity to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water like the men of Gideon" (Note Twenty-Four). The rigid reaction of the Colony Oberschulze in Halbstadt is reflected in the comment that the landless could not have even subsist on a half of a dessiatine of land [the size of their lots] and now they wanted even more land" (Note Twenty-Five).

As in the other disputes described above, this one required the intervention of the Russian authorities. The crucial ruling came from the Czar himself on February 14, 1866: "All the unsettled land to be found in the Colonies is immediately to be divided among the landless Mennonites, who have their own dwelling houses."

Again it was Ältester Johann Harder and the Ohrloff Gemeinde that exerted the pressure needed for this land redistribution. The petition he wrote to the Privy Councillor, Lord Islavin, on behalf of his church, was the following:

"Your Excellency, member of the Council of Ministers of State Domains, and Privy Councillor, Lord Islavin:"

"We recognize that thousands of fellow brethren are without a means of livelihood. We as the spiritual overseers cannot remain indifferent with respect to the lamentable prospects for the future which are developing in this matter. Rather, we must deal with the serious dangers to the moral character of our churches."

"Since there is a solution for the current situation through the presently available land, we feel ourselves compelled to support the wishes of our poor landless in this respect. Accordingly we submissively bid your Excellence, that you make appropriate arrangements to bring an end to this oppression and poverty. Such a measure will be a great benefit for us and the mentioned brethren, as well as for our posterity."

"August 20, 1865 Ältester Johann Harder" (Note Twenty-Six).

Ritualized Conversion.

Among the teachings espoused by the Secessionists (Brethren) was that believers needed to experience a radical and emotional conversion, sealed by river or immersion baptism to be saved. [The legalistic insistence upon a ritualized dramatic conversion experience (better described as 'pendulum' conversion) was contrary to sound biblical exegesis as well as orthodox Mennonite teaching, which held that believers would come to faith by a variety of New Testament models, including the nurture and formation of Christian parents, 2 Timothy 1:5-7.] (Note Twenty-Seven). Several of Johann's children would wrestle with this issue, including son Johann IV who had moved to the Crimea in 1865. A letter dating from 1871 by Johann Harder, speaks of his religious tolerance and love for his children:

"To Johann Harders in Annenfeld. Blumstein, Feb. 5, 1871"

"We received your letters, and it appears from them that you are well, which makes us glad. We also learned from them that you had not yet received my letters from the beginning of February of this year, one to you and one to your parents. The man to whom I gave them, a Prussian with the name of Bilitz, said that he lives in the lodge of his colonization project, 30 verst from you."

"We are fairly well now, except for mother, who is always ailing, but she has improved to the point that she talks occasionally about coming to visit you in the month of May. On the 6th of January, we buried our little Jakob."

"My dear children, here are some suggestions about your expressed decision regarding baptism. First, examine what is reproved so earnestly in the letter to the Galatians, namely, that the Galatians were abandoning the foundation of their free grace and striving after works, hence entering into the realm which `leads unto the flesh.' Therefore the reproach, `having begun in the Spirit,' etc. [Gal. 3:3].

"About your group, and especially you, my dear Johann, I do not believe otherwise but that your beginning was made in the Spirit, and that this was followed by the baptism of the Spirit from above [Acts 19:2ff]. The true God will not lead your group into the flesh, if you are earnest with the sighing, as you state in your letter. `Search me God,' etc."

And should you repudiate your [first] baptism, the question would surface in my mind: How were you so blessed at the time? Who has hindered you? Who has robbed you? I am fully convinced that my Saviour, who left his heavenly throne and dressed himself in the form of a servant [Phil. 2:7], carried all the miseries of this life, finally suffering mockery and reproach, torment and martyrdom, breathing his life out on the crossbeam of shame, just to free me, miserable sinner chained to Satan's prison and deserving nothing but punishment and death. If salvation was really bound up with the form of baptism, we would expect that he would have expressly said so in his Word, that the form of baptism should be so and so, and that 'my meritorious shedding of blood will not help you.' No, this I cannot believe."

"It is said now that each one is so sure of his own opinion but that the Lord will help those that are upright. Therefore, because of these different opinions, far be it from us to love each other less, as it has been the case until now. In conclusion, I wish you everything good for body and soul."

"If you plan to visit us this spring, let us know; and then maybe we will come to you in fall. Cordial greetings from your parents who love you. `Johann Harder'"

Millennialism.

The biblical reference to a thousand year reign of Christ on earth following his "second coming" is found in Revelation 20:1-10. [Jung-Stilling (1740-1817), a professor at Heidelburg, Germany, was a prominent leader of a branch of the Separatist-Pietist movement. He advocated that the second coming of Christ would occur in the East where He would gather His "true" church to escape the tribulation, and that Russian Czar Alexander I would be the protector of the church in the end times. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 these teachings had influenced many believers in Germany to emigrate to Russia. Historian Karl Stumpp has written: "Many of the faithful also looked upon the Russian Czar as the `White Eagle', just as they regarded Napoleon as the `Black Angel' or the incarnate Anti-Christ. In wide circles there arose an intense desire to go to the East, the land of refuge, to the sacred Mount Acarat where Noah's ark was believed to have landed. From Württemburg the so-called `Harmonies' comprising thousands of people migrated to Russia" (Note Twenty-Eight). Henry Schapansky has written that many if not the majority of the Post-Napoleonic War Mennonite immigrants had already converted themselves to Separatist Pietist teachings in Prussia: "Included with these groups were many Mennonites who would later promote Pietist or Chiliastic views including Nikolas (Klaas) Epp, previously mentioned, Johann Klassen (regarded as the founder of the Mennonite Brethren Church), Wilhelm Lange, Tobias Voth and Heinrich Franz" (Note Twenty-Nine). The Gnadenfeld Gemeinde, in particular,

brought these Chiliastic views with them to Russia, and became a radicalized center for their dissemination in the Molotschna Colony. Editor D. Plett].

In their struggle with the harsh conditions on the Russian steppes, including the problem of landlessness, several Mennonite prophet-types and their deluded followers found an escapist hope for a better life in the millennial promise. Unfortunately, this hope led to several excesses that caused the acute suffering of the people involved.

One was known as the Templer group or "Friends of Jerusalem." This movement was started in Germany in connection with Württenberg Pietism, and its goal was to anticipate the second coming of Christ by establishing little kingdoms of God on earth, starting at Jerusalem. The movement spread to the Molotschna Colony through the teaching of Johannes Lange in Gnadenfeld. The dissension this caused resulted in the temporary imprisonment of Lange in Halbstadt in 1863. Upon release, Lange and 20 of his followers founded a Templer Church and moved to the Kuban River area to establish their new branch of the kingdom.

Another manifestation of millennialism occurred in the early 1870s when another prophet-type by the name of Claus Epp began to teach the imminent end of the age and the return of Christ, launching the promised millennium. He promised the Mennonites in Russia an "open door" to the kingdom if they would "flee the tribulation" and follow him to a place of refuge (Rev. 12-14) somewhere in the far east, an idea that actually came from the writings of the German pietist, Jung-Stilling [whose tracts and novels had wide circulation among the Mennonites in the Molotschna and were promoted by those of the radicalized Pietist persuasion]. Epp led a small band of followers on one of the most bizarre and tragic adventures in Mennonite history to the barren wild land of Turkestan to meet the Lord and inaugurate his millennial kingdom (Note Thirty).

The eschatology of Jung-Stilling and his eastward chiliasm, found some acceptance among the Russian Mennonites. Johann's cousin, Bernhard Harder, the renown Evangelist, supported these millennial ideas in his preaching as did Abraham Goertz, Johann's successor as Ohrloff Ältester (Note Thirty-One). By the end of the 19th century these teachings were widely accepted among the Russian Mennonites, both in the Brüdergemeinde as well as the more conservative Kirchliche Gemeinden (Note Thirty-Two).

But Johann Harder and another cousin from his mother's side, Peter Toews, decided to cooperate in an effort to provide a sounder biblical view of the future Christian hope. Peter, who was 30 years younger than Johann, had been elected to the Kleine Gemeinde Ältestership at the age of 29, which spoke well for his gifts for church leadership. He was the son of Johann Toews, Fischau, whose first wife was Johann's Aunt Elizabeth Harder Toews (1800-34). Actually, however, Elizabeth had died before Peter was born, and Toews later married Maria Plett, the half-sister of Johann's mother, Elisabeth Plett. Thus, although Peter's father was Johann's uncle by marriage, they were blood cousins only through their mothers.

Peter was very bright and well read, and he knew that one of the best tools for sound expository teaching was good Christian literature, especially out of the Anabaptist past. Somehow, he had acquired a copy of the 17th century Dutch Anabaptist writing, *The Peaceful Kingdom of Christ: An Exposition of Revelation 20* by Ältester Peter J. Twisk (1565-1636), Horn, Netherlands, setting forth an orthodox Mennonite eschatology (Note Thirty-Three). In contrast to the wild speculations about Christ's second coming, Twisk reminded his readers of Christ's teaching in Mark 13:32-33, "Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, therefore, and watch and pray, for you never know when the time will come." In this perspective, Twisk argued, the kingdom of God must be understood in a spiritual sense and not as an imminent physical historical event or physical kingdom.

Peter wrote to his cousin Johann to ask for his help in publishing and distributing this tract. Here is what Johann wrote in reply:

"Blumstein, the 21st of January, 1874.

Beloved friend Toews. I have received your letter of the 20th, which was very precious to me. It was truly a heartfelt joy for me to receive such a letter during a period when the teaching of the thousand year reign [millennium] which is yet to come here on earth is being adopted so earnestly. But I do not understand this in that manner and I am in complete agreement with the contents and meaning of your letter. It is unfortunate that I have not previously read the referenced work which you intend to publish, for then I would have been able to endorse it more and consequently also take a greater part in this, for the greater the number of copies printed, the lower will be the cost. Nevertheless you can count on me for 100 copies. I will forward payment as soon as you request it. With heartfelt greeting, Johann Harder" (Note Thirty-Four).

It took 17 months before the book came off the press of Ulrich & Schultze in Odessa. The cause for the delay was the decision of the Russian censors to require an endorsement of the book by the Mennonite Council of Ältesten. When Johann approached the other five Ältester about this he got a negative response as usual; and in the following letter to cousin Peter, he suggested an alternative solution:

"Blumstein, April 9th, 1874.

To the Church Ältester Peter Toews in Blumenhoff. Beloved Friend. It has taken somewhat long for us to provide you with a definitive reply to your last writing. I had requested that Ältester Toews in Blumenort also take part in this endeavour, but this he declined to do. The seeding season came in the meantime and so the matter remained until now."

"But you can count on 150 copies for us. With respect to the endorsement or approval of this work for the printer, I believe that it would be sufficient if you would provide your attestations for the booklet in the same manner in which you commended it to me, for we no longer have a joint council [of Ältesten] since each church deals independently for itself."

"It is my wish that this work be printed if the approval of the censor is granted. I wish even more that our beloved God might bless the same so that Satan cannot succeed in his plan. Matters here have already progressed to the point that it [millennialism] is being cast down from the pulpit during the worship services (Note Thirty-Five). There are certainly those who are casting shame on the teachings of their Saviour in that they do not endorse or believe his teachings."

"With heartfelt greeting from your true friend' Johann Harder" (Note Thirty-Six).

Emigration.

In 1874 Johann's son, Johann IV, and his family, joined his Krimmer Brüdergemeinde coconfessionists from the Crimea, and immigrated to America. [Separatist Pietist idealogy also played an important role regarding the emigration issue influencing many adherents of Separatist Pietism to remain in Russia. Professor James Urry has written: "One of the arguments put forward in the 1870s by members of the Molochnaia and Volga Mennonite communities for not emigrating was that Russia lay close to the `east' and was thus the promised place of refuge whereas America, situated in the `west' was doomed" (Note Thirty-Seven).

Other more traditionalist leaders simply disagreed in their interpretation of the situation in Russia believing that there was still room for compromise in terms of freedom from military service. Editor. D. Plett]. The Ältester Johann Harder and cousin Bernhard Harder were not convinced that emigration was necessary, at least not until the Russian government had been petitioned for reversal of its decision to rescind their entrenched rights as pacifists.

His cousin, Ältester Peter Toews, and his people, however, were in the process of deciding for emigration. In 1872, Peter came to Blumstein to discuss the question with Johann Harder and Frank Isaak. In his diary Peter wrote that "these men [Harder and Isaak] were not yet convinced that we should emigrate. Instead, they first wanted to present a petition for more freedom to the Imperial Council and then personally to the Czar" (Note Thirty-Eight).

Until the day of his death, Johann remained active in the duties of his Ältestership. On March 20, 1875, he monitored the school examinations in Ohrloff for the last time (Note Thirty-Nine). He was saddened to hear that the able Kleine Gemeinde teacher Abraham R. Friesen, Lichtenau, was planning to immigrate to Canada. His cousin Peter Toews and his Kleine Gemeinde people, not to mention his own son and their group in Crimea, had already emigrated.

Death.

Johann's son Abraham wrote: "Father often talked about laying down his leadership because of the many conflicts he had to face, but this was not to be. God in his wisdom had other plans and called his weary servant home by a sudden death. I often noticed how a sigh of worry and frustration escaped his lips.

In the last year of his leadership, he was en-

Ältester Johann Harder (1811-75), Blumstein, Molotschna, oldest son of Elisabeth Plett Harder and Johann Harder. Photo - Blumstein Legacy, *page 26/*Pres., *No. 13, page 129.*

couraged by the election to the ministry of the brethren Abraham Goertz and Nikolai Ediger, who stood by him faithfully. During the last days of his life on earth, when one of the ministers visited him, he said, 'I am so tired. I long to go home'" (Note Fourty).

On the morning of September 10, 1875, Johann became ill. Several hours later at 12:30 p.m., he suffered a heart attack and died an hour later.

Peter I. Fast (1831-1916), Rückenau (and later of Jansen, Nebraska), described the death of Johann Harder: "Today our beloved Ältester Johann Harder, Blumstein, died instantly. He had still gone to the field that day but returned home very tired, laid down, and managed to summon the children to come to pray. Three hours later he lay dead. His wife had been very sick for a considerable time already, so that the doctor had frequently been called there to tend to her, and on that day also they had sent for her. When she arrived the children rushed out of the house screaming `Father is dead!' The Doctor had thought to herself, `they must be saying the mother is dead', since in her sickness she had frequently been at death's door. But it was indeed the father who was dead. He had evidently had a premonition of his death and had wanted to have a new Ältester elected. Through his death the Gemeinde lost a very precious shepherd" (Note Forty-One). Peter I. Fast goes on to describe a journey when they stayed at the home of minister Ediger in Altona on December 15, 1875, where Ediger had earnestly related of Ältester Harder's last activities and death as follows: "The beloved Ältester was very loyal (devout), and had a premonition of his death and had said quite some time earlier that he wished to lay down his office, and allow a new Ältester to be elected" (Note Forty-Two).

By modern standards he was still a young 64 years of age. Indeed, his widow was only 36 and his youngest child was not yet two. But Johann was old and had finished his course. He was buried on September 13th. The memorial sermon was preached by his associate minister, Johann Regier. His cousin and closest confidant, Bernhard Harder, composed a hymn to his memory, which was sung to the familiar German tune, "Aus meines Herzen Grunde":

"Though aches and faint laments went this man's pilgrimage. Yet faced with dire potents the Lord will now assuage. O servant good and true, the Lord has called you home. To be where you can roam, to get what is your due. O house of death and grief, ordained to life that stuns, today is hard but brief. Then separation comes. Who conquered death and fear in Jesus learn to trust. You widow, children, must to him, the Lord, draw near! O Jesus, full of grace, look on these orphaned kin, and these poor ones embrace your Word of hope to win. O Father, thou wilt be to widow, orphaned soul, provider, make them whole so heav'n they can forsee. Your flock, O Jesus, give a Shepherd in his place through whom these sheep may live by counsels of your grace. Like him who built thy shrine. They realm did he proclaim, in honour of Christ's name and glorious blood divine!"

Legacy.

Ältester Johann Harder has been widely recognized for his genuine Christian virtue and spirit of reconciliation. He was one of the most respected and prominent Mennonite leaders of the 19th century. Among his many enduring accomplishments are the resolution of the so-called "Barley Land Dispute" and his benevolent intervention on behalf of the landless and the "secessionists", the Brüdergemeinde. Although Johann Harder recognized that the dissidents should be treated in love as directed by scripture, he held steadfast to the faith of the fathers' and contended valiantly for the integrity of the Mennonite communion.

M.B. historian, John A. Toews, gave Johann Harder the following tribute: "The new elder [Johann Harder] was a man of moral integrity and of deep concern for the renewal of the church....The [Mennonite] Brethren found `true Christians' in elder Johann Harder and other members of the Ohrloff Mennonite Church" (Note Forty-Three).

Endnotes:

Note One: *Harder Family Review*, July 1988 Issue.

Note Two: Leland Harder, *The Blumstein Legacy*, pages 26-36.

Note Three: For a full listing of her family, including several siblings immigrating to the United States, see Johann Harder (1836-1930), "Family History and Genealogy", pages 2-3--courtesy of Dr. Leland Harder, Box 363, Newton, Kansas, 67117, 1983. For excellent historical accounts of the Schulz family see also; *Harder Family Review*, Issue Three, 1988, pages 4-5 and 11-13.

Note Four: *Blumstein Legacy*, page 27.

Note Five: Abr. J. Harder, "Autobiography," 1899, in *The Harder Family Review*, No. 6, page 2.

Note Six: Abraham J. Harder, "Autobiography von Pred. Abraham J. Harder," Alexanderwohl, 1899, as quoted in *Blumstein Legacy*, page 51-52.

Note Seven: *Harder Family Review*, Issue No. 3, page 4.

Note Eight: Leland Harder, e-mail, January 28, 2003.

Note Nine: Jakob W. Friesen was the son of the widely known Kleine Gemeinde Ältester Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff: see Plett, ed, *Dynasties of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 2000), pages 541-543.

Note Ten: Leland Harder, *The Blumstein Legacy*, page 18.

Note Eleven: Abraham J. Harder, "Autobiography," in *Blumstein Legacy*, page 13.

Note Twelve: "George Schulz Family Records."

Note Thirteen: "Auszug eines Briefes aus der Ohrloffer-Halbstädter Gemeinde in Süd-Rußland," aus *Mennonitische Blällter*, 8(2) 1861, page 34. Courtesy of James Urry.

Note Fourteen: As found, for example, in the work of Ältester Dirk Philips (1504-68) in attempting to resolve the worsening schism between the Flemish and Friesian Mennonites in the 1560s, see Doornkaat Koolman, *Dirk Philips: Vriend en Medewerke van Menno Simons* (Haarlem, 1964), 235 pages; also available in an English edition: *Dirk Philips: Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons, 1504-1568* (Kitchener, 1998), 234 pages.

Note Fifteen: P. M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (Fresno, California, 1978), page 715; see also Plett, *The Golden Years* (Steinbach, 1985), page 142.

Note Sixteen: More complete details are found in Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, pages 104-105.

Note Seventeen: *Ibid*, page 107.

Note Eighteen: Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte derselben* (Halbstadt, Taurien, 1908), pages 159-173.

Note Nineteen: Peter Toews, "Sammlung...zur Historie der Kleine Gemeinde der Mennoniten," unpublished manuscript, 1874, as quoted in *Storm and Triumph*, pages 153-154.

Note Twenty: James Urry, *None but Saints*, page 180.

Note Twenty-One: J. J. Hildebrand, *Hildebrand's Zeittafel* (Winnipeg, 1945), pages 212-213.

Note Twenty-Two: P. M. Friesen, page 236.

Note Twenty-Three: P. M. Friesen, pages 239, 241 and 255.

Note Twenty-Four: Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, page 129.

Note Twenty-Five: *Ibid.*

Note Twenty-Six: *Ibid*, pages 129-130.

Note Twenty-Seven: John Neufeld, "Toward an understanding of conversion - Part One," in *Preservings*, No. 21, pages 33-36. Available at www.hshs.mb.ca

Note Twenty-Eight: Karl Stumpp, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862* (Lincoln, Neb. 1978), pages 27-28.

Note Twenty-Nine: Henry Schapansky, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia*, pages 87-9.

Note Thirty: Readers interested in knowing more about this episode will find interesting reading in Fred Belk, *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia* (Scottdale, 1976).

Note Thirty-One: P. M. Friesen, page 570; cf: M. B. Fast, *Mitteilungen von etliche der Großen unter den Mennoniten in Rußland und in Amerika* (Reedley, California, 1935), page 9.

Note Thirty-Two: P. M. Friesen, page 570, and James Urry, *None but Saints*, pages 226-227.

Note Thirty-Three: See Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, pages 307-321, for extracts of his correspondence and various references to the publication of this work, as well as a complete copy of the English translation prepared by John F. Funk.

Note Thirty-Four: Delbert Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, page 309. A facsimile of the original was published in *The Harder Family Review*, No. 3, page 16.

Note Thirty-Five: Johann was probably referring to the fact that his most intimate friend, cousin and associate minister, Bernhard Harder, had embraced a premillennial view and was preaching it from the pulpits of the churches.

Note Thirty-Six: Delbert Plett, *Storm and Triumph*, page 275.

Note Thirty-Seven: James Urry, *None but Saints*, page 227. For an example, of how the differences in religious culture impacted on those favouring immigration and those opposed, see comments of veteran school teacher Jakob Wiens, Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, as published in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada*, pages 90-91.

Note Thirty-Eight: *Storm and Triumph*, page 327.

Note Thirty-Nine: Abraham J. Harder, *Blumstein Legacy*, page 4.

Note Forty: *Ibid*.

Note Forty-One: Peter I. Fast, "Wiederholtes Tagebuch und sonstige wichtige Chroniken angefangen den 8 Januar 1907," unpublished journal, page 66--courtesy of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas. February, 1989. Translation by John W. Wohlgemuth, Elma, Manitoba.

Note Forty-Two: Peter I. Fast, "Wiederholtes Tagebuch," page 68.

Note Forty-Three: John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno, California, 1975), pages 42 and 380.

Secession of the Mennonite Brüdergemeinde, 1860

"The Secession of the Mennonite Brüdergemeinde, 1860: An Historical Outline,"
by Henry Schapansky, 108-5020 Riverbend Road, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6H 5J8.

Sectarianism in Russia.

Vice-Director Sivers (Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs), in an undated report of 1860-69, made numerous, perhaps belated, recommendations on how movements such as the Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde could be checked or prevented from emerging. Central to these recommendations is a belief that foreign influences were the major cause for the appearance of the Brethren. This too, is the perception of Brethren historian P.M. Friesen, and of this author (Note One).

Another reason given by Russian officials for the emergence of the Bruder was lack of unity in the Mennonite community. Minister and diarist David Epp similarly attributed most of the perceived problems in the Molotschna to this cause. I would also agree on this point. During the period 1840-60, the Russian Mennonites were divided as follows:

A. Traditionalist Gemeinden:
* The Old Colony Gemeinden;
  - The Chortiza Gemeinde;
  - The Kronsweide (Schönwiese) Gemeinde;
  - The Bergthal Gemeinde;
* The Molotschna Gemeinden:
- The Grosse Gemeinde (later forcibly split into three: Lichtenau/Petershagen, Margenau/Schonsee, Pordenau);
  - The Kleine Gemeinde;
  - The Waldheim Gemeinde;
  - The Alexanderwohl Gemeinde.

B. Progressive/Pietist Gemeinden:
  - The Orloff Gemeinde;
  - The Rudernerweide Gemeinde;
  - The Gnadenfeld Gemeinde.

In the past, historians have interpreted Mennonite history from the progressive/pietist viewpoint, even though the traditionalists, throughout the entire Russian period, represented the majority of Russian Mennonites. To find validity in the traditionalist outlook has been judged as academically or politically incorrect, especially as many Mennonite institutions were - and still are - dominated by scholars of the progressive or Mennonite Brethren schools. This is all the more astonishing since historical events themselves have repeatedly proven the judgments of the traditionalists to be correct. I would argue that an unbiased analysis and an open-minded effort to understand the (majority) traditionalist Gemeinden is productive of a clearer and less contradictory picture of Mennonite history in its entirety (not only of the Russian period) than that available seen through the eyes of Brüder or "progressives". It is also my thesis that the divisions above were due, in large part, to foreign influences.

Yet another reason given by Russian officials is the negative opinion of a small number of Mennonites themselves as to the moral state of the Mennonite community. I have commented on this elsewhere (Note Two).

Mennonite or not?

The purpose of this article is to describe the early history of the Brüder from a more objective view than done by Brüdergemeinde apologists. The Brüder consisted in a small number of individuals within the Mennonite community, who, in the years 1850-1860 came to see themselves as an elite group, with a higher level of faith (and a higher level of morality?) than their Mennonite neighbours. They were above all else, convinced that they were saved, and that those who disagreed with them were not. In what did this conviction lie? This conviction had its roots deep in the spiritualistic movement, which held that the inner light and the internal awareness of God, were more important than any scriptures (or study of the same), written commandment of God, or even the words of Christ. Spiritualism (akin to mysticism) is by nature individualistic and elitist, and readily lends itself to predestinationist and prophetic tendencies. Spiritualism is in almost total opposition to the Mennonite faith, which places a high value on the community of Christians, on adherence to scripture and the words of Christ, as well as on individual penance, repentance and rebirth. Menno Simons himself viewed spiritualists as the worst enemies of the true church.

Pastor Eduard Wuest (1817-59). Photo credit - P. M. Friesen, page 214. Wuest was a fanatical Separatist-Pietist committed to the spread and propagation of his religious culture, whatever the cost. He was prepared to use any means to turn alienated young people and marginalized adults against their own families and Christian communities.

Minister August Liebig (b. 1836) in Bernstein/Neumark. Photo credit - P. M. Friesen, page 214.

Spiritualists, in particular the Pietists, and later the Separatist-Pietists, held the various forms of church organization (of whatever form) in contempt. To them, an organized church contradicted the idea that God pre-destined certain individuals (for unknown reasons) for salvation. These spiritualists, whether Separatist-Pietists or Mennonite Brethren, regarded the organized church as evil (as did also, for instance the Dutch Collegiants). Indeed, the term "Kirchliche" (churchly) was a term of contempt applied by the Brüder to those who disagreed with their vision and who were therefore without the certain guarantee of salvation. The Brüder (originally) referred to themselves as the "Gemeinde der Heiligen" (community of the saints).

How then did (and do) the spiritualists (including the Brüder) justify their own missionary efforts and their own church organization? Quite simply, their missionaries were not missionaries at all. They were merely tools (robots) of God, pre-ordained to serve His cause in awakening those persons already destined for salvation. Their church was merely a gathering place for those who had been given an assurance of salvation by means of a conversion experience.

As history reveals, spiritualistic movements individually have generally had very short lifetimes. Often a spiritualistic group dies out with its founder, who may be a proclaimed visionary or prophet. In and of itself emphasizing individual experience, spiritualism ill lends itself to growth and development, unless compromise and adaptation to ritual and organization is made.

How then did the Mennonite Brethren movement survive? The early years of the Brüder were indeed chaotic and contradictory. Prophetic and fanatical figures such as Gerhard Wiehler and Benjamin Becker appeared and then vanished from the scene. The Kuban settlement, founded by extremists of the Brüder, did not thrive, a fate suffered by similar Brüder settlements. The answer surely must lie in the Mennonite heritage of the Brüder. Although (I contend) the Mennonite Brethren movement was totally opposed to fundamentals of the Mennonite faith, the Bruder eventually realized the advantage of adapting their Mennonite heritage to their spiritualism to ensure survival. Indeed the Brüder narrowly escaped the fate of their spiritualistic brethren, the Separatist-Pietists and the Templers, and also narrowly escaped absorption in the Russian Baptist movement.

The single most unresolved question relative to the Mennonite Brüdergemeinde is the following: were the Brüder only yet one further division within the Mennonite community, or did their theology and actions divorce them entirely from the Mennonite community? Could - or should - the Brüder, like their close associates, the Templers, be referred

to as "Brethren" of Mennonite background?

Both contemporary (1860) and modern Mennonites had and have various views on this question. The prevailing opinion on the question is that the Brüder did remain, and still have remained, within the Mennonite community, although there are good arguments for the opposite view.

Retired Elder Daniel Fast (b. 1826), Ältester of the Brüdergemeinde in the Kuban, 1877-1901. Photo credit - P. M. Friesen, page 919.

Foreign influence and alienation.

Given that, as I claim, the Mennonite Brethren movement was embedded with spiritualistic views, and diametrically opposed to fundamentals of the Mennonite faith, the question arises as to how this form of spiritualism found a foothold in the Mennonite community. It is my thesis that foreign influences acted on individuals, or groups of individuals, who were to some extent estranged from the whole Mennonite community. This estrangement arose mainly from spatial or temporal isolation. The Rudnerweide and Gnadenfelder Gemeinden had experienced this spatial isolation from other Mennonite Gemeinden, long before the immigration to Russia. Many of the post-war (post 1815) immigrants to Russia were temporally isolated from the first Russian settlers and had experienced the physical, emotional, and idealistic upheavals of the Napoleonic era. Yet other individuals were isolated by their (foreign influenced or pietist) educators.

In another piece, I have shown that the overwhelming majority of Molotschna Brüder were from post-war families, and the majority had roots in Friesian Gemeinden (mainly, but not exclusively, from the Tragheimerweide/ Rosenkrantzer Gemeinde) (Note Three). Of the Old Colony Brüder, the majority came from families of the Lithuanian/ Tragheimerweide/Rosenkrantzer group. Where this is not the case, for the very few men of pre-war Flemish families, it can generally be shown that their wives came from this background. Additional research and information confirms, except in a very few cases, this conclusion (Note Four). Thus, among the families previously regarded as uncertain, David Dirksen (1830-1913) and Johann Thiessen (b.1820) now appear to have been from pre-war families, however their wives Karolina Strauß (b.1832) and Sara Koop (b.1821) were from post-war families. On the other hand, Abraham Peters (b.1826), whom I previously thought from a pre-war family, was from a post-war Friesian family (from Schlamsack). The Penner brothers, Kornelius (1837-1915), Heinrich (b.1845), and Abraham (b.1846) were from Schönwiese (Old Colony) families, with roots in the Tragheimerweide (Rosenkrantz) Gemeinde. Jacob Giesbrecht was a relative, not the brother, of Wilhelm Giesbrecht, and was from a family which immigrated in 1818.

Of importance too, is the fact that, of the post-war Flemish immigrants found in the early Brüder, a surprising number came from, or had roots in (southern) Heubuden Gemeinde villages located far to the south of the Mennonite triangle in the Vistula delta, in close proximity to the Tragheimersweide (Rosenkrantz) (later Rudnerweide) villages; such as Kurzebrach, Oberfeld, Gutsch (also known as Pastwa), etc.. Kurzebrach, in particular, was the early home of several families of later importance in the Bruder movement (Note Five).

Also worthy of note is that a considerable number of Molotschna Brüder were in fact descended from Lithuanian families who had originally settled in the Old Colony (for example - Johann Hiebert (b. 1818)).

The groups representing foreign influences can be summarized as follows:

- the Lithuanian Lutherans;
- the Neumark Lutherans;
- individuals from Wurttemberg of pietist views;
- the Wurttemberg Separatist-Pietist groups;
- educators of "foreign" (or pietist) origin;
- the Hamburg Baptists.

A discussion of these groups follows:

The Lithuanian Lutherans.

The first of the foreign influences relevant to this discussion occurred, perhaps not unexpectedly, in the first Mennonite settlement established in Lutheran-Prussian territory, in Lithuania, where the (Friesian) Lithuanian Gemeinde was founded circa 1713. At the same time as the founding of the Lithuanian (Mennonite) Gemeinde, perhaps also due to the great plague of 1709, a "great awakening" arose within the Prussian Lutheran community in Lithuania, likely involving Pietists, and probably involving south German and Swiss settlers, who had been invited to settle in plague-devastated Lithuania at the same time as the Mennonites.

Ältester Heinrich Donner reports (from second hand sources, no doubt) that this cross-over to the Mennonite settlements was of considerable concern to both Prussian and Mennonite authorities. The later Falk and one of the Funk families may have been part of this group, which joined the Mennonites, but which also included other Prussian Lutherans. Later, in reaction it seems, the Lithuanian Gemeinde developed one of the strictest policies in respect of accepting outsiders.

The Tragheimersweide Gemeinde was a direct descendant of the Lithuanian Gemeinde, being formed from uprooted Lithuanian exiles in West Prussia in 1724. The later Rosenkrantzers, led by self-appointed Ältester Jan (Johann) Klassen, adopted some new, unknown and peculiar ideas, and created dissention in both West Prussia and in the Old Colony. They were part of the Tragheimersweide Gemeinde. Only a small number of these, including some "Rosenkrantzers", immigrated to Russia in the first period (1788-1796). Of those who remained in Prussia, many came under the influence of Pietists. Most of the remaining Gemeinde later moved to Russia in 1819, and established the Rudnerweide Gemeinde. A great many later Brüder were originally from the Rudnerweide Gemeinde.

The Neumark Lutherans.

The second of the foreign influences involved again the second (not surprisingly) Mennonite settlement in Lutheran Prussia, in Neumark province, namely the Neumark or Brenkenhoffswalde Gemeinde. The Neumark Gemeinde was founded 1764 by the Flemish Mennonites from the Przechowko Gemeinde. This Gemeinde preserved their traditionalist community for decades until, due to isolation by distance (and political boundaries) from the main Mennonite Gemeinden, the Neumark Gemeinde accepted a number of Lutherans of pietist inclination. These Lutherans included Wilhelm Lange (originally joining the Mennonites to escape conscription in 1788, later to be Ältester (1810-41) of the Neumark, later Gnadenfeld Gemeinde). Other families joining at that time included the Lenzmanns, later active in the Wust Brüder.

Members from both Rudnerweide and Gnadenfeld Gemeinden were active in the later Wüst Brüder, the Templers, and the Mennoniten Brüder. Although August Lenzmann (later Ältester of the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde) was an early Wüst Brüder, he was nevertheless a strong opponent of the Mennoniten Brüder. Nonetheless, many later Mennoniten Brüder and Templers had previously belonged to the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde. The Prezchowko, later Alexanderwohl Gemeinde (parent of the Neumark Gemeinde), it seems, had a leadership which supported, in part, pietist ideals. It is however reported that Ältester Peter Wedel (first head of the Molotschna branch of the Petersburg Bible Society) had little support from the members of his Gemeinde (David Epp diary, year end 1837).

Individuals from Wurttemberg of pietist views.

Pietism, which grew in the mid-1600s throughout Europe, proposed that the relationship between the individual and God was strictly personal and mystical. It was another manifestation of spiritualism, arising in part as a reaction to the growing rationalism and dogmatism of both church and society. It appealed to individuals who felt constrained by the Christian community in which they lived, in emphasizing the role of the individual, as opposed to the community and a shared system of Christian values. It is surprising that many radical Pietists themselves formed new denominations (such as John Wesley) or new separate Christian communities. In the more radical form, Pietism came to proclaim the certainty of salvation obtained through a conversion experience or through an inner awakening directly attributable to God. Thus predestinationism was reborn. This concept was the basis for the new elitist Separatist-Pietist communities. Perhaps the strongest attacks made by the Separatist-Pietists were against the Lutheran church which had originally adopted, then abanded the idea of pre-destination.

Within the German-speaking lands, the kingdom of Württemberg was the single most important centre of Pietism and Separatist-Pietism. Numerous Separatist-Pietist communities were formed in the kingdom, many immigrating as groups to Russia (Note Six).

Although Pietism (I claim) has much more in common with Augustinian, Lutheran, and Calvinist theology than with the Mennonite faith, it did

make an appeal to some Mennonites, particularly those with Lutheran connections or recent Lutheran background, or living in isolation in a predominantly Lutheran enviroment.

Among the individual Pietists, Württembergers, or Württemberg Separatist- Pietists who had, to some degree, a negative influence on the Prussian or Russian Mennonites could be mentioned the following:

- Sophie Dorothea (later Maria Feodorovna) of the royal family of Württemberg, mother of Alexander I;

- Alexander I, Czar of Russia (1801-25), a sometime Pietist, who had numerous contacts with Pietists, and together with Prince Golozyn, founded (1812) the Evangelical Bible Society of Russia (Petersburg);

- Wilhelm Lange (1766-1841), originally a Lutheran, later Ältester of the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde;

- Friedrich (Wilhelm) Lange, nephew of Wilhelm Lange, school teacher at Rudlofferhuben (West Prussia), later Lehrer and Ältester (1841-49) of the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde. He was removed from office in 1849 (for unspecified moral lapses) and rejoined the Lutheran church in Russia. He officiated at the marriage (1847) of Eduard Wüst in Russia.

- Jacob v.d. Smissen (b. 1785), son of a Hamburg Mennonite, Jacob v.d. Smissen (a convert to Pietism and a correspondant of Jung-Stilling and other radical Pietists), later Ältester of the Danzig Gemeinde, but dismissed from office.

- Jacob Mannhardt (1801-85), son of Jacob W. Mannhardt of Württemberg (later tutor to Jacob v.d. Smissen), a Lutheran (Pietist?). Jacob Mannhardt was also a relative of Jacob v.d. Smissen, Ältester of the Danzig Gemeinde (1836-85) (Note Seven).

-Eduard Wüst (1817-59) (see below).

Among the early supporters of Pietism in Russia should be mentioned Franz Görtz (1779-1835) Ältester (1819-35) of the Rudnerweide Gemeinde and Tobias Voth (b.1791) from the Neumark Gemeinde, later school-teacher and protégé of Franz Görtz. Tobias Voth had married a Lutheran (Pietist?) (Maria Skrage b.1788).

The Wurttemberg Separatist-Pietist Groups (The Swabian colony and Eduard Wüst).

The (chiliast) teaching of Pietist Heinrich Jung-Stilling, who proclaimed that the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ would appear in the east circa 1833-36, motivated various groups of Württemberg Separatist-Pietists to emigrate to Russia. Alexander I contributed to this idea by projecting himself as the defender of Christianity, and Russia as the haven for Christians.

One such large group of Württemberg Separatist-Pietists came to Russia in 1819, at the same time as the (later) Rudnerweide Gemeinde. They were originally scheduled to settle in the north Caucasus, however they remained in the Molotschna for two years. In the event, these Separatist-Pietists settled in the lands immediately to the south of the Rudnerweide Gemeinde villages (neighbouring on Rudnerweide, Franzthal, Pastwa, Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, and Eliesabethal), and immediately to the north of Berjansk. Not surprisingly, a very large number of later Wüst Brüder and Mennoniten Brüder were from these very same villages or from Berjansk (Note Eight).

The exact nature of the relationship between these Württemberg Separatist-Pietist settlements (also known as the Swabian Colonies, consisting of the villages of Neuhoffnung, Hoffnungsthal, Rosenfeld, and Neu-Stuttgart) and the Rudnerweide and Gnadenfeld Gemeinden has never been closely examined, and is a subject for further research. It does appear that the convictions of this Württemberg group lapsed into apathy, and a number of its members returned to the Lutheran church. The failure of Jung-Stilling's prophesies no doubt contributed to this demoralization.

In about 1842, the situation in the Swabian Colonies was serious enough (with respect to demoralization) that the Separatist-Pietists requested help from Wurttemberg (Note Nine). A young and remarkable individual, revivalist missionary Eduard Wüst was sent out by the Württemberg Separatist-Pietists in about 1843-1844.

Jakob Reimer (1817-91) with his young wife Gertrude, nee Neustädter, 1887. Jakob was an itinerant minister of the Brüdergemeinde. His work on endtimes beliefs, Der wundervolle Ratschluss Gottes mit tder Menschheit *was widely read. They immigrated in 1924, settling initially in Steinbach, Manitoba. Photo credit- Lohrenz, page 74 (for another photo, see P. M. Friesen, page 791).*

Eduard Wüst was a powerful orator, whose abilities and influence must have been similar to John Wesley and George Whitefield in prior times, or Billy Graham in modern times. The impact of his oratory extended beyond the Swabian Colonies, to the neighbouring Molotschna villages, and even to the Old Colony, as well as to other Russian-Lutheran circles. Some of his enthusiasts formed study groups, referred to as "Wüst Brüder". One such small group (of about 27 family heads) was formed in the Molotschna. These Molotschna Wüst Brüder were to be later founding members of the Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde and the Templers (with perhaps the notable exception of August Lenzmann). It appears likely that Wüst's influence also extended to the Old Colony, although evidence of direct links is not available. It was likely, however that Separatist-Pietists distributed copies of Ludwig Hofackers' Sermon-Book (first published in Stuttgart, 1833), which is reported to have impacted several individuals in the Old Colony. In about 1853, likely under the spell of Separatist-Pietist teachings, one Johann Löwen and Jacob Janzen (a former Lehrer of the Kronsweide Gemeinde who had been dismissed from office) began to form a group of the "awakened".

Little is known regarding this Old Colony group which soon fell into extremism and disrepute. Some of the most extremist of all the later Bruder (including Gerhard and Johann Wiehler) belonged to this group at one time. Perhaps because of this early extremism, the more moderate Brüder, including Abraham Unger, turned away from the Württemberg Pietists, seeking and finding support elsewhere, namely from the pietistically-minded Hamburg Baptists.

Educators of "foreign" (or Pietist) origins.

The role of educators in the development of the Mennonite Brethern should not be undervalued. Many of the leading early teachers were either former Lutherans or pietistically-minded Mennonites. Education was often a controversial issue in early Mennonite Russia. Central to the questions raised was not education itself, but the nature of the education and the background of the educators. The traditionalists naturally wished educators to reflect existing community values, while the progressives promoted Pietists or former Lutherans for leading educational roles. One expression of the traditionalist view of education can be found in Heinrich Balzer's "Verstand und Vernunft" (l833) (Note Ten).

Among the leading educators with a Pietist or Lutheran background could be mentioned the following:

- Friedrich W. Lange teacher at the Rudlofferhuben school (1826-36) mentioned above and later teacher at the Steinbach private school;

- Heinrich Franz 1(1812-89) pupil of Friedrich Lange;

- Tobias Voth (b. 1791) mentioned above, teacher of the Orloff Vereinschule (1822-29), a Pietist said to have deeply influenced Heinrich Hubert in Pietist directions;

- Heinrich Heese (1787-1868) a former Lutheran who joined the Mennonites to escape conscription;

- David Hausknecht (b.1833) teacher at Einlage (Old Colony), later Wüst Brüder, then Templer;

- Johann Lange (1838-1902) from a Neumark Mennonite family (originally Lutheran). Educated at the Württemberg Jerusalem school at Kirschenhardthof, later teacher at the Gnadenfeld private school and a Templer (Note Eleven);

- Friedrich Lange (1840-1923) brother of Johann Lange.

The Wüst Brüder realized the importance of education in promoting Pietist values, and established the "Brüderschule" (1857-59) with support from Wüst Brüder in the Swabian Colonies, in Charkow, and in Moscow. David Hausknecht and Heinrich Franz were the candidates for teacher. Franz was selected over the opposition of Johann Klassen and Jacob Reimer, but was later replaced

by Johann Lange.

The Hamburg Baptists.

The pietistically-minded Hamburg Baptists were very anxious to expand their vision of Christianity to Russia, particularly to the highly regarded, deeply religious, and prosperous Mennonites. Correspondence from Old Colony Brüder Abraham Unger, and activities in Poland (part of Russia) prompted many leading German Baptists to look to the Russian Mennonite communities as ideal new areas for expansion. Among the leading Baptists who played a key role and exerted much influence during the early formative period of the Mennoniten Brüder were the following:

- Johann Gerhard Oncken (b. 1799): Hamburg. Founder of the Hamburg Baptist movement;

- Karl Benzien: Dirschau (West Prussia). A deacon of the Hamburg Baptist movement. His daughter Louisa later married Abraham, a son of first Ältester of the Einlage Brüdergemeinde, Abraham Unger;

- August Liebig (b.1836): Neumark. A Hamburg Baptist. His daughter Martha later married Peter Wedel (1865-97) missionary in Cameroon, brother of Kornelius Wedel (1860-1911) president of Bethel College and a historian (!) (see *Pres.*, No. 23, page 48);

- Martin Kalweit: Prussian Lithuania. His daughter Emma later married Abraham Reimer (b.1853), son of Brüdergemeinde leader Jacob Reimer (1817-91);

- Friedrich Alf (1831-98): Originally a Lutheran, but dismissed as a school-teacher because of his activities, went to Hamburg to study at Onckens' school, and was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1859. His main sphere of mission work was central Poland, where some Mennonites from Wola Wodzinska went over to the Baptists;

- Eduard Leppky: Originally a Baptist, later joined the Mennonite Brüder in the Kuban, then moved to the U.S.A. as a Reiseprediger of the KMB;

- Wilhelm Schulz: A Baptist from abroad. Worked as a Reiseprediger with the Brüder after 1873, but was apparently deported (Note Twelve).

The Templers.

The Templers need to be mentioned in any account of the early Brüder because both movements originated from the same inspiration, and indeed from the same origin group, namely the Wüst Brüder. The Templers took the idea of separatism and elitism even further than the Brüder, and also arose in Württemberg in the 1840s. Various Separatist-Pietists proposed that a separate model community of Christians be created in the only location suitable for such a group, namely the Holy Land itself. Thus the Templer movement was founded. Through the established communication links to Russia, the movement soon spread to include Mennonite Wüst Brüder. Later, some Mennoniten Brüder (especially from the more radical Kuban Colony) joined the Templers, while some Templers went over to the Brüder. Particularly numerous among the Mennonite Templers were former members from the Gnadenfeld Gemeinde.

It may be of interest to examine the origins of the first Mennonite Templers. These could include the 20 signatories to a petition in favour of the Templers, dated 6.4.1863 (Note Thirteen) listed as follows:

- Nicholas Schmidt (1815-74) Alexanderthal. An original Wüst Brüder. Came to Russia 1810 (his family was originally from Zweibrücken/Pfalz) m. Katherina Mathies (1816-80);

- Johann Schmidt (1826-1864) brother of the above;

- Abraham Schmidt (b.1786?) Schardau. Possibly the Abraham Schmidt from Rosenkrantz who came to Russia in 1819. His daughter married Dietrich Dyck below. m1) Katherina Peters (1785-1830), m2) Anna X (b.1794);

- Abraham Wiebe (b.1792) Rudnerweide. A son of Jacob Wiebe (1745-1807) (Leske 1776) m. Margaretha Mathies (b.1753) 2)m1) Gertruda Klassen (b.1783), ml) Abraham Mathies (1781-1824). Abraham Wiebe was an immigrant of 1818.

- Isaac Mathies (b. 1822) Rudnerweide. A stepson of Abraham Wiebe above and a brother of Abraham Mathies, an original Wüst Brüder.

- Dietrich Dyck (1809-63) Rudnerweide. m. Kornelia Schmidt (1819-1901). A son of Wüst

Retired Elder Aron Lepp (b. 1829), Elder of the Brüdergemeinde in Einlage, (1876-1903). Photo credit- Lohrenz, page 96. In 1866 Peter Toews, later Kleine Gemeinde Bishop, sold his leasehold farm in Andreasfeld to Aron Lepp (Toews to Rundschau, *Aug. 2/12 - courtesy of Henry Fast).*

Brüder Peter Dyck (1788-1867) of Pordenau, an immigrant of 1819 from Heubuden. Also a Wüst Brüder, married a daughter (born at Rosenkrantz) of Abraham Schmidt;

- Abraham Dyck (b. 1827) A brother of the above;

- Peter Dyck (b. 1830) A brother of the above;

- Isaac Dyck (b. 1834) A brother of the above. m. Helena Dyck (1836-1908);

- Benjamin Lange (b.1804) Gnadenfeld, m. Maria Janz. Came to Russia 1833 from Neumark (Alt Hoferwiese);

- Johann Lange (1838-1902) A son of the above. m. Emma Jaus;

- Friederich Lange (1840-1923) A son of the above Benjamin. m. Anna Dyck (1843-1930), daughter of Dietrich Dyck above;

- Benjamin Lange (1845-95) A son of the above Benjamin. m. Katherina Dyck (b. 1848), daughter of Dietrich Dyck above;

- David Hausknecht (b.1833) see previous comments above;

- Isaac Fast (b.1845) A son of Isaac Fast(1815-96), an immigrant of 1836.

Persons who are difficult to locate: Abraham Braun (Grossweide or Franzthal, an original Wüst Brüder), Isaac Hiebert, Hermann Friesen, Johann Dyck, Jacob Dyck. Also of note is that Franz Isaac (1816-99), Lehrer of the Orloff Gemeinde, and author of *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten*, later joined the Templers (Note Fourteen).

This profile of the Templers is indeed very similar to that of the Mennoniten Brüder.

Early Historical Developments: Extremism and Secession (1860):

Both the Molotschna Wüst Brüder and the Old Colony Brüder soon began to adopt the extremist and elitist ideas that appear to be a natural consequence of Separatist-Pietist theology. Within Wüst's own parish, extremists contributed to the disrepute into which the movement fell. Many Lutheran settlements in south Russia were likewise affected. The extremism of these Pietists consisted in the belief that, since they had a guarantee of salvation, and were therefore members of God's elect, they could do no wrong. There was nothing for them to do, except luxuriate in the knowledge that they had been saved. Meetings of the elect began to degenerate into rejoicing, frenzied dancing, and proclamations of superiority. For this reason, outsiders (including Russian officials) referred to them as "Hupfer" or leapers.

About the time of Wüst's death (1859), the Molotschna Wüst Brüder sent out missionaries Heinrich Bartel and Benjamin Becker to the Lutheran Volga and Planer Colonies (Note Fifteen). At this time too, a strong feeling arose within the Brüder that they should separate from the Mennonite community. It is still a matter for debate as to whether the agenda of the Brüder included total separation from the Mennonite community, or whether the Brüder had merely intended to reform the Mennonite community in pietist directions, forming a new Pietistically-inclined Mennonite church. The evidence, on the whole, suggests the former thesis. Certainly, this was the course expressed by the extremists, who were in the majority in the early years.

Early in 1860, the Brüder published the "Ausgangsschrift" the articles of secession. Some of the Brüder argued that the actions and degenerate nature of the Mennonite community forced them into taking this step to separation. On the other hand, it could be argued that the elitism of the Separatist-Pietist movement itself would inevitably lead to separation. Within the next two years, some of the extremists began to think of a physically separate colony. One of the early (and perhaps most important) of the Brüder, Johann Klassen, went to Petersburg to negotiate for a separate living space, which was to result in the formation of the Kuban colony in the south Caucasus (founded in 1863). (Note 16)

The extremist Brüder were the dominant group among the Secessionists, both in the Molotschna and in the Old Colony, up to 1865. Their leaders

included Molotschnau Brüder Johann Klassen, Isaac Koop, Jacob Becker, and Benjamin Becker and Old Colony Brüder Gerhard Wiehler, Johann Wiehler, and Heinrich Neufeld. Moderates, who could be said to have supported Pietist, but not extremist Separatist-Pietist views, included Molotschna Brüder Heinrich Hiebert, Jacob Reimer, and Abraham Kornelson and Old Colony Brüder Abraham Unger. By the time (1865) that the moderates finally prevailed, the split from the Mennonite community was irreparable. The extremists failed to carry the day because of the very nature of their extremism. There was really little for them to do except rejoice or awaken others. Having been saved and elected of God, there was no need to search for additional truth, and they turned to book-burning. They also turned to banning each other for disagreement or lack of enthusiasm. Thus Gerhard Wiehler banned both his father and his brother for disagreeing with his some of his views. Others, including Heinrich Hiebert and Jacob Reimer, were also banned. Moral lapses occurred and became public knowledge, including the affair of Heinrich Bartel with Helena Regier (1861 - the affair could not, of course, be concealed due to pregnancy). Friedrich Lange had been previously dismissed in 1849, because of moral lapses within his household.

Crisis and the Hamburg Baptists.

The years 1864 and 1865 were years of crisis. Many of the Brüder became very apprehensive regarding the future, fearing that they themselves might be banned at any time for lack of enthusiasm or for incorrect thinking. A return to the Gemeinden seemed impossible, as their actions had rendered them ridiculously pompous in the eyes of their friends and neighbours, and the slanderous utterances made by many Brüder had antagonized many Mennonites. Ältester Heinrich Hiebert proved to be ineffective in this period of stress, nor was Jacob Reimer, another natural leader more effective, as he was related to Johann Klassen by marriage. Abraham Kornelsen had already moved to the Planer Colonies.

This unbearable situation could not continue indefinitely, and eventually, the moderates prevailed with the introduction of a protocol of August 4, 1865. Leadership of the Brüder effectively passed to the only strong early leader who had continuously resisted the extremists, namely Abraham Unger of Einlage (Old Colony). Many of the moderates who had moved to the Kuban were greatly disappointed with both spiritual and economic conditions prevailing, and returned to the Molotschna, to the Old Colony, or eventually to the new colonies at Andreasfeld and Wiesenfeld (in the neighbourhood of Einlage).

Unger had, at a very early time, foreseen that the extremist and Separatist-Pietist directions of the movement taken by the Brüder had no future. Acquainted with the pietistically-minded Hamburg Baptist movement through various periodicals, he began a correspondence with some of the leading Baptists in Hamburg. Correspondence with Baptist leader Friedrich Alf in Russian Poland had also been initiated by various Brüder in 1860-61, including Jacob Reimer and Jacob Becker, with no definite results (Note Seventeen). To establish some sort of legitimacy to the movement, and in view of their small numbers and poor reputation at home, many moderates supported Unger in the cultivation of closer ties with the Baptists. When the moderates did prevail, more concrete measures were taken to further these ties. The Brüder remained on the path to union with the Baptists, under the leadership of Unger, until his resignation in 1876.

This move towards union was resisted by only a few Brüder, including Aron Lepp and Eduard Leppky (a former Baptist). Aron Lepp (1827-1912), former Judenplan superintendant, and brother of industrialist Peter Lepp (1817-71) (both immigrants of 1817), was in fact the only leader in the movement to resist union with the Baptists, and it was largely due to him that a final union did not take place.

The Baptists, as indicated above, were only too pleased to assist the Brüder in the reorganisation required after 1865. In 1866, Baptist August Liebig, in reponse to written requests from the Einlage Brüder, was sent out by the Hamburg Baptists to help resolve the many outstanding issues. However, he was arrested after two weeks and deported. Karl Benzien, also a Hamburg Baptist, who had come to Russia for business reasons and stayed to settle, chaired several meetings in Einlage, including the meeting of July 10, 1868, where an organizational protocol was adopted, and the meeting of July 14, 1868, where Unger was elected Ältester. Benzien himself eventually joined the Brüder. Shortly thereafter, in 1869, the founder of the Hamburg Baptists himself, Oncken, came to Russia and presided over the ordination of Unger, as well as the ordination of Aron Lepp as Lehrer of the Brüder and Benzien as Lehrer of the Gerhardsthal (Tschornoglas) Baptists. Liebig later returned, again at the request of the Brüder, living at Andreasfeld 1871-1872, to assist with a number of issues. He organized annual conferences of the collective Brüdergemeinden (of the Einlage, Molotschna, and Kuban Gemeinden) and presided over the same from 1872-l875 (Note Eighteen). The first such annual conference took place in May, 1872 at Andreasfeld. Liebig finally settled permanently in Russia in 1875, taking on the leadership of the Odessa Baptists.

Peter M. Friesen and his wife. He was the author of the "Altevangelische Brüderschaft" *(Halbstadt, Taurien, 1911), from which many of the photos in this article are reprinted. Photo credit - Quiring,* In the Fullness of Time, *page 69.*

In some respects, many of the Baptists did not live up to the high expectations of the Brüder, when they became more closely aquainted. The Brüder had, for instance, developed a positon against alcoholic beverages and tobacco. Indeed, many Brüder resigned from the movement for this reason. P.M. Friesen reports that over 10 Brüder, including some who were "begabt und angesehen" (talented and respected), left because of the prohibition on tobacco. The Brüder were therefore very astonished when they discovered that many of their Baptist colleagues, including Oncken himself, were smokers (Note Nineteen). Liebig himself was refused admission to the communion service at one time (Note Twenty).

On the other hand, the Brüder often revealed great moral weaknesses themselves. P.M. Friesen tells us that three Brüder, from families of high standing in the Brüdergemeinde, during the period (1870-80), were involved in a get-rich-quick scheme of land and business speculations at Blumenau, cheating their fellow Brüder (including Jacob Reimer) who apparently suffered large financial losses, resulting in the abandonment of Blumenau (Note Twenty-One). This account is rather similar to that involving Heinrich Martens (1867-1942), a.k.a. "Swindler" Martens. "Swindler" Martens was a Brüder originally from the Kuban, later perpetrator of a famous (at the time) California land swindle where very many fellow Brüder lost their life savings (Note Twenty-Two).

Interestingly enough, the Brüder placed great emphasis on the "form" of baptism, and argued extensively on the subject (it was also in part this subject which attracted them to the Baptists). Yet the Brüder criticized the "Kirchliche" for adhering more to form than to matters of substance.

The Brüder and the Baptists continued to have extensive and involved relationships, even after negotiations for a union had ground to a halt by the time of Unger's resignation in 1876. Johann Wiehler (the former extremist Brüder) was in fact the first chairman of the Union of Russian Baptists (1884-1886). Other Brüder attended various Baptist institutions in Germany. Of the eight missionary workers at the Brüdergemeinde mission station at Nalgonda (India), seven had studied at Hamburg-Horn, including the head of the mission, Abraham Friesen (1859-1919) (Note Twenty-Three). Other examples include Jacob Kröcker, publisher of the *Christlisches Abriss Kalendar,*and the *Friedenstimme,* who had studied at Hamburg (his brother Abraham had worked as a Baptist minister in Rumania for two years) (Note Twenty-Four). The Brüder of the Volga and Planer Colonies, whose conversion to the Brüder had begun with the proselytizing of Bartel and Becker in 1859, all later joined the Baptists.

Why then did the movement towards union collapse? As indicated above, the Mennonite heritage of the Brüder was the key factor, along with the passing into law of the Universal Military Service Statute in 1874 in Russia, at exactly the critical moment of the discussions. The Mennonites were highly regarded in official circles, while the Baptists were persecuted as a disruptive sect. Alternative service, it was soon apparent, would be available to the Mennonites, but not to the Baptists. Pacifism had always been a strong tenet of the Mennonite faith, but not at all an article of the Baptist creed. Indeed, the Mennonites had suffered for this fundamental tenet and struggled to maintain this principle, for centuries. Then too, the more restrictive lifestyle of the Bruder conflicted with the more tolerant attitude of the Baptists. Despite their abusive condemnation of their fellow Mennonites, the Brüder were simply unable to give up the prestige and regard that the behaviour and labour of generations of Mennonites had won for them in Russian society, in exchange for a much lower and hazardous position as a dangerous and disruptive minority sect. Nor were cultural factors or considerations of lifestyle unimportant. Nevertheless, the discussions were difficult, and many Brüder were of two minds on the subject. Even Aron Lepp later in 1900 regretted his strong position against the Baptists (Note Twenty-Five).

Not surprisingly, however, the Russian bureaucracy repeatedly identified the Brüder and the Baptists. When, for example, the Baptists were recognized as a legitimate Protestant group in Russia in 1879, the Brüder were classified as Baptist. Shortly thereafter, a contra-petition was prepared (with the assistance of P.M. Friesen himself) with successful results.

The Brüdergemeinden 1865-1870.

In the period 1865 to 1870, the Brüder can be grouped as follows:

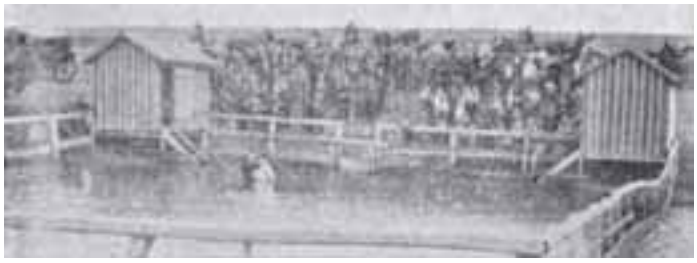
1. **The Templers.** The most extremist of all the Brüder groups. Later most of the Templers moved to the south Caucasus region. Some of the Mennonite Templers eventually did move to Palestine.

2. **The Kuban Brüder.** Most of the extremist Brüder (both from the Old Colony and the Molotschna) moved to the Kuban in the early period, as well as some of the moderates. As the moderates came to prevail, many Brüder families returned to the Old Colony or to the Molotschna. A number of these then moved to the new settlements at Andreasfeld and Wiesenfeld. In time, the Kuban settlement came to be regarded as a backwater in the Brüder community.

3. **The Moderate Brüder.**

- The Einlage Brüdergemeinde under the leadership of Abraham Unger, then Aron Lepp. Later subgroups - Andreasfeld, Wiesenfeld, Jasykovo, Fürstenland, Burwald, and Neplejevko;

- The Molotschna Brüdergemeinde (later the Rückenau Gemeinde). Later subgroups - Putchin, the Crimea, Herzenberg, Friedensfeld, Sagradovka.



Baptism of the Brüdergemeinde in Rückenau, Molotschna Colony. The strategy of rejecting the traditional Mennonite baptismal mode, namely, affusion or sprinkling, created a strict and dramatic cultural and social border marker for those who rejected their parental faith. Photo credit - P. M. Friesen, page 488. Cf: "Evangelical Baptism," Pres., *No. 20, pages 34-39.*

Summary.

The Mennonite Brüdergemeinde remained a very small minority group for much of the Russian period gaining only some 20 percent of the 100,000 Mennonites in Russia by 1917. Later Pietist extremists, such as Klaas Epp and his followers had much in common with the Brüder. The Mennonite Pietist Brüder, generally speaking, came from families who were already estranged (spatially or temporally), to some degree, from the main traditionalist groups. Pietists and/or Lutherans deeply influenced some of these individuals. In this, some Mennonite leaders (such as Johann Cornies) and some leading Russian officials (such as, in particular, Eugen v. Hahn), who themselves were possibly Pietist or Pietist sympathizers, saw a means to further breakup the traditionalist Gemeinden, and further the assimilation of the Mennonite into Russian society.

Had it not been for the early influence of the "foreigners", the Brüder would likely not have come into existence. Had it not been for the later support of "foreigners" the Brüder would likely have fallen apart as a group and disappeared. The Brüder then would likely have in part, returned to the Mennonite community, and in part, dispersed as insignificant splinter groups. Much of the subsequent social tension and inner conflict within the Mennonite community would then have been avoided.

References:

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Endnotes:

Note One: Sivers. Report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 14, April 1865, in John B. Toews, ed. *Story of the early Mennonite Brethren*, p.134.

Note Two: See my comments in *Pres.*, No. 22, pp.138-139. This is a critical point, invariably assumed by Brethren historians, generally without factual evidence of any kind.

Note Three: *Pres.*, No. 23, pp.118-125.

Note Four: Information from my friend, Dr. Glenn Penner, of Guelph, Ont., includes census lists for 1858, 1864, and 1869 for the Kuban settlement.

Note Five: For example, the following persons were either born at, or from Kurzebrach: Jacob Wall, Martin Friesen (1814-83, father of P.M. Friesen), Karolina Thiessen (b.1818, wife of Brüdergemeinder Wilhelm Löwen b.1818).

Note Six: Karl Stumpp, *The Emigration from Germany to Russia*, Lincoln, Neb. 1978, pp.138-139.

Note Seven: See also John Friesen, *op. cit.*, p.161, etc.

Note Eight: James Urry, *None But Saints*, pp.97-101.

Note Nine: George K. Epp, *op. cit.*, p.19.

Note Ten: See D.Plett, *The Golden Years*, pp.237-247.

Note Eleben: Johann Lange published articles in the *Süddeutscher Warte* (nos. 14, 17. 1861), while still in Württemberg, wherein he promoted the Templers, and his own future plans. The Fürsorgkomittee at Odessa was made aware of these articles by Lutheran officials. On his return to Russia, he preached a sermon at Hoffungsthal/Odessa, attended also by members of the Fürsorgekomittee. Later, at Gnadenfeld, having replaced H. Franz as school-teacher, the Komittee requested a written declaration from Lange himself, as well as a statement from the Molotschna Lehrdienst as to his suitability. On March 8, 1862 Lange wrote that he was not connected with any sect, and had no solidarity with Kirschhardhof. A. Keller, a member of the Fürsorgekomittee, paid a surprise visit to Lange's school room on January 9, 1863, where he found literature of the Templers. Both J. and N. Schmidt were also implicated, and all three were required to complete a written questionaire, whereupon Lange was dismissed as teacher and placed under a form of house arrest (being released June 21, having promised to discontinue his Templer activities). J.J. Hildebrand, *Aus der Vorgeschichte der Einwanderung aus Rußland nach Manitoba*, Winnipeg, 1949, pp. 71-77.

Note Twelve; P.M. Friesen, p.395.

Note Thirteen: Hildebrand, *Aus der Vorgeschichte der Einwanderung aus Rußland nach Manitoba*, Winnipeg, 1949, p. 76.

Note Fourteen: Hildebrand, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Yet another example of how much Russian Mennonite historiography has been coloured by Brüder, Templers and Orloff "progressives".

Note Fifteen: The Planer Colonies were near the Bergthal Colonies (so-called after the "Plan") (also known as the Gronau Colonies).

Note Sixteen: See comments of J.J. Hildebrand regarding the Kuban settlement, quoted in *Pres.*, No.22, p. 63.

Note Seventeen: P.M. Friesen, p.244.

Note Eighteen: P.M. Friesen, p.386.

Note Nineteen: P.M. Friesen, pp.383-384.

Note Twenty: P.M. Friesen, p.396.

Note Twenty-One: P.M. Friesen, p.403.

Note Twenty-Two: See Leland Harder, *Harder Family Review*, Oct, 1992, for a complete account.

Note Twenty-Three: P.M. Friesen, p. 568. Abraham Friesen was a son of Brüdergemeinder administrator Johann Friesen, later of Einlage, Andreasfeld, then Rückenau. Abraham's brother, Gerhard (probably named after his uncle Gerhard Wiehler (the Brüder extremist)) later participated in a revolutionary worker's tribunal in 1917. He was arrested by members of the Selbstschutze and executed by a German military tribunal (of the occupation forces) in 1918. A.A.Töws, *Mennonitische Mörtyrer, Band 2*, Clearbrook, 1954, p. 297.

Note Twenty-Four: P.M. Friesen, p.467.

Note Twenty-Five: P.M. Friesen, p.385.

Evangelist Bernhard Harder (1832-84), Halbstadt

Evangelist Bernhard Harder (1832-84), Halbstadt, Molotschna - Letters of Admonition to Johann Fast and Johann Harder, Annenfeld, Crimea, March 29, 1872, compiled and edited by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Introduction.

Evangelist Bernhard Harder (1832-84), Halbstadt, Molotschna, is considered among the most important leaders of the Mennonite Church in Russia. Therefore the publication of two of his letters expressing his views regarding the secession of various sectarian groups from the main body of Mennonites and the level of their morality is of considerable significance.

On March 29, 1872, Evangelist Bernard Harder wrote two letters of admonition to his dear friends Johann Fast and Johann Harder who joined the Brüdergemeinde secession from the Kleine Gemeinde in the Crimea in 1869 or shortly thereafter.

Letter One was written to veteran school teacher Johann Fast (1813-92), formerly of Schönau, and nephew of Ältester Bernhard Fast of the Ohrloff Gemeinde. Johann Fast was married to Elisabeth Isaak, a sister to historian Franz Isaak (1816-1900), Tiege. The Fast family had moved to Annenfeld, Crimea in 1867. In 1873 Johann Fast moved to America, selecting and settling on the land where the village of Gnadenau was established the following year (Note One)

Letter Two was written to Johann Harder IV (1836-1930), son of Ältester Johann Harder (1811-75), Bernhard's cousin. Johann IV was married to Elisabeth Fast (1836-98), daughter of teacher Johann Fast. Johann IV and his young family moved to Annenfeld, Crimea in 1865. In 1874 they immigrated to Gnadenau (Hillsboro), Kansas, where Johann IV also served as a minister of the K.M.B. (Note Two).

The two letters published here were discovered by Dr. Leland Harder, Newton, Kansas, in private family archives and published in *The Harder Family Review*, April 1989, pages 6-7.

Founding Myth.

The founding narrative of the Mennonite Brüdergemeinde in Russia in 1860 was: One, that the Flemish Mennonite Church was fallen, corrupted and beyond redemption; Two, spontaneously, a number of the "enlightened" brethren started reading the Bible, artificially redefined the "New Birth" as "conversion experience", converted themselves to "true" religion, and, having no choice, separated themselves from the "Babylonian whore" to form their own assemblies.

In the preceding essay, Henry Schapansky has established convincingly the lack of validity of the second premise in that the secessionist movement consisted mainly of the adoption of alien religious cultures which were presented to the Secessionists by foreigners of various spiritual hues and denominational varieties.

Failure to Respond to False Criticism.

It is noteworthy that the Flemish Mennonite religious leaders generally did not stoop to the level of their accusers to reply with harsh criticism of their own. Like their Old Colonist counterparts of the modern-day, they evidently felt it was more Christ-like to turn the other cheek. It would have been relatively easy to point out that the much self-lauded piety of the secessionists was mainly of the inwardly personal variety which did not regulate nor temper their outwardly actions, particularly in their arrogant treatment of their former Brethren in the "Kirchliche" congregations whom they denounced as unsaved "heathen".

To understand the Kirchliche reluctance to reply in kind to the harsh condemnations of the Secessionists we should recall that one of the central tenets of traditionalist Flemish Mennonite thought is that pride was a sin. Therefore you do not criticize others. You look for the splinter/plank in your eye as the New Testament has it. For this reason the conservatives did not respond with their own very legitimate questions about the "salvation" of the Secessionists, especially regarding the salvific efficacy and validity of the dramatic conversion experience processes and immersion baptism procedures as ritualized by them. No one other than God knew that until they met their Maker face to face on the day of judgement.

The Flemish Mennonites also recognized the imperfection of human beings; what they wanted was a pure community in which imperfect people could live, separated from the temptations of the world which threatened their salvation, and hope for salvation after a life lived according to the commandments of Jesus. Thus all conservative leaders knew and expected problems to emerge among members of their community and concentrated on settling these, collectively - first removing a person from being a polluting threat to others, and then trying to reintegrate them into the community (the ban and public confession). But the Brüdergemeinde campaigned on the idea of a perfect individual who, through a conversion experience had gained knowledge (certainty) of their salvation. They did not need others in a community to achieve salvation - they had achieved it. Whether or not they would subsequently "fall" into sin was debatable. But one can see why many conservatives did not trust them. But again, to criticize would be to put oneself above them. Only God knew one's true value and the state of one's soul.

Morality.

Regarding the first premise of the corruptedness and fallen morality of the "old line" Gemeinden, Brüdergemeinde apologists have cited mainly the self-serving epithets of their own contemporary brethren as well as statements by foreign missioners and other observers generally in agreement with their agenda. Members of the progressivistic Ohrloff Gemeinde feature prominently in any Brüdergemeinde recitation of testimonials supporting or sympathetic to their cause, which, however, are of little probative value since Ohrloff itself had already adopted many pietist ideas and was actively engaged in a protracted cultural and social struggle against the traditionalists majority. In short, little or no proof is ever cited that would pass the basic rules of evidence in any court of law (Note Three).

That having been said, Bernard Harder is invariably the centrepiece of any defence of the Brüdergemeinde secession and the absolute necessity thereof. It is alleged that with his preaching Harder supported the Secessionists but never had the courage to join them (Note Four). On the issue of moral and ethical values among the Flemish Mennonites, John A. Toews, the prominent M. B. historian, cites a letter written by Evangelist Bernhard Harder in the *Mennonitische Blätter*, dated July 22, 1862, in which Harder severely criticized the ministry in his own church: "`What is lacking among us?' he asks."

"In the first place there is something wrong with us - the witness and watchman. A large number among us lack the very first and all-important capital `A' of Christianity: `Wake up, o man, from your sleep of sin'....What can be expected from complacent and self-satisfied preachers who are reluctant to do anything but read an occasional sermon which for a half a century has been part of the family heritage, without consideration whether it is relevant to the times or not...all that we are left is a dry foundation, a shell without a kernel, a church without living members" (Note Five).

It may therefore come as a surprise to historians and lay persons alike that in his Letters of Admonition, 1872, written less than 10 years later, Evangelist Bernard Harder expressed himself forthrightly and unequivocally that no improvement in moral character and social ethics had been brought forth by the various Secessionist movements and that, therefore, he would never consider joining any of the new sectarian groups.

We are indeed grateful to Dr. Leland Harder for translating and publishing these invaluable primary source documents. *—The Editor*

Bernhard Harder (1832-84), Halbstadt, Molotschna, and his second wife, Helena (nee Ewert). He was a poet, teacher, minister and evangelist who promoted revivalistic techniques among the Mennonites. Photo - John Friesen, ed., Mennonites in Russia, *page 165.*

Bernhard Harder - Letters of Admonition, 1872

Letter One:

Blumstein, March 29, 1872

On the 25th of this month I was 40 years old

Dear Brother Fast!

This time I must write again in such a way that both you and the Harders get [letters] to read because thereby I save time and work, for what I have to say, I would like to say to all of you. The descriptions of the decline of our people which I gave in my last letter were close to the truth, and everyone who has open eyes for the truth and the reality must find it that way and attest to it. I find exceptions in individual souls but not in existing Gemeinden or communities, just as I also do not believe that the remedy for this decline is the starting of new churches and movements.

To your river-baptized brethren I would say somewhat the following: If I should withdraw [secede from my Gemeinde], I would first like to find a congregation that I would like better than my present one. Now I would like to ask you for advice. Which of the separated congregations that all profess to be the Church of God should I choose? I ask you because of all the directions that are arising through the haughtiness and passions of the Kleine Gemeinde [KMB] (Note Six). You would not recommend any of them to me!

I would mention [for example] the congregations of Huebert and Peters. I would have so much to criticize in both that my courage would fail me, and even more so, perhaps, in the movement of Klaas Schmidt and the Jerusalem Friends [Templers]. Then I would also feel obligated to abide by the advice of others, and I would be cast down by so many with the same judgment of repudiation as I hear from you; and you would be all the same, and you really are that in my eyes. I really would not know which way I should go.

Here it is remonstrated that one must follow the Word of God. Indeed, [in order to] follow the Word of God I would go neither to you nor to the others but remain in my own Gemeinde, which is no worse than yours, and which I love and cherish above all others. Everywhere there is a need of the real power of faith and of the genuine signs of life; and I myself fall short so much that I am glad and satisfied when the Gemeinde has patience with me. I go, it is to be hoped, directly to the name of Jesus before any consideration of form and dogma becomes the determining and separating [factor in the] confession. When the Gemeinde no longer believes in the name [of Jesus] anymore, does not want to have anything more preached about it, that is, when it demands something else, then I will go with those who confess Jesus, God willing, over valley and hill, even to the Sahara, if God so wills, or to another desert; for where shall His Gemeinde blossom for two times, one time and a half time [Rev 12 v. 14]. Amen.

A congregation which is started as a private venture, which ignites like a straw fire at first, soon dies out again; for it is nothing but the natural enthusiasm of the poor human spirit for its own work. On secession it becomes necessary that only one aspect of doctrine is professed. The most fervent adherents bestir themselves for a time, as if on a stick-horse, while most are asleep for a long time, and until they also grow weary thereof and all together they rigidify into a dead form. When the scoundrels have first finished scolding each other, they quiet down and become tranquil as the others; and the biggest difference remaining, which for the most part lies in the fervour itself, disappears without anything having been won for the Kingdom of God. But for those [who are] righteous [the opportunity] always remains to [serve] the Lord in the [established] Gemeinde as well as among those who have withdrawn. [In the early church] no prophet and no apostle of the Lord has [ever] separated until the Lord in judgement regarding Jerusalem himself gave the signal [Acts 1:4].

But there was only the Apostle John, who presided over the Gemeinde of the believers, independent from the Jewish Church. Read in the letter of the Apostle John and in the Revelation of John whether even under the most corrupted and decayed Gemeinde, the loyal ones withdrew or whether they were admonished to do so, or whether faith, kinship, or heaven were denied unto them because of the fallen and corrupted church.

Bernhard Harder's memorial stone in Halbstadt, Molotschna. Eleven of B. Harder's songs were included in the Gesangbuch der Brüdergemeinde, *including the much loved "Die Zeit ist kurz, O Mensch, sei weise!" For a current biography of Evangelist Bernhard Harder, see Leland Harder,* The Blumstein Legacy, *pages 17-24.*

Thus have I believed until now and thus have I preached. Is that wrong? If I endeavour in my relationships to be gentle and to evade all useless questions that cause more friction than improvement, is that hypocrisy and falsehood?

The three dear youths have always demonstrated themselves to be loving and childlike towards me, and we always parted from one another in peace. I never fostered suspicion against them that they wanted to attack and conquer me, but rather gave myself to them without deceit and without suspicion. That they are now bitterly angry [at me]; is that the gratitude I have earned? From whom have they learned that? Perhaps [but not likely] from such who wish to be followers of Christ? [Is it] By chance because I do not follow you like them (Luke 9:49-50)? Truly that would be woeful fruit - fruit like Sodom's apples [Deut. 32:32] or the adder's eggs [Isa. 59:5].

Oh, may the Lord protect the dear young brethren from pride and unrighteousness! May the dear Saviour forgive them for what they have scolded about me. If one of them should become deathly ill or comes to the point of reflection along the way, and he begins to feel sorry for unknowingly and unnecessarily having grieved a friend who in weakness had good intentions, then tell him that everything is alright with me as if there had been reconciliation with a kiss and handshake, as if nothing had ever happened. And whoever has any doubts about this, whether it be genuine, I would admonish him to have patience until the day comes when everything will come to the light - everything that has remained hidden here.

Thus be heartily greeted and see to it that the brothers Zacharias, Janzen and Hein receive a greeting from me if they still love me a little, and see whether they will write to me. Yours, "B. Harder"

Letter Two:

Blumstein, March 29, 1872

Johann Harder:

Beloved brother Johannes!

I have not yet replied to your letter which I now want to do at this opportunity. I am glad for the loving tone of your letter, which shows to me that you are not renouncing or condemning me, even though your new direction by nature implicitly tends to judge [others] quite severely. But is it not, however, against all Christian love and fairness to reproach a man or count it as evil if he does not immediately run along when a new idea comes up? The individual must first consider whether the new persuasion is genuine or in error, also that shortly previous to this he was not that far along, and how he attributes his growth to grace. Likewise he must now also expect that this same grace can and will lead the other one along as well."

"You, for instance, were a believer earlier than I and have for many years walked in the same persuasion of faith to which am I still committed. You have also known that others thought differently - in fact, you were thoroughly familiar with almost exactly the same beliefs as those upon which you are currently embarking, but you were a believer nonetheless and were saved. If you should reply to this with a `no', I would have to say, `I am not convinced of that,' for I have gotten this perspective from your earlier professions and from your course of life until now. If I am wrong then I have totally misjudged you; but in that case I cannot trust you now either and I would trust your present word and walk less than the earnestness of your first love for the Saviour!"

"Yet you will not allure me to such a dismal conclusion; for you know how at that time you were so blissful and filled with powers of faith and of eternal life. Oh, are you still today so meek, so childlike, so humble? At that time with God's help, your were an example that wrested me out of a dead intellectual and moralistic faith and enabled me to grasp the living Saviour, wherein your father has [also] rendered me faithful ministries of love.

"Should that now have been all for nothing? With you mother, nothing? With your father, nothing? And with you nothing? With me nothing?"

"Well, I know that the faithful hands of Jesus have guided me since then, and I know whom I have believed [2 Tim. 1:12]. If all that is nothing, including all the blessed experiences of my life which have become a strength for life in me, in spite of all my weaknesses and imperfections, and all that is nothing, then I expect nothing at all from all the new ideas, inventions, and introductions in the area of faith."

"But, however, I will leave it at that and leave it to the conscience of each one, whether inner persuasion or the enticement of the new is driving him, whether he serves his God in simplicity and humility, or whether the striving to be something and to enjoin something have crept in. You, however, know that all upright souls in your congregation will not be differently disposed towards us. If you feel compelled to advise others to join your congregation, I will not

Peter B. Harder (1868-1919) and wife Lena, nee Epp. Photo credit - Lohrenz, Damit es nicht Vergessen Werde, *page 75. Peter was the son of the Evangelist. He was a teacher and also the first novelist among the Russian Mennonites, publishing his book,* "Die Lutherische Cousine," *in 1912, with others following. In 1902 he published a collection of his father's poetry. Leland Harder writes that "...the main theme in Peter's writings was Mennonite village life on the Ukrainian and Crimean steppes, observed and interpreted from a critical, yet sympathetic perspective, somewhat reminiscent of the prophetic preaching perspectives of his father," see L. Harder,* The Blumstein Legacy, *pages 37-45.*

find fault with that. It is for you the drive of conscience. Whether this is correctly or wrongly understood remains to be seen."

"When, however, the members among you become rude and spiteful and spare themselves no means in putting others into a bad light, then the upright ones will not be part of it, rather will admit that the `hateful' ones among you are just as hateful among you as the hateful ones amongst us. Or when before and after the worship service a form of program is presented, lovelessly discussing the shortcomings and infirmities of other congregations and their members, then the upright and faithful disciples of Jesus, will certainly on one occasion remain quiet and sighing, or on the other, will exert themselves to direct the discussion to the one who has the need. That is the way it is with you and that is also the way it is with us. Your secession will soon be considered a failure - as useless - if it has not gone that far already, and you will not have achieved anything except to increase the number of splits - [divisions] which should not take place."

"When I describe and deplore the decline of our people, I do not know a single congregation which I could regard as an exception. However, there are many souls who are scattered here and there in all the congregations who cling to the Saviour in child-likeness and sincerity and [who] will also follow when He will blow [the trumpet] for the departure [Rev. 8:6].

Always preach repentance in your congregation also, for sooner or later, it will prove to be necessary. The two-edged sword strikes to the right and to the left [Rev. 1:16; 2:12]. It judges among the 'pious' (Note Seven) - whether a heart is humble or whether it sets itself up against the Word in proud self-righteousness and thinks or says, 'Such to me? Am I like the others?' etc. I have had such experiences, and my heart has grieved - grieved silently. But thank God! I can be silent by His grace, submit, and be strong in His power despite my weakness."

"I am telling you this because my love bids me to trust you. I trust that likewise you will believe me. I am not consciously nor wilfully a gross liar, have not consciously or wilfully sought the favour of people, nor for the favour of the rich, have not consciously or wilfully preached against the pious, nor against the proper distinctions between belief and unbelief; have never, never, never declared from the pulpit or in conversation the godless to be right when he was wrong in relation to the pious, have not preached to keep the company of the searching souls away from me; and I also did not know that the three young brothers were so ill-disposed against me as it presently turns out, rather in my weakness I have been sincere and loyal towards them and took them under my protection as well as I could - more so than I deemed wise to reveal unto them. More later, perhaps orally, God willing."

"I greet you heartily, `B. Harder'" (Note Eight).

Endnotes:

Note One: See Plett, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach, 1990), page 344, for a brief biography. The entire Issue 12 (Oct. 1990) of *The Harder Family Review* is devoted to the story of this dedicated and gifted pre-Cornies era teacher.

Note Two: See Plett, *Johann Plett: A Mennonite Family Saga* (Steinbach, 2003), pages 121-126, for a biography.

Note Three: The explanation for this lack of evidence is clear. The alleged excessive immorality existed only in the minds of the Secessionists. There are numerous laudatory reports by outsiders regarding the high level of morality and social ethics of the Russian Mennonites which establish this point beyond any reasonable doubt.

Note Four: An excellent example is found in Loewen and Nolt, *through fire & water: An Overview of Mennonite History* (Scottdale, 1996), pages 322 and 335.

Note Five: J. A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno, 1975), page 20. The letter is reproduced in P. M. Friesen, *Mennonite Brotherhood*, pages 252-253.

Note Six: In a letter of March 1, 1871, to his brother Johann Harder IV, Crimea, Heinrich Harder, Kleefeld, Mol., refers to the Krimmer Mennoniten Brüdergemeinde as the "Kleine" Brüdergemeinde.

Note Seven: A derogatory term for those who had converted themselves to Separatist Pietist religious culture, since they considered themselves "holier than thou" than all the others, and they made the ridiculous assertion that only they were "saved" whereas they regarded all the others as unsaved "heathen". Such fanatical attitudes, regrettably, are normal for "new" sectarian movements.

Note Eight: As quoted in the *Harder Family Review*, No. 8, page 6, and also extracted in Leland Harder, *The Blumstein Legacy*, pages 56-57.

Nestor Machnov (1889-1934), Anarchist

"Nestor Machnov (1889-1934), Guljaj Pole, Anarchist," as presented at the Zaporozhe Museum by Swetlana Wladimiowna Taranowa, September 2002, as recorded by Adina Reger, with information added from Victor Peters, *Nestor Machnov* (Winnipeg, n.d.), 139 pages, as quoted in Reger and Plett, *Diese Steine* (Steinbach, 2001), pages 365-366.

Background.

Machnov was born in the village of "Chasarowo" close to Guljaj Pole on October 27, 1889. Guljaj Pole was a district centre located some 50 km. northwest of the Molotschna Colony. Machnov's father had been born a serf. When he died he left behind a widow and four infant sons, the youngest Nestor being 10 months old. Since the family was poor Machnov, as a seven year-old, had to herd cattle and sheep for the farmers of the village. At the age of eight he finally started school. After finishing school Machnov worked for the German large-scale farmers and "gutsbesitzer" in the area. Later he worked in his home village in the smelter of the Kröger factory. The wages were low and the Machnov family remained poor. The three brothers of Nestor also grew up as anarchists and revolutionaries.

The Machnowzy installed their machine guns on the Mennonite-built wagons; this was a totally new tactic by the Machnowzy. With this invention one could simultaneously shoot and escape. The wagons, called "Tatschanka" made the Machnowzy untouchable. One of these "Tatschankas", used in the 1940s by the NKWD-personnel, was parked on the yard of the NKWD in Chortitza. It stood there until after the war. For a while the police used this wagon, and then the museum took possession of it where it is on display to this day. Photo - Peter Janzen, Winnipeg, June 2002.

[Machnov]....was a very agitated, unpredictable, insufferable man; like a hounded animal he attempted to cause trouble everywhere and to every person. He was dispersed everywhere until, finally, at age 16 he was employed by one Mr. Klassen in the agricultural equipment factory in Guljaj Pole. He attended school for only two years.

Anarchism.

During the Revolution of 1905-6 the anarchists also won their first adherents in Guljaj Pole. The fundamental principle of anarchism was "the destroying spirit is a redemptive spirit." The group in Guljaj Pole at first consisted of 10 men and they were armed with revolvers.

In 1908 Machnov participated in a "Union of Poor Peasants", an anarchistic organization, which attempted to attack the police and wealthy farmers on account of alleged injustices. They killed a policeman in the central square of Guljaj Pole. Machnov was condemned to death by hanging but his mother went all the way to the Czar and his death sentence was commuted to a life sentence. He came to Moscow in the famous "Butyrka" prison, where he was incarcerated for eight years and eight months.

Contemporaries report that he was always kept in shackles since he was very undisciplined, disorderly and malicious. He was frequently held in solitary confinement. He was very weak and small of stature (1.64m.). While in prison he contracted tuberculosis, an ailment which affected him all his life. While at Butyrka he became acquainted with other anarchists: Arschinow among others and he became acquainted with his ideas to which he took a fancy.

Display of Machnovzy uniform, apparel and weapons. Zaporozhe Museum, June 2002.

Machnov had very little understanding of science. Of Marxism and Leninism he understood nothing. As hard and as hopeless as life in Butyrka was, Machnov exerted himself to make use of his presence there to advance his education. He learned Russian, grammar, mathematics, literature, cultural history and economics. This learning served Machnov well in his later revolutionary life. In other respects the time at Butyrka had made a gruesome animal out of Machnov.

Revolution, 1917.

On March 2, 1917 during the Revolution, he was set free. For the record, it was the Revolution which set him free since he was released as a political prisoner and not as a murderer who had killed a policeman. In Guljaj Pole he was received as a political prisoner, a victim of the Czarist regime. He was celebrated as a national hero.

As an anarchist he was shocked at the economic developments in his village. He challenged the village council. It ended with a boycott by the anarchists, who founded a new village Soviet and Nestor Machnov was elected as the chairman.

During these times various parties banded together in the region. This was at the time of the Revolution, the time of the Civil War. Machnov joined one of these bands which was headed by a man named Schüss. Machnov's *joie de vivre*, his bravery and his single-mindedness to achieve a victory in every skirmish led to his being voted leader of the band and he was immediately called "Batjka" (Little Father). Machnov regarded this as a high honour. His military, anarchistic way now started; his rebellious army grew from day to day since the peasants were tired of the constant taxes levied on them; the individual farmer was incapable of defending himself against this marauding band.

Mennonites.

By August 1917 Machnov was so strong that he was able to demand an inventory from all the Gutsbesitzern ("estate owners"), well-to-do farmers and other entrepreneurs, regarding their lands, property and inventories. Bordering the Guljaj Pole Volost [municipality] lay the German-Mennonite Schönfelder Volost. This included prosperous villages and estate owners Jakob Neufeld, Gerhard Klassen, David Schroeder, Wilhelm Janzen and others. He rejoiced when houses were burning. His eyes lit up when a shootout took place on the street. It pleased him to witness the torturous death of an innocent person.

One day when they brought a group of terrified people to him, he said, "Hack them all apart." And so it also occurred. The result: instead of a group of living people, a pile of chopped apart and bloody corpses; heads lying around and hands with twisted fingers. Suddenly, Machnov, who had witnessed this event with laughing, jumped on the pile of bodies and stomped around on the corpses of the dead. A minute later, he said, "That was that!" Machnov had no human feelings. Nothing influenced him, neither the tears of a mother, nor the crying of children, nor the cursing of men. Among all the "Ataman" of the Ukraine, Machnov was the most fearsome.

The Mennonite colonies of Zagradowka and Chortitza and its daughter colonies Borosenko,

Nestor Machnov, 1918. Photo - W. Wolkowinskij, Nestor Machno: Legendy and realnostj *(Kiev, 1994), 256 pages.*

The camp of the Machnovzy partisans, 1921. Photo - Wolkowinskij.

Division commander P. J. Dybenko and Brigade commander N. I. Machnov, Station Pologi, 1919. Photo - Wolkowinskij.

Nikolaifeld and Jasykowo suffered the most.

Guljaj Pole.

The new Ukrainian government entered into a special peace treaty with the Axis powers. In order to avoid the occupation of the Ukraine by the Bolsheviks, it invited the German and Austro-Hungarian occupation troops into the country. The Machnov movement was scattered in pieces. Machnov fled to Moscow. Until his return home he spent the time with a family Arshinow. During this time he conferred with prominent government officials including Lenin. Lenin applauded his activities and declared his willingness to help Machnov. Lenin saw to it that Machnov received forged identity documents in which he was called "Iwan Jakowlewitsch Schepelj" and with these he returned to the Ukraine.

Machnovzy Regime.

By July 1918 Machnov was back in Guljaj Pole. At the beginning Machnov sided with the Red Army, and he concluded an agreement with the commander of the Dnieper Region Army Pawel Dybenko. Machnov believed in his own ideals and intended to found a "Guljaj Poler Republic without Soviets" but he had no idea as to how he could realize this.

During the Civil War he fought on the side of the poor people. For many years Machnov was regarded in the Soviet Union as an enemy of Communism, as an enemy of the Soviet forces. In fact he himself was exactly this party since he murdered the representatives of the Soviet forces, the Communist-Socialists. He not only murdered Communists and Revolutionaries, but also the common folk who did not suit his fancy. As an example: he drove up to a house and called for the young woman to come out and then said: you are to be my wife. If she refused, he shot her in the head and took off.

When the German retreat was ordered at the end of 1918, the government of the Ukraine fell and entire region of the southern Ukraine was delivered to the disposition of the Machnovzy. When Machnov occupied a city everything was robbed which could be loaded on farm wagons. He kept the most valuable things for himself.

Something should also be mentioned here about the other side of the bandit's life, the camp experience. A shortage of soap and other sanitary conveniences contributed to the fact that they routinely spread contagious diseases among which typhus and diarrhoea were the most prevalent. Since the army had no medical services, the sick Machnovzy remained in the homes where they were quartered and passed their sicknesses on to the villagers. Problems of nutrition arose. The men were too weak to bury the dead. A famine followed which claimed many victims.

Although Machnov suffered great losses among his Army, the ranks were always refilled with new recruits. Their banner remained the black flag. Machnov was wounded 21 times and he died of the consequences of these injuries. In 1919 he was so seriously injured that he almost died. He was treated in a Soviet military hospital where they saved his life.

Flag of the Machnovzy. Photo - Wolkowinskij. The flag states: "Death unto all who hinder us, to suppress the might of the working class."

Exile.

The time of Machnov's rule in Guljaj Pole was only short. Soon the area was surrounded by units of the Red Army. With great effort Machnov was successful in breaking out of the encirclement. Accompanied by a small group Machnov wandered around in the woods and river valleys. Wounded and maimed by hunger and thirst he reached the Rumanian border. On August 28, 1921, he crossed the Dnestr River and turned his back forever on Russia.

The Rumanian government awarded him and his wife temporary exile in Bucharest in a private dwelling although his troops were interned in prisons. On April 11, 1922, he was forced to leave the country by the Rumanian government. At this time Machnov moved to Poland. In 1923 he also left Poland, going to Danzig and later to Berlin. Here he went into the hospital and was diagnosed with tuberculosis. From Berlin he went to Paris. Here he found some like-minded souls and was taken in by a anarchist family.

One daughter Elena was born to him. His wife Galina later worked in Paris in a children's home for Russian children. They were divorced. His wife and daughter lived close to Paris, while Machnov lived in the city proper. During his final years he was very sick and poor. He was supported by former friends who still believed in the anarchistic ideas.

Machnov died in Paris on July 25, 1934. His wife Galina Kusmenko was present at his death. He was buried in the world famous Pere-Lachaise cemetery.

In 1940 when France was occupied by the Germans, Galina (who now adopted the name Michnenko) stayed in France. At the end of the war, when the Russian army marched into Berlin, the NKWD ordered that the Machnov family be delivered to them. The interrogation was brief. Galina admitted to everything. They were sent to a prison camp in Kazakhstan where they lived till 1957. Then they were rehabilitated upon the condition that they never settle in Central Russia. Later they moved to the Rostow area where Galina died. In 1978 her daughter Elena also died.

Nestor I. Machnov, 1921. Photo - Wolkowinskij.

Galina Kuzmenko, wife of Nestor Machnov, in the 1970s. Photo - Wolkowinskij.

Conclusion.

The Republican Administration of the Ukraine issued an order that a special exhibit be featured on the occasion of the 110th anniversary. If an order was issued by the government of Kiev, particular attention was paid to it. In order to memorialize Machnov, a bust was ceremoniously erected in his home in Guljaj Pole with dancing and singing. It is said that in Guljaj Pole people love and honour him. Ljowa Sadow, son of Ljowa Sadow, Machnov's personal secretary who was involved with the NKWD for a while, was present at this celebration. Ljowa Sadow had not accompanied Machnov to Rumania. He was banished to the outermost Urals in the 1930s.

In 2000 Machnov's last cousin, who knew him well and had much to tell about his life, died. Many of his nephews and nieces live in France.

Machnov understood the Revolution in his own way because anarchy was a sort of revolution as well. Today opinions regarding Machnov have changed and republican historical research is revising the topic. It may be that Machnov was a political bandit who intended to found his own republic without Soviets and Communists. With equal justification one could also term another political party banditry, for instance Lenin or Trotsky.

Machnov was a political bandit. The Machnovzy movement had 300-400,000 souls upon its conscience, the price of a new experiment. He may have wanted to do some good but only by means of death upon death. He wanted to found a new republic and distribute the land to the poor, and to hand out food as well (none of which belonged to him) but in doing so, he was constantly involved in killing and murdering. One should evaluate such a person objectively and not condemn him outright as has been the case for many years; further, he is also not worthy of honour. One may dislike a person on account of his destructive activities...he had an idea to construct something but he had no idea of how to go about it. To the Mennonites of the Ukraine, Machnov was the beast of the Apocalypse who brought nothing but rape, murder and destruction.

Further Reading:

See *Preserings*, No. 21, pp. 25-27; No. 19, 63-4 and 31-4; No. 18, 25-31; No. 16, 88-90; No. 11, 41-2; No. 8, Part Two, 5-7.

Ältester Gerhard Plett (1860-1933), Hierschau, Mol.

Ältester Gerhard Plett (1860-1933), Hierschau, Molotschna," based on a biography written by grandson Gerhard Hildebrand, Göttingen, Germany, published in Aron A. Toews, *Mennonistiche Märtyrerder jüngsten Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart* (Abbotsford, 1949), pages 214-219, and translated and republished in English in Aron A. Toews, *Mennonite Martyrs: People Who Suffered For Their Faith 1920-1940* (Winnipeg, 1990), pages 167-174.

Background.

Gerhard Julius Plett was the son of Julius Johann Plett (1817-92), Hierschau, Molotschna, a second cousin to Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900) who settled in Blumenhof, Manitoba, in 1875 (see *Johann Plett: A Mennonite Family Saga*, pages 41-61).

Gerhard Plett was baptised May 21, 1879. He married for the first time to Elisabeth Franz Klassen from Alexanderkrone. He married for the second time to Katharina Willms, daughter of Gerhard Willms and Maria Baerg of Nikolaidorf, Molotschna. The following biography of Gerhard Julius Plett was written by his grandson Gerhard Hildebrandt, as a refugee in Germany in 1947:

"Shortly before his death, my dear grandfather expressed the wish that the [records] in `the golden classical Bible' (family Bible) be continued under all circumstances. In fulfilment of his wishes. I now feel compelled to write his life's story. Today, May 1, 1946, I find myself in Mündersheim, Germany, where I have been employed as a public school teacher since October 25, 1945."

"[I] do not only want to preserve the eventful story within the framework of family happenings. Even more than this, I want to portray my grandfather's unshakeable faith, which became a kind of refreshing oasis during the Red reign of terror, and his conviction that not a hair on our heads would be singed without God's will. [I] want to portray his strength to patiently bear the hardship visited upon the Mennonites, without murmuring, and in the fear of God, [a strength] which stemmed from this conviction. I want to honestly depict his upright desire to serve the Mennonite people with his life and work, his actions and activities."

"Another one of his last wishes must also be carefully taken into consideration, namely, that no words of praise about his life work be mentioned in his funeral sermon. Therefore, it is my humble wish that my attempt to show dear grandfather as he was in everyday life will not be construed as a form of praise. His God-fearing lifestyle is to be the ongoing example for all his descendants."

"From the very onset, I have to regretfully note that the portrait will not be without its gaps. During the retreat from Russia to Germany, valuable pages containing grandfather's handwritten memoirs were lost in flight. Many important incidents in his life which find a welcome place [in these jottings] came from the recollections of his daughters Maria, Katharina, Nelly, and Aganetha, who were on the Ringelsbruch estate in Westphalia while these lines were being written. Time references cannot always be given exactly but, in general, are correct. The loss of the said papers was especially regrettable, because the fate of a considerable section of the Molotschna settlement was intimately associated with grandfather's activities."

Professor and Ältester Gerhard Hildebrand, Göttingen, Germany, grandson of Ält. Gerh. Plett. Photo - Men. Geschichtsblätter, *1999, page 140.*

Ältester Gerhard Plett (1860-1933), Hierschau, in his later years. Photo - Mennonitsche Märtyrer, *Volume One, page 214.*

Teaching.

After completing village school, grandfather received his further education in an evening school run by the teacher Johann Doerksen. It cannot be argued that this was more of an inspiration rather than an education for grandfather, since this style [of education] suited him admirably. His knowledge, which was rather impressive and diverse, was largely acquired by self-study.

For some years, he was a teacher in the village of Sparrau, Gnadenfeld district. After his first wife died, he moved to Hierschau. Here, he purchased a small farm and also acquired the clay pit near the village. At the same time, he built a small store. Here, grandmother sold bread, meat, rope, nails, etc. to the Russian travellers who came from far and near to buy the much sought after clay. Grandfather had married again; and so they worked together. At that time, the clay pit brought a rather good income. The clay was also called "white earth" or lime. Russian clay huts were plastered with this inside and out. Even Mennonite housewives bought this from Russian peddlers who went down the street shouting, "Bella Glina" and used it to paint the brick walls in their rooms so that they appeared snow-white. The brick fences in front of them were also painted once a year, usually for Easter or Pentecost. This gave a festive appearance to the entire farm.

Through this business, my grandfather was soon able to accumulate capital, and when his father, our great-grandfather, died, he bought his fine, full-sized farm in the village [Wirtschaft 12 on the north side of the street].

Ministry.

For a lengthy period, he was the district judge in the Gnadenfeld district. Unfortunately, I cannot give the exact time when he held this position. In 1904 he gave up this post in order to devote his full time to the ministry. He had already been elected as a minister by the Margenau Mennonite Gemeinde in 1899. When Ältester Peter Friesen died in 1907, he was ordained as Ältester of this Gemeinde the following year by Ältester Heinrich Koop of Alexanderkrone. One or two years later, he also took charge of the Landskrone Gemeinde where a fine meeting house was being constructed: this was in 1910. Following the death of Ältester Johann Schartner, Gerhard Plett also took over the Gemeinde in Alexanderwohl. He baptized some 2,000 people. It is evident from statistics, which he carefully kept, that in one year he made 400 trips on behalf of the Molotschna churches. This naturally included all the travel required of him as Ältester of the three churches, especially at funerals, weddings, worship services. etc.

Though he spent almost all of his time in the service of the churches, his farm was in model order.

In 1916 son Kornelius contracted some form of "black pox" and died on February 23, while serving in the *Forstei* in Anadol, near the Sea of Azov. Gerhard performed the funeral (Note One).

Sovietization.

In 1919 he was arrested by the Reds and imprisoned in a very unhealthy cellar for 14 days. Why so many Mennonites were locked up never became clear; they were mistreated for no real reasons. Sixty-four men were crowded together in a room of 56 cubic meters. The wet and cold floor was of stone. After several days, grandfather could no longer stand

on his feet. With great difficulty, enough room was found for him to lie down, but he had no protection from the [cold] floor. When his son Gerhard visited him several days later, he did not recognize him. With the help of the Mennonite doctor, Franz Dueck, grandfather was transferred to the hospital after 14 days. After one month, he was allowed to go home, without ever learning why he was imprisoned in the first place.

Grandfather even spoke of this period as the leading of God. He was able to comfort and pray with many men in prison, and for some of them these were the last minutes of their life. Men had not only prayed but cried to God. Many a man was taken at night and, not long after, one heard shots. Why the prisoner had been shot, no one knew.

The health of our grandfather Plett had deteriorated severely while he was in prison. After that time, he never fully recovered. He obviously contracted rheumatism there, which later, virtually crippled his legs. By 1928 he could hardly move without the help of his cane. Because of his poor health, he felt compelled to resign his office as Ältester and placed it in the hands of his younger colleague, the minister Heinrich T. Janz of Landskrone. This happened in the year 1928 (Note Two).

In 1928 Russia initiated equalization - in simple words the liquidation of classes. This generally referred to those who had more possessions than the average person. The procedures were rather harsh. First, a money levy, the so-called "extraordinary tax," had to be paid. Then came the second levy which also had to be paid to the state within a very short period of time. This went on until the last resources were exhausted. This, of course, was the purpose of the whole operation. All the possessions were then confiscated by the state and sold at a ridiculous price in order to pay the debt to the state. In this fashion, three-quarters of all the farmers had to part with their belongings accumulated over many years of work. They were only allowed to take what they carried with them on their own person.

In this manner, grandfather saw his earthly possessions vanish in December 1930. On February 17, he had to bid his home adieu. When they came to take his furniture, grandfather commented, "For his livelihood a blacksmith needs a smithy and a bed. The one is as important as the other. My chair and my bed mean the same to me as a shop and a bed to the craftsman. I go from the bed to the armchair and the armchair to the bed." Amazingly, they left him these two items but no more. His farewell to the men who forced him out of his own house was characteristic of his whole lifestyle. In a warm, forthright manner,

Ältester Gerhard Julius Plett (1860-1933), Hierschau, Molotschna. Photo - Hierschau, *page 158.*

he shook each hand and wished them all the best for their later life. The men, normally not given to sentimentality, were dumbfounded by such behaviour.

Refuge.

Grandfather found a secret refuge with Heinrich Sawatzky of Landskrone. In the summer of the same year, Sawatzky suffered a similar fate: he had to leave as well, and grandfather went to Kornelius Toews, also of Landskrone. By April, 1932, the difficulties generated by the local political administration made a further stay in Landskrone impossible.

On a pitch dark April evening, my father, Hildebrand, secretly obtained horses (which did not belong to him) in order to get grandfather. Though the wagon was almost empty - what did the grandparents still possess? - and the four strong horses did their best, the journey made slow progress because of the deep mud. I, as a 13 year-old, was along at the time.

Grandfather's stay at our house had to be kept secret so that he would not be found by his pursuers. Meanwhile, his health deteriorated, and, after several months, he was confined to bed where he remained until the end of his life. His daughters Aganetha and Maria were with him. Katharina and Nelly were in Kharkov. The political situation steadily worsened and so, one hot June day, grandfather, with no regard for his condition, had to be loaded onto a wagon and taken to Friedensdorf.

During the last days of his stay in Hierschau, his daughters Maria and Aganetha had to hide in the gardens and hedges in order to avoid arrest. This time it was Jakob Voth in Friedensdorf who placed his home at the disposal of the grandparents. Here, grandfather was privileged to spend the last months of his strenuous life. If he was confined to his bed before the move, the move itself certainly did not improve his condition. Instead, the pain intensified month by month, and later, week by week. His bodily weakness steadily increased. His body became sore from lying in bed. Sitting brought some relief, but soon his weakened condition did not allow this. He could not even turn in bed.

Death, 1933.

He consistently viewed the political chaos as God's leading, as he did the arrest of ministers, the prohibition of public worship, the closing of churches, the deportation of Mennonites to Siberia, etc. During his entire period of suffering, no one ever heard him make a complaint. He was as calm in death as he had been in his pain and suffering. On April 1, 1933. he died quietly in the Lord.

Ältester Gerhard Julius Plett (1860-1933), Hierschau, at the funeral of his son Cornelius in February 1916 at the Forstei *"Anadol" in the Crimea. Photo* - Hiertschau, *page 159.*

The funeral service was held on April 5, 1933 at the home of Jakob Voth in Friedensdorf. Ältester Heinrich T. Janz from Landskrone, his successor in the office, preached the funeral sermon. All the children, except Gertrude were at the funeral. The small room could not hold all the visitors. Even men like Heinrich Kliewer, director of the high school in Gnadenheim and a communist, as well as several of his colleagues were present.

In a quiet spot in the Friedensdorf cemetery, grandfather Gerhard Plett gently sleeps until the great resurrection morning.

Note by Aron A. Toews:

"For a time, Ältester Gerhard Plett was a member of the

Molotschna School Council. As such, he had to visit the schools and evaluate and supervise the instruction of religion and German language. School council members also had to be present at the final exam of the village school pupils in order to test the verbal and written skills of the graduates and provide them with an appropriate certificate."

"They were also the examiners in religion and German for the final exam in high school and for the candidates in the pedagogical classes. They also represented the interests of the school to the community and the government. They were elected by the Molotschna Ecclesiastical Council for a specified term. The Ecclesiastical Council was comprised of all the ministers of all the churches of the three [Mennonite] groups in the Molotschna."

"Ältester Gerhard Plett was a man possessed of a calm objectivity and presence of mind. His verdict meant something in the churches. He had respect among the congregations, in the community, among his colleagues and the teachers."

"I was able to visit him on his sickbed in Hierschau in the last years before my emigration. At that time, he was still vitally interested in the affairs of our churches. May the Lord reward His servant according to his work. 1 Corinthians 3:8."

Postscript from his diary: "Most of my childhood and youth were preoccupied with learning. On May 21, 1879, I was baptised in the Margenau Gemeinde by Ältester Bernhard Peters. In the fall of 1881, I was called into state service, but was released because of family obligations, serving as a teacher in the Crimea at the Spat station in a tenant village called Schamk. From there, I was transferred to Sparrau in the Molotschna Colony where I served for six years as teacher in the village school" (Note Three).

Gerhard Plett was the only Plett mentioned in the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. His biographer Heinrich Goertz has written "Devotion to duty and sound judgement were outstanding features of his character" (Note Four).

Family.

Mrs. Plett and her four daughters. Maria, Katharina. Nelly and Aganetha (with her three children) fled before the Russians to Germany where they work on the estate Ringelsbruch. Aganetha's husband. Heinrich Kaethler, vanished during the war as a member of the Red army. Mrs. Plett is very weak and confined to bed. She only wishes to die and go home. (The latest word from Germany which just arrived, states that Mrs. Plett has died and was buried on January 29, 1947.)

7 Son **Johann Gerhard Plett** was adopted by a Fast family from Hierschau. He was exiled to Siberia before the Germans occupied the Ukraine. His wife and daughter also came to Germany but were forcibly deported back to Russia by the Russians. Son **Gerhard Gerhard Plett** married Katharina Plett, daughter of his uncle Bernhard Plett of Hierschau. Until 1931 Gerhard and Katharina lived in Hierschau when they were dekulakized. They lived for a time in Chortitza and then were exiled to Seneno, 400 miles east of Moscow. In 1936 they returned to Chortitza. In February of 1937, Gerhard Plett was arrested and executed May 5, in Saporoshje Prison (Note Five). He was found dead, his clothing covered with blood. Katharina was arrested in 1939 and released after one year. The family lived in Chortitza again until the arrival of the Wehrmacht in 1941. In 1943 she with her children joined the Trek to Poland. In 1945 she and children were repatriated and sent to Archangelsk, northwestern Russia, where she died. Son John (b. 1927) founded the Mennonite Gemeinde at Bechterdissen, Germany, and served as the first Ältester (Note Six). Daughter **Elisabeth Gerhard Plett** and her husband, David Hildebrand, together with several children, were also sent back to Russia. Two children remained in Germany, among them son Gerhard Hildebrandt, who wrote his grandfather's biography. He is a retired Professor of Russian Literature and History in Göttingen, Germany, and former Ältester of the Mennoniten Gemeinde. Daughter **Maria Gerhard Plett** escaped to Germany and immigrated to Coaldale, Alberta, in 1948 with sisters Katharina and Enelse. Son **Heinrich Plett** was arrested by the Russians in 1938. He was shot in prison. His wife and their child were deported before the occupation. She is to have been in a train on which the Russians poured oil and set it on fire. There is no word as to her fate. Daughter **Gertrude Plett** and her husband Johann Bergen remained in Russia, fate unknown. Daughter **Aganetha Plett** married Heinrich Käthler, son of Heinrich Jakob Käthler and Helena Johann Janzen. Aganetha died in Alberta of an accident. He was exiled before 1945.

Endnotes:

Note One: Helmut Huebert, *Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life* (Winnipeg, 1986), page 230.

Note Two: Village historian Helmut Huebert mentions that Gerhard Plett wrote an official letter of thanks for American Mennonite assistance to the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, August 9, 1922, pages 11,12, supplement. A note by him and an evaluation of the previous several years was included in a book by relief worker D.M. Hofer, *Die Hungersnot in Russland und Unsere Reise um die Welt* (Chicago, 1924), pages 157-159: see Huebert, *Hierschau*, pages 160 and 362.

Note Three: Aron A. Toews, *Mennonite Martyrs: People Who Suffered for Their Faith 1920-1940* (Winnipeg, 1990), pages 167-174.

Note Four: Heinrich Goertz, "Plett, Gerhard (1860-1933)," ME IV, pages 194-5.

Note Five: Les Plett has the information that the execution took place on May 5, 1938. But son Johann states that his father was shot in 1937.

Note Six: Telephone interview Oct. 5, 2002, with Ältester Johann Plett, Bechterdissen, Im Kleine Werder 11, D-33818 Leopoldshöhe, Germany. The Bielefeld Gemeinde was a daughter church of the Bechterdissen Gemeinde. See Reger and Plett, Diese Steine (Steinbach, 2002), page 529. See also Der Bote, April 31, 1984, for a report on Johann Plett's 25th anniversary of service to his Gemeinde.

Gen	Name	Birth	Marriage	Death
6	**Gerhard Julius Plett**	Jun 30,1860		Apr 1,1933
m	Elisabeth Klassen	Jun 4,1862	Jun 3,1882	Jun 2,1890
7	Franz Gerhard Plett	May 31,1883		Oct 27,1890
7	Elisabeth Gerh. Plett	Aug 12,1884		Aug 12,1886
7	Gerhard Gerhard Plett	Aug 26,1885		Jul 31,1886
7	Johann Gerhard Plett	ca.1886		Before 1940
m	Margaretha Plett			
7	Gerhard Gerhard Plett	Oct 2,1888	Nov 19,1922	May 5,1938
m	Katharina Plett	Jul 15,1896	Jun 3,1882	Nov 14,1962
7	Franz Gerhard Plett	Apr 4,1890		Oct 27,1890
6	**Gerhard Julius Plett**	Jun 30,1860		Apr 1,1933
2m	Katharina Willms	Jan 15,1869	Sep 22,1890	Jan 27,1947
7	Jakob Gerhard Plett	Dec 7,1891		Oct 17,1894
7	Elisabeth Gerhard Plett	Mar 23,1893		
m	David Hildebrand			
7	Kornelius G. Plett	Dec 1,1894		Feb 23,1916
7	Peter Gerhard Plett	Sep 15,1896		Nov 4,1896
7	Maria Gerhard Plett	Nov 14,1897		Jul 28,1986
7	Katharina Gerhard Plett	Feb 21,1900		
m	Hans Thiessen	From Friedensdorf		Coaldale, Alberta, 1948
7	Heinrich Gerhard Plett	Dec 21,190		Exiled
7	Kornelia (Enelse) Plett	Jul 3,1904		Came to Canada 1948
7	Gertrude Gerhard Plett	Mar 29,1906		
m	Johann Bergen	Mar 19,1905		
7	Aganetha Gerhard Plett	Jun 27,1911	Aug 23,1934	
m	Heinrich Käthler	Mar 16,1909		

Nikolai Reimer (1900-77) - Only by Grace

"Only by Grace: Reminiscences of a Russian Mennonite Pastor - Nikolai Reimer (1900-77)," translated and edited by Peter Pauls, 51 Rutgers Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 3C9, retired professor at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The italicized portion of the following biography is written by Peter Pauls, editor of this article, and the remainder is from the memoirs of Nikolai Reimer.

Introduction.

Nikolaj Reimer (1900-77) was born in the village of Stepanovka, Orenburg Settlement (One of five Mennonite settlements between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains). In 1909, his parents moved to the village of Schöntal in the Slavgorod (Barnaul) Settlement in western Siberia where Nikolaj spent his remaining early years. In 1925 his parents, together with their five unmarried children, immigrated to Mexico, and in 1928 to Oklahoma. Nikolaj and three married siblings remained in Russia.

In 1922 Nikolaj Reimer married Agatha Penner. In 1927 they moved to the village of Neu-Hoffnung in the Trekehn settlement in the Caucasus. In 1929, Nikolaj tried to immigrate to Canada, but by this time it was too late. After selling all their possessions, and two frustrating trips to Moscow, Nikolaj and his family were forced to accept the fact that they would have to remain in Russia and accommodate themselves to life under communist rule.

Nikolaj and his family suffered extreme persecution during the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Like other Soviet citizens, Mennonites were not above informing on one another if by doing so they could themselves escape arrest, interrogation and exile. Reimer was initially betrayed by one of his own people. Since Reimer was a religious leader, the governing authorities regarded him as a counter-revolutionary and kept him under constant surveillance. The book, "Only By Grace," is based on Reimer's journals and was written in the 1970s after Reimer's final release from prison. What follows are excerpts from this book translated into English:

Moscow, 1929.

"After 1925, the migration movement gradually came to a standstill. Remarkably, in 1929 there was again renewed interest in emigration. Encouraged by my brother Aaron, Agatha and I decided we would risk it. We left our horses with the Collective that had just been organized and sold our prize hogs at the market in Woronzowka. We seemed to be well supplied with money, but there was much that we still needed to buy. When my wife had selected the necessary articles, she asked me for money. I said to her, "Didn't you just now take the money out of my pocket? I felt your hand there." What had happened? Pickpockets had stolen the money I had just acquired from the sale of our hogs. In tears, we returned all our purchases and went home. At this point we began to wonder if our desire to emigrate might not be in accordance with God's will. However, letters continued to come from friends already in Moscow advising us to make haste. And so we sold the little house that we had built with so much labor, and with this money set out for Moscow on September 15, 1929...."

This proved to be the first of two unsuccessful attempts to immigrate to Germany. After the second attempt, Nikolaj Reimer had no choice but to move back to Trakehn in the Caucasus with his wife and two small children. It was the beginning of a lifetime of suffering under Communist rule. It was also the beginning of Reimer's commitment to a life of service to God, his church and his fellow Mennonites. Reimer recalls the following incident from this period - Editor Peter Pauls:

Agatha (1904-41) and Nikolaj Reimer (1900-77) with children Katja and Kolja. Rear: Liese Penner, sister of Agatha, and a servant. Photo taken in Schönthal, Slavgorad, Siberia, 1926.

Renewal, 1929.

The chairman of our collective (Kolchos) [Neu-Hoffnung, Caucasus], allowed us to move into one of the vacant houses made available when a number of Russian men had been sent into exile. I had reached the nadir in my spiritual journey. At that time I wasn't even reading the Bible. One day Brother Johann Regehr came to visit and to ask how we were managing. I told him all about our disappointments and our extreme poverty. We had a long discussion.

That evening I told my wife all about it and she said: "My dear husband, how much longer do we want to oppose the Lord? Aren't we to blame for our poverty? Others have been allowed to emigrate but obviously God has more difficult ways in mind for us. Does that mean that we must give up? Perhaps our trust is no longer in God. Shouldn't we resume family worship services, something we have sadly neglected recently? Open your Bible and see what God has to say to us in our distress." Then she sat down and wept. Three children had to be clothed and fed. We had no home for the coming winter and no money or provisions....

At last I opened the long neglected Bible at Isaiah 40, 26-31 and read: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." My wife said, "Read on."

In the verses following we read that the Lord does not grow weary and that "He giveth power to the faint," and that "they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." I had found comfort. "My dear husband," my wife said, "shouldn't we make a fresh start and put our faith entirely in the Lord?"

Pastoral Calling.

Reimer notes that by 1931 their economic situation had improved considerably. In 1932 he and his wife moved to the city of Pjatigorsk, Caucasus. They were able to provide much needed clothing for their family. "Material comforts are a vexation to the spirit," *Reimer writes in retrospect. By this time they had four children, all reasonably well clothed and fed. Fellowship with other believers was lacking since by this time there were no longer any Mennonite congregations in Russia. Because there were other Mennonites who felt isolated, Reimer eventually became their spiritual leader. His work as pastor soon aroused the suspicion of the Communist authorities:*

In the months before my arrest and trial, I

was summoned several times by the NKVD and asked if I would work for them as an undercover agent. Out of fear I gave them a few written reports on my fellow villagers, but when the notorious Dobrowolskij read these papers in which I had made only positive statements about my neighbors he flew into a rage and tore my papers into little pieces. After I returned home, my wife and I prayed to God that we might be spared a separation. Our children noticed how unhappy we were. Our little five-year-old Waldemar came to me and asked me: "Papa, you're not going to leave us, are you?" I was overcome with pity for my wife and children. What we so greatly feared would soon come to pass.

On Jan. 29, 1936 we celebrated my dear wife's 32nd birthday. At eleven o'clock that evening my uncle, Klaas Reimer, paid us a visit and stayed the night. Around 2:00 a.m. there was a loud knocking on our window and a voice I didn't recognize shouting, "Nikolaj Aaronowitsch, come outside for a few minutes!" Eternity will reveal who the traitor was. I knew immediately what was happening. As I stepped into the yard comrade Ginsberg, Lieutenant and Examining Magistrate of the NKVD, welcomed me. He greeted me as though we were old friends. He ordered me to fetch my coat as the night was cold and I was lightly dressed, only in trousers and shirt. I took advantage of this opportunity to embrace and kiss my beloved wife for the last time. "Come!" was his brusque command. As we entered the street we were met by a truck on which there were several men. When I mounted the truck it was completely full.

Imprisonment.

I was imprisoned in a "Klopownik," a bug-ridden cell. A bed and a pitcher of water was all it contained in the way of furnishings. All night long I could hear a woman in the adjoining cell crying out in despair, "O God, my children, my children!" "Thank God," I said to myself, at least my wife is still with our children."

During this night in prison I came to appreciate for the first time the meaning of Job 5: 17-19: " Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth. . ." But I did not yet fully understand that God was preparing me for true happiness through suffering. I had resisted this testing all my life. I had always fled from such trials. . . . Now I began to have qualms of conscience about my lack of faith in God and about my neglect of the spiritual nurture for my children. . . .

On Monday I was taken to the Inquiry Chamber. [My interrogators] could not offer me much hope. In fact, what they told me during this examination only increased my fear of what was yet to come. I spent much of the nighttime in prayer. After a few more days, one of the prosecutors, Dobrowolskij, sent for me and asked me in a mocking tone how I was enjoying prison. But his more serious question soon followed: "Are you willing, if I release you, to write more truthful reports?" What

Nikolaj Reimer, after his release from imprisonment in Russia's north country. City of Norilsk, 1947.

that meant was that I was to betray my fellow Mennonites. I countered by telling him that I was not prepared to bargain for my freedom under such conditions and that I would rather sit in prison with a clear conscience.

After this I didn't hear from Dobrowolskij for three months. Then I had to face the inevitable further inquiry. First I was asked to reveal the address of Professor Rempel-Suderman. Jakob Aaronowitsch Rempel was the former bishop of the Mennonite Kirchengemeinden in Ukraine. Earlier he had resided in Chortitza. He had been part of the emigration movement in Moscow in 1929. Some of the leaders there, including Rempel, had been exiled to the North. However, Rempel had managed to escape, and in 1930 he had surfaced in the Omsk settlement using the name "Suderman," his wife's maiden name. . . . I learned all this when he visited us in Pjatigorsk in the fall of 1932, just before he disappeared again. . . . Now I was asked to tell the authorities where Rempel-Suderman was hiding. As punishment for my refusal to disclose this information I was forced to relieve myself in the large chamber pot that my fellow prisoners were obliged to carry out each day. "You will be required to do this until you give us the information we seek," Dobrowolskij threatened.

Interrogation.

That entire summer I was called before the Public Prosecutor almost every day. When I was brought back to my cell, sometimes at 3, 4 or 5 in the morning, the guard was ordered to see to it that I would not go to bed. This lack of sleep was a difficult burden for me. The psychological stress imposed by the prosecutor almost brought me to a state of utter despair. I was completely isolated and could confide only in God.

The interrogations focused mainly on the following points:

1. I was to confess that counter-revolutionary meetings had taken place in our house.
2. I was to confirm that I had been in attendance at these meetings and that we had discussed the overthrow of the government.
3. I was to agree that the religious meetings were against the law.

One day in the summer of 1936, I was again called before Dobrowolskij. "Be seated," was all he said at first. For a long time I sat waiting and wondering what was about to happen. Finally there was a knock on the door. Upon Dobrowolskij's "Enter!" a guard appeared and asked, "May I bring in the prisoner?" Then, to my great astonishment, my wife Agatha walked in. When she saw me she broke into tears. For nearly half a year I had not had a change of clothing. My shirt was torn from top to bottom, exposing my bare flesh. When I was arrested I had been wearing only a shirt and thin trousers. Now Dobrowolskij asked my wife to confirm in writing that she had taken part in the counter-revolutionary meetings in our house.

"She doesn't even know what the word `counter-revolutionary' means," I interjected. At this point Dobrowolskij shouted me down and forbade me to say another word. I've forgotten by now how this particular altercation ended, but eventually Dobrowolskij made his second demand: "Admit now that Rempel-Suderman and his wife spent three days as your guests!" Agatha replied, "It was less than three days." Here I interjected once again: "She didn't really understand your accusation. She knows very little Russian! She meant to say that Rempel-Suderman did not spend three days with us!" The records show to this day that my wife twice signed the declaration "Rempel-Suderman did not spend three days with us."....

This confrontation was meant to show me that my wife was also under arrest. Although Dobrowolskij had often threatened me with this possibility, I had never taken him seriously. Even at this time my wife was well dressed. She was wearing a white blouse and carefully ironed black skirt. I couldn't tell by her facial expressions if she really was under arrest. While the prosecutor wrote, my wife signaled to me with 5 fingers. Did she mean 5 months in prison? I couldn't believe it. At this point my wife asked the prosecutor if, for God's sake, she might be allowed a few words with the children. At this the prosecutor flew into a rage as though he were the devil himself. My wife was escorted out of the room, but as she was leaving she turned and said in German: "Nikolaj, trust in God! He won't forsake us." When I told my fellow inmates what had happened, they said: "Just accept the fact that your wife is in detention." I could not count on them for words of comfort. In the quiet of that night, the Lord Himself provided consolation.

As a second tactic they confronted me with Brother Heinrich Tobias Janz. Their plan was to prove that I had lied. In one of my statements I had denied that I had visited the [Collective] store with Rempel-Suderman. When

Janz was questioned as to my visit to the store with Rempel-Suderman he had said that he knew nothing about it. Dobrowolskij had angrily countered that I had myself confessed to it but Dobrowolskij had not shown Janz a written confession. However, Dobrowolskij had managed, by shouting and threatening, to wring a confession from Janz. Janz was too compliant and therefore highly vulnerable.

The next confrontation was with Johann Bergen. Bergen had been tried twice and had been pronounced guilty. By this time he was in prison and, along with other condemned prisoners, was awaiting exile. He too had been questioned about his acquaintance with Rempel-Suderman. This was a difficult time for me. ....I was asked to disregard my conscience and betray other people. The Lord helped me to resist the temptation to commit the sin of Judas.

When I signed only one declaration, namely, that I was innocent of all charges brought against me, Dobrowolskij vowed: "This declaration is your death sentence! I hope I will have the satisfaction of shooting you myself!" How unfathomable are God's ways. In 1940, a former high-ranking government official was transferred to our prison. This man reported that Dobrowolskij, along with two other prosecutors had been executed. I was reminded of Psalm 62: 8-10 and Psalm 64: 2-8: "Trust not in oppression. . ." and "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked....."

Pjatigorsk, Caucasus.

After seven months of constant hearings, many of which took place at night, the investigations were finally concluded. On the 25th of August, 1936 I was transferred to a larger prison in Pjatigorsk. There I came down with dysentery and so ended up in the infirmary. Here I met the elderly Brother Franz Janzen from Kolontarowka. My brother-in-law Johann Bergen also paid me a visit. From these two I learned that I had been labeled the ringleader of 32 other prisoners, including my wife. I knew some of the 31 men but a number were unfamiliar. This was the first time I had seen my wife since her arrest.

My joy at seeing her again defies description. Upon the conclusion of their investigation, they had granted her a temporary release. This had enabled her to once again gather our scattered children and try to provide them with the necessities of life. Her release proved to be an extremely frustrating experience since she was utterly destitute. During our absence, our own people in the Collective had rummaged through our house and had made off with most of our belongings. While our 12-year-old daughter was attending school away from home, complete strangers had even taken up temporary residence in our home.

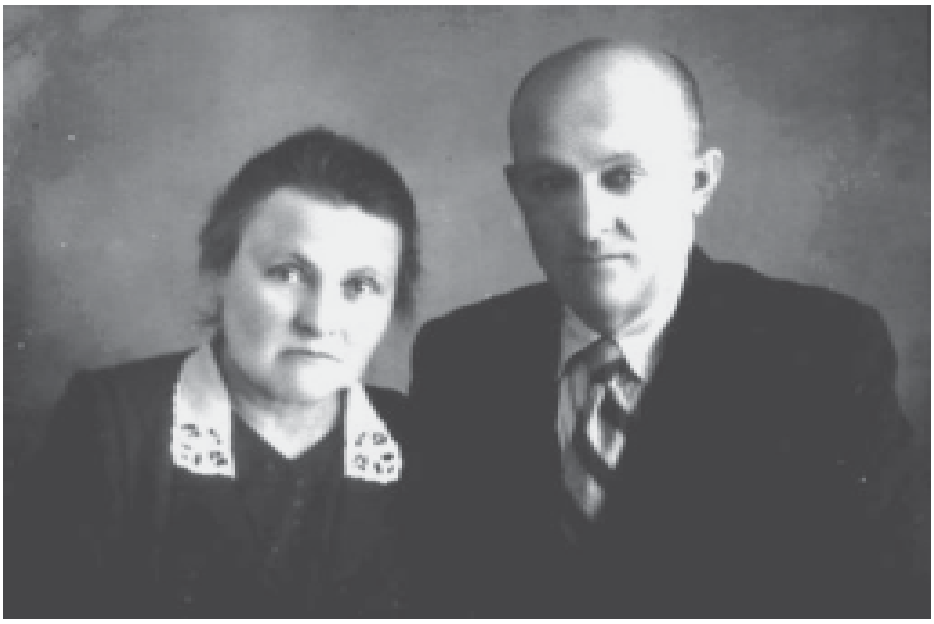
Criminal Charges.

On November 19, 1936, while still in prison, we received notice of the charges against us, a document of approximately 80 pages. The main points in my case were as follows:

1. I was the son of a Kulak or landowner;
2. I was a counter-revolutionary;
3. I was a German nationalist, and so on.

All the charges had to do with politics or religion. In light of today's views and general attitudes they seem laughable, even perverted. However, in 1936 there were still some rules that limited the measures taken by the prosecutors. Investigators were not permitted to inflict beatings or to force prisoners to stand upright all night before their trials the following morning. Because these rules were still observed we were spared some of the tortures that were later endured by others.... Slowly my fellow prisoners and I read the charges against each one of us. Again and again the concluding sentence read, "He himself admitted his guilt."...It was obvious that in many cases such statements were fabricated.... When we came to my name I was surprised to read, "Reimer did not admit that he was guilty of any of the charges, but a number of witnesses testified that he was an active counter-revolutionary." This statement gave me considerable confidence in my determination to stand firm for what I believed was right.

On November 25, 1936 the process of sentencing began.... The court was made up of three judges, a secretary and a prosecutor. Armed guards were stationed next to these officials, at the door, on the steps and in every corner of the room.... When they brought all of us, 31 altogether, into the same room, the scene was indescribable. Some were asking, "What did you say about me?" Many apologized for having said anything while under investigation that had proved harmful to their fellow prisoners.....In the few minutes we prisoners had to communicate with one another in the corridor it was agreed that we would all try to distance ourselves as much as possible from any questionable statements that any of us had made under duress. . . .



Nikolaj Reimer with his second wife, Katharina Sukkau. Photographed in the 1950s in Kaschmurn, Kasachstan.

My wife was one of those who attended the proceeding. I will never forget the moment when I approached the courthouse and saw my Agatha among the crowd of people who were being held back by soldiers. She was there with Tienchen Sukkau (now my second wife) and both were trying desperately to push their way forward. Only someone who has experienced a similar fate can imagine the emotional turmoil a helpless prisoner has to deal with at such a moment. Although my heart was breaking, and my tattered clothes were a clear indication of my desperate situation, my smile was nevertheless a reflection of the joy, however brief, that I felt when I saw my wife once again. My wife broke into tears when she saw me in my rags.

My wife entered the courtroom along with the prisoners and took a seat next to me, but when the judges entered she was taken away from me. "Is there no mercy, no sympathy left in this world," I asked myself. As soon as the judges were seated, one of them asked, "Which one is Reimer?" I identified myself, and so the sentencing began.

The sentencing process lasted five days..... Five days I spent mostly standing upright since I was made to feel responsible for what had happened to all 32 prisoners. For example, while the judge was questioning the others he would often ask, "What did Reimer say to you privately? What role did you play in Reimer's group of counter-revolutionaries?" If the accused tried to temper or deny what he had admitted to in an earlier hearing, the judge would interrupt him with complex legal language and accuse him of lying..... Some who had testified against me earlier now tried to change their testimony. Others, who had been granted freedom in exchange for their false witness, stood by what they had said, obviously out of fear. I found this disillusioning to say the least.

Death Sentence, 1936.

Although Reimer and his fellow prisoners hoped that this court would set them free the final outcome was a bitter disappointment.

Three men were set free and allowed to return to their families. Three others, including my wife, were sentenced to three years in prison. The others were given prison sentences ranging from 8 to 10 years. My heart was pounding as I listened to these increasingly harsh sentences and still did not hear my name mentioned. At last the judge came to the last four names: Nikolaj Reimer, Ivan I. Koop, Isaak I. Pötker and Abram T. Janz. The sentence: Death by firing squad.

While the sentences were being read the door to the courtroom stood wide open so that the relatives of the condemned could hear. Our daughter Katja was standing at the front of this large crowd. When she heard my sentence read she screamed loudly. My wife collapsed, unconscious. However, the inebriated judges quickly left the room so that they would not have to witness the misery they had caused.

The four of us who were condemned to death were the first to be escorted out into the yard. Armed soldiers were posted everywhere. As I passed by my daughter Katja, she threw herself at my feet, embraced my legs, sobbing: "Papa, my papa!" Our escorts ruthlessly tore her from me, cursing horribly.

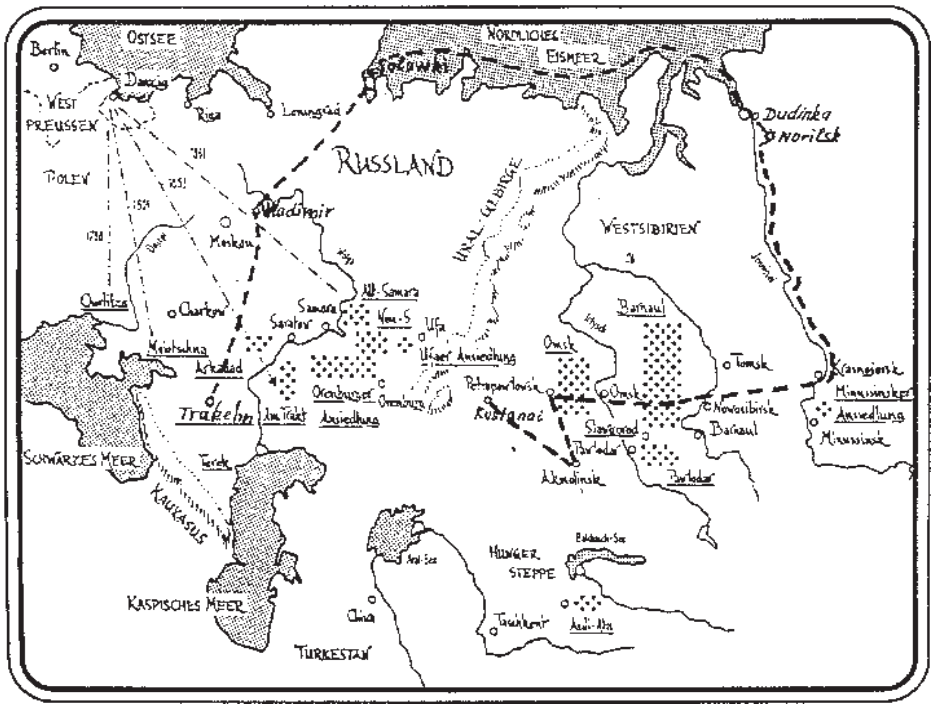
There was a great throng of people in the yard next to the courthouse. They were there to see us off. Just before I stepped into the waiting vehicle, I turned to the crowd, took off my cap and waved it over my head as I called out: "Auf wiedersehen, my friends! We will see you again!" This was an expression of hope in the future even though I was heartsick about my prospects. Then four of us were taken to the cell next to the guardhouse.... How disappointed I was with what had transpired in spite of my fasting and praying earlier. I had thought God would answer my prayers according to my conditions rather than according to His will and that I would soon be set free. Now I found myself in a death cell with three companions.

Death Cell No. 21.

As we entered the little cell, two corpulent men with long hair and full beards got up from their beds and welcomed us. One was named Rasmunji and the other Warfolomej. R. was a convicted thief and W. had been found guilty of embezzling public funds.

"And which one is Reimer?" they wanted to know.

I was reminded of Nathaniel who asked Jesus, "Whence knowest thou me?" (John 1: 48). Before my sentencing in court I had been incarcerated in cell no. 20, adjacent to cell no. 21. By this time, only one person, Professor Alexandrov, a Director of Theatre in Moscow, was still being held in no. 20. Immediately I took my cup and knocked on the wall to see if I could get his attention. At last he awoke from sleep and asked, "Who is it?" I answered,



Journey of suffering of Nikolai Reimer, 1936-47.
The settlements established by Mennonites prior to the 1920s are underlined. Map credit - Nur Aus Gnaden: Errinnerungen *(Lemgo, Germany, 1996), page 157.*

"Kolja Reimer!" He was very surprised to hear me. We wept as we bestowed kisses on one another through the wall.....

After I had spent 40 days in this death cell, the response of the higher court to our sentences was announced. This higher court found the sentences of the local court just and legal. All that was left to us now was the opportunity to appeal and sue for grace. Before we had time to discuss this option amongst ourselves, lawyers arrived and offered to represent us. We had talked about and prayed for this development from time to time but had not reached consensus on the matter. Would such an appeal be tantamount to a confession of guilt? This was something we were not, as a matter of principle, prepared to do. We were willing to let God be the judge. This was beyond the lawyers' comprehension. Again and again they tried to persuade us, but we remained firm.

One morning, at approximately 10:00 o'clock, I was brought before Dobrowolskij. He greeted me in a friendly manner and asked me if I would like to escape the sentence hanging over my head. Tearfully I answered in the affirmative. After all, I had a wife and children to think of. "I will promise you that your life will be spared if you will give me a positive answer to two questions," he said. Again I was asked to corroborate the lies I had refuted earlier. When I refused, he said angrily, "Well, if you won't co-operate you will be executed! I have done all I can to save your life!" I replied: "If it is God's will, let it happen."

Dobrowolskij's response to this was to call in the guard who took me to an auto waiting outside. "Don't be afraid," the guard confided, "stick to the truth! They won't shoot you; they're only trying to frighten you into submission. But don't tell anyone I said so." This man seemed an angel sent by God. When I returned to my cell later, I discovered that Pötker had also been called out for an interview. My cellmates and I fell on our knees to thank God for assisting me and to ask Him to assist Pötker also. Pötker, as it turned out underwent an experience very similar to mine and likewise refused to acquiesce. This was a victorious day for us.

This day was also a special day for our dependants who were still enjoying their freedom. That morning government officials sought out our daughter Katja. They sent a telegram on her behalf to N.K. Krupskaja who was the chairperson of the committee that had responsibility for mothers and children. By 3:00 o'clock that same afternoon they brought Katja the news that this committee would take measures to ensure her security. The wives of other prisoners were required to send similar requests by telegram on behalf of their children.

A Dream, 1937.

One morning I awoke late and asked my companions, "Who called me?" They replied, "No one."

I was silent.

Then Pötker said, "Nikolaj, the Lord must have spoken to you in a dream." At this I could only say that someone had said, "Be quiet and hear what I have to say to you." These words were similar to those found in Samuel 9:27.

Then Pötker cried: "Nikolaj, madman! This means that God is speaking to you. You must be quiet and listen so that God can use you in His service."

I will never forget this death cell experi-

ence. It led me to promise God that if He would restore me to my family I would from that moment on no longer fear mere men and seek only to do His will. Since that day I have regarded unfaithfulness as the greatest of all sins.....

March 8, 1937 I received a letter from my wife who was also still in prison. As I lay in my bed I read, over and over again, a particularly moving passage: "If only I could once again weep in your embrace, and share with you my private grief and what lies nearest to my heart, then I would gladly die." My cellmates were fast asleep, but these words kept me awake.

Late Night Visitor.

Suddenly I heard a large number of people in the corridor.

Someone shouted, "Open up!"

We heard the key rattling in the lock.

I was uneasy to say the least because a visit at that time of night usually signified something out of the ordinary -- death or an extension of the prison sentence. We were all wide-awake in an instant. Radtschenko, one of the guards, entered the room.

"Koop!" he shouted repeatedly.

Koop, however, remained silent until, finally, Janz said, "There he lies."

Koop heaved a deep sigh as he was told, "Come with me!"

Then Janz was asked to step outside as well. Janz sprang to his feet and followed the guard into the corridor where all was eerily quiet. Brother Pötker sat on his bed, his hands folded in his lap, praying. Automatically, I bowed my head in prayer as well.

Our other cellmates were profoundly affected as well. One of them became violently ill and vomited; the other suddenly needed the bathroom. After a brief silence Baikarov, one of my cellmates, wondered aloud what all this commotion might signify, why they had come to take these two away to be put to death.

At the time we assumed that they had been taken away to be executed. Br. Janz had mentioned several times that he would probably be executed because he had once spoken out against the Politburo. Koop also feared for his life because one of the witnesses at his trial had testified that Koop was responsible for the deaths of 50 Reds. Brother Pötker and I conveyed our last wishes to our two remaining fellow cellmates who we felt had a better chance than we did to have their sentences overturned. After all, they were just thieves, common criminals. Over the next half hour or so we reviewed the events of our lives in silence. What more could I do in this situation except to utter the prayer: "Forgive me, forgive me my Lord and Savior!" We bade farewell to our Russian cellmates in brotherly fashion. They embraced and kissed us.

At last we heard the dreaded steps in the corridor. We waited in abject fear. Were our brothers returning or were we about to be taken away as well? Again the key rattled in the lock. It was like a dagger through the heart.

Pardoned.

Even as Janz and Koop were entering the room, Radtschenko was shouting, "Reimer! Pötker! Come with me!"

I turned to Janz and asked, "Pardoned?

Say something or my heart will burst!"

He answered, "Yes, pardoned." At this point Radtschenko bellowed, "What are you saying?"

He had obviously ordered Janz to say that they had been pardoned and that we would be executed. As we left the cell, I lashed out at Radtschenko with my fist and struck him on the shoulder. "Is one permitted to play such games with human lives?" I wanted to know.

Taken aback, Radtschenko countered, " I wanted to frighten you one more time just to see how you would react, how fearless you really are. But you have assaulted me, a guard, and I won't forget that. You'll be punished for that."

A number of convicts and an NKGB officer were already assembled in the guardroom when we entered. Some welcomed us but others ridiculed us. We were presented with the official pardons that we were told to read and sign. The pardons stated that as of March 5, 1937, by order of the "the gracious Kalinin," our lives had been spared. I was too eager to believe it and I signed without reading further. Why had Janz and Koop been away so long? Janz had insisted on reading the entire document but had needed glasses. It had taken some time to find the necessary spectacles. From various other details in that document, Janz had learned that our death sentences had been commuted to 10-year prison terms.....

That night in our cell the conversation was animated as we recalled those moments of terror when we all thought the end was imminent. Again and again we thanked God for answering the prayers of His children. Yes, the pardons seemed a miracle to those of us who still believed in miracles. Our faith had been greatly strengthened and like the apostles in Acts 5:41, we rejoiced because we had kept the faith and had been willing to suffer for Christ's sake. We were especially grateful that God had granted us the strength necessary to resist the temptation to utter falsehoods that would have ultimately led to our damnation.... We felt as though we had been born again. I was hopeful that I would soon be reunited with my wife and children.....

March 10th, on the 100th day of our incarceration, we were transferred to another larger compound where we met many other convicts. It was a joyful reunion. Here I found my brother Aaron and, to my surprise, Rempel-Suderman as well. We four from death cell no. 21 were subpoenaed as witnesses at his trial. He too had his death sentence commuted to 10 years. . . . In this prison I received several gift packages and even a visit from my 13 year-old daughter.

Transfer to Solowki.

Although my brother Aaron and I were able to share our joys and sorrows from March until September of 1939, the expected day of separation eventually arrived. For six months we had supervised the cleaning staff of the entire prison. . . This work provided ample opportunity for us to meet and converse on a daily basis. It also gave us access to the fresh air outdoors.

On the 23rd of September, 1939 those of us whose death sentences had been commuted were transported to Vladimir-Kljasma [distribution prison near Moscow]..... My first concern here was to write to prison officials for permission to exchange letters with my wife. This request was denied the very next day. As I was not expecting this rejection, I was quite disheartened. I asked the supervisor if this decree would apply to my entire 10-year sentence and he answered with a very brusque, "Yes!"

I was crestfallen. To whom could I turn? In utter despair I cried out to God: "If I am now in a predicament in which I am so isolated that no fellow human being can offer me sympathy or comfort, I pray you, send me one of your other creatures, a bird whose song will serve as a sign of your blessing. I had hardly uttered these words when a little bird swooped out of nowhere and settled on the grate outside my window, nodded its head, and chirped merrily several times before it resumed its flight. In an instant I felt comforted and broke into a song of thanks and praise. Nevertheless, I still faced the grim prospect of 10 years without written communication with my wife and family.

In my lonely, desperate state I resolved that I would designate the very next day as fast and prayer day. At first my guards were uncomfortable with my decision. The prison supervisor even came to ask me the reason for my fasting. They all thought I was ill and summoned a doctor examine me. I reassured all of them that I was undertaking a biblical fast and that I did not mean to cause trouble....

All that morning I paced back and forth in the cell, praying and singing softly. After singing, "Instruct Me In Thy Ways, O Lord," I prayed fervently with eyes cast heavenward. Suddenly, I heard a key in the door and two uniformed officers entered. The guard stood behind them holding the keys.

One of the officers addressed me: "Do you have any questions?"

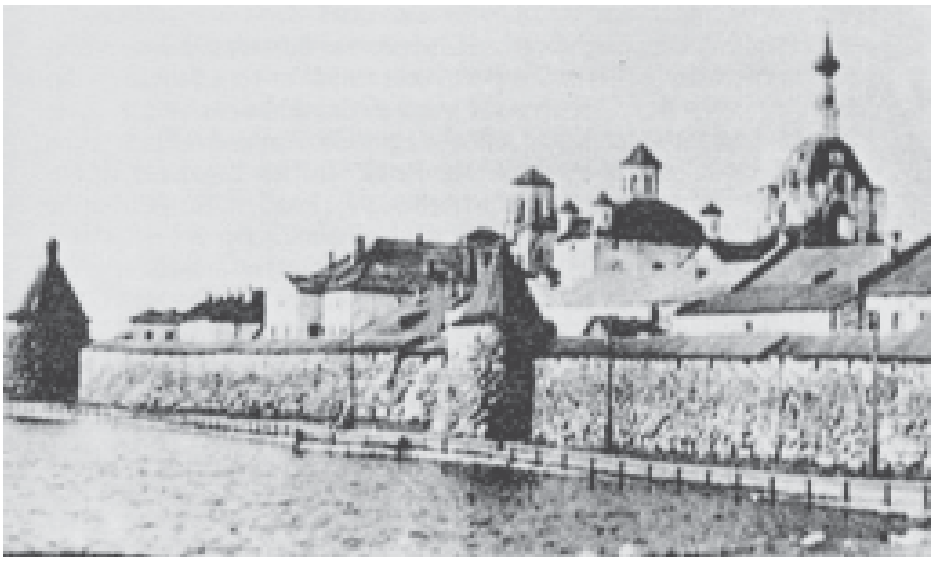
I replied, "May I know with whom I am speaking?"

"I am the warden of the prison," he answered.

My heart was pounding. Was this to be an answer to my prayer? I was sure he was standing before me under God's command. I acquainted him with my request.

"Prisoners are not permitted to post letters from one prison to another," he replied. "However, if you know someone outside the prison to whom you can can send your letters, this third party can then forward your letters to your wife."

When I was alone again I thanked God for this blessing. I was deeply contrite for my lack



Overview of the Solowezker Kremlin. In the White Sea, where the nights are light for half the year, lies the "Great Solowzki Island". In this area there are a group of islands collectively referred to as "Solowzki-Ostrawa" archipelago, although each (altogether six islands) has their own names: Anserskij, Large and Small Muxulma, and in addition two small islands known as Sajazije. The cloister (monastery) - also known as a fortress ("Kremlin") - on Solowzki Island was founded 1420-1430. The State Penitentiary existed on the island since 1718. From December 1937 until August 1939, Nikolaj Reimer existed behind the walls of this fortress - prison under inhuman conditions. In 1939, just before the Finnish War, this prison was closed because of its proximity to the border and relocated to the city of Norilsk. N. Reimer was transported to Norilsk, by way of the northern sea route. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag *(Gütersloh, 1974), page 29.*

Steps to the Axtberg ("Sekirnaja Gora" in Russian). This flight of steps leading from the church above on the hill to the sea, has 365 steps. Many prisoners lost there lives here by a peculiar form of punishment. Those being punished were lashed to a tree trunk and thrown down the 365 steps. The steps were so steep that not a single prisoner could humanly stop the tree trunk. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 29.*

of faith. And although I had to wait a year for the first letter from my wife, I decided to observe this particular day as a fast and prayer day. I promised God that, if he would one day make it possible for me to be reunited with my family, I would continue to serve Him with all my strength and devotion. ....

On November 25, 1937 all the convicts in our prison were taken to the railway station [and from there transported to "Kem", a harbour on the White Sea]. As we were herded from the train to our new detention center, I saw huge piles of lumber and a large number of convicts working among them. It was a depressing sight, especially as it brought to my remembrance a threat uttered by Dobrowolskij on one occasion: "I'll send you and Brother Janz into the far north. Then we'll see how strong your love for one another will be!" On the same day that we arrived at the harbour we were taken by ship to Solowki Islands that lie approximately 40 kilometers from Kem in the White Sea. It is an archipelago of some 65 islands.

The lights had already been turned on when we docked at Solovecki, one of the larger islands. This is the site of the so-called "Soloveckij Kreml, " a fortress surrounded by high stone walls mounted with watchtowers from which they can keep a close eye on all activity. As we entered the huge iron gate and I heard the ominous groan of its hinges I was overcome by dismay. It seemed that the sound of the gate was telling us: "Here you will be securely imprisoned and it will be a miracle indeed if any of you ever escape."... According to experts, approximately 1500 to 2000 condemned prisoners were incarcerated here from 1937 to 1939, a place of total isolation where inmates were not even permitted to read any books. This was now to be my destiny.

Life in the GUlag.

Reimer quotes Alexandir Solzhenitsyn's description of the Archipelago as well as his account of the history of this region. The Solovetsky Islands, colloquially known as ***Solovki****, were a group of islands in the White Sea and the site of monasteries that were later refurbished as prisons. The area had been used as a place of exile for rebellious priests in the Middle Ages and was used for forced-labor camps after the 1917 Revolution.*

As usual, when we arrived at this new location we were separated from our previous companions. I found that I was sharing a cell with Jerochin, a former Komsomol secretary from Winitza. Our first question: "Would they be giving us anything to eat or would we have to go to bed with empty stomachs?" We had been provided, at the outset of our five-day journey, with a daily ration of a few herring and 600 grams of bread.

The last day's portion had been finished long ago. We weren't kept waiting long before the door opened and we were handed some bread and a substantial piece of cooked fish. How we celebrated. If this was how they were going to feed us here, Solowki would be an improvement over our previous prison. . . . In the quiet of the night I silently thanked God that He had brought me to this place. Soon this prison was the home of educated people as well as simple, ordinary folk and there was an interesting exchange of ideas and experiences.

However, in December,1937 we were taken from this location to an inaccessible island named Muxulma. Here I and 15 other men I had not known formerly were imprisoned until December 25, 1938. . . .

Reimer describes in some detail the tedious existence on Muxulma, and the difficulties he experienced living with men with whom he had little in common. Yet this was merely the calm before the storm.

December 25th, 1938 was the day on which my good fortune took a turn for the worse. While I was deep in thought, imagining that I was celebrating Christmas at home, the key rattled in the lock and four prison officials strode into our cell. All fifteen of us were ordered to go outside and get into a waiting truck. We were driven out into the cold in the clothes we were wearing, thin summer trousers and shirts and thin leather shoes. Shivering in the bitter cold, we realized soon enough that we were being taken back to the Kreml, our former prison. There I was locked up with three others in one cell, Josef Bereschwilli, an engineer from Georgia, Choschtarija, a party secretary from Georgia, and a partisan named Efremow.

The room could hardly provide accommodation for our four beds. There was no room for a table. On one side of the cell there was a brick oven that was as long as a bed. My bed was nearest the oven. This oven was heated for an entire day so that our cell became unbearably hot. Then the oven was turned off. For several days it was so hot that we removed all but our underclothing. By the fifth day we huddled in our coats to keep warm. We wondered what further mistreatment this would lead to.....

In my despair the spirit of God led me to the thought that I should mark the third anniversary of my arrest by doing penance, by praying and fasting. On that day I gave my food rations to my comrades and lay face down on my bed all day as I pleaded with God for forgiveness, for release from prison, for my

family's safety . At first I was mocked by my three cell mates, but I ignored them. Once they realized I was in earnest they became quiet. It was on this day that I composed the poem, " My Mortification."

I was convinced that God had acknowledged my prayers and my fasting, but now it pleased Him to further try me. One day in February, 1939 the head of our prison section came to our cell and escorted me to the prison warden. This man asked me if I was familiar with the rules of the prison.

I said I was.

"Why then are you hiding forbidden articles in your cell?" he demanded.

I was amazed as he proceeded to show me a crumpled piece of newspaper, so small he could hardly grasp it with his hand. In addition to this he held up a small piece of rubber. We had been to the bathhouse the day before and one of the guards had found this piece of newspaper among my clothing. It was approximately 10 x 15 cm. in size and cut diagonally to make it unreadable. It was the kind of paper we were issued whenever we went to the toilet.

One of these pieces had apparently been left in one of my pockets without my knowing it. The little piece of rubber came from the heel of one of my shoes. I used it as an eraser whenever I wrote in my notebook. When I tried to convince my interrogator that such articles surely could not be regarded as contraband, he shouted: "Silence! This warrants three days in solitary confinement!"

I was placed in a cell that was 3 meters by 3 meters. There was a stool in the middle of the floor fastened to the floor. A bedspring attached to the wall could be lowered at night to serve as my bed, but all sheets and blankets had been removed, supposedly to prevent me from committing suicide. The window had been boarded up. There was an oven in the room but no heat.

Without a cap, thinly clad, I stood shivering in the cold room. As it was February, it wasn't too long before I was almost frozen stiff. In an attempt to stave off hypothermia, I paced around the stool at the center of the room a hundred times clockwise and then a hundred times counter clockwise, until I was completely exhausted.

.... Around 11 p.m. the guard came in, lowered the bedspring that was attached to the wall, laid some boards on it and ordered me to lie down. As I lay down my body felt as though it had been packed in ice. I sighed a silent prayer to God, but my discomfort was unrelieved. After a few sleepless hours I tried to walk quietly again, but the guard noticed and threatened that he would report me to his superiors if I refused to lie down immediately. Failure to obey, he said, could lead to an extension of the period of solitary confinement. A meager daily ration of 300 grams of bread and one pitcher of water did little to make me feel warmer.

The Axtberg ("Sekir Gora"). Here was located the church "To the beheading of John the Baptist" built by the monks. At the time when Nikolaj Reimer found himself here, this was a place whose very name caused terror in every prisoner, for many prisoners were shot here during the last years. The road forked just in front of the hill, leading out of the prison in two directions: the one to the top of the hill and death, and the other outside out of the prison. When N. Reimer was being sent to Norilsk in 1939, he did not know at first, which way he would be taken - to death on the Axtberg or into another prison. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 37.*

By the evening of the third day I was so despondent that I suffered a nervous breakdown. I knelt at the stool and cried out to God in a loud voice. Immediately the guard rushed in and wanted to know what this outburst meant. I told him that I was at the point of freezing to death and I pleaded with him to beg the warden for grace on my behalf. But the guard refused saying that I would have to serve out the rest of my sentence under these conditions, and he added that if I persisted in my screaming and weeping I would only make things worse for myself.

On the morning of the fourth day they returned me to my cell. My cellmates were shocked when they saw me. My face and my feet were severely swollen. My eyes were so puffed-up I could barely see. My cellmates gave me some bread and after I had eaten it I lay down on my bed, near the oven, and fell into a deep sleep. How grateful I was that evening to once more be in a warm cell.....

Norilsk, 1939.

Reimer quotes Solzhenitsyn again to describe the events that led to the transfer of many prisoners to the more remote concentration camp named "Norilsk" - located at the mouth of the Lena River in eastern Siberai. With the outbreak of the war with Finland in 1939, it became apparent to Soviet authorities that the Solovki prison was too close to Russia's western border. Reimer and many of his compatriots were therefore hastily transported to this northern outpost that soon housed, according to Solzhenitsyn, 75,000 inmates.

On the sixth of August, 1939 we were unexpectedly taken to Solovki, the main island of the Solovki group. There we were immediately transferred from the trucks to the big ocean steamer "Budjonyj." On this ship I once again met Brother Pötker. Janz and Koop were in another part of the ship's hold. The ship had three levels and each level held 3500 prisoners. Pötker and I were assigned quarters near the engine room which was centrally located and so we were not as affected by the ship's motion as some of the other prisoners. Pötker and I were able to bring each other up to date with regard to our experiences from September, 1937 to August, 1939.

We were free to move about on this ship, but this was a mixed blessing since there was nothing but confusion and disorder everywhere, partly because the guards were to be found mostly on the upper two decks. The toilet facilities were totally inadequate. With only one private cubicle per deck to serve 3500 persons, one can readily understand that many had to relieve themselves in the open buckets meant to serve only as urinals. There was a permanent line-up for the cubicle with much pushing and shoving and angry exchange of words.

The first few days at sea passed without too many problems, but toward the end of our

The Clock Tower. Groups of people were shot at the foot of the Clock Tower. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 39.*

voyage we encountered a great storm. Our ship was tossed about like a toy by the waves. Virtually all the men became seasick. Most were too sick to throw up over the ship's rail and instead used the open buckets. It isn't difficult to imagine the stench that resulted. On some of these days even the cooks were too ill to provide us with food. Fortunately, this did not occur at the beginning of the voyage. If it had, many would not have survived. . . . . .

We arrived at Norilsk after dark. I don't intend to describe the history of this region except to say that this is a place where the government made use of cheap labor. As cheap laborers it was our fate to be sent here where we would soon sacrifice our physical health and many would give up their lives. The first forced laborers had been brought here in 1936. I was given the number 21506. Today, at the age of 76, I can repeat that number on demand, even if I'm suddenly awakened from sleep. It will remain indelibly inscribed in my memory until I die.

The number of prisoners at Norilsk grew quickly. Those who had arrived in 1936 were put up in tents even in the winter season. When we came three years later we were housed in stone cottages that were little more than drafty stone piles. During the winter nights mounds of snow would accumulate on our blankets and would actually serve to protect us from freezing.....

The door to the clock tower. The people were shot at the top of the stairs and then came falling down as corpses. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 29.*

The German arch. There was a store here, where the prisoners also received some wages (9 ruble per month) and received packages from their families. Presumably N. Reimer never saw this building since he never received any money or packages from his wife who was also in prison at the time. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 41.*

Slave Labour, 1939.

Hungry and miserable, we were nevertheless taken to our workplace for the first time on August 17, 1939. On this day we were told that we would not be required to put in a full day's work and so we had time to become acquainted with our fellow convicts. Here I met Reinhold Rode, a Lutheran. That evening as I sat high up on my bunk bed, eating my little bowl of soup without bread, I noticed my new friend sitting with the prison officials. It was disillusioning to see how much better off party members and officials were. Suddenly I felt someone touch my feet. I looked down and to my surprise it was my friend Rode offering me a full daily ration of bread. Before I could thank him he was gone. I could not explain his act of kindness, but I took it as an answer to my prayers.

The Revelation of Christ Church. Here N. Reimer daily picked up tea water which was brought for the prisoners when the long columns returned from their labour. The prisoners sometimes had to stand in lineups for hours, waiting for their water. Here, in an addition to the church, was also the bathhouse and the washing facilities. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag, *page 41.*

The next day we were expected to put in a full day's work even though most of us were too undernourished and hence too weak to do so. The punishment for anyone who failed to do the required amount of work was an immediate reduction in food rations. Instead of a full kilogram of bread per day, such offenders received only 300 grams. As a result of this malnourishment I developed night blindness..... One night after we returned from work long after dark, and I was carrying my little bowl of soup from the kitchen to our sleeping quarters, I stumbled and spilled my supper. This meant I would have to go to bed hungry. When I went back to plead for another portion I was told to come again later. Until late that evening I stood at the kitchen window and waited only to be told repeatedly that not all workers had returned from work. Should any soup be left over I would get some. Finally I gave up, went to my bed, and tried without success to fall asleep.

The back wall of our room had a window that could be opened from the kitchen. Suddenly, this window was opened and someone called out: "Who wanted soup?" Most of my roommates were asleep and so I was the only one to respond. I jumped from my place in the uppermost bunk and as quick as a flash I was at the window. When the cook heard me he handed me a full bucket of soup. Quickly I ate my fill and then filled all the bowls of my sleeping comrades. When I returned the empty container, the cook gave me another one. I decided to wake my starving cellmates and we had a feast. I was even able to stash away a supply of soup for the next several days. After this overindulgence I was so uncomfortable I couldn't sleep. From one extreme to another! Anyone who has ever gone hungry for a long period of time will understand.

It wasn't long before we were organized into work brigades. What was most difficult at this time was the constant reassignment of the sleeping quarters. This was typical of the socialist system. Every day there was a new plan. The work brigades were also constantly reorganized, and this led to the repeated relocation of prisoners within the camp. After coming home from a long day in the cold, we would be ordered to gather our bedclothes and stand outside in the yard, like sheep, until the processing was completed. This went on for weeks at a time until we were all thoroughly exhausted and many were sick, myself included. As a result of this I had to be sent to the infirmary.

Sickness.

The prisoners who had been brought to this camp during the first three years now began to fall like flies. The death toll in this infirmary was extremely high. Up to forty men died in this infirmary on some days. Fellow prisoners carried these corpses to ditches that had been excavated by bulldozers as early as 1935. Since the ground was frozen for six months of each year, these corpses could be covered only in summer. If I hadn't seen an acquaintance for some time and then inquired about him I would often be told, "Oh, he was taken to the pit a long time ago."

Many in the infirmary were suffering from dysentery. Small wonder when one considers the living conditions. Because the infirmary was overcrowded, multi-level bunk beds became common. As I was one of the weaker patients I was put on the lowest level. This was considered the preferred level, but if those above me became violently ill and could not control their bodily functions I had to put up with whatever fell down on me. The stench in the infirmary was frightful. I'm reluctant to write about it, but it is the truth even though it is a sad truth. . . . .

As soon as we felt somewhat better we were sent on to Norilsk No. 2 situated in the virgin polar forest approximately 10 to 20 kilometers from Norilsk No. 1. Here we were housed in tents. The coal that was used for heating could be found near the surface and was gathered by those who already felt somewhat stronger. Wood was plentiful as well. The forest contained numerous dead tree trunks and the wood from these trees was dry and burned readily. Yet we lacked proper light and had to make do with primitive oil lamps. Such a lamp was a simple dish that contained oil and a wick. These lamps would smoulder rather than burn and by the end of the day the tent would be filled with smoke. This was meant to be a place for convalescents but as elsewhere there was never enough food and too many corrupt officials who robbed us of our greatly needed sustenance. No one seemed to be in control of the situation but we knew better than to complain.....

Snow Clearing.

I couldn't do much physical labor during the winter of 1939/40 as my strength was steadily declining. For this reason I was placed with a brigade of invalids. The brigade was assigned the task of snow clearing. This was considered privileged work because we were not required to fulfill predetermined work quotas. We received the same food rations as all the others, but we were often forced to venture out in extreme weather conditions at any time of the day or night. Our work consisted mainly of keeping the railway tracks clear of snow.

Reimer describes some of his experiences with the snow clearing crews:

[During one major snow storm] each one of us was expected to keep a 15 to 20 meter section of rail line open, but we knew our efforts were futile. We dug holes in the snowdrifts and took cover in them to escape the fierce wind. This was not without risk as we could easily have fallen asleep in our shelters. If we had we would eventually have died because of the extreme cold. I sat in my tiny snow den and struggled to stay awake by moving my limbs as much as possible. Outside, the storm raged on.

Entrance to the Revelation of Christ Church. Every day, Nikolaj Reimer, pressed through these doors in the hope of obtaining a pail of hot water. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag*, page 49.*

Entrance to the Revelation of Christ Church. Every day, Nikolaj Reimer, pressed through these doors in the hope of obtaining a pail of hot water. Photo - Solzhenitsyn, Der Achipelag GUlag*, page 49.*

Suddenly I heard someone call my name. When I rejoined my comrades they pointed to Serafim Nikolajewitsch Winogradow, a 23 year-old man who had collapsed against a wall of snow two meters high. He appeared to be frozen stiff. We lifted him up to a standing position and tried to bring some movement back to his limbs but to no avail. We pummeled him and encouraged him to walk with us, but he cried and begged us to leave him, insisting all the while that he felt quite warm and comfortable.....

Finally we called the guards who were keeping warm next to a red-hot stove in one of the railway cars. When they realized that they would be reported to their superiors if Serafim were to freeze to death during their watch, they relented and allowed us to bring him into their quarters. As soon as Serafim was brought near the stove he began to tremble violently. This case demonstrated how rapidly a man could fall victim to the extreme cold. Many of us lost fingers or toes yet this man suffered no such after-effects.....

One day it was reported that a locomotive with a number of freight cars was stuck on our section of rail line. We were assigned the task of freeing this train. The next morning, when the storm abated somewhat, as hungry as we were, we were ordered to take on this work. Visibility was still limited because of the blowing snow. We were assured that we would be given sufficient notice if the train would begin to move. I dug down to rail level and realized that I was trapped between two walls of snow.

Suddenly I heard a loud hissing noise and gunshot. As I looked behind me I saw the train approaching. I could not escape by going forward or by going back. I cried aloud to God and began to clamber up the wall of snow. With God's help I was able to preserve my life. Yet that same night 12 men were either seriously injured or killed.

Dudinka.

At the end of April, 1940 the weak or sick prisoners in these brigades were transported to Dudinka a small harbour on the Jenisej River some 90 km. east of Norilsk. That was not a pleasant experience. We were herded like cattle. Each prisoner was forced to carry his bedclothes and personal possessions (straw mattress, spoon, cup).

The weakest were not able to keep up and those who couldn't carry their belongings simply threw them away in spite of the cursing, shouting and beating of the guards. We spent the nights on this journey in unheated barracks where we were also housed occasionally for a whole day without food. However, during the day we still had to be prepared to clear snow from the rail line. How incredibly difficult! . . . It was hopeless, this endless battle with the snow on a 113 kilometer stretch of rail line. The relentless wind filled in the trenches shortly after we dug them. We arrived in Dudinka on May 10. . . . .

In Dudinka I was assigned to a construction brigade. I was expected to do heavy work that was too demanding for me in my weakened physical state. I was having constant abdominal pain and I was feeling generally unwell. Yet, evenings, when I reported to the infirmary, the doctor always told me my temperature was normal.....

One day, while at work, I simply collapsed. I was taken to the infirmary, but when the doc-

tor saw me he said in an irritated tone of voice, "You again?" On this occasion my temperature was found to be 40° C. This time I was placed in the care of a compassionate Jewish female doctor who was known for her charitable dealings with prisoners. She was herself a convict. When she made her early morning rounds she always found some reason to keep the weaker patients in bed for a while longer. To me she would say, "Just rest a bit longer." And so I was allowed to remain in the infirmary for a full month. . . . .

Once again winter returned. With the heavy work we were required to do, I soon lost the strength I had gained over the summer months. Upon the recommendation of the doctors, I was consigned to a work brigade made up of prisoners who were too weak to do the heaviest work. We were nevertheless required to go out every day and sometimes at night even though most of us were too sick to accomplish much. How we suffered from the cold! Sometimes when our legs could no longer hold us up we lay down in the snow to rest.

Then, mercifully, one day in the early spring of 1941, the supervisor of the hog barns came to our brigade leader and asked him if he could recommend a dependable man to look after the hogs. To this day I don't know why my brigade leader singled me out. It was a job that many others would gladly have taken. At least I didn't have to work in the bitterly cold conditions outdoors.....

War, 1941.

On June 22 our camp received the news of the war with Germany. That same day all the prisoners of German, Polish or Rumanian descent, as well as others who came from countries that supported Hitler's war against Russia, were singled out and isolated from the main group. A special train took us by night to Norilsk. This was most alarming. We wondered if we were being taken into the tundra to be shot. Such thoughts gained credence when, somewhere enroute, we were left standing out in the open for several hours. Another night of sighs and groans. No one really wants to die.

The next day we arrived and were placed in section no. 9 of the camp. This section had been enclosed with barbed wire even before our arrival. Our new fellow prisoners regarded us as dangerous criminals. Every night the guards checked our beds for weapons. This is laughable in retrospect and yet, at the time, it was frightening because we knew that they wouldn't think twice about shooting us at the least provocation. And so we worked for a long time as specially isolated prisoners under the governance of the notorious, wicked, Polish general Milewskij.

Every day we were forced to walk 9 kilometers to our work. Every morning our brigade passed through the gate an hour earlier than the others. We were exhausted even before we arrived at our work site. The younger, stronger ones had to again break the path made the previous day. Those of us who were weaker were herded along behind the leaders like cattle. Then we worked for twelve hours before we began the 9 kilometer trek back. This meant that each day we were up at 6 o'clock, passed through the gate at 7, arrived at our work site at 9, worked steadily for 12 hours, walked the return 9 kilometers and passed through the camp gate again at 11 p.m. Seventeen hours on our feet! . . . .

Every opportunity was taken to get rid of the weakest prisoners. In the spring of 1942, the weakest in all the camps were gathered together. The intent was to transport them to the mainland. I was one of this assembly. When the authorities realized that our group consisted mostly of Poles and Germans, enemies so-called of the Russians, they brought us back again to work in the brick factory. I was deeply disappointed as I had so much looked forward to our removal from the high north to the mainland and a less extreme climate. "Why, O why, Lord," I prayed. Perhaps, I reasoned, God had brought me back to Norilsk to preserve my life.....

A Letter, 1943.

My dear wife had been released from prison in 1939. Her first task had been to find and retrieve the children. She did receive word from me, and in 1940 she wrote to me in Norilsk. With the outbreak of the war, written communication once more became impossible. In June, 1943 I received the first letter since 1940. When I noticed that the handwriting on the envelope was unfamiliar, I became very apprehensive and I trembled as I opened it.

The letter began as follows: "Today, March 13th, is a happy day! Kolja, your son, is celebrating his 17th birthday." There was more news from home and then the following: "And now you must know what happened to our mother. On the day that we arrived at the railway station here in Kazakhstan, mother passed away. She was already dead when she was carried from the railway car."

No one will be surprised to hear that I find it impossible to describe the pain I felt when I received this news. My friend, A.J. Weber, a former educator from the German Republic, had heard about my letter and immediately came to visit me. I gave him the letter and he studied it carefully. Then he asked me some questions to which I couldn't respond because I was so devastated. I asked him to leave me to grieve alone on that day. Then I isolated myself, brought my sorrows to God and pleaded with Him to give me comfort.

By evening of that same day, as I returned to the camp, I was able to thank God for this tribulation. I knew that this misfortune was part of God's plan for my personal salvation. When my companions gathered around me in the barracks that night, I was reminded of Job whose friends, with all their fine words were unable to comfort him. My prayers were now focused on my four children. As I was trying to get some rest, a man I hardly knew in the bunk next to mine said, "Nikolaj, you have lost your first wife and you refuse to be comforted. What would you say if, like me, you had lost three and the fourth had been left with children from four unions and no means to feed them?" This man made me feel ashamed and made it possible for me to overcome my self-pity and confess, "God, your ways are just and merciful!".....

Over a span of years, a man named Emmanuel Fischer was my counselor. As he was considerably older than I was, I regarded him as my spiritual father. He was not ashamed to proselytize in this hostile environment and wasn't the least discouraged by all the mocking he had to endure. When the German armies conquered the Odessa region he felt sure that his family had escaped to Germany. And so he thanked God every day for their deliverance.....

One day I brought him a letter from his wife. He grew visibly pale as he read its contents. Several days later I was called to his bedside in the infirmary. He had become completely demented. He refused to eat any food offered to him and was becoming violent. I approached his bedside with these words: "Peace be with you, dear brother!"

However, he turned his face away from me without responding. I was moved to tears. I asked him if he would like to say something to me. He answered with a curt "No." I continued my efforts to win his confidence. At last, after a long silence, he said: "Nikolaj, leave me alone. I am guilty of the unforgivable sin; I have blasphemed the Holy Spirit."

I found this shocking. I did my best to persuade him that God is merciful and so on. Yet all I could do was to persuade him to eat a little. My last encounter with him was on the occasion when Brother Otto Petrowitsch Wiebe and I received permission from the doctors to take him outside for some fresh air. Together we took him on a walk through the camp. He was not very cooperative and kept glancing apprehensively from one side to the other. Every now and then he would cry out, "My son, my son Gerhard!" In the past he had often talked about his youngest son, his hope for the future. Then he told me he had heard from his wife that, during their escape from Odessa, Gerhard had died.

This must have been the main cause of his breakdown. Such great hopes and now they were dashed. He had mistakenly assumed that God would answer his prayers. Because God had not granted him his requests he felt that he was no longer worthy of God's grace. This thought was the cause of his guilt and his fear that he had blasphemed God's Holy Spirit. Both Brother Wiebe and I were deeply pained by his suffering and we prayed fervently for his recovery. Soon after this Brother Fisher was transferred to a larger hospital where, I was told later, he improved somewhat and became more communicative. It was there that he was able to die peacefully. Years later, I wrote to Fisher's wife and told her all I knew of her husband.

Free Again, 1946.

At times, when I was still in prison, I thought I would never again enjoy freedom. Because I consorted with other German inmates I was always under surveillance. Three of my acquaintances told me during my last

year of incarceration that they had been interrogated by prison officials about me, about my private relations with other prisoners. One of these acquaintances recommended that I no longer associate with Germans in my cell. I took this man's advice. . . . .

On November 25, 1946 I was released from prison. I had already received the address of a friend who had been released earlier. This friend introduced me to a group of former convicts; this group proved to be a very supportive spiritual fellowship. Soon I was serving this group as speaker. . . .

Although Nikolaj had been released from prison, he was still required to report regularly to the authorities.

Although I had been released from prison and had passed the necessary medical examination, my supervisor did not give me all the necessary papers but did promise me living quarters where I would be able to live with my children etc. Only when I appealed to higher officials was I able to receive permission to travel. At this time there was a law that required those who had been released from prison to work in Norilsk for an additional three years. As a result of special efforts I was able to depart on the first ship that left Norilsk when normal navigation resumed in 1947....

I was one of the "rabbits" and was assigned to the lower deck where we slept on the cold hard floor... On this ship I celebrated my 25th wedding anniversary with two Russian brethren and two Russian sisters as my guests. As we went for a leisurely walk on the upper deck where we could enjoy viewing the green forests and the river currents, I felt once again like a free man. . . .

On the eighth day we arrived at Krasnojarsk. Here my first concern was to find the local congregation. What a thrill it was, after 15 years, to once again hear the gospel preached openly....

Reunion.

The author describes his reunion with his children in Novoneschenka, in Kustanaj, Kazakstan (see ***Pres.****, No. 19, page 50):*

The first person I met as I stepped down from the train was a German woman. When I asked her where I might leave my belongings she pointed to a sod hut nearby. It was the home of a family named Janz. After I was given directions I continued walking toward Novoneschenka where both my daughters were living at that time. On the way another pedestrian joined me, a young girl, who served me as guide. She went her own way when we approached the first houses in the village. Soon thereafter I met another German woman named Krueger.

Before I could reveal who I was she said, "Are you the father of Elli and Katja?" When I answered in the affirmative she took me to their place. As we approached the little house she left me and I walked the remaining few steps alone.

I was so excited that I'm sure the slightest push would have sent me tumbling. Slowly I approached the house, as if I were sleepwalking. "Could this really be happening?" I asked myself. "Was I actually going to see my daughters after all these years, after all that waiting?" Then I noticed two young women plastering a wall of the half finished house. One of them saw me and stood there with plaster pails in her hands as she observed the approaching stranger. As I came closer she quickly put down her pails and wiped her hands. By this time I had reached the neighbor's house where I stopped for a moment to lean against the fence. I was afraid that I was about to have a fainting spell, and I felt the world around me was growing dark.

The next moment my vision cleared as my eldest daughter, Katja, embraced me. "Papa, my long awaited Papa, is it really you?" For a long time she clung to me as we kissed each other. Words cannot describe the emotions I felt at the time of this reunion.

"And where is Elli?" I asked.

Elli was called and soon came running. At first she was a bit shy, probably because she had imagined her father somewhat differently. I recognized her immediately as my child and held her long in a warm embrace. In four days, on the seventeenth day of July, we would be celebrating her fifteenth birthday. At this time my two daughters were living with a young widow, Olga Benke, her 5-year-old son and her sister, Ida Briese.

My daughters were living in abject poverty. They slept in a wooden bed lined with straw and their only covering was a blanket their mother had brought with her from prison. They slept in their day clothes, the only clothes they had. . . . Their diet was very poor also and consisted mainly of potatoes – no meat or eggs. Bread was not available in the stores and was strictly rationed. Katja and Olga both worked in the Kolchos.

At the end of the working day the women often carried home small amounts of wheat that they hid in their skirts or jackets. At home they had to grind this grain by hand, no small task after working a ten-hour day in the Kolchos. There was no artificial light at night except for "smoking saucers," dishes that held a little oil and burning wicks. These lamps usually delivered more smoke and stench than light....

Ministry.

Soon after my arrival in Novoneschenka my two sons Kolja and Waldemar also joined us. This was a great joy for everyone but particularly for me. I hadn't even been able to imagine them as grown-ups. Kolja had been assigned to the Worker's Army and so he was able to spend only a few days of his leave with us. .....

In accordance with my wishes, Katja brought me to a group of believers in Novoneschenka. They were all Russian. This group was led by two elderly brethren, both in their eighties. A younger man was also involved, but he was mainly in charge of the singing. Although I was still physically weak, I was soon recruited to participate in the preaching. This was not easy, as I had to do it in Russian. I didn't even own a Russian Bible at that time. . . Needless to say there was more singing than preaching at these worship services. The group remained small since proselytizing was not permitted.

A New Home, 1947.

Together with the widow, Olga Benke, we enlarged the house so that we could all live together more comfortably, albeit simply. Evenings there were usually animated conversations, often instigated by readings from the Bible.

In spite of this pleasant living arrangement, with the passage of time I realized how lonely I was without my beloved spouse. I prayed to God that He might direct me to someone who would be willing to share the rest of my life with me, someone who would also be a support for my children. My children were relatively young, and I became convinced as time went on that a mother was still needed.

At last I told the children of my plan to travel to Koktschetaw where my relatives lived and there propose marriage to Tina Sukkau, a spinster. My children were not very sympathetic. They were of the opinion that I was too old to enter a new relationship. They felt that they were capable of looking after my needs. Eventually, however, they consented.

December 4, 1947 I set out on my quest.... After a difficult journey I arrived in Karagaj where my relatives lived. Two days later my brother Gerhard managed to get two oxen and a wagon from the Kolchos and we set out for my cousin, Agatha Schmidt's place.

It was here that Nikolaj met Tina Sukkau, her mother and her two spinster sisters among others. His proposal of marriage was made the first time Tina and he were together alone:

After a brief pause, she responded: "How will you know that I was meant to be your wife?"

"I will know this," I answered, "if you tell me that you could learn to love me."

"In that case," she said, "we will have to go our separate ways because I have never loved a man and I feel no love for you either."

These words certainly took the wind out of my sails. I began to have doubts about all the prayers I had offered up specifically with regard to my hopes for a more positive response to my proposal. When I returned to my cousin Agatha's house that evening, they were all singing joyfully. I was invited to join in, but I was more in a mood to sing funeral songs.

The next day I made a few social calls, and before evening I went to old mother Sukkau to bid her farewell.... With this farewell I gave up all hope of remarriage. I told my brother Gerhard that we would be leaving early the next morning.

A Bride.

Next morning, December 11, 1947 I was up bright and early. Suddenly there was a knocking on the window and I heard a woman's voice asking, "Is Nikolaj Reimer still here?"

I went out into the yard.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"I want what you want," she replied. She told me that she had spent a sleepless night agonizing over her decision, but now she was convinced that she should comply with my wishes. Once again I confessed that I was a poor man as far as worldly goods were concerned. She assured me that she was aware of this. . . . On that same day we were legally married and the public celebration of our wedding was set for Sunday, December 14, 1947. Because we were so poor the celebration was indeed a humble affair. . . .

Bringing home one's second wife is very different from bringing home the first. We had prayed that the children might welcome us and, to our great relief, they were all happy to see us. Both Olga and Ida were even addressed my second wife as "mother."

Katharina (1901-96) and Nikolaj Reimer with children Katharina, Elli and Waldemar, Kaschmurn, Kasachstan, 1955.

Persecution.

Reimer goes on to describe the impoverished living conditions and other restrictions he and his family endured during the late 1940s. Although he was no longer in prison, he was constantly reminded that his freedom was not to be taken for granted.

In Kasanbasy two elderly men and a woman were arrested for singing Christmas carols while they kept watch over cattle [*presumably on a Kolkoz or collective farm*]. Someone heard them and reported them. All three were sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Even though the repressions suffered under the Stalinist regime eased somewhat after Stalin's death, basic freedoms that prevailed in the pre-Stalinist era were restored only gradually. Permission to travel, for example, was more easily obtained in the 1950s and as a result Nikolaj and his second wife were able to visit children and relatives who were scattered across the Soviet Union as a result of the purges and subsequent relocations. Freedom to assemble and carry on with worship services also became easier during the '50s. However, as the various Christian congregations began to grow in number, authorities once again became alarmed and took measures to discourage religious assemblies.

One Sunday toward the end of March 1959, a number of persons including the Inspector of Finances attended one of our worship services. During the service they remained silent. At the conclusion, however, they seized the collection plate that contained 30 rubles....

On the 4th of April I was asked to appear before a committee where 9 persons questioned me. First they asked me to sign a document promising that we would no longer assemble as a group. This I could not do, in spite of all their threats. Then I was called before the leader of the Finance Department who offered me an agreement. Two meetings on Sundays, one midweek and one on Saturday came to four meetings per week, he observed. At each meeting he decided we could collect 30 rubles. Then by calculating retroactively he was sure we had collected a considerable sum of money of which he estimated that I would have received one-third. A few days later I received a letter asking me to pay a fine of 22,000 rubles.

This led to a court hearing at which many of the members of my congregation testified that I had not received a single kopeck from any of these collections. Nevertheless, the court found me guilty and required that 20% of my monthly pay be deducted every month until the fine was paid. In 1961, when I became eligible to receive a paltry pension of 45 rubles per month, this fine was rescinded. . . .

When all the threats and scare tactics didn't achieve what the authorities desired (we continued to assemble in our sanctuary in spite of repeated interferences) they demanded that Sister Sara Funk appear before the Village Plenum. Here we were sternly warned again. After a few days a number of officials arrived at Sara Funk's residence with a truck and, notwithstanding all her protests, loaded her belongings, locked up her house, and transported her to the outskirts of the village, to a humble little sod hut that became her refuge. The house that had served as our house of prayer was now no longer open to us. Nevertheless, we were later able to offer up prayers of gratitude for the many blessings experienced there.

Arrested, 1963.

The religious harassment of Reimer's congregation continued intermittently until Reimer was taken to court in March 1963. After three days of hearings, Reimer was sentenced to 1 and1/2 years in prison but was free to return to his home until his appeal could be processed.

My wife and daughter were baffled by the outcome of the trial. "You mean you can return home with us today?" my wife asked. Although it was already late, we stopped at the home of Sister Dueck and together we praised God for my release. Then it was on to my mother-in-law's house. I went to her bed and kissed her. Confused, she asked, "Nikolaj, have you really been set free?" We prayed together and praised God although we were aware that soon I would be in prison again. . . .

The lawyers advised us not to appeal the sentence. They were of the opinion that, judged from a strictly secular and legal point of view, I had every reason to be satisfied with this mild sentence. Because I did not appeal to a higher court, a police officer came for me on April 17, 1963 and took me to the prison in Kushmurin. On the 23rd of April, I was transferred a larger prison in Kustanaj. It is said by some that with time a prison begins to feel like home. However, after 17 years of freedom, a prison looked to me very much like a place for common criminals. Once again I was isolated, exiled. Why? For what purpose? Such thoughts gave me little rest.

Criminals such as smugglers, traitors and so on are not usually offered the job of bookkeeper in a prison. And yet, prisons need bookkeepers too. As my prison documents permitted me to work as bookkeeper, I was given this position even before I had served a month of my sentence.

Prison Labour.

After a stint as bookkeeper and night watchman, Reimer was once again forced to do hard labor, as a member of the infamous "Invalid Brigade."

This brigade was sent out to work every morning. Those winter months were particularly difficult for me as I suffered from insomnia throughout the winter of 1963/64. I would lie awake at night pleading with God to grant me sleep. Mornings I had no choice but to join the others in the brigade. At work I was extremely exhausted and had to struggle to stay awake. Technically it was illegal to force pensioners to join these labor gangs, but it was done nevertheless.

Eventually, my health was so compromised I simply could not muster the strength to get up in the morning. The prison warden called me in for a hearing and tried to persuade me that I was still capable of working, but I simply couldn't. The prison officials were not prepared to consign a pensioner to solitary confinement and so I was excused from daily physical labor for the remaining 3 to 4 months of my sentence.

Although my sentence seemed endless, the last day of my incarceration, October 17,1964 finally came. My family knew of the date of my release and so my son-in-law, J. Dyck and his wife came to the prison to bring me home. I was already waiting at the prison gate when they arrived.... After being isolated for a year and a half, I could once again experience a happy reunion with children, grandchildren and the family of God.

My next desire was to pay a visit to my mother-in-law, 91- year - old Mother Sukkau. Alas, her chair was empty. She had been carried to her grave on October 11, 1964, 6 days

Nikolaj Reimer with grandchildren: l.-r., rear, Nikolaj Reimer (today pastor of the Mennonite Church in Lemgo, Germany, Adina Reger, Elfriede Reger; front, Elli Reger, Peter Dyck (on grandfather's lap), Johann Reimer, Katharina Dyck (on grandpa's lap), Wladimir Reimer and Rita Reger, Kuschmurun, Kazakstan, ca. 1960. All photos for this article are courtesy of A. Reger, editor of her grandfather's memoirs.

before my release. Following the persecution of 1962, many members of our congregation had fled to parts unknown. Our children, Waldemar and Rita, were still in exile, and we could not count on their return to their former home. In the meantime, we continued serving those members of the congregation who were still left. Eventually, at the urging of our children, we also left Kuschmurin and moved to Amankaragaj [Kazakstan].

A Beating.

Reimer's final release from Soviet prisons did not lead immediately to a life of peaceful retirement:

In 1965, late autumn, conditions seemed to be generally more settled and quiet. November 9th was the date of my wife's birthday, and on that day we were visited by my sister Sara and my wife's sisters, Mariechen and Lydia. In the evening, Lydia and I decided we would attend a Bible study meeting. About halfway to our destination a young girl, eight or nine years of age, met us, screaming, "Quickly, run away! Gypsy robbers are after me with knives and they're going to kill me!" While we were still trying to decide what to do, the child disappeared down the darkening street. Before we could react to this news a young man suddenly appeared and threatened me with a knife. To protect myself, I grasped the knife and in doing so I suffered a severe cut to my hand. In an instant a second robber appeared, threw me to the ground, and began beating me on the head. I thought I would lose consciousness. There was nothing I could do to defend myself. "Run for you life, Lydia!" I shouted. After that, all I could do was pray: "God, in your mercy, take me to you!"

As suddenly as the beating had started, it stopped. Bloodied and bruised, I managed to get up off the ground. The murderers had vanished. Had they seen a frightening apparition? Only heaven could reveal why they had accosted me and then had decided to spare me. In the meantime Lydia had returned. She had run for help but had not been able to find anyone. I was cradling my wounded right hand closely to my bloodstained right side. My left hand was also bleeding. Lydia quickly escorted me to the home of Mariechen Fast. . . .

Eventually friends took Reimer to the local hospital where he was treated for a chest wound and severe lacerations to the head and hand.

I suffered great pain and spent several sleepless nights because of these injuries. "Why this as well, O God?" I couldn't help asking. Eventually these physical wounds healed also.

Granddaughter's Tribute.

Adina Reger, Nikolaj Reimer's granddaughter, pays tribute to her grandfather in the epilogue:

Our grandfather, Nikolaj Reimer, like so many Mennonites in the Soviet Union, hoped all his life that one day he would be able to move to the Republic of West Germany, the home of his ancestors. Unfortunately, this wish was never granted. However, his children Katja, Waldemar and Elli, as well as his daughter-in-law Magda together with all their next of kin were able migrate to the West.... Our grandfather's life was a special blessing and example for all of his descendants. His home was a place where life was appreciated to the fullest. Here was a place where we found work, sorrow, comfort, tranquillity but, above all else, a genuine concern for others. Here we saw the daily practice of divine love and forgiveness, conduct that served as a model for his entire family.

Grandfather's life was always spiritual in orientation and his attention entirely focused on his desire to please Almighty God. His life was always exemplary and like the sun, warmed and sustained us even when he was silent....

On the 17th of April, 1977 grandfather suffered a heart attack. On the 20th of April, 1977 he was called to his heavenly home. He had looked forward to that moment with great anticipation. For his epitaph he requested his personal motto: "Grace, only by grace and entirely by God's grace."

Nur Aus Gnaden.

Readers interested in the story of Rev. Nikolai Reimer, may read his edited memoirs in the book, *Nur Aus Gnaden: Errinnerungen* (Lemgo, Germany, 1996), 160 pages, published by his Granddaughter Adina Reger, Weiszenthurm, Germany, in 1996 in loving memory and in sincere appreciation of her heroic grandfather. See book review by Jacok Pries, Winnipeg, in *Preservings*, No. 17, pages 139-140.

Further Reading:

Colin Neufeldt, "The Flight to Moscow, 1929," in *Pres.*, No. 19, pages 33-47.

Translator's Comments:

Some time ago, I received the booklet *Nur Aus Gnaden* ("Only by Grace"), the memoirs of Nikolaj Reimer. I found this to be an interesting story. It tells us a good deal about various Mennonite responses to the Stalinist purges and the persecution of ethnic minorities during the 1930s and 40s.. Reimer's response, his refusal to betray his fellow men and women, both before and after his imprisonment, was indeed admirable. Reimer's account reveals an uncommon will to survive. It's hard to believe that a person could live through all that and not succumb to bitterness or resentment.

As I read this book I kept thinking that this man was an almost exact contemporary of my father, a pastor and bishop in the West Reserve from 1935 until his death in 1961. My father and his extended family escaped a similar fate simply because they were able to emigrate in 1926, three years before Reimer's unsuccessful attempts.

I have translated excerpts from this book to share this courageous story with the readers of *Preservings*. It is not a continuous narrative because I summarize, whenever necessary, parts that I have omitted....

Nikolaj Reimer was fortunate to have a granddaughter who took an interest in his story and with the publication of this little book also managed to preserve it.

Translator "Peter Pauls"

51 Rutgers Bay, Winnipeg, Canada, R3T 3C9.

Tamara (Dagmar) Djakonowa, nee Klassen

Reminiscences of Tamara (Dagmar) Djakonowa, nee Klassen, Marganez, Ukraine, written by Adina Reger, Weißenthurm, Germany.

Tamara (Dagmar) Djakonowa, nee Klassen, has written: "If I would record my life's story, it would be very repetitive, for the tragedy of the Germans in Russia was and continues to be very similar." For this reason Dagmar writes only about certain episodes in her life which are unforgettable to her. Adina Reger

Katharina (Loewen) and Abram Kroeker, Halbstadt, 1924. All photos for this article are courtesy of Dagmar Klassen and Katharina Kröker-Suprunowa, Marganez, Ukraine.

Introduction.

I, Dagmar (later I called myself Tamara) Klassen, was born on November 29, 1928, in the Mennonite hospital in Halbstadt, Molotschna, founded by Franz Wall. Franz Wall, together with a number of others were driven out onto the fields and shot.

My parents, Maria nee Loewen (b. 1898) and Peter Klassen (b. Nov. 9, 1897, in Melitopol) both worked as teachers for six years in Tiegerweide, close to Halbstadt. Circa 1925 they married in Melitopol. In 1932 they moved to Olgino, 18 km. distant from Berdjansk. Here I attended school and for three years the German school. German instruction in the schools was forbidden in 1938. In 1941 I completed the seventh grade here.

I was born to a family where the most of the members (eight persons) were teachers: Grandfather Loewen, his two daughters and their husbands, two adopted daughters and one adopted son.

On September 7, 1941, they came and picked up my father (a mathematics teacher) from the classroom and sent him to Charkow. Later he came to the city of Iwdelj in the Urals, where he died already in December.

Escape from Berdjansk.

On October 7, 1941, our family and also many others from Berdjansk where transported to Mariupol with a barge. There was no other way, for the German Wehrmacht was already in the area and the residents had to flee. We were herded onto an open barge where many hundreds - and possibly also thousands - of people had gathered: Germans, Bulgarians, Greeks, Jews, Ukrainians, Russians, party functionaries and non-party people. This was the last chance to escape the German soldiers who were already occupying Berdjansk.

Three huge barges with sugar, sheep, and other provisions, were sunk right in front of our eyes. During the night and during the day 13 bombs were dropped on three other barges, but not a single bomb hit us. The people waved with towels and bed sheets, but the bombs continued to "rain" from heaven. A storm arose upon the sea and we had to anchor in the middle of the Asowschen Sea for the entire night for otherwise our barge would have tipped over and sank.

Towards morning an attack fighter plane came by. Everyone prepared themselves for their death. Suddenly the captain on the bridge shouted out: "Women, pray!" He had already lost a ship in this manner earlier.

And God heard our prayers. The pilot dove down and as he approached our barge, he waggled his wings (all of us were screaming), and flew on!!! This experience is unforgettable for me.

Kasachstan.

We came to the village of Bannowka, District of Kustanaj, Kasachstan, where I was able to complete the eighth and ninth grades. Since teachers were in short supply at this time, a two year pedagogical course was offered in the Pedagogical Institute in the city of Kustanaj for students who had completed grades nine and ten. I was registered at the Institute in 1944 and completed the course in 1946.

I was the only German enroled at the Institute, since following my father's papers, I was entered as "Dutch" in my personal identity documents. This is what saved me at the time. On this basis I was freed by Kliment Efremowitsch Woroschilow from the Kommandatur (NKVD) authority in 1955, a year sooner than the other Germans. My mother was appointed as the German teacher at the Bannowskaja School in 1942. After the completion of my course I was also

Katharina Löwen, 1918-1919.

Peter Klassen, student in Berdjansk, 1915-1916. He was the father of Dagmar Klassen Djakonowa. He was the son of Jak. Klassen, the owner of the flour mills in Melitopol.

Katharina (Löwen) and Alex Suprunowa, 1964.

The Löwen house in Halbstadt, view from the inner courtyard.

Front right: Katharina (Löwen) Kröker-Suprunowa. Front left, Dagmar Klassen, the niece of Katharina. Photo taken in Tokmak, Ukraine.

allowed to work in the Bannowskaja School. In 1956 I graduated from the pedagogical advanced studies in the city of Uralsk. I was now a teacher of Literature and the Russian language.

Ukraine, 1962.

For the entire time, my homesickness for the Ukraine was so great that in the year 1962 I left everything in the Kustanaj District and moved back to the Ukraine, in the city of Marganez. Acquaintances here had arranged a teaching position for me. I arrived in Marganez on August 20, 1962, and already on August 31 I took up my new position of employment in the youth evening school.

In 1965 I married a Djakonow and in 1966 we moved back to the Kustanaj District, Region of Fedorowskij, working on the Sowchose (state farm) "Fedorowskij". In 1966 my mother and her sister Tina moved to Alma-Ata and lived there until 1978. Then they moved to live with my brother Heinrich, who worked as the Director of the Sowchose "Nautschnyj", district of Komsomolshij. This Sowchose was an experimental station for new varieties of grain. Mother died there in 1978.

In 1972 we moved to Marganez where I taught as a teacher for the German and Russian languages and Literature.

In 1985 my husband died. Subsequently I moved Aunt Tina to my place in Marganez. My husband Djakonow was a very sweet, loving person, but he drank too often which caused me much pain for my entire life. We had no children. Today (2001) I have already been a widow for 16 years.

Mennonite Church.

Even before I ever was a member of the Gemeinde, my aunt Tina said to me, "Can you invite a pastor to the house for me?"

"Where shall I find a pastor?" I asked. "Shall I go to the train station in Zaporozhe and scream, `Where is there a pastor here?'"

In 1992 Tante Tina's nephew Jakob Gossen from Canada and Heinrich Ehemann from Germany visited us. We had already been exchanging letters with the father of Jakob Gossen, a married-together brother of Tante Tina. He regularly sent us "Der Bote".

In March, 1997, the "Bote" contained an article with a report by Peter Kehler regarding the baptism in the Mennonite Church in Zaporozhe. The address of the pastor was also given. Immediately I wrote him a letter. It took four days for my letter to get to Zaporozhe even though Marganez is only 70-80 km. distant. During this time the pastor family of Peter Kehler had returned back to Canada and Frank Dyck, the new pastor, had come. Since my letter was addressed to Peter Kehler, F. Dyck forwarded my letter to Peter Kehler in Canada. Finally I received the telephone number for F. Dyck from him and I also phoned Frank immediately. The very next day we visited Frank and Nettie Dyck. This was on Wednesday, the 23rd of July 1997. On July 27 I was already attending the worship services in the Mennonite Gemeinde in Zaporozhe.

Halbstadt 1917. *Rear: l.-r., Heinrich Löwen, father of Katharina, and brother Kornelius, right. Front: l.-r., Aganetha (Gossen) Löwen, Mrs. Dück and Anna (Löwen) Löwen). The latter two are sisters to the Loewen brothers.*

Baptism, 1997.

The second important experience in my life was when I was baptised on August 3, 1997, together with six other persons from our Gemeinde. One can hardly imagine: completely in the open and without fear, we were baptised by our pastor Frank Dyck and Arno Timm (a pastor from Holland). This was such an experience in my life that I wept for joy and rejoiced. After all these prohibitions under which we had suffered in Russia until now, and suddenly these freedoms: one needs to pray often.

Ever since this day I have regularly attended the worship services and serve in the Gemeinde as translator of the sermons from German to Russian. Once a month we were visited by Frank and Nettie and presently by the pastor family Unrau.

Presently.

At the present time, I live in the city of Marganez, Ukraine, together with my aunt Katharina (Tina) Kroeker, nee Loewen, who reached the age of 102 on the 23rd of May, 2002. Both of us have been engaged as teachers for our entire lives. We celebrated Tante Tina's 100th birthday at our place together with a number of members of the Gemeinde who also had birthdays in May: Dorothy Unrau (May 26) and Lydia Berg (May 20). Such gatherings are always very happy, with prayers and songs, which we bring forth to the honour of our God. We are blessed to belong to this Gemeinde.

There would certainly be much more to write about. I had only one more wish - to emigrate to Germany. I have been waiting for the emigration approval since 1993. But since my ancestors had allowed themselves to be recorded as "Dutch" in their Passports, now Germany does not wish to accept us. But I have not lost hope. Tante Tina received her immigration papers in 1993 already, but she does not want to emigrate without me.

Katharina (Lowen) Suprunowa (b. 1900)

Written by Katharina (Lowen) Suprunowa herself at the age of 102.

Heinrich Loewen.

I was born on May 23, 1900, into a teaching family. My father Heinrich Lowen came from Muntau. My mother Sara, nee Sudermann, from Melitopol. After their marriage in 1897? my parents moved to the Crimea. All three children were born in the Crimea: Maria 1889, Tina 1900 and a brother in 1903.

During the birth of my brother, my mother suffered a stroke and was lamed. At that time father was a teacher in Neu-Schirin, Crimea. The lameness could not be completely cured even though mother had spent an entire year in the hospital of Dr. Weidenbaum. She was indeed able to walk again but the left foot dragged a little and the left hand remained completely powerless. I was three years old at the time and could not understand everything, but it was something quite exceptional for me that my father would brush my hair and that mother did not come home. I never saw my mother well again.

We lived here until 1905 to 1906 after which we moved back to Halbstadt. Mother died in 1912. She suffered a kidney attack and died four hours later.

Whenever father was without work we had to move elsewhere. Father, who looked after us, found a teaching position in Sofiewka (ca. 1913), a Mennonite village. Heinrich Neufeld had a factory there. We only lived here one year and then father was offered a teaching position in Halbstadt (ca.1914) because the existing teacher had been drafted into the service. Now father was close to his mother. He taught in this school for three years until the old teacher returned from his service.

Remarriage, 1915.

In 1915 father married for the second time in a marriage to Aganetha Gossen. She was loving and good to us. Now I was again able to attend the high school. They moved to Muntau into a dwelling. Our second mother was a old maid and had lived with her sick brother for many years. The brother lived on an estate. He died of cancer and his wife (Katharina, nee Neufeld) asked her sister-in-law (our second mother) to stay with her. Unfortunately [for her], Aganetha married my father.

One day the Machno band visited another brother of our second mother on his estate (he was a Neufeld), while he was sitting outside his front door with his guests. The bandits pulled out their sabres and cut all of their heads off, even the eight-month old child. The oldest daughter, who had witnessed all this through the window, grabbed her little brother by the hand and ran off into the woods. Later, when they returned home, they found the corpses of their dear ones.

Gymnasium,

In 1917 we again moved away from Halbstadt to a village in the district of Mariupol, where father received a teaching position. Two years later (ca. 1919) father was again offered a teaching position in Halbstadt. My sister and myself were accepted into the Mädchenschule (girls' school), from which we graduated three years later (ca. 1922) after which we were accepted into the high school (Gymnasium) in Tokmak. Father found it very difficult without mother and us two daughters. After five classes in Tockmak I had to remain at home for one year and my sister was again able to attend the high school.

We finished the high school and became teachers, at first in Halbstadt, then in Sagradowka, and then in Tokmak. When we fled to Poland in 1943 I worked there for two years in a German school. Then we arrived in Germany but were captured by the Russian

Aganetha (Gossen) and Heinrich Löwen, Halbstadt, 1912.

Theatre drama "Neuzuczayaps" or "Iwan Susanin" presented in the Mädchenschule (girls' school) in Halbstadt, 1914. Left, middle: Katharina Löwen, born 1900.

military. This was a hard time. We were again gathered together and we were told we would be returned to our homes. Regrettably it was all a lie - we were brought to the Urals. Here we worked in the woods. In 1947, because of a shortage of teachers, we were again allowed to work as teachers.

Later I found my sister and we moved to the city of Alma-Ata and lived there for 13 years. Then we moved to my sister's son where she died in 1948. The daughter of my sister, Dagmar, took me to her home and looked after me like a "daughter".

The beloved God has looked after me.

Tamara (Dagmar) Djakonowa, nee Klassen (left) and her 102 year old aunt Katharina (Lowen) Suprunowa (b. 1900). Photo - Adina Reger, August 2002.

Löwen house in Halbstadt, 1935.

Mädchenschule in Halbstadt. Front right: Katharina Löwen (b. 1900). Rear, left, the first in the row is sister Maria.

Material Culture

Village Nicknames Among the Mennonites in Russia

"Village Nicknames Among the Mennonites in Russia,
by Gerhard Wiens, reprinted with permission from *Mennonite Life*, October 1970, pages 177-180.

Introduction.

Even though the culture of our Mennonite settlements in Russia was largely German, several factors, in the course of the generations, set us apart from the people of the country of our origin. They were: very limited contact with German, our isolation within the Russian environment, our district way of life, and the recognition of our Low German dialect as our "Mennonite" mother tongue. We realized more and more how different we were from all other Germans and we eventually became the *Mennonitenvolk*. We were *Menniste*-not just a religious group, but a people.

The period of our growth as a people (roughly the 19th century) was long enough to allow the evolution of a folklore of our own (Note One). A fascinating and rather distinctive element of our folklore was the Low German nicknames which we gave to our villages.

Nicknames.

It would seem the every one of our villages had a nickname. I had always remembered the nickname of my own village (Lindenau, in the Molotschna settlement) and those of our neighbors, but had forgotten any others I ever knew. Fascinated by the robust humor which lives in these ingenious and often bizarre creations of the popular imagination, I decided some years ago to make a study of them or at least to save as many as I could from oblivion. Since my articles concerning our life and folklore which had been appearing in the *Bote* had elicited warm responses from readers who fondly remembered the olden times, I issued a call for our village nicknames.

I wrote the article in Low German and gave it a title which would startle any old-timer from Russia into reading it: *Rollkoakeschluckasch, Piezjeriedasch enn Prachabraodasch* (Note Two). These were the nicknames which I had remembered. I told my readers what I knew about the tradition and asked them to write me what they remembered. I had to justify my request as part of a serious scholarly endeavor, for I knew that many would consider our ludicrous nicknames unworthy of a scholar's attention, however fond of them they might be themselves. Despite this, one great-grandmother chided me gently, saying a professor should have better things to write about than such foolish names. And she sent me not one foolish name.

But others did. Within a few weeks I had received more than a dozen letters, some of them half a dozen pages long. The response was heartwarming, the letters delightful, and their writers obviously delighted. When I compiled the information received, I had the nicknames of all the villages of my own vicinity and about twenty more from both our "mother colonies" (i.e., the two original colonies: Chortitza, the "Old Colony," settled in 1789; and Molotschna, begun in 1804). I also received explanations of the origin of some nicknames, reports of customs associated with them, and some related stories. By the way, the kinship between our Low German word *Etjenaome* and the English "nickname" is fascinating: "nickname" comes from the older "a nekename", a corruption of *an ekename*; *eke*, meaning "also", is a cognate of High German *auch* and Low German *etje*, which occurs only in *Etjenaome*; a nickname thus is an additional name, an "also-name", as it were, an *Auch-Name*.

Village Nicknames.

But here is a sampling of our village nicknames. Our string of thirteen villages, my own Lindenau lying about the middle, had these nicknames:
Altenau – *Haowamies* (oat mice)
Münsterberg – *Dwoajbiedels* (bags of curds)
Blumstein – *Bobbatstjarschte* (*bobbat* crusts; *bobbat* – a meat pastry)
Lichtenau – *Prachabraodasch, Prachawaste* (beggar roasters, beggar vests)
Lindenau – *Rollkoake, Rollkokeschluckasch* (roll cakes, roll cake swallowers)
Fischau – *Piezja, Piezjeriedasch* (frogs, frog riders)
Schönau – *Krauntjemaltjasch* (crane milkers)
Tiegenhagen – *Heatjt, Heatjteriedasch* (pike, pike riders)
Muntau – *Krauje, Tjirre, Kraujeschluwe, Kraujenasta* (crows, crows' shells or hulls, crows' nests)
Halbstadt – *Rode Hunj* (red dogs)
Neu-Halbstadt – *Glomsbiedels* (cottage cheese bags)
Petershagen – *Tjräft, Tjräftschluwe* (crayfish, crayfish shells)
Ladekopp – *Koape, Koapedoarms* (carp, carp guts)

The exuberance of the imagination in these names and their realism identiry them as true products of the people. How old these nicknames are we cannot say, but my oldest correspondents (in their eighties) remembered them from their childhood. One correspondent suggested that they arose during the *Podwodentiet* ("carting time"), that is, during the Crimean War (1855), when our great-grandfathers supplied and transported large amounts of food to the Russian army. Young men from all the villages of both colonies were thrown together for the first time, and natural rivalry and local patriotism led to more or less good-natured raillery. It could be that this meeting gave impetus to the proliferation of nicknames, but it was not the cause. Local pride and various degrees of antagonism toward others have been part of social psychology ever since there were tribes or units of human habitation. (Witness the feuding between Fort Worth and Dallas, between California and Florida). Our nicknames were products of the eternal human contest.

From the Molotschna colony I can account for 13 nicknames besides the 13 in my own row of villages, a total of 26 out of 58 possible names. These others are:
Alexanderwohl – *Krauje* (crows)
Blumenort – *Huppupsnasta, Kuckucksnasta, Kurreijoalinja* (hoopoes' nests, cuckoos' nests, Russian thistle yearling colts)
Franztal – Kwaustreddasch (Kvastriders)
Friedensdorf – *Prachawaste* (beggars' vests)
Fürstenwerder – *Huppsfleaje* (fleas)
Gnadental – *Forzvesaola* (though amusing, the name is too crude for translation)
Grossweide – Bolleleidasch (bull leaders)
Hierschau – *Kosefelt* (goat field)
Konteniusfeld – Kosifelda (goatfielders)
Landskrone – *Kraujenasta* (crows' nests)
Ohrloff – *Prachawaste* (beggars' vests)
Pastwa – Paunkoake (Pancakes)
Pordenau – *Komstgnoagasch* (cabbage chewers)
Rosenort – *Kraujenasta, Schmauntletjasch, Schmauntangeltjes, Rotkoppje Distle* (crows' nests, cream lickers, cream anglers, redheaded thistles)
Rückenau – *Noadspogge* (north frogs)
Rudnerweide – *Suri Kruschtje* (Sour Wild Pears)
Sparrau – *Spoalinja* (sparrows)
Tiege – *Huppupsnasta, Kuckucksnasta* (hoopoes' nests, cuckoos' nests)
Tiegerweide – *Aotpoaschintjes* (stork hams)

From the Old Colony I received the following nicknames:
Chortitza – *Hunjsbroade* (roast dog)
Einlage – *Welsgnoagasch* (catfish gnawers or chewers)
Kronsweide – *Poggeleidasch* (frog leaders)
Neu-Chortitza – *Aufjebroakne Massasch* (broken-off knives)
Neuenburg – *Deiwschlappasch* (dew draggers)
Neuendorf – *Rollkoake, Jäwelbräda* (roll cakes, gable boards)
Nieder-Chortitza – *Tscherkesse* (Circassians)
Osterwick – *Moadeschietasch* ("maggot flies" is a polite translation)
Rosental – *Kruschtjekwaus* (wild pear kvass, a sour drink)
Schöneberg – *Krauntjemaltjasch, Utjeblajhte Fuppe* (crane milkers, tin-lined pockets)
Schönhorst – *Bobbatstjarschte met Fiasteena* ("bobbat" crusts with flint-stones)

For one of the villages of Memrik, an older daughter colony, I received the nickname *Kwausdrintjasch*. There, it was said, a party could get high on five kopecks worth of *kvass*.

The sources of our village nicknames seem obvious in some cases and quite puzzling in others. Local conditions of life or landscape could be expected to give rise to descriptive names. For example, I am sure that our neighbors, the good people of Fischau, were the *Piezja or Piezjeriedasch*, i.e., the frogs or frog riders, because the village was half surrounded by ponds with a million frogs in them

whose croaking on balmy summer evenings drowned out the song of the nightingales. Tiegenhagen, according to one correspondent, was called *Heatjt* or *Heatjteriedasch* because the pike in the Molotschna River flowing by it were big enough for the people to ride on. Muntau was teased with *Krauje* or *Kraujenasta* because, even though we all had woods with innumerable crows' nests in them, in this village the woods were situated right by the main road at one end of the village, not behind the farmsteads and away from the road as in the other villages, and every traveler passing through Muntau was made aware of its abundance of crows and their nests.

My 83-year-old correspondent from Blumenort surmised that the inhabitants were call *Kurreijoalinja*, Russian thistle colts, because a short distance from her village a Siberian-olive hedge ran all the way across the steppe and, during the long days of wind in autumn, dead Russian thistle plants in the shape of huge rolling tumbleweeds would collect against it to form a wall of great height. However, she wondered plaintively, why particularly colts, why not for instance calves or heifers?

The Old Colony village of Neuenburg had the nickname *Deiwschlappasch*, dew draggers, because, being situated in a deep valley, it had frequent heavy morning fog, and the villagers often had to hitch their horses to a contraption of boards to drag the fog out of the village.

Food and Nicknames.

The other most common source of the nicknames was the food known or assumed to be the favorite of the village. We Lindenauers were the *Rollkoake*, roll cakes, which were thin squares of dough, fried in deep fat, which expanded into balloons of crispy goodness and were particularly delicious with watermelon. As in many other cases, our nickname appeared in both the plain and the adorned form: *Rollkoake* and *Rollkoakeschluckasch* (swallowers or devourers). The same tendency to embellish is apparent in *Piezjeriedasch, Heatjteridasch, Krauntjemaltjasch, Tjräftschluwe, Prachabraodasch, Koapedoarms* and others. Other names derived from foods were: *Dwoajbiedels, Bobbatstjarschte, Glomsbiedels, Komstgnoagasch, Schmauntlejasch*, and *Welsgnoagasch*.

Some nicknames seem to have come from a corruption or a mockery of the village's name. The *kopp* in Ladekopp seemingly was corrupted into *koap*, though this presupposes an abysmal lack of sensitivity to shadings in sound. Similarly, one of the nicknames of Rosenort being *Rotkoppje Distle*, my guess is that "redheaded thistles" is an attempt to ridicule Rosenort ("Roseville", as it were) as the place not of roses but of thistles.

I know of two cases where the nicknames were invented to rhyme with the name of the village: *Kronswieda - Poggeleida* and *Jnoadentaola* (Gnadental) – *Forzvesaola*.

For several of the remaining nicknames my correspondents offered more or less farfetched explanations. The origin of these names remains a mystery, all the more impenetrable for such outlandish ones as *Prachabraoda*, roaster of beggars; *Krauntjemaltjasch*, crane milkers; *Aotpoaschintjes*, stork hams; *Aufjebroakne Massasch*, knives with tips broken off.

It is of interest to note how many different nicknames were sometimes showered upon one village. On the other hand, the same appellation was often given to a number of villages. One correspondent reported a very deserving nickname but regretfully conceded that he could not vouch for its authenticity: *Mesttjniepasch* (manure beetles).

While we may see the psychological explanation of our village nicknames in the age-old antagonism between tribes and localities, the vigor of our creativity was probably due to our extreme clannishness. Not only did we shun contact with the surrounding Russian population and even, to a considerable extent, with our non-Mennonite German neighbors; the circumstances of our life also encouraged some isolation of every village from its neighbors. There was so little social contact that children and youths of different villages, when they did chance to meet, kept their distance or approached one another with reserve or a chip on their shoulders. When such hostile camps faced each other, it was not long before those insulting nicknames started flying across no-man's land. Further developments of the encounter might range form a tiresome repetition of the insults or variants thereof to a *Tjielerie*, a donnybrook.

Wit and Folklore.

It seemed immensely funny to our people when some wit would rise to the occasion and provide a clever twist to the hoary nickname or extemporize an apt application to the situation at hand. Writes one correspondent: As a teenager I was standing with a schoolmate one afternoon, in the late nineties, by the gate of my grandfather's place in Tiege (the *Kuckucksnasta*, cuckoo nests). A sleigh full of youths and girls from Blumenort (the Russian thistle colts) drove by and a young man shouted to us, "Boys, go inside, or you'll freeze fast to the cuckoo droppings!" My pal shot back, "We'll cover ourselves with Russian thistles!"

My delightful correspondent goes on to report: The people of Petershagen were teased with "crayfish shells". When someone driving through the village would show the people on the street, with his fingers, the sign of what crayfish do with their claws, then it was not certain he would get out of that village with a whole hide.

One old correspondent relates a story from her mother's youth: My mother and her brother were driving toward Fürstenwerder, the village of the fleas (*Huppsfleaje*), and were nearing the opening of the street where the village herd was customarily driven out to pasture. When they saw a couple of boys approaching, my mother said in a loud voice to her brother, "Look, they're driving the fleas out to pasture!" The brother had to apply the whip to the horses promptly to get out from under the rain of clods which was descending upon them.

To be sure, the teasing was often quite good-natured and, as a matter of fact, mutually appreciated. Writes one *Oltkolnia*: We of Einlage, situated on the Dnieper which was full of the best fish, were called the catfish or catfish gnawers and actually we were proud of it. The land of Neuendorf bordered on ours and the Neuendorf road went past our fields. The people of Neuendorf were the roll cakes. One noonday when my uncle was sitting by the roadside at the edge of his field eating his lunch which consisted of roll cakes and watermelon, a boy from Neuendorf came along the road. "Boy," my uncle called to him, "would you like a roll cake?" Came back the prompt rejoinder, "Sir, do you have a piece of catfish to go with it?" My uncle had a sense of humor and liked to tell the story about the alert boy.

The jeering tale is a natural companion to nicknames of localities. Out of several which I received I select one. Variants of it were sent me by three correspondents. Two could not identify the village and one did so with uncertainty. This village, it seems, had no clocks, but the people knew how to help themselves. With a long rope they tied a boar to a pole outside the village. When the boar, while grazing or just from boredom, had wandered around the pole enough times to have wound all the rope around it - then the time was noon. Between noon and evening he obligingly unwound himself again - and it was quitting time. Some rationalist, dissatisfied with the story's implausibility in relying upon a hog's perambulations, changed the story so that now the boar was being driven, and not around a pole but a thick tree. The third version let him graze again, but tied him to a big wild-pear tree.

We had another derisive tale which Rabelais, I believe, would not have been ashamed to allow for his own, but I am not Rabelais enough to publish it. Hence no tale, only the observation that in it our two colonies ridiculed one another in an identical story: whoever the teller was, it was always the other colony which was made the butt of the joke - a case of patent plagiarism which speaks ill for the teller but well for the tale.

Conclusion.

In conclusion let me share with you a peek into the very workshop of folklore. At least such it seemed to me. I felt I was witnessing the birth of a legend when I read in this correspondent's letter how he had invented many a jeering tale himself in self-defense. He, a Molotschner, had marred an *Oltkolnia* and had lived in the Old Colony afterwards. The only Molotschner among all these Old Colonists, he had lain awake nights thinking up ways to counter their nasty attacks. Out of a number of his tales I select one which shows the characteristics that would make it indistinguishable from a folktale. Its background is the historical fact that our ancestors, who came to settle the Molotschna villages in 1804, wintered in the Old Colony on their way from Prussia. Now, according to my correspondent, during that winter an Old Colonist had stolen a wheelbarrow from a Molotschner's wagon. With the aid of that wheelbarrow the thief, and by and by all the Old Colonists, learned to walk on their hind legs.

Endnotes:

Note One: Cf. my article, "Volkskunde der Ruszlandmennoniten," *Der Bote*, March 19, 26 and April 3, 1958.

Note Two: *Der Bote*, Oct. 21, 1961.

About the Author:

Gerhard Wiens emigrated from Soviet Russia as a young man in the 1920s. He served as Professor of Russian at the University of Oklahoma, in Norman, Oklahoma. (see *Preservings*, No. 23, page 132). He passed away ca. 1965.

Mennonite Bibles and Bible Translations

"Mennonite Bibles and Bible Translations,"
by Walter Klaassen, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, reprinted from *Mennonite Life*, July 1964. pages 117-124.

Froschauer Bible.

Mennonites have through the centuries for the most part used the standard translations and versions of the Bible. The Dutch Mennonites have used the *Statenvertaling*, the German-speaking Luther's translation, and English- speaking Mennonites the King James Version. There were, however, two versions, one Swiss and the other Dutch [Flemish], which can be described as Mennonite Bibles, although neither of them was a Mennonite translation.

The first is the Froschauer Bible, so-called because it was published by Christoph Froschauer, Zurich printer and publisher. The version was that prepared by Zwingli and his aides between *1524* and 1529 on the basis of Luther's work. It differed from Luther mainly in word order and vocabulary since the German spoken in Zurich differed considerably from the German of Luther's translation. For some reason, perhaps the familiarity of the dialect, the Swiss Brethren preferred this original version to others and continued to use it long after it went out of use in the Swiss Reformed Church. From 1588 onwards reprints were made in Basel and elsewhere especially for Anabaptists. A Froschauer New Testament was reprinted in America in 1787 for Mennonites in Pennsylvania.

Biestkens Bible.

The second is the Biestkens Bible, again called by the name of its printer, Nikolaes Biestkens of Emden and member of the Mennonite congregation there. This Bible was a Dutch version printed especially by Biestkens for the members of his brotherhood in 1560. The basis for this version appears to have been a Low German version done by Jacobus van Liesveldt, and published in Antwerp in 1526. Mennonites continued to used this Bible in spite of the fact that an official Dutch translation, approved by the Reformed Synod, had been published in 1556.

The Biestkens Bible went through as many as one hundred printings at Amsterdam and elsewhere. It was published again by the Dutch ëmigrés in West Prussia near Danzig, some copies of the Bible finding their way to Russia in the 18th century and thence to America in the 19th. In some congregations in Holland it continued to be used into the 19th century, but has since been replaced completely by the more accurate *Statenvertaling*.

Mennonites have from the beginning insisted that they were more biblical than some other Christians but they have done relatively little in a practical way to prove this contention. Mennonites have produced no great biblical scholars to date [1964], and, as can be seen from the following notes, can show only isolated cases of solid achievement in the biblical field in the course of 440 years. Such achievement as there has been should, however, be recognized.

Psalms Chapter 22-26 from the Biestkens Bible first printed in 1560. Courtesy of John D. Tiessen, MLA, Bethel College, Newton, Kansas.

Bible Translations.

Three outstanding efforts at Bible translation by Mennonites deserve attention, connected with the names of Hans Denck, Pieter Jansz and Rodolphe Petter.

Hans Denck (1500-27) was one of the best-educated Anabaptist leaders in the 16th century. In the course of his university years he acquired a good knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. This enabled him to assist Ludwig Haetzer in translating the Old Testament prophets into German. The work was begun towards the end of 1526 when Haetzer and Denck were both in Strassburg, and completed in 1527 in Worms. The translation was a good one, and according to the judgment of one 20th century expert on Luther's Bible translation, in some instances an improvement on Luther's own German style as seen in his first New Testament. Luther, who had not yet translated the prophets at this time, complimented the zeal and workmanship of Haetzer and Denck, and was stimulated by the appearance of their translation to complete his own work.

The work first appeared on April 13, 1527 and within four years it was reprinted 11 times. It was used extensively during the years 1527-1532 because it was the only Reformation translation in existence. As soon as the Lutheran and the Swiss translations appeared, however, the "Worms Prophets" were totally rejected, never to experience a renaissance. The reason for this total rejection, writes Gerhard Goeters, is not because the translation was philologically deficient, but because both Haetzer and Denck belonged to the Anabaptist movement and held theological views that diverged from those of Luther and Zwingli. And yet, says Goeters, it must be admitted that this translation influenced both the Lutheran and Zwinglian translations in that it was for them the main text next to the originals. More cannot be claimed....

[Editor's Note: The last part of the article dealing with a number of 19th and 20th century translations of the Bible into various foreign languages has been omitted].

The Story of the Flemish Biestkens Bible

"The Story of the Flemish Biestkens Bible, as told by Christian Neff, in the *Mennonite Encylopedia*, Vol. One, pages 340-341, and *Mennonitische Lexikon*, Vol. One, pages 220-221.

Biestkens Bible, the designation of the Bible printed by Nikolaes Biestkens, printer of Emden and member of the Mennonite congregation there, which was for many years the Bible commonly used by the Dutch [Flemish] Mennonites, therefore also known as the *Dooperbibel* (Keller, *Waldenser, 155).*

Before 1560 the [Flemish] Mennonites of Holland, like the Reformed and Lutherans, used a Low German Bible, which was based on the old Cologne translation from the Vulgate, and was published by the famous printer Jacobus van Liesveldt (q. *v.),* in Antwerp in 1526. Menno Simons and his coworkers apparently used the East Frisian edition of the Luther translation prepared by Bugenhagen *(1545);* in addition they consulted the Erasmus translation of the New Testament (published in Delft in 1524) and the High German Strasbourg and Zurich edition (see S. Muller in *DJ* 1837, 64 ff.).

In 1556 and again in 1559 a new Dutch translation of the Bible was issued by the Reformed Church in Emden; this translation was made by J.N. Utenhove, and was approved by the Reformed Synod in 1562. This translation was not used by the Mennonites, who usually used the New Testament published in 1557 by Mattheus Jacobszoon and reprinted a number of times *(1558,* 1559, 1562) without naming the place of publication. The Mennonites also used the translation which appeared in *1556,* also in Emden, in the house of Steven Mierdemann and Jan Gheylliaert, a translation which closely follows the Old Testament of the Liesveldt Bible and the New Testament of the Froschauer Bible. (See also C. Krahn, *Menno Simons,* 84 ff.).

In 1560 Nikolaes Biestkens printed the entire Bible at Emden for the use of his fellow believers. It is generally known by the name "Biestkens Bible", and went through an extraordinary number of printings, mostly at Amsterdam, but also at Leeuwarden and Harlingen. Keller says (p. 154) that according to le Long there were seven editions between 1562 and 1565, 24 between 1567 and 1600, and 24 between 1602 and 1650; from 1650 to the end of the century there were four editions; the last one was dated 1723. Muller mentions (p. 56) nearly 100 editions; viz., 16 of the entire Bible in folio, 10 in quarto, and one in octavo; of the New Testament there were 13 in quarto, 17 in octavo, 15 in duodecimo, and 19 in sedecimo.

This is an indication not only of the size and number of Mennonite churches in Holland at that time, but also of their effectual zeal for the spread and use of the Word of God among them. For the Dutch-speaking Mennonites in West Prussia a special edition was published in Schottland near Danzig *(HRE* II, 122), but printed in Haarlem. According to A. Muller (p. 57) this edition with artistic lettering was sold in 1598 by Crijn Vermeulen, a tradesman in Schottland, and gave exact information about the differences between this Bible and that of the Reformed of 1559-90.

Of vital interest is the question of what translation was used as the basis of the Biestkens Bible. Muller says it is exactly Luther's translation, except that in the later editions certain words pertaining to the oath, etc., were changed and some passages, such as Acts 2:30 and Romans 1 and 3, were given different forms for reasons of dogma. Keller calls attention to the fact that the Biestkens Bible contains not only the Apocrypha, but also the Laodicean Epistle with the heading, "The Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans, which is found in the oldest Bible printed at Worms". But the text does not follow that of the Worms Bible of 1529, but the Tepler Codex, which leads Keller to the conclusion that in the translation of the Biestkens Bible, not only the Lutheran, but also the Waldensian version was used (see **Bible Translation).** There is, however, no positive proof for this surmise. De Hoop Scheffer has shown *(DB* 1890, 64) that the Biestkens Bible is an improved new edition of the Liesveldt Bible, though the Mierdemann Bible mentioned above was also used.

The Biestkens Bible is the first Dutch edition divided into verses. In this respect it became the model for all later Dutch versions. Its use was continued longest in the Old Flemish churches. It was still used in the congregations at Aalsmeer and Balk in 1837, for public services as well as family worship. In the other congregations it had been probably everywhere replaced by the superior state translation *(Statenvertaling)* by the close of the 18th century. Some copies of the Biestkens Bible were taken along when the Mennonites went from Prussia to Russia and later to America. At least two copies (one in Bethel College Library) exist. Copies of the first edition are in Mennonite libraries at Amsterdam and Goshen. C. NEFF.

Title page of Biestkens Bible first printed in 1560 and extensively used among Flemish Mennonites in Amsterdam and Danzig in the 17th century. Courtesy of John D. Tiesen, MLA, Bethel College, Newton, Kansas.

S. Muller, "Het Ontstaan en het Gebruik van Bijbelvertalingen", in *DB* 1837, *51-*65; *HRE* III, *"Bibeluebersetzungen":* "German Translations", 65-84, and "Dutch Translations", 120-24; L. Keller, *Die Waldenser und die deutschen Bibeluebersetzungen* (Berlin, 1886); *Menn. B/.,* 1887; F. Dijkema, "Dc Doopsgez. En de Statenvertaling:, in *De Statenvertaling 183 7-1 937(Haarlem,* 1937) 86-92: *BRNV,* 587; VII, 263, 493, 509;
ML I, 220.

Biestkens, Nikolaes of Diest, Flanders, a printer and editor (1517) at Hoorn, a Mennonite, rendered great service by printing and publishing Mennonite books. He died at Amsterdam in *1585.* Of his publications the best known is the Bible he printed in 1560 for the use of the Mennonites, known as the Biestkens Bible (q. *v.).* Two years later he probably published the Dutch martyr- and hymnbook, *Het Offer des Heeren.* He may also have printed the third *(1567),* the fourth *(1570),* and the fifth (1578) editions of this book. Then he perhaps moved to Amsterdam, where he printed in 1582 or 1583 the fourth enlarged edition of the oldest Dutch hymnary, entitled, *Het tweede Liedeboek, van vele diversche Liedekens, ghemaect wt den ouden ende nieuwen Testamente, waer af sommighe eertijts in Druck uutghegaen, ende sommige noyt in Druck gheweest, hehhende, daer be ghevoecht,* VDZ.

Qffer, 8ff, 20; *CatalogusAmst.*, 211,266; *ML* 1,220; Wolkan, *Lieder,* 70; *DJ* 1837, 55ff; *DB* 1882, *53;* 1890, 64; 1918, 107.

The East Reserve, 1894

by "H. B.", Der Nordwesten, June 21, 1894.

I have finally fulfilled a long delayed wish to visit the Mennonites of the East Reserve. The things we had been hearing about the condition of the land and the situation of the farmers in that part of the province did not seem - we must admit - very inviting. What should one think about a district about which the inhabitants themselves do not have much good to say, and which has often been portrayed as over-run with water, or sown throughout with stones, or populated here and there with scrub brush, or as the home of weeds which cannot be tilled? One could almost pity the poor people who see themselves as bound to try and survive on land so poorly fit for farming.

In reality, however, the truth of the matter stands as something rather different, and, having travelled through the district, we are convinced that, in many ways, people have a false impression of the East Reserve. As far as we are in a position to judge, based on our opportunity for observation, the conditions for farmers in the East Reserve are just as good as farmers anywhere else in the country [and they can allow themselves the same land, as do others]. The land is sufficiently productive to support very successful grain growing and cattle raising. The fact that the farmers there themselves do not think much of their situation is not a sign of discontent, but rather one of modesty, a virtue especially developed through their inter-relationships.

The East Reserve district dates from the beginning of the stream of Mennonite immigration to Manitoba. At that time, now more than 18 years ago [almost 20 years, actually] there was no railroad here, and this area was chosen for settlement because it lay near the Red River, which served as a transportation route for immigrants coming through Minnesota, and was also deemed important as the principal trading route for this part of the country. Soon, however, it became apparent that this area was not suitable for a densely populated, large settlement.

One sign of this was the fact that, at that time, very large pieces of land stood under water. In short, a segment of the immigrants settled on the other side of the river, in southern Manitoba. There the land was more fertile, and dryer, and the open prairie could support a flourishing wheat culture. With comparative rapidity the people on the other side of the river seized on this, and, in the years that followed, wheat farming could have been called a gold mine, and many farmers did very well, while those who had stayed behind on the East Reserve made only slow progress, as the land was productive only in restricted areas. Only after some time did they find a way to adapt. They put more effort into the raising of cattle and milk production than grain farming, though wheat-growing still paid better and was given preference.

Since a few years ago, the picture has materially changed in favour of our farmers on the East Reserve, that is, in favour of cattle farmers and butter- and cheese-makers. The price of wheat fell substantially and stayed low; right now it mostly is at less than 50 cents, only half of what it was five to eight years ago. For many wheat farmers this was a hard blow for which they were not prepared. Trusting, perhaps, that the high wheat prices would continue, they had made liberal use of the convenient credit system, bought expensive machinery, and so had taken on a debt load which they could not pay when prices fell.

Unfortunately, the number of those who fell into the hands of the sheriff, or who were threatened with the seizure of their goods, was not small. And even those wheat farmers who find themselves in better circumstances suffer more under the present low product prices than those whose main activity is cattle raising. Even if prices for cattle, butter, eggs, cheese, wool and hogs are low, there are always buyers for these, and no expensive machinery is required to produce them.

At present there are three cheese factories in the East Reserve, one each in Steinbach, Hochstadt, and Grünfeld. The owners are very satisfied with the financial results of their enterprises, and the farmers who deliver their milk to the factories also gain more than if they make their own butter. The owners of the cheese factory in Hochstadt are planning to install a separator for making butter. On the part of the farmers, large amounts of butter are also being sold in Winnipeg, at 12 cents a pound. The distinction that used to be made, between Mennonite-produced butter and that produced by the English (the latter always got better prices), has now completely disappeared and is only brought forward today by unethically speculating dealers.

Flourishing sheep farming is also being widely pursued. In the village of Bergthal farmers own over 1000 sheep. This year they are selling the wool for an average of nine cents a pound. Bergthal is a large village with good farmers. Not far away, close to a small grove, lies Hochfeld, and in another direction, about six miles distant, Chortitiz, where the post office and the church are found.

Steinbach is a large, beautiful village, where enterprising people live. One would almost believe that one has come upon a small factory town with its smoke stacks and the blowing and humming of steam boilers, which one would hardly expect to find in the country. Steinbach could be called the "metropolis" of the East reserve. Farmers can find all the services there. Abr. Friesen & Sons' saw- and shingle mills deliver lumber in significant quantities; the Friesens also own a lathe for turning iron and a blacksmith shop. Also in Steinbach is the flour mill of Reimer, Barkmann & Co. equipped with new improvements as previously reported in the *Nordwesten*; and besides that, the cheese factory and a tannery. Isaak Plett has built a new type of well-drilling machine after a plan he brought back with him from the Chicago World Fair. The first attempt with this machine indicated that it passed the test very well. In addition, the Steinbach farm people are also happy with their estates. Klaas Reimer and Abr. Friesen have beautiful enclosed gardens. Particularly, the latter's house is surrounded by shade trees. Oak trees have grown remarkably fast and strong, and the fir and spruce also display fresh green colours. Altogether, the land here seems very suitable for growing trees. Klaas Reimer has grown apple trees with some success and harvests ripe fruit from these every fall. There are large number of plum and cherry trees. Everywhere in the reserve there is good water to be found not far down, and many farms have artesian wells.

The next village we visited was Hochstadt. It was late in the evening when we reached David Loewens' farm (see *Pres.*, No. 16, page 106 and No. 18, page 36). Here, as with the others farmers we met in our tour through the Reserve, we found a friendly welcome and open friendliness. To all friends and *Nordwesten* readers on the East Reserve, our heartfelt thanks. We will see you again.

Acknowledgement.

The readers are endebted to Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, President of the FMHS, who shared this gem from his current on-going research.

Bible translated into West Prussian Plautdietsch, also known as Mennonite Low German.

The translation was produced under the auspices of the Canadian Bible Society and Kindred Press of Winnipeg. The 1,266 page Bible includes maps and a glossary of difficult words.

Pastor John Wiebe, Steinbach, Manitoba, says the Low German bible makes it possible for him to share the scriptures with Low German speaking people using the "language of the heart." Photo - Chronicle, *Dec. 2003, page 6.*

Books

Samme Zijlstra, *Om de ware gemeente en de oude gronden: Geschiednis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden 1531-1675* ("Of the true Gemeinde and the old fundamentals: History of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands 1531-1675") (Hilverson, Uitgeving Verloren, Leeuwarden, Fryske Akademy, 2000), 544 pages, Hardcover.

A Book Review Essay by Henry Schapansky, 108-5020 Riverbend Road, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5J8:

Introduction.

This new book is perhaps the most important of several works on the early history of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands. It is the most recent, the last previous history dating from 1952. It incorporates the scholarship and archival studies of various researchers (including the above author) of some 50 subsequent years.

Now English-speaking readers will want to know why this book (and for that matter, this review), written in Dutch as it is, and concerning only the Mennonites of the Netherlands, would be of interest.

I should begin by stating that this work is in fact accessible to those somewhat familiar with Plautdietsch (Low-Saxon). As some Plautdietsch speakers probably already know, written Dutch [Flemish] and Plautdietsch are perhaps as close as any two distinct languages can be. A speaker of Plautdietsch can generally read Dutch with some degree of fluency. If he were to read Dutch aloud (pronouncing his words as though they were Plautdietsch), other listeners of Plautdietsch would undoubtedly understand almost every word, although a native Dutch person would be puzzled indeed (spoken Dutch and spoken Plautdietsch are in fact quite different, owing to evolution in the pronounciation of Dutch).

Furthermore, the vocabulary used by the author is not excessively technical and is relatively consistent. The author repeatedly employs the same words and phraseology, so that if a dictionary is needed for the odd word or so per page, by the middle of the book, a dictionary is rarely necessary. As well, the book is very well laid out, in chapter, section, and sub-section format, with clear headings, supplemented by appropriate diagrams, charts, and tables. Extensive and detailed footnotes abound, with reference to source documents (generally archival in nature), other authors, and quotes from early writers. Indeed, the footnotes are just as interesting as the text. There are numerous illustrations and graphic reproductions of an eye-catching nature (although perhaps the 16th century "streakers" are not as attractive as one would wish). One of Rembrandts most famous and beloved group portraits is featured - De Staalmeester ("The Cloth Merchants"), whose most prominent member (in the painting) is Volckert Jansz, a Mennonite (Hard-Friesian Gemeinde). The printing quality is outstanding, and generally the book is visually attractive.

The primary reason that readers will want to read this work, however is because of the content. Not only does it contain much new or recently researched material, the author has come to important new conclusions regarding the early Anabaptists and Mennonites, at variance with prior generations of historians. While I, and possibly other readers, may disagree with some of his conclusions, they are nevertheless well-argued and supported by source documents. All of his ideas require the most careful consideration.

I should like to begin this essay by pointing out what I believe to be the general strengths and some general weaknesses of this work. The general strengths include the extensive use of archival material, source documents, the published studies of scholars over the last 50 years, as well as the use of older published histories. While the work is indeed scholarly, it is far from pedantic, and is exciting to read. It is not just a history, but an evaluation of the historical material, with the conclusions of a wider nature that can be drawn from such material.

The general weaknesses, in my view, include the limitations imposed by the author himself in this study. These are partially outlined in the book's title. These relate to time, place and the set of events covered. One of the strengths, which is also a weakness (although some may disagree with me here), is a refusal to go beyond the documentary evidence itself. Indeed we do not likely have all the documentary evidence we really need. The archival evidence is never complete, and that presented is likely to be one-sided in nature. For example, the judicial proceedings against the AnabaptistlMennonite heretics, recorded in the archives, reflect only some Anabaptist views, and not those of the entire Anabaptist community. Memoirs and similar writings (as indeed noted by the author) can often be self-serving and misleading. The documentary evidence relating to some of the early divisions in the Anabaptist movement is obviously incomplete, and therefore a clear understanding of these divisions is sometimes not forthcoming in the author's account.

The limitations in respect of the time period do not appear particularly onerous, but do reflect the author's bias. For him, the Anabaptist movement began in 1531 (in the Netherlands) and previous events have little direct relevance. More on this later.

The geographic restraints are somewhat more problematic. The author (with the single exception of the Münster affair) never ventures outside the modern Netherlands, even though the Netherlands were not geographically defined until circa 1610. Indeed, the author rarely looks outside Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland. For much of the period covered by the book, there was no nation known as the Netherlands, and it was political and military maneuvering which determined the final geographic boundaries, being as much determined by the narrow-minded tactics of the county (later province) of Holland as by the Habsburg Imperialists. Anabaptists/Mennonites were numerous at various times in Flanders, Brabant, East Friesland (hereinafter referred to as the Low Counties) and various adjacent Rhineland counties.

It is unfortunate indeed that Dutch historians in general, and Zijlstra in particular, do not explore the history of the Anabaptists in the Flemish counties (Flanders, Brabant, etc.) in any detail. As Zijlstra's statistics demonstrate, the number of legally prosecuted dissenters (undecided protestants, "sacramentarians") in Flanders alone was almost eight times that of all the modern Dutch counties combined (that is, in so far as research has uncovered the legal cases). Furthermore, the number of rebaptizers (Zijlstra's definition of Anabaptist) prosecuted in Flanders alone exceeded the number of prosecutions in any single modem Dutch county, excepting Holland (taking Amsterdam, North and South Holland as one county, which reflects the political organization of the time), which is comparable in numbers to those of Flanders.

This very large gap, as relative to the Flemish, is fairly serious. Were not these Anabaptist or dissenting Flemish the parents or relatives of those Flemish who fled to the northern (Dutch) counties during the severe persecutions? There is infact evidence that many of these Flemish continued onwards to East or West Prussia, as well as settling in the northern counties. Did these Flemish Anabaptists emerge via the influence of Hoffmann or northern Anabaptists, or did Anabaptist ideas circulate independent of external groups? Given that Flanders was then the centre of northern European trade and commerce, as well as the intellectual centre of northern Europe, it seems possible that the Flemish Anabaptists may have evolved more independently of northern influences than is supposed by the Dutch.

Indeed, there was a continuing jealousy on the part of Amsterdam (then a minor port/city) and Holland (then a minor province) towards Antwerp and Flanders. This jealousy was to lead to the military neglect of the Flemish counties during the war of independence and later, their total abandonment. This antagonism went so far as to close Antwerp to shipping for centuries, through the pressure of Amsterdam and Holland. Is it remnants of this attitude that still prevails among Dutch historians?

No consideration is given to the interaction between Anabaptist/Mennonite groups in these areas and the counties mentioned above, nor is there any account taken of movements into or from these three counties. The Flemish appear out of nowhere, and no account is made to discuss their origins, beliefs, or how they arrived in the north, despite the fact that a major portion of this work deals with Mennonites referred to as Flemish. Likewise Mennonites who moved elsewhere (to the Vistula delta in Poland, for example) are not mentioned at all, despite the fact that many of them influenced events in the above three counties (for example, Dirk Phillips in Danzig played an important role in the events of this work).

Further, the author excludes historical and political events from consideration unless they involve Anabaptists/Mennonites in a very direct manner. Thus, during the period covered by this

work, we have almost no idea that there was a war of independence going on, that there were huge streams of refugees going both north and south, that the north and east were overrun by Imperial forces, that decisions were being made (mainly by Holland) as to which counties (provinces) should be included in the eventual union. We have very little insight here of the efforts made by the Calvinists (the major rivals to the Mennonites) to secure political control in these years. We have no idea in this work, of the political and social tensions which created "Stad en Land" (Gröningen city versus Gröningen province - the Ommeland), although this region, located between Friesland and East Friesland was very important in the history of the Mennonites.

In some respects, the author has taken a nationalistic and parochial approach, perhaps to manage the scope of the book. This is not atypical of Dutch historians. I mention these generalities because they affect our view of the many important conclusions enunciated in this work, and may affect our view of the parallel history of Mennonites elsewhere. There are indeed many conclusions which differ to a greater or lesser extent from previous writers. I shall attempt to point out some of these important new conclusions. There are, however, some very major ideas which require listing at the outset:

* The Anabaptists/Mennonites originated (in the Low Counties) with Melchior Hoffmann in 1531. The Münsterites were the major early Anabaptist group (in the Low Counties). After the debacle of 1535, these Anabaptists regrouped, with one division becoming the mainstream Anabaptist/Mennonite community headed by Menno Simons.
* Spiritualists of many varieties were present and influential at the beginning of the movement. The influence of spiritualists continued to impinge on the mainstream movement even at much later times.
* the Waterlanders represented a grouping which diverged from mainsteam Mennonite thinking, and their numbers and importance in the Mennonite community have been greatly overrated. In fact the influence of more liberal groups associated with the Mennonites is similarly vastly overrated.
* the Lamists (and Galenus Abrahamsz) also represented a divergent and fringe Mennonite group, whose significance and importance have likewise been overrated by later historians.

These are four very important new conclusions. I hesitate only to agree entirely with the first two because of the limitations in the author's work mentioned above. The evidence with respect to the last two conclusions is much more convincing, being based in later, more fully documented times.

1. Historiography, Antecedents, and Early Events.

The introduction and chapters 1 and 2 of the book outline the background material. They give a overview of the various histories relevant to the Anabaptists/Mennonites, as well as an outline of the various streams of historical thought concerning the Mennonites. Also given here is an account of the several streams of early Protestant thinking in the Low Counties. It may be of interest (particularly for English-speaking readers who may be unfamiliar with the Dutch Mennonite historiography) to list some of the more important of the histories:

- 1548 *Tumultuum anabaptistarum liber unus*, Lambertus Hortensius, Basel ("Anabaptist revolts");
- 1558 (appr.) *Van den oorspronk ende anvanck des sects welck men wederdoper noomt*, N.M. Blesdijk, handwritten manuscript, Basel University Library ("Of the origins and beginning of the sect known as the re-baptisers");
- 1561 *Der Widertoufferen Ursprung*, Heinrich Bullinger, Zurich ("The origins of the re-baptisers"). Translated into Dutch with additional material relative to the north by Geradus Nicolai, 1569;
- 1615 *Historie der Martelaren*, Hans de Ries, Haarlem ("History of the martyrs");
- 1671 *Historie Reformatie*, Gerard Brandt (1626-85), Amsterdam;
- 1699 *Verdediging der christenen die doopgezinde genaamd worden*, Galenus Abrahamsz. Amsterdam ("Defense of the Christians known as the baptism-minded");
- 1743-45 *Geschiednis dier christenen welke in de Vereenigde Nederlanded onder de protestanten Mennoniten genaamd worden*, Hermann Schijn & G. Maatschoen, Amsterdam ("History of the Christians known in the Netherlands as Mennonites among the Protestants");
- 1839 *Geschiednis der Doopsgezinde in Friesland*, Blaupot ten Cate, Leeuwarden ("History of the Baptism-minded in Friesland");
- 1842 *Geschiednis der Doopsgezinde in Groningen, Overijssel, en Oost-Friesland*, Blaupot ten Cate, Gröningen;
- 1847 *Geschiednis der Doopsgezinde in Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, en Gelderland*, Blaupot ten Cate, Amsterdam;
- 1873 *Geschiednis der kerkhervorming in Nederland van haar ontstaan tot 1531*, Jacob Gijsbert de Hoop Scheffer (1819-1893), Amsterdam ("History of church reform in the Netherlands from its beginning to 1531") [also various papers 1866-1895 in Doopgezinde Bijdragen];
- 1914 *Menno Simons (1496-1561) Zijn leven en werken en zijne reformatorische denkbeelden*, K. Vos, Leiden ("Menno Simons: his life, works, and reformation ideas") [and other works];
- 1940 *Geschiednis van de Doopsgezinden in Nederland 1600-1735*, W.J. Kuhler, Haarlem ("History of the Baptism-minded in the Netherlands") [also many other works];
- 1950 *Geschiednis van de Doopsgezinde in Nederland*, W.J. Kuhler, Haarlem;
- 1962 (2nd ed.)- *Geschiednis der Doopsgezinde in Nederland in de zestiende eeuw*, W.J. Kühler, Haarlem ("History of the Baptism-minded in the Netherlands in the 16th century");
- 1954 *Galenus Abrahamsz (1622-1706)*, H.W. Meihuizen, Haarlem;
- 1961 *Menno Simons*, H.W. Meihuizen, Haarlem;
- 1952 *Geschiednis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland*, N. van der Zijpp, Arnheim

Service of holy baptism in an early Mennonite church: From Zijlstra, Om de ware gemeete, *page 100.*

In this early part of the book, Zijlstra discusses various streams of thinking advanced by prior historians regarding the (Dutch) Anabaptists/Mennonites. There are those who see the Anabaptists as the first Christian socialists (K. Vos, A.F. Mellink, H-J Goertz, etc.) and who view the Anabaptists as primarily a socio-political phenomena, reacting against the social, religious and political restraints of the time. Zijlstra, quite rightly, in my view, rejects this approach, concluding that the Anabaptist movement was primarily a religious one, although social and political factors need to be taken into account in considering the formation of the movement. Far too often, in my opinion, historians neglect the importance of the

Mennonite faith, when writing on the Mennonites (even some of the most respected historians, for example with respect to the Russian Mennonites (e.g. D.G. Rempel) are guilty of this undervaluation).

Other historians have found forerunners of the Anabaptists in prior groups, including the Devotio Moderno and the "Sacramentarians" (de Hopp Scheffer, Kuhler). Zijlstra can find no basis for these antecedents. He also believes the "normative" vision of Harold Bender has seen its demise. Futhermore, Zijlstra proposes that the search for antecedents and roots (of the Dutch Mennonites, at least) prior to 1531 and Melchior Hoffmann, is meaningless.

Now here I do disagree (perhaps my only major point of disagreement with the author). And I think the central problem is one of definition. One cannot argue with definitions, only evaluate their usefulness and determine if they are clear and consistant. Zijlstra defines Anabaptists as those who espoused the idea of spiritual re-birth through penitence and adult baptism (Note One). Others, myself included, define the Anabaptists as those who wished to rebuild the Christian community on the basis of the teaching of Christ alone. The latter definition, on the surface much more general, entails a much more complete set of corollaries, including non-worldliness, non-violence in all its forms, discipleship and discipline, as well as re-birth through adult baptism (Note Two). This definition also implies a strict adherence to scripture (particularly to the words of Christ) and excludes the possibility (in my view at least) of latter day prophets and visionaries who overrule the teaching of Christ. With such a definition we can return to a normative view in the Bender mold.

What are the implications of these two definitions, and how are they useful? According to Zijlstra's terms, the Anabaptists include the Batenberg terrorists, the Munsterite fanatics, and the spiritualists such as David Joris. With this definition, we revert again to the contemporary outsider view of the early period, and could probably justify the persecution instigated by the authorities of those times. For Zijlstra indeed, the Münsterites were the first and primary (Dutch) Anabaptist group. The Batenberg terrorists and the spiritualists were equally valid Anabaptist groups. Indeed, if his is to be our definition, many other more modern groups, who adopt only the one idea of adult baptism, should also be included as Anabaptist.

In keeping with his definition, Zijstra de-emphasizes other central Anabaptist principles. Without adequate evidence, he equates Anabaptist nonworldliness with anti-Catholicism (an assertion I cannot accept). Zijstra does however provide examples of the converse; Hans De Ries and Albert Verspeck were Calvinists who left the Reformed church (joining the Anabaptists) because it was too worldly and careless of discipline (p. 72). Furthermore, pacifism was not, in his view, an early Anabaptist tenet (in the Low Counties), and again we have a problem of definition. Certainly, the Batenbergers were violent anti-Catholic terrorists, and other socio-revolutionary groups such as the Munsterites, allowed the use of arms for "self-defense".

Under the other definition however, we would classify the Münsterites, terrorists, and spiritualists as non-Anabaptist, as deviant groups, who had adopted only some ideals similar to Anabaptist tenets. We could call them pseudo-Anabaptists, subdivided into mystic pseudo-Anabaptisits and revolutionary pseudo-Anabaptists. This alternative definition had already been enunciated very early by Swiss and South-German Anabaptists, and are expressed in the Schietheim Articles of 1527. We could then see that the large portion of the population of the Low Counties in those time, studying the scriptures, and other religious works, and who rejected that which was not based on scripture, were indeed antecedents of the Anabaptists (as proposed by De Hoop Scheffer and Kuhler). These include those who rejected some of the rituals, practices, and sacraments of the church not based on scripture (but not necessarily rejecting infant baptism), loosely grouped as "sacramentarians", although I would prefer just to refer to them as more or less Protestant. It was this large body of undefined Protestants who were the basis for the tremendous growth of the (true) Anabaptist movement as well as the later spread of the Calvinist/Reformed faith. Erasmus, the Devotio Moderno, and even the monastic movement itself, can then validly be seen as the antecedents to the Anabaptists and Mennonites. These vaguely Protestant men and women could just as easily be called vaguely Anabaptist or Mennonite. The absolute formulation and consolidation of the principles under this definition did not occur (in the Low Counties) until Menno Simons began his work. In this sense, we could find validity in the idea (De Hoop Scheffer, Mellink) that the history of the Protestant/reform movement prior to 1566 in the Low Counties is largely the history of the Anabaptists.

The 16th century was an age of religious ferment. Most people took their beliefs seriously, and tracts, pamphlets, and books on religious matters were read avidly. This was particularly true in the Low Counties where the average level of literacy (and perhaps wealth) was higher than elsewhere in Europe. That the (true) Anabaptists readily gained a large following is not surprising, nor is it surprising that many adopted only some Anabaptist tenets, while incorporating new and alien beliefs. Nor is it strange that many committed (true) Anabaptists may not have been clear on some of the fundamental principles at the beginning of their spiritual journey, nor that some later fell away from various of these. That charlatans, fanatical prophets, and revolutionary visionaries took advantage of ordinary people seeking answers to religious questions to gain a following is lamentable, but almost inevitable. It is however doing a disservice to those who did (or continue to) adhere to the fundamentals, to classify the charlatans, fanatics, and revolutionaries as either Anabaptist or Mennonite. Nor, more importantly, does this aid in understanding the history of the AnabaptistlMennonite movement in general, or in the Netherlands in particular.

2. **Melchior Hoffmann and the Münsterites.**

Zijlstra places the beginning of the Anabaptist movement (in the Low Counties) in 1531 with the arrival of Melchior Hoffmann (a point with which I disagree). The role of Hoffmann and the Münsterites are discussed in chapters 3-5. Both these topics are dealt with in more clarity and detail than perhaps in other works of this genre.

Hoffmann introduced some important theological ideas in the Low Counties, some of which were also later taken up by Menno Simons and other Anabaptists. These include the theory of incarnation, the ideas of free will, the universality of grace (as opposed to pre-destination), and spiritual re-birth and adult baptism. In a sense, these are also central Anabaptist tenets, and therefore Hoffmann was to some extent an Anabaptist (according to my definition). He had many other strange chiliastic beliefs however, and saw himself as a second Elias (p. 88).

We need to say a word (as does Zijstra) about the theory of incarnation (that Christ was God incarnate). Thoughts on the Trinity and the relationship between God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are as old as Christianity itself. Traditional thinking held that Christ was half God, half human in some mysterious way. Hoffmann advanced the view that Christ partook nothing of human nature except external form. Menno Simons too, favoured this view, because to him, Christ and his teaching was so fundamental.

The theory of incarnation can be contrasted with Socinianism. Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) was an Italian who moved to Poland in 1579, and promoted the idea that Christ was only a human being, whom God, because of his exemplary life and teaching, raised up and deified after his death. His adherents were known as the Polish Brethern, or Socinians. Now if this theory holds, then one could in fact, view Christ as perhaps only the most important of the prophets, and his teaching need not necessarily be binding, to the extent that better alternatives may become available. In this sense the spiritualists were no different than the Socinians. The spiritualists believed that inner inspiration and the inspiration of God were more important than the literals words of the scripture (and therefore the prescriptions of Christ himself. Not surprisingly, many spiritualists went a step further and came to see themselves as prophets or as a second Christ (David Joris (p. 162)). For this very reason, Menno Simons adopted the idea of incarnation, and spiritualists in any form were, to him, the worst enemies of the true church.

Socinianism itself was viewed in Europe as akin to atheism, and was proscribed even in the most religiously tolerant nations of the period, namely Poland and the United Netherlands.

Melchior Hoffmann himself only remained in the Low Counties for a short perod of time. He was a friend of several prophetic visionaries and spiritualists (including Andreas Karlstadt (p. 86)). In 1530 he rebaptized some 300 persons in Emden (East Friesland) (appointing Jan Volckertsz Trypmaker as Altester (oudsten)) and in 1531 some 50 persons in Amsterdam. His whereabouts from 1531 to 1533 are unknown. In 1533, he returned to Straßburg to await the coming of the Kingdom which he himself had prophesized, and was promptly arrested, spending the next 11 years in prison until his death.

Hoffmann's personal influence, therefore, arose mainly from his various published writings, which

include the "Ordonnantie Godts"(1530). Obbe Phillips and Menno Simons were familiar with his writings and found validity in many of his ideas. Both however, strongly rejected his visions, prophecies, and chiliastic/mystical proposals. Martin Bucer (a leading Calvinist theologian) wrote a refutation of Hoffmann's thinking, which had the opposite effect from that intended, publicizing rather than refuting Hoffmann's ideas. It was via Bucer that Bernhard Rothmann first heard of Hoffmann. Rothmann became an enthusiastic Melchiorite, and later apologist for the Münsterites.

The years 1531 to 1536 saw a tremendous growth of both (true) and pseudo-Anabaptists. This growth was centred around north Holland and neighbouring regions (i.e. south Holland, Zeeland, Friesland). By pseudo-Anabaptists, I mean those who subscribed to the idea of adult baptism, but were followers of fanatical prophets and visionaries hoping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, using violence if necessary. Whether true Anabaptists or pseudo-Anabaptists were in the majority is unclear (certainly, the true Anabaptists would have been less observed or documented than the fanatics). Zijlstra (p. 131) and Mellink claim the pseudo-Anabaptists were in the majority, while Kühler claims the opposite. Leaders of the true Anabaptists at this time include Adam Pastor (later adopted Unitarian views and was suspended as Ältester in 1547, banned in 1554), Obbe Phillips, Dirk Phillips, and Menno Simons. The pacifist mystics were grouped around David Joris, while the social-revolutionaries were led by Bernhard Rothmann (in Münster) and Jan Mattijsz (of Haarlem) (who saw himself as a Henoch) at Amsterdam.

Zijlstra views the Münster affair (5.1534-6.1535) as the most important event in the history of the Anabaptists (a point with which I disagree). Bernhard Rothmann arrived in Münster in 1530, under the influence of Hoffmann's writings. He was elected pastor of St. Lamberts (the church of the guilds) in February, 1532. In 1533 he published a booklet (Bekentnisse van beyden sacramenten, doepe ende nachtmaele), which obtained a wide circulation, and stirred many people already inspired by the apocalyptic prophesies of Hoffmann. Numerous prophets and visionaries appeared in north Holland, including Jan Matthijsz (a baker from Haarlem) who gained great influence in Amsterdam. Two of Matthijsz's emissaries (apostles) Bartholemeus boekbinder and Willem de kuiper ordained Obbe Phillips and Hans scheerder as Ältester in Leeuwarden (p. 108), thereby establishing an indirect link between Obbe Phillips and Matthijsz (Obbe Phillips in turn ordained David Joris (1534), Dirk Phillips (1534), and Menno Simons (1537)).

Various Protestant groups in Münster obtained initial support from Phillip, Landgraf of Hesse (a Lutheran) in their struggle with the bishop (Franz v. Waldeek). A Protestant majority was elected to the city council in 1533. Hendrik Rol (a former priest from Wassenburg, County of Gulich, Rhineland) lent his support to Rothmann, who promoted Anabaptist rather than Lutheran ideas. The minority Anabaptists invited Matthijsz to Münster in 1534 (Matthijsz had previously sent Bartholemeus boekbinder and Willem de kuiper to Münster to preach). Owing to conflict and indecision among the Lutherans (or undecided Protestants) and the Catholics, the city council quickly lost control over the situation. New elections brought in members favourable to the Anabaptists who soon took control of the city government. The bishop laid siege to the city in February, 1534, and the Anabaptists passed a number of decrees, to establish their Kingdom of God on earth. These measure included the exile of all non re-baptized persons, the abolition of private property, and the institution of polygamy.

Jan Matthijsz himself fell in battle on April 5 1534. Jan van Leyden (who had come to Münster with Matthijsz) appointed himself king (9.1534) and headed a government including Rothmann (official spokesman), Bernhard Knipperdollinck (governor and chief executioner), and Heinrich Krechting (chancellor). Rothmann escaped after the fall of Münster, while Krechting was released due to family connections, and later headed a Münsterite group in Oldenburg.

The institution of polygamy has often been explained by the 3 to 1 ratio of women to men in the city under siege, as a means to provide for the women and maintain order. Zijstra also adds that a spirit of sexual Puritanism prevailed among the Münsterites and the spiritualists, who held that sexual activity should only be for reproductive purposes. On the other hand, claims by opponents that polygamy was instigated by a spirit of sexual license cannot be lightly dismissed. Certainly, many bizarre and horrific events took place during the siege (which ended in defeat on June 25-26, 1535).

The Münster government sent out many emissaries to gather material and military support. These agents were unsuccessful in their main objective, but did succeed in creating various disturbances outside the city. Numerous outbursts of fanaticism, provoked by Münster agents, occurred in Amsterdam and other towns, led by various prophets and visionaries. On February 2, 1535, some 12 persons ran naked through the streets of Amsterdam on the instigation of prophet Hendrik Hendriksz (all 12 were executed). On May 5 1535, 40 pseudo-Anabaptists seized the town hall of Amsterdam, in an attempt to take over the city government. The town hall was re-taken a few days later.

In Friesland, a larger group took over the cloister at Bloemkamp (the Oldeklooster). This was retaken (7.4.1535) and some 100 persons were executed including a brother of Menno Simons. On January 18, 1535 an emissary from Münster (Antonie kistemaker) arrived at t'Zand (near Delfzijl, Ommelands, Gröningen). His purpose was the gathering of material support and men for the Münster struggle. At a gathering at one Eppe Peter's farm, he named one Harmen schoenmaker leader. The latter however, promptly declared himselt to be the true messiah, and the true God. One Kornelis int Kershof, not to be left behind, declared he was the "son of god". In frustration, Antonie and others fought with "God" and his supporters. During this time, Karl v. Gelder (stadhouder/governor of Gröningen) and a troop of 40 men arrived, and the group dispersed. This rather trivial event is only important because Nicholas Meijndertsz Blesdijk (a follower and son-in-law of David Joris (p. 20)(who was regarded by Menno Simons as one of the worst influences on the Anabaptists)) reported that Obbe Phillips was present at these events (p. 134).

The fall of Münster at the end of June, 1535, marked the end of the first phases of the Anabaptist movement (in the Low Counties), according to Zijlstra. According to A. L. E. Verheyden, however, Hoffmann and the Münsterites had neglible influence on the movement in Flanders which in the face of a century of persecution remained faithful to the teachings of Menno Simons (Note Three). In August, 1536, a meeting of various mainly pseudo-Anabaptist leaders occurred at Bocholt (Westphalia). David Joris (leader of the spiritualists) attended, as did representatives of the terrorist Batenburgers, the Münsterites (now led by Krechting), as well as "true" Anabaptists. The meeting was unsuccessful in resolving the major issues, namely the use of force and polygamy. Thereafter, the pseudo-Anabaptists gradually dwindled in numbers and disappeared.

Zijlstra claims the Anabaptist movement began (in the Low Counties) with Hoffmann and was originally violent and socio-revolutionary in nature. The fall of Münster eventually convinced many Anabaptists that violence was not the answer.

I disagree with both conclusions, since Zijlstra equates Anabaptists with re-baptizers. I am not convinced that Anabaptists did not exist in the Low Counties prior to Hoffmann in some form, nor that the true Anabaptists were insignificant in number. Certainly the writing of Hoffmann (excepting his visions and prophecies (he did not advocate the use of force to establish the Kingdom of God on earth)) contained much solid Anabaptist material which was used by Obbe Phillips and Menno Simons. Zijstra connects Obbe with the Münsterites using insufficient evidence. Obbe was ordained by an emissary of Jan Matthijsz (of Haarlem) and, according to Blesdijk (not necessarily an unbiased or reliable reporter), was present during the commotion at t'Zand. Zijstra claims the memoirs of Obbe ("Bekentenisse" wherein he states he had always been a pacifist, opposed to the Münsterite prophets and polygamy) was written as a self-justification (p. 152). (Obbe resigned as Altester in 1540 and left the movement). He also ties Menno Simons to the Münsterites by the fact that his brother took part in the Oldeklooster uprising (indeed he suggests this may have been Peter Simons, one of the 12 Ältester of Münster, who left in March of 1535 as an emissary to gather support for Münster (p. 174). In an early edition of the Fundamentbook, Menno refers to the Münsterites as "dear brothers" (p. 176) (although Menno made a sharp distinction between the leaders at Münster, and their followers).

3. **The Spiritualists, David Joris, and Menno Simons.**

Chapters 6-10 cover the struggle between the true Anabaptists and the spiritualists. Early leaders of each group include Menno Simons and David Joris. Menno may indeed have regarded the spiritualists as the greatest menace to the true church because they were willing to relegate the words of Christ, the Bible itself, and the forms and discipline of an external church to a second place in favour of the inner spirit and inner growth.

David Joris was typical of many later spiritualists, coming to see himself as a third religious David (the second being Christ (p. 162)). Eventually his followers fell away and dispersed, including his son-in -law N.M. Blesdijk.

Nevertheless, spiritualists were to continually plague and appear within the Mennonite community periodically, in other guises, for instance as pietists. Not surprisingly, later pietists (including for example Klaas Epp in 19th century Russia) came to see themselves as God-appointed prophets, rather like David Joris. In this respect, with regard to historical hindsight, it may be said that spiritualists are indeed the greatest menace to the Mennonite faith, whether as Separatist-Pietists (Brüdergemeinde) in Russia, Evangelical Fundamentalists in America, or in other forms. Zijstra appears to have made David Joris and N.M. Blesdijk the object of special study (in other works). These chapters thus contain much new material of interest. I disagree with the author only in not classifying Joris and the spiritualists as true Anabaptists.

The life and works of Menno Simons are discussed in detail in these chapters. Of the beliefs, teaching and writings of Menno Simons, we should mention principally a conviction that the grace of God could only be received through repentance, penance (in the Monastic tradition) (p. 187), and re-birth, symbolized by baptism, a faithfulness to the scriptures and the words of Christ, and a belief that a Christian should imitate the life of Christ (accompanied by deeds and works). He believed it was possible to establish a community of true believers on earth (the Gemeinde) without "spot or wrinkle". The Gemeinde was the realization of Menno's ideal. This community would be maintained through a church order and discipline, which included the use of the ban and shunning.

The strictness with which the ban and shunning (particularly marital shunning) should be applied was to be a matter of great controversy. The south Germans and Friesians, according to Zijlstra, favoured a mild approach (p. 183). At a meeting in 1554 at Wismar, the leading Ältester (including Dirk Phillips and Lenaert Bouwens) adopted a strict approach, although Menno Simons was of a mixed opinion. The leading Altester circa 1540-60 include Dirk Phillips, Adam Pastor, Gillis v. Aken, Lenaert Bouwens, as well as Menno Simons. Those who opted for the mild approach became known as the Waterlanders.

Menno Simons was a fierce opponent of those who departed from the scriptures, particularly the spiritualists such as David Joris and Hendrik Niclaes, as well as those wishing to rationalize the faith.

4. **Persecution and Growth.**

Chapters 10-11 discuss various aspects of the persecution and growth of the Anabaptists after 1535.The actual number of Anabaptist executions in the modern Netherlands is studied. The safest counties were East Friesland and Gröningen (both city and Ommelands). Various estimates of the number of executions have ranged from 100,000 to 10,000, but the current best estimate is, according to Zijlstra, 2,000. Here Zijlstra also discusses the martyr books and their weaknesses. Zijlstra, does not note, however, the conclusions of Marjan Blok that two-thirds of the martyrs from the Low Countries dealt with in van Braght's *Martyrs Mirror* were Flemish (Note Four).

Distribution of the Anabaptists by county, occupation, and position in society are also reviewed. Briefly, the greatest concentrations of the Anabaptists were in Friesland (25% of the population) (p. 259), north Holland, the Ommelands, and East Friesland (although the author does not go far outside the modern Netherlands to adjacent areas). The profile of the Anabaptists in society was very similar to that of the general population, refuting an opinion that the Anabaptists came from poorer sectors of society. Structure within the Anabaptist community is also discussed, including the roles of Ältester, Lehrer, and Diakon. Women were appointed as Diakon(ess) very early (Aeltgen de Wael was appointed in Amsterdam in 1549). Over half of the Anabaptists were women, but only one-third of those persecuted were women. The research on growth and persecution is illustrated throughout in various statistical tables. Around 1700, women were able to vote in Gemeinde elections (p. 435).

5. **The Waterlanders.**

As Zijlstra points out, most histories and studies of the Dutch Mennonites focus on the Waterlanders, viewing them as the most important and normative of the Mennonites. These works reflect the attitudes and values of their authors rather than historical reality. Prior generations of historians perceived the Waterlanders as more progressive, tolerant, economically thriving, and culturally mote advanced than the others. These perceptions too, as Zijlstra demonstrates, reflect only the opinions of the historians themselves, rather than historical fact. In numbers alone, the Waterlanders only represented about 20% of the Dutch Mennonites (p. 283). The fact that historians expand and elaborate on a disproportionately small percentage of Mennonites is not unique to the Dutch situation. We see the same in Russian and Canadian historiography (where the Brudergemeinde and the "progressives" of the Ohrloff Gemeinde receive all the attention, while the great majority of traditionalist Mennonites are dismissed with a few unfavourable remarks). There is here another remarkable parallel between the Dutch and Russian-Canadian experience of historiography.

Zijlstra shows that the Waterlanders were neither as tolerant or progressive as portrayed, nor necessarily more culturally or economically advanced than other Mennonite groups. On the other hand, the Waterlanders were more prone to assimilation, and many gravitated to spiritualism or rationalism (to Socinianism, or to the Remonstant or Collegiant movements).

The Waterlanders (originally sometimes referred to as the Franekers (after Franeker, Friesland)) disagreed with the strict approach to Gemeinde discipline agreed to at Wismar. They favoured a milder use of the ban (applied only after many warnings), shunning (marital shunning was rarely practiced, and soon dropped), outside marriages, while formally forbidden, were by practice allowed, re-baptism of new members was not required, and fewer restrictions applied in respect of separation from the world. Although they were the first to formulate a Confession of Faith (the 25 articles of Alkmaar in 1577), the Confession of Faith (1620) of Hans de Ries/ Lubbert Gerritsz), the Confession of Faith was never binding on Gemeinde members.

The strongest following of the Waterlanders was in north Holland and Friesland. In Gemeinde structure they were more autocratic than the others. The Ältester were chosen by other Ältester, rather than by Gemeinde members (p. 272). Most conflicts within the Gemeinde were decided by the Ältester (pp. 204, 438).

While many historians see the Waterlanders as examples of Mennonite tolerance and openmindedness, Zijlstra observes that the Waterlanders desired to water-down the faith and to accommodate a spirit of indifference. They were also the first to pay a salary to Lehrerdienst members, and provide training for Lehrer (pp. 440-441), a move indicative of apathy among members and elitism in the Lehrdienst. These measures were resisted by the other Gemeinden.

6. The Flemish and the Friesians, 1566.

The strict Mennonites who adhered to the Wismar agreement (the non-Waterlanders) were to form by far the largest and most enduring group. The split among the strict Mennonites into Flemish and Friesian Gemeinde, and later sub-divisions, is not particularly clearly explained in Zijlstra's account. This original first division is, in part, ascribed by Zijlstra to the cultural and ideological differences between the indigenous residents of the north (mainly the Friesians) and the refugee immigrants from the south (mainly Flemish). He also adds a number of minor reasons and points to personality clashes as partially to blame (a point which I do not necessarily accept). Regrettably, Zijlstra provides little information on these Flemish, who were to become the largest grouping in the Low Counties. Details of the events involved in the split are, as far as documented, provided in Zijlstras's account.

It seems a secret union was formed in 1560 by (the Friesians of) the towns of Leeuwarden, Harlingen, Franeker, and Dokkum. While the original protocol has been lost, the union seems to have been formed in reaction to the Flemish influence and position in the north, and was kept secret for this very reason (Note Five). One Jeroen Tinnegieter, a Flemish refugee, was somehow elected/appointed Lehrer at Franeker. Karl Koop has described the conflict as follows: "The Flemish in the town of Franeker wanted to elect their own Flemish minister and felt they had the right to do so on the basis of the authority vested in the congregation. The Frisians did not favour the election and believed that they could overturn the Flemish decision on the basis of the authority vested in the regional church council, which had drafted a nineteen-point statement - *Verbond der vier steden*....and which gave them the power through the regional council to intervene in the affairs of the local congregation," (Note Six).

This election/appointment was opposed by Eppe Pieters (Ältester at Harlingen). With minority support, and through carelessness and absenteeism in the Franeker Gemeinde, Jeroen maneuvered to pull Franeker out of the union (1566),

gaining considerable support among the northern Flemish refugees. In this, he was opposed by Eppe Pieters, and a dispute arose, taking on very large dimensions. Various Ältester and leaders throughout the Low Counties attempted to mediate the dispute, with the Flemish position gaining considerable sympathy. Dirk Phillips, now living in Danzig, appears to have (later) criticized the union on the grounds that ordinary Mennonites were excluded from Ältester decisions which was directly contrary to the basic Flemish tenet of grass roots democracy. A compromise achieved in December, 1566, ended in failure when the Flemish were surprised at the last minute by an attempt to make them accept the greater blame for the dispute.

The majority of Mennonites in Groningen/ Ommelands, East Friesland, Flanders, Brabant, as well as a contingent from Holland, supported the Flemish (p. 292). Hoyte Renix (Friesian Ältester at Bolsward) wrote to Dirk Phillips, the senior Ältester, (Danzig), advising that his presence was wanted to solve the dispute. Phillips may have acted unwisely (perhaps already prejudiced in favour of the Flemish), and with undue severity towards various Friesian leaders. Zijlstra blames the actions of Phillips, in part, for the split. Zijlstra also justifies the secret union for reasons other than mere anti-Flemish sentiment.

Briefly, the Flemish adhered to stricter standards of non-worldliness than the Friesians, according to Zijlstra (p. 288). Four minor points of difference are mentioned in his account, which nevertheless (in my view) still fail to completely account for the enduring division of the Flemish and Friesians (particularly in West Prussia). Nor do the secondary reasons, such as personality clashes, fully explain the situation.

At any event, the dispute became so intense that the Flemish and Friesians banned one another, and reconciliation was impossible.As late as 1569, the Mennonites of Overijssel were pulled into the conflict, deciding in favour of the Flemish (p. 296).

The Flemish section itself divided into Old (stricter) and Young (soft) Flemish, ostensibly over a relatively minor matter, but in fact over the strictness of Gemeinde discipline (regarding the ban, outside marriages, (p. 300)). A Flemish Lehrer, Thomas Byntgens, was accused of irregularities in the purchase of his house by a Diakon, Jacob Keest (he later appears to have gone by the name Jacques Outermann (and was later accused of Socinianism, preparing a Confession of Faith in 1626 as a defense)) . The Hauskopers (siding with Byntgens) were the Old Flemish and the stricter, more traditionalist group, while the contra-Hauskopers the (Soft) Young Flemish.

The Friesians too, divided into Old (Hard) and Young (Soft) Friesians for the same reasons, although Ältester Jan Willms kept the Friesians together until his death in 1588.The more important leaders of the Young Friesians included Lubbert Gerritsz and Hoyte Renix. Among the leaders of the Hard Friesians was Pieter Jansz Twisck (1566-1.10.1636), author of a number of works and Ältester at Hoorn. The Hard Friesians were indeed much stricter than the Young Friesians, remaining apart as a separate minority group. Jan Jacobs, Ältester at Harlingen, later took an even stricter position, and separated from the Hard Friesians in 1603, forming the Jan Jacobs division.

The "naaktlopers" in Amsterdam. From Zijlstra, Om de ware gemeete, *page 136. The Anabaptists included spiritualists, mystics, terrorists, social revolutionaries, chiliasts, polygamists, and also the peaceful Anabaptists later demoninationalized by Menno Simons. Some modern North American Evangelicals claim to be the "true" descendants of the Anabaptists but are never specifie as to which Anabaptists they are the descendants of.*

Within the Young Flemish, Jan Luyes (d.1637, Ältester at Kloosterburen) and Uke Walles (1593-1653) reverted back to a stricter position (perhaps the strictest of them all), ideologically very close to the Old Flemish. They were to form the Gröningen Old Flemish division, centred mainly at Gröningen. These divisions were typically the results of genuine efforts to retain the purity of the vision of early leaders such as Menno Simons and Dirk Philips and to resist the assimilationists and others who wanted to forsake the purity of the community based on strict adherence to Bibical text. This couragious struggle, which has continued for almost 500 years, is known as the "Kampf um die Gemeinde". Karl Koop has described these efforts as follows: "In both the Dutch and the Swiss contexts, these differing understandings of the church and religious life led to open conflict. In the Dutch contect the clash culminated with the "War of the Lambs"; in the Swiss context the clash led to the Amish schism" (Note Seven).

Various attempts to re-unite the divisions of Waterlanders, Friesians, and Flemish took place over the years, and in various regions, not necessarily on a national basis. The High-Germans united with the Soft Friesians in 1591 (p. 304). According to Zijlstra, over time, the High-Germans (previously associated with the Waterlanders) adopted a stricter outlook on Gemeinde discipline. A partial union of Soft Friesians, High-Germans, and Waterlanders took place in 1601, but fell apart in 1613. Lubbert Gerritsz, however remained with the remnant of the union (now predominantly Waterlander). Many Soft Friesian Gemeinden joined with Flemish Gemeinden over time until 1626 when four Flemish Lehrer wrote a proposal for a union, in the form of a Confession of Faith, known as the "Olive-Branch". This led to a union of the Friesians and Flemish, based on the Confession of Faith of Jan Cents (a High-German) (prepared in 1630 by the Soft Friesians and the High-Germans), with various Old Flemish and Hard Friesian Gemeinden (and of course the Waterlanders) remaining outside the union. The Confession of Faith of Dordrecht (1632) was to be the adopted by those Gemeinden gradually joining the union over subsequent years.

By about 1650, the Mennonite Gemeinden in the Netherlands were distributed as follows:
- United (Flemish) 60%
- Hard Friesian, Old Flemish —20%
- Waterlanders 20%

Zijlstra provides a detailed and informative listing of the various Gemeinden by province in 1650 in chapter 17 (pp. 458-463).

While Zijlstra does not dwell extensively on the various Old Flemish Gemeinden remaining outside the union, the importance of the Old Flemish on the history of West Prussia, Russia, and Canada, cannot be overrestimated. Various Old Flemish Gemeinden, mainly in the northern and eastern Netherlands, joined in the union known as the "Societat der Gröninger Oude Vlaminger". Other Old Flemish Gemeinden, particularly in the west (including Holland: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, etc.) and in parts of Overijssel formed a looser union known as the Danziger Old Flemish. The latter union derived its name from continuous and close contacts with the (old) Flemish Gemeinden in West Prussia who also subscribed to the strict ideals of Menno Simons and Dirk Phillips. The church books of the Danzig Flemish Gemeinde are replete with references to interchanges between Danzig and Dutch (Flemish) Mennonites. Indeed, the Danziger Old Flemish Gemeinden at Amsterdam and Rotterdam asked Dirk Janzen from Danzig to serve as Altester from 1725-1733 (documented in the Danzig church records).

The differences between the Danziger and Groninger Old Flemish were minor (Note Eight). Footwashing was a more regular practice with the Groningers. On the other hand, the Danzigers were stricter in forbidding members to bring complaints against others (either members or non-members) before higher or legal authorities. The ban, shunning, and a prohibition on marriage with outsiders were strictly applied in both unions (with some variations). The Old Flemish were the only remaining Gemeinden where Lehrdienst members were democratically elected by all the male baptized members.

One of the features of the Flemish Gemeinden in general, and the Old Flemish in particular, was in fact, the retention of the early democratic structures of the first Mennonite Gemeinden. The Waterlanders were the first to revert to a system where new Lehrdienst members were selected or appointed by existing Lehrdienst members, a system also found later in the Friesian Gemeinden (at least in the Netherlands). This was, in my mind, symbolic of a growing worldliness and elitism, as well as apathy. The Flemish always insisted on a complete equality among the members (and were therefore also much stricter in the selection of new members). The (male) members realized that they could be called upon to serve at almost any time, which led to a greater devotion and attention to the fundamentals of the faith. Conversely, the Flemish were stricter and more selective in the admission of new (and voting) members, as well as in the application of Gemeinde discipline. Obviously, members who transgressed agreed upon rules of behaviour, or otherwise, would not be suitable voting members, either in the election of Lehrdienst members or in making decisions on matters of general concern.

It may have been this concern for democratic structure that led the Flemish to oppose, not only the secret union of the Friesians of 1560, but also the emerging protocol (also part of the secret agreement, it seems) of the Friesians whereby decision-making would be reserved to the combined Lehrdienst of all the Friesian Gemeinden, rather than open to the entire membership of each separate Gemeinde. It may have been this very feature which prompted Dirk Phillips to take such a strong stance against the Friesian Lehrdienst and the secret agreement.

Discipline and the use of the ban was therefore more strictly applied in the Flemish Gemeinden. In the Netherlands, the Old Flemish were the only Mennonites to resist the pressure of assimilation, to retain both the early democracy and strictness of the first Mennonites. Elsewhere, in West Prussia, a similar situation existed. Evidence regarding the Friesian Gemeinden, reveals that often important decisions were made by the Lehrdienst, or even only the Ältester, without any voting procedure or membership consultation (for instance, some of the actions of Ältester Heinrich Donner-Orlofferfelde Gemeinde come to mind). Towards the end of the 18th century however, it was worldliness and apathy which eventually led to a paid and appointed Lehrdienst in the Danzig city Flemish Gemeinde. Fortunately, this innovation was resisted by the (Flemish) "Land" Gemeinden. Both democracy and strictness of discipline were complimentary factors keeping the Flemish united in their vision of the Gemeinde as it should be, the "true" Gemeinde. This vision was, in turn, taken along by the Flemish in their migrations to Russia, Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, and elsewhere.

Both unions still insisted they were the only true Gemeinden (long after other Mennonite groups dropped this claim), and required new members from other Gemeinden to be re-baptised. Both unions sought and maintained contact with West Prussian Old Flemish groups. The Groningers established links with the Prezchowko Gemeinde in the Vistula valley, thereby continuing a heritage extending to Russia and the United States. The Danzigers had firm relationships with all the Vistula delta Flemish Gemeinden, being, at least in part, of the same ancestral stock of Flemish refugees who had fled to the north after 1526.

Of all the various Mennonite groups in the Netherlands, we may in fact claim the Old Flemish were the most important and enduring. Even though they were eventually absorbed throught assimilation into other Mennonite Gemeinden (in the Netherlands), their ideology (and even blood descendants) survived in the West Prussian, Russian and Canadian Mennonites. In a sense, although they died out in the Netherlands, they are perhaps the most numerous of todays living Mennonites. They, both in the Netherlands and elsewhere, represented the traditionalist Mennonites. As Voolstra states, "unless we take these conservative [Old Flemish] Mennonites as the most legitimate norm of the Anabaptist (doopgesinde) identity, we cannot fully or correctly describe and understand the history of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands (Note Nine).

The most serious challenge facing the Mennonites in the increasingly prosperous and nationalistic (Calvinist) Netherlands after l600 was absorption and assimilation. Efforts to unite the various divisions were symptomatic of a malaise beginning to affect the Gemeinden, that of apathy and a falling away from their strict principles. Written and binding Confessions of Faith were found to be necessary in the maintenance of an identity as a distinct group. The Waterlanders, although the first to produce a Confession of Faith, never regarded the Confession of Faith as binding on members. Over time, after the partial union, many Gemeinden did indeed abandon and weaken principles of discipline (the ban, shunning, and outside marriage), strict pacifism, and non-worldliness. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Mennonites of Friesland lent the government one million gulders, in the war years 1665, 1672, and 1678 (p. 365).

7. **Galenus Abrahamsz and the Lamists.**

The Remonstrant and Collegiant movements were among the forces impinging on the Mennonites. The Remonstrants were characterized by opposition to extreme Calvinism and an emphasis on free will. They adopted the Confession of Faith of Hans de Ries (p. 374), although the Waterlanders and other Mennonites tried to distance themselves from the Remonstrants. A discussion regarding possible union was held in 1658. The Collegiants went even further, denying the validity of any formal church structure.

Galenus Abrahamsz (1622-1706), a medical doctor and an Ältester at Amsterdam in the (united) Flemish Gemeinde, was originally a strong Collegiant, and had adhered to Socinian views. Both Collegiant and Socinian doctrines can be regarded as non-traditional and in opposition to Mennonite beliefs. He had apparently abandoned those views when he was elected Lehrer in 1648. Many Waterlanders, on the other hand had close contacts with the Collegiants and Socinians, and many Socinians were admitted to the Waterlander Gemeinde (p. 399).

At this time (circa 1650), the Waterlanders were pressing for a union with the Flemish. Abrahamsz was suspected of attempting to turn the Gemeinde into a Collegiant institution and was opposed by 9 of 14 Ältester/Lehrer of the Gemeinde (including Tobias Goverts v. Wijngaerd, one of the authors of the Olive Branch, and Samuel Apostool, also a medical doctor). It soon became clear that Abrahamsz was not the leader wanted by many in the Gemeinde when he and his colleagues brought in Collegiants to the church council and Lehrdienst (3.1662). Apostool and other leaders formally left the Gemeinde, while Abrahamsz tried to conciliate the remaining members. The dispute (sometimes known as the "War of the Lambs") spread thoughout the Netherlands, with various Gemeinden of the (united) Flemish becoming Lamist (adherents of Abrahamsz) or Zonists (adherents of Apostool).

Abrahamsz then sought closer ties with the Waterlanders, who themselves were divided between Collegiant supporters and those wishing to adhere to the Confession of Faith of de Ries. Furthermore, opposition to union with the Waterlanders arose from with his own Lamist group, and Abrahamsz was forced to give in on this issue. Many Collegiants and Socinians were however to join the Lamists. Later, Abrahamsz was to retreat from many of his earlier ideas, but re-unionification with the Zonists was by this time (1698) impossible.

At the heart of the controversy was the issue (faced today by many Mennonite churches as well) whether a loose spirit of tolerance (i.e. indifference) should prevail regarding fundamental Flemish beliefs, or whether the Gemeinde should be maintained through a binding Confession of Faith, and adherence to the fundamentals enunciated therein (that is, whether or not the Gemeinde should be a "true" Gemeinde or just a debating or social club). In summary, Abrahamsz was an individual who deviated from Mennonite principles and not the enlightened leader proposed by many (e.g. Meihuizen).

In a sense, the "War of the Lambs" was the last victory for the conservatives (the Zonists) of the united Flemish Gemeinden. For indeed, the forces of assimilation, evidenced in the efforts of the Collegiants, the Socinians, and Abrahamsz to turn the united Flemish away from their traditional faith met with strong resistance and the Zonists succeeded in preserving their heritage for at least some decades to come.

8. Society and the Mennonites.

The last two chapters provide much additional detailed information on the Dutch Mennonites of the 17th century. Various population estimates of Mennonites, Gemeinden, and geographic distribution threrof are given, at various points in time. An early estimate of 160,000 (1700), 7.4% of the

total population, is reviewed. More recent studies reduce this number by one-half. One of the reasons this estimate is important is that if the larger figure were correct, a significant growth and later decline would be implied, whereas Zijlstra contends that while there was no significant growth, neither was there as large a decline as otherwise suggested. The distribution of the Mennonites was however very uneven. In 1665, 12% of the population of Friesland was Mennonite (and interestingly enough, the united Flemish represented 60% of these). North Holland, particularly the cities of Haarlem and Amsterdam, had a significant Mennonite population, as did Gröningen. Other provinces in the south and east had much smaller numbers of Mennonites. Zijlstra, however, totally ignores the possible effect of immigration, particularly to West Prussia, on the statistics.

Also discussed in these chapters are various aspects of social life, including studies of the occupations of the Mennonites. Here, Zijlstra points out that it was not only the Waterlanders who were active in cultural life. Artists and writers in the Waterlander Gemeinden included: Hans de Ries (whose 1615 *Historie der Martelaren* was brought out in a second edition by the Hard Friesians to correct de Ries' misleading introduction), Jan Philipsz Schabaelje, Joost v.d. Vondel (the Milton of the Netherlands, later (1640) joined the Catholics), Pieter Pietersz, and Judith Lubberts (joined the Catholics (1632)). Other Gemeinden are represented by: Carel v. Mander (Old Flemish, writer and painter), Pieter Twisck (Hard Friesian), Solomon Ruysdael (Flemish, Haarlem), Jacob Ruysdael (nephew of Solomon, Flemish, joined the Reformed church 1657) and Jan Deutel (Hard Friesian, poet! bookseller) (Note Ten).

It is evident from various sources that as a group, the Mennonites were relatively wealthy. Zijlstra reviews and discounts some of the theories which purport to explain the great wealth and status of the Dutch Mennonites, including the Weber theory, and the "marginalizing" theory. His own proposal is quite simply that the Gemeinde organization itself, mutual aid, discipline, and other aspects of the faith, were important factors, and furthermore that the prohibition of marriage to non-Mennonites led to an accumulation of capital in Mennonite hands. They were also active in profitable enterprises, including the Baltic trade (particularly advantageous must surely have been the presence of a large Mennonite population in the Vistula delta), and the textile industry. A gift of some 1,000 gulders to the Prince of Orange in 1572 (by the Waterlanders (pp. 230,478)) during the war of independence was to set the stage for a particularly warm relationship between the Mennonites and the royal family, who in many instances favoured the Mennonites.

9. General Conclusions.

In his epilogue, Zijlstra summarizes some of his major and important conclusions. I have drawn attention to some of these earlier in this essay. In many of these conclusions, he disagrees sharply with other historians. The author sees the early period of Anabaptist/Mennonite history as a religious struggle of a minority group, attempting to maintain their faith and identity as the "true" Gemeinde of God through discipleship and discipline, eventually developing binding Confessions of Faith to consolidate both faith and Gemeinde. The seriousness of their faith led to division, but minority groups such as the Waterlanders, and later the Lamists, attempted to water down their Mennonite heritage to accommodate the world. Eventually, all the Gemeinden in the Netherlands did become assimilated (forming the "Algemeene Doopsgezinde Societat" in 1811) and gradually lost much of their identity as a distinct religious group.

Spiritualism, Zijlstra claims, was always a force impinging on the Mennonites, a force, which (in my opinion) was opposed to all the central tenets of the Mennonite faith, and was justly condemned by members of the "true" Gemeinde, including Menno Simons.

The one point of difference I have with the author is his central view of Hoffmann and the Münster affair. For Zijlstra, Münster was not the miserable interlude claimed by others (including myself), but the key event in (Dutch) Mennonite history.

Though, on some points, I do differ with the author, this work is one of great importance and should be read by every student of Mennonite history.

Endnotes:

Note One: In chapter 2, Zijlstra points out some differences between the re-baptisers (his definition of Anabaptist) and the other dissenters. Statistical tables are provided (pages 66, 68) on the number of legally prosecuted persons in the years 1530-1560. The re-baptisers represent the majority of prosecuted dissenters in all the northern counties, although these figures may be skewed since the re-baptisers were more visible and usually more organized (almost by definition/necessity). The statistics also reveal that there were more prosecuted dissenters and more prosecuted re-baptisers in Flanders than in any one single northern county (figures which emphasize the importance of Flanders in the Anabaptist movement).

Note Two: See for instance my own approach, *The Old Colony (Chortitza) of Russia* (New Westminster, 2001), pages 7-12.

Note Three: Verheyden, *Anabaptism in Flanders* (Goshen, 1961), precis as reproducted in *Preservings*, No. 22, page 18.

Note Four: Marjan Blok, "Religious text as a bridge to puralism: The Epistemology of Flemish Anabaptist Martyr Literature," Doctoral thesis, Protestant University, Brussels, 2000, page 130.

Note Five: Zijstra, pp. 285-286. See also my own article (*Preservings*, June, 2003, pages 34-44) on the Flemish-Friesian division. Zijlstra here refers to all the collective southern refugees as Flemish (p. 288).

Note Six: Karl Koop, *Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith* (Waterloo, 2003), page 51.

Note Seven: *Ibid*, page 134.

Note Eight: S. Voolstra, "Huiskopers of Danziger Oude Vlamingen," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* (nieuwe reeks 29, 2003), pages 111-124.

Note Nine: *Ibid*.

Note Ten: Marijke Spies, "Mennonites and literature in the seventeenth century," in Hamilton and Voolstra, *From martyr to muppy: A historical introduction to cultural assimilation processes of a religious minority in the Netherlands: The Mennonites* (Amsterdam, 1994), pages 83-98.

A Book Review Essay by Henry Schapansky, 108-5020 Riverbend Road, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5J8.

Leonard N. Neufeldt, editor, *Yarrow, British Columbia: Mennonite Promise - Volume One: Before We Were the Land's; Volume Two: Village of Unsettled Yearnings* (TouchWood Editions, Victoria, 2002).

Compressing centuries and the lives of thousands into 650 pages is done the same way in which porcupines make love: very carefully. And "very carefully" describes the massive undertaking by editor Leonard N. Neufeldt who in the Acknowledgements of vol 1 gives tribute to about 100 individuals as well as to several foundations and societies. No slipshod task, this, that tells the story of Yarrow (presumably named after the herb by that name found in abundance here), a community on British Columbia's mainland built on a major floodplain.

Land in the area went through a series of developers' hands (Vedder in the 1860s, Knox in 1905, Eckert in the 1920s). Beginning in 1928, Eckert sold land to Mennonite immigrants from the Ukraine who found their initial prairies experiences disappointing, and who responded to advertisements of the "Eckert Colonization Company", promising productive soil, good roads and schools. Also assisting in the settlement of Mennonites (in Yarrow and elsewhere in Canada) were the Canada Colonization Association (subsidiary of the CPR) and the Mennonite Land Settlement Board. (Baptists and Lutherans had their own denominational land agencies to help their people settle.)

In the last half of 1928, about 400 immigrants settled in Yarrow, and by the mid '30s Eckert had sold all 750 acres he offered. His integrity is underscored by one writer (Agatha Klassen) who says he "showed his goodwill by selling the land on long term credit, furnishing building materials, helping them buy farm machinery and even allowing them to charge up groceries in his name." (vol 1, p 132). Eckert also encouraged crop diversification (peas, rhubarb, beans - not all of which were successful!).

One of the strengths of these two volumes is the use of personal memoirs, of journals and of interviews. Here are the stories of hardships: chicks eaten by weasels and foxes; unseasonal frosts; long hours of work with crops or in the hop yards where many found work (some stayed in the hop yards overnight; one boy tried to utilize the heat from the tractor's exhaust for the tent in which he was sleeping and nearly died of carbon monoxide poisoning).

The journals quoted, and the interviews given, cover the life of the community from the 1920s to (in a few cases) the 1990s. Fascinating stories of trucking and fruit processing, of grocery stores and feedmills, of lumberyards and nurseries - all are told either by the people who starred in them, or by their children, or by both. The importance of the raspberry industry, that collapsed after WW II ended and demand dropped, taking down with it a newly built church school and a marketing corporation - this is told from the viewpoint of proprietors, investors and pickers (an integrated historiography!). Social life is talked about, including a chapter on recreation (vol. 2, p 192); so are the arts, including the eccentric violin maker Friesen (is the account of his production besting a Stradivarius and a Guarneri possibly an apocryphal embellishment? vol. 2, p 267) and graphic artists (vol. 2, p 121). Closely related is music and the role it played both in the community (the Neufeld brothers, vol 11, p 254) and in the Mennonite Brethren church with George

Reimer (vol 2, p 244) and H. P. Neufeldt (vol 1, p 177).

There is an emphasis on education, with the first private school that collapsed when the raspberry market foundered, and the bible school sponsored by the Mennonite Brethren congregation.

And the role of religion. These settlers came to recreate the pattern of church and community integration that had given them strength in the Ukraine, and so the church was a major, if not the major, institution. While there were two Mennonite congregations, it was the Mennonite Brethren that dominated in sheer size (with a membership of 971 in 1948, the largest Mennonite Brethren congregation in Canada) and through the work of Peter D. Loewen (the first teacher in the bible school, and an active Sunday School promoter and organizer) 461 students in 40 classes with 72 teachers (vol. 2, p 41).

Yarrow Church Baptism. Photo - courtesy of Vern Ratzlaff.

Lumber for the first church built was paid for by volunteer labour at a nearby sawmill; part of the agreement was that the sawmill's owner be allowed to play his violin during an evening service (vol 1, p 196). The church was a dominant, if not at times domineering, force: excommunication for biblical interpretational differences, forbidding farmers to grow tobacco (question: what did they think the hops they picked went for?). In its early years, the church had frequent congregational meetings (24 in 1931, vol 2, p 39). In the 1940s, it even passed a resolution to place a two percent levy on the income of all church members and of all businesses owned in part or in full by members.

The two volumes present a wonderful personal look at the life of a thriving community that was able to remain relatively homogeneous (there was one Chinese resident, vol 2, p 305; there were those who joined the Armed Forces, vol 11, p 95). These accounts are carefully told and skilfully edited (in some instances translated) so that there is a consistent language flow. The strength of this approach is that the subject matter is viewed from several perspectives e.g. the raspberry marketing crisis, the closing of the private school and the life of the bible school, hop picking and its contributions socially and financially. But this approach has a weakness for the same reason. While this provides shafts from a number of points above the ore bed, a tunnel approach would have provided a more sustained and orderly approach (e.g. of the marketing crises, of the school collapse).

Also lacking in the two volumes is reflection on the impact of pluralism. While the bulk of the material comes up to the '60s, there is some that goes beyond. It's curious that there is no mention in either volume of the Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation that began in Yarrow in the late 50s; there are only passing references to the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate that closed in the late 60s; there are no references to the presence of the Christian Reformed who bought the latter school. Two volumes is a lot of writing, but a short reflection on religious and cultural pluralism would have brought the volume at least partially full circle. Also, although a few quick references are provided, lacking is an account of how the aboriginal community was viewed or related to (the Sto:lo).

A printing error: the table on p 61 (vol 1) has names but lacks the picture.

A wonderful read of the history and religious faith of a strong community.

Book Review by Vern Ratzlaff, 1606 Ruth St. E., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7J 0L8.

Vern Ratzlaff taught in the Sharon Mennonite Collegiate (l962-66), and received grapes from Aaron Rempel (vol 2, p 227). He is on the pastoral team of Nutana Park Mennonite Church, Saskatoon.

Loewen, Royden, *Hidden Worlds, Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s* (Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba Press, 2001), xii and 139 pages. maps, illustrations, selected bibliography, and index. Softcover.

In *Hidden Worlds*, Royden Loewen who holds the chair in Mennonite Studies at University of Winnipeg, presents another analysis of the social history of Mennonite people. In this volume he analyses Mennonite life in three North American communities: the central United States, southeastern Manitoba, and Waterloo, Ontario.

The chapters were first presented in 1999 as the "Menno Simons" lectures at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. The occasion was the 125th anniversary of the immigration of Mennonites from Imperial Russia to the central United States and to Manitoba. For comparison and contrast he added a third Mennonite community, namely the one in Waterloo, Ontario that was settled around 1800 by Mennonites from Pennsylvania who were of Swiss and south German origin.

In the introduction to the study Loewen indicates that he uses different sources and asks different questions than Mennonite historians have usually done. His sources are "personal documents including diaries, letter collections, memoirs, and financial accounts," as well as "public information including probated wills, tax rolls, homestead files, nominal census records, court dockets, and marriage records."(7) In addition, he indicates he asks new and different questions of well known and published sources, for example "newspapers, inheritance protocols, diaries, and local histories."(7) The result is a Mennonite story that is textured somewhat differently than previous studies were, even though the basic earlier outlines remain.

In chapter one Loewen analyses the diaries of six immigrant men. What they reveal is the events of daily life. Loewen thus entitles this chapter "Wonders and Drudgery," arguing that it is in the drudgery of everyday life that one can see the wonder of the immigrants' lives.

The diaries consist largely of comments about weather, crops, yields, health of the households, prices of commodities, interest rates, and visitors. The diaries do not normally express a lot of emotion. This changes, however, when they describe the travel from southern Russia to the United States. Loewen speculates that it seems that the "transoceanic relocation produced a heightened self-consciousness, revealed in more intense record keeping."(21)

A number of women wrote accounts of their migration to North America. Their travel logs differed somewhat from those written by men. Women used more descriptive language about the areas through which they traveled. What was noteworthy, however, was that women gave more attention to the social aspects of the journey; including family separations and traumas, feelings of fear and dislocation, and descriptions of the migrating groups and families. Loewen surmises that the migration was likely even more disruptive for the women's lives than it was for the men.(28)

In chapter two Loewen analyses inheritance patterns. Mennonites who immigrated from Russia in the 1870s believed there was a strong connection between their faith and economics. One way they expressed this was in inheritance patterns. Where one spouse died, the surviving spouse received one half of the estate and the remainder was divided among the children. The children's portion was divided on the basis of bilateral and partible distribution. Bilateral meant that daughters and sons inherited land and money equally. Partible "meant that the estates were divided, often literally, into fragmented eighty-, forty-, and even twenty-acre parcels" depending on the number of children and the size of the estate.(34)

In both Canada and the United States this pattern of inheritance came under pressure from the inheritance laws of the two countries. Loewen analyses how Mennonites responded to these pressures, and how long they were able to maintain at least some aspects of the traditional patterns. Loewen analyses the effect the bilateral and partible distribution had upon the formation of communities, the strength of families, size of farms, and the attitude to migration.

In chapter three Loewen addresses the role, place and voice of women in the immigrant Mennonite communities in both the USA and Canada. He notes that scholars of prairie rural German women in both Canada and the USA have concluded that women wrote little because they were exploited and ignorant. Consequently, they conclude, it is difficult to discern what women thought about their lives and community. Loewen disputes both the assumption and the conclusion, noting that in Mennonite

communities many women wrote diaries and correspondence and left a rich written legacy.

After noting what male writers said about women, he peruses women's own letters and diaries. From these writings he is able to discern their self-image, their view of family, their perception of the men in the communities, and their image of the contours of their communities. Some of the writers, he notes, were quite self-assured, confident, even brazen, willing to admonish male leaders in the community.

In chapter four Loewen compares two Mennonite farmers in two regions in Canada, Mr. Bergey in Waterloo County, Ontario and Mr. Plett in Hanover municipality in Manitoba. Both were rooted in Mennonite communities that loved the land. The immigrants of the 1870s "expressed an almost obsessive interest in farmland."(71) Mennonites in both Ontario and Manitoba considered that their "life of simplicity, peace, self-sufficiency, and separation from worldly society" were inseparable from the agrarian community.(70)

Loewen makes numerous comparison between the two Mennonite communities and notes that even though their basic orientation to land was similar, and they had similar commitments to maintaining their communities, there were also differences. Mennonites in Waterloo county, who were third generation immigrants, spoke more English, intermarried more with people from other cultures, and had more contact with urban centers. Mennonites in Hanover lived in a more ethnically homogenous setting, were more self-sufficient and lived further from a major urban centre. Loewen sees this comparative study as helping to see the importance of the variable of regionalism.

In Chapter five Loewen analyses four studies about immigrant groups in the USA in order to show that Mennonites shared immigrant experiences with their neighbours. The first study Loewen analyses is about a Dutch immigrant who settled in the Missouri Valley in 1892. The second is of "Rural German speaking women and their families in the Nineteenth century Midwest."(93) The third is entitled "Minds of the West: Ethnocultural evolution in the Rural Middle West."(95) The fourth study deals with the pressures that industrialization and urbanization placed on the family farm, on women's roles, and on local communities. It concludes that often immigrant farm groups were all struggling with the effects that agribusinesses, supported by large corporations and the government, had on the family farms.

Loewen says that by comparing Mennonites with their neighbours, it is possible to see the many areas where their experiences were similar to those of other groups. Also as Mennonites and other immigrant groups interacted with the powerful forces of the host American society, they also interacted with each other. Each was fighting for survival, all accommodating, and in this process "it was not at all clear which part of a multifaceted America the Mennonites came to know."(100) Loewen concludes that the immigrant groups' experiences were much more complex than simply relating to the larger American society.

Loewen concludes the book by indicating that his intention in the study was to "identify the social and cultural arrangements that allowed Mennonites to evolve as an ethnoreligious group."(106) Even though he acknowledges that Mennonites were a religious group with deep roots in the 16th century Anabaptist movement, he suggests that it was the cultural patterns and temporal organizations that they developed and reshaped which became the essence of their communities. He indicates that this study is intended to indicate the dynamic way in which Mennonites adapted to a new world in their migration to Canada and the USA in the 1870s to maintain "a clear ethnic identity, a sense of 'peoplehood.'"(106)

In *Hidden Worlds*, Loewen allows the voice of the common people to be heard. His diaries, letters, newspaper articles and other sources draw upon the experiences of the farmers, housewives, and other ordinary people who are the back bone of Mennonite communities, but who are often neglected and not given a voice in history writing.

Ilustration from Hidden Worlds, *page 50, identified only as "Members of an unidentified Mennonite family in 1955." Can any reader recall the names of this family?*

In particular, Loewen gives voice to immigrant and pioneer women, and provides categories for understanding the significance of what they said and did. His emphasis on the important role immigrant women played in maintaining and reestablishing the households is refreshing and instructive. His ability to show the creative role women played in shaping and imaging the contours of the immigrant communities helps readers understand immigrant communities more fully. His excerpts from diaries and letters which indicate women's ability to see what men had missed; namely details of their surroundings, the impact of migration upon family life, and the expression of emotions and feelings is a major contribution to Mennonite history writing.

Loewen has also provided a service in drawing attention to new and rich collections of materials that have previously been ignored. As more of this is published and thus moves from private collections to the public domain, other researchers will also be able to include it in future studies.

The one puzzling aspect of the study is the conclusion. In it Loewen is dismissive of the religious or faith dimension of the Mennonite story, and sees his study as showing how the religious and the temporal created "a clear ethnic identity." He sees the basic identity of the Mennonite communities as ethnic, and the faith aspect of the Mennonite communities as serving the maintenance of ethnic identity. For him faith seems to be a secondary motivator and a derivative identity for who Mennonites were and the migrations they undertook.

I think it would be more helpful, and more accurate, to see the ethnic and communal aspects of Mennonite community as an out growth of the faith of the community. The Mennonite community would not have existed apart from its faith commitments. The early Mennonites would have assimilated into Lutheran or Reformed churches in The Netherlands or Poland without a commitment to an Anabaptist Mennonite faith. The migration to North America from Russia is not understandable apart from the Mennonites' commitment to pacifism. The group settlements and the churches they organized in each immigrant settlement are not intelligible without the faith commitment as the basic factor. The inheritance patterns, which Loewen discusses, were the result of the Mennonite commitment to relating faith and economics. The strong Mennonite commitment to community, and the development of the many organizations which sustained those communities, developed out of a belief that faith is to be expressed and nurtured in community.

It seems that Loewen weakens and diminishes the significance of his own work by denigrating the faith that has provided the life blood for the communities which he studies.

Except for this puzzling conclusion, Loewen in *Hidden Worlds*, makes a valuable contribution in broadening our understanding of Mennonite immigrants and the communities in which they lived.

Book Review by Professor John J. Friesen, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

David G. Rempel, *A Mennonite Family in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union 1789-1923* (Toronto, 2002), 356 pages.

Memorialization in the form of diaries, journals and memoirs has long been a significant tradition among the Vistula delta Danziger Old Flemish Mennonites who settled in Imperial Russia in 1789. The "Familienbuch" typically recorded the ancestry and frequently also significant family events. As early as the 17th century, Flemish Ältester Georg Hansen (1635-1703), Danzig, maintained a journal as a way of organizing his life world as well as that of his

community (Postma, *Das Niederländsche Erbe*, pages 121 and 168). The extensive journals of Ältester Ohm Gerhard Wiebe (1725-96), Ellerwald, West Prussia, created a template for numerous similar endeavours in the future. In essence, such writing represented nothing less than the continuation of a literary tradition established by the Anabaptist martyrs in Flanders during the Reformation and by the Flemish expatriates in the northern Netherlands in the 17th century.

In more recent times a number of memoirs dealing with the experience of the Mennonites in Russia during the first decades of the 20th century have been published. By way of example, Gerhard P. Schroeder's *Miracles of Grace and Judgement* (Lodi, California, 1974), 266 pages (actually co-edited by David G. Rempel), and *Hope Springs Eternal* (Battleford, Sask., 1988), the memoirs and sermons of Prediger Johann J. Nickel, describe the life of the Mennonites during World War One and its tragic aftermath under the Soviets.

David G. Rempel was not only a gifted observer of the human condition but also one of the first trained historians coming out of the Russian Mennonite community. He was also quite erudite and did not hesitate to criticise and lecture his fellow Mennonites when he believed that historical events were incorrectly interpreted. Rempel became well-known, for example, to *Der Bote* readers for his didactic contributions. Accordingly I looked forward to reading David G. Rempel's memoirs fully cognizant that they would be of great significance.

David G. Rempel is already familiar to the readers through his excellent essay "From Danzig to Russia: The First Mennonite Migration," published in *Presservings*, No. 20, pages 3-18 (including a brief biography by Dr. James Urry at page 19) as well as a subsequent article, "`I too was there, and Mead I drank....,' The Eichenfeld massacre: and Analysis and Commentary on the Eichenfeld massacre and the Mennonite film, `And when they shall ask,'" in *Pres.*, No. 21, pages 25-27.

David G. Rempel was born in Nieder Khortitza in 1899 and died in Menlo Park, California in 1992. He attended the Chortitza High School and taught school until 1922 when he was removed by the Soviets. In 1923 he emigrated to Canada. He completed his PhD at Stanford University in 1933 with an impressive thesis "The Mennonite Colonies in New Russia: A study of their Settlement and Economic Development from 1789 to 1914." Rempel's thesis was ground breaking for its time and had it been published and widely circulated within the Flemish-Russian Mennonite community, it would undoubtedly have added considerable depth and balance to Russian Mennonite historiography which for far too long was dominated by Brüdergemeinde apologists and neo-Kellerites (see *Pres.*, No. 23, pages 46-50). Rempel's work can usefully be compared with that of his contemporary, Baltic German Adolf Ehrt, who published his thesis in 1932 under the title, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seine Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart* (republished in 2003).

David G. Rempel grew up in Nieder-Chortitza and his descriptions of the *Cherkessy* "with broken-tipped knives" are delightful, reflecting an earthy, unpretentious Mennonite world interacting with "....numerous lawless elements in the early days of the settlement" (page 16).

Rempel's literary sketches of the "Nippaenja" flesh out the teasingly short descriptions of Dr. Jack Thiessen (*Pres.*, No. 15, page 134). The "Nippaenja" were the landless day-labourers living at the river end of the village, "...who lived a haphazard, perhaps carefree life" (page 124). The villagers were apparently considered as "lower class" by some, but seemingly compensated with a robust and stoic Mennonitism and an impressive ability to survive. Some of the other villages in the Old Colony considered themselves more cultured and educated and "delighted in ridiculing our villager's [Nieder-Chortitza] mode of speech...[which was] devoid of any High-German words.....and deemed our everyday vocabulary and pronunciation to be that of country bumpkins...." (page 87).

The "intelligentsia" during the "Golden Age" of the Mennonites in Russia lauded mainly modernization, pietization and Germanization as the finest virtues of civilization. This resulted, ironically, in the rather intolerant attitudes and narrow views cited. It is regrettable that the so-called intellectuals of this period overlooked and made no effort to preserve the noble traditions and pre-capitalist, egalitarian and communitarian ethos and culture of the Flemish Mennonites, shaped as it was by four centuries of persecution and struggle for survival. One tragic example: Heinrich Unruh, Ältester of the Halbstadt Gemeinde in 1903 could not even identify and was not familiar with the classic work by Schaebalie, *Die Wandelnde Seele*, from the canon of Flemish Mennonite devotional literature (Endnote).

The reader will find the personages described by Rempel to be warm, human and complex and not the simplistic stick figures which pietist hagiographers have attempted to foist upon unsuspecting readers - as again bravely presented in such recent productions as Janice L. Dick's, *Calm before the Storm* (Herald Press, Waterloo, 2002) (see *Pres.*, No. 21, page 134). One of the intriguing characters crossing the stage of Rempel's world is "Great, Great Grandfather Gerhard" who at age 65 married an 18 year-old girl, apparently a marriage of convenience. Gerhard took his bride to the summer room right after the wedding, telling her: "Helena, here this is your room, here no one will disturb you" (page 19). Two days after "Old Jeat died....she married her old beau, Jakob Loewen" (page 20). The family demonstrated a genuine understanding of human needs and relationships as "Old Jeat's sons and their wives visited Helena and Jakob often...[and were miffed] to hear the Neuendorf neighbours sniff at their stepmother as `that barefoot grandmother'".

The next generation was represented by Johann Rempel, a stalwart of his community. In his term as Schulze or mayor of Nieder-Khortitza, Johann went head to head with the regime of Johann Cornies rejecting his dictatorial and simplistic educational reforms and living to tell the tale (page 21). Johann also fought off Cornies when he wanted to relocate part of the village of Nieder Khortitza and presumably turn it into one of his square-box, square-grid, sterilized, village plans and marked by "....overwhelming, stultifying sameness" as he had in the Molotschna. Johann - backed solidly by his villagers - refused to obey the "Fuhrer's" directives, something for which he might have been excommunicated, banned, shunned, exiled, and even corporally punished in the Molotschna where the "Supreme unelected Ruler" had broken the back of the traditionalist majority by public beatings, whippings, shaming, and defrocking of several leading Ältesten and even exiling the noble Ältester Heinrich Wiens (1800-72), Gnadenheim, Molotschna, using deceit and chicanery. Presumably Cornies filed a complaint with the Guardianship Committee which "removed Mayor Rempel and one of his assistants from office." D. G. Rempel proudly notes that because of his grandfather's heroic resistance, Nieder-Chortitza remained "....one of the settlement's most beautiful villages" (pages 23 and 192).

David G. Rempel is candid about Cornies' police-state regime, writing: "Although such forms of punishment seem out of keeping with Mennonite tradition, there is ample evidence of Cornies' brutish methods" (page 22). Historian Adolf Ehrt echoes these observations, referring to "the policing [state] representation of the Cornies' commission [Society] as an organ of the absolute Russian State," (page 40).

One of the most tragic chapters in Russian Mennonite history was the fall into hopelessness and despair of many of the "landless" some of whom sought deliverance through the frantic proselytising of Separatist-Pietists and Baptists of various hues and varieties. The "enlightened self-appointed elect" from "Deutschland" were only too delighted to spread sectarianism, strife and conflict among the Mennonite colonies in Russia (much like American Fundamentalist missionaries in the modern-day seek to spread their lies and deceit among our brothers and sisters in Christ in Latin America).

Gerhard Wieler, one of the early leaders of the secessionists or *Brüdergemeinde* movement, is described by Rempel as follows: "Soon after becoming a brethren leader, he proclaimed himself an apostle with the rights and obligations to baptize, ban, or excommunicate whomever he wished, thereby splintering this separatist group as well" (page 27). D. G. Rempel points to some of the devastating consequences of the "evangelizing" activities of Evangelist Eduard Wuest and other sectarians. Referring to the death of Johann Wieler, Gerhard's more stable brother, Rempel writes: "A few Mennonites may have secretly and uncharitably deemed the means of Johann's demise poetic justice, for the schism between the Brethren and the established churches engendered such bitter feeling that often family members severed virtually all contact with other members if they were of the opposite branch of the faith. For a member of the old church to `convert' (the Brethren's favourite expression for joining its membership) to the new was regarded as a betrayal of true Mennonite faith" (page 28). D. G. Rempel refers also to one of his relatives who was leaning towards the Brüder and "perhaps would have left his own church except that he found it easier to recruit converts from his position in the established church," (page 64). Rempel's cynicism regarding religion is perhaps understandable in view of the transparent manipulativeness and unethical conduct typical of such sectarians.

The standard approach among the Russian Mennonite historians has been to denigrate the struggle of the Flemish Mennonites at Chortitza in

1789-1800 to implement their traditional forms of governance based on egalitarianism and communitarianism, as the work of ungrateful, unruly and recalcitrant neophytes, and as the manifestations of a fallen and corrupted culture. In his well-known essay "From Danzig to Russia" published in *Mennonite Life* in 1969 (*Pres.*, No. 20, pages 16-18), D. G. Rempel takes an impartial, more scholarly approach, pointing out that the charges against delegate Jakob Höppner (1748-1826) arose out of an inquiry by Imperial administrator Samuel Contenius (normally lauded by the modernizationists), were laid by the authorities and, "....the government eventually found them guilty."

David G. Rempel was a descendant of Jakob Höppner and possibly this influenced his treatment of the Höppner affair in a chapter of his memoirs with the rather revealing title, "Unjust Charges: The Fate of Jacob Höppner." Rempel refers to "The colonists...[who] turned their wrath on blameless Höppner and Bartsch...(page 8) [and pursuant to] "...the early settlers' cruel and unjust treatment....the church shunned both and the community forced Höppner's imprisonment" (page 46).

One speculates whether the change in interpretation may reflect the viewpoints of the editor of Rempel's memoirs? The historical record is clear that Höppner had no elected status nor even appointed authority relative to the pioneer settlement at Chortitza and although his services and contributions were outstanding and noble, not the slightest shadow can be attributed to the Flemish settlers in "New Russia" for seeking to reorganize and re-implement their traditional communitarian and democratic forms of governance.

Pietistic - and progressivisticly - orientated writers have tried desperately to reinvent delegate Jakob Höppner as some sort of proto-Johann Cornies "proconsul" with a mysterious but unexplained divine authority to govern. It would be much to the benefit of the Mennonite community to move beyond the superficial hero-worship of Johann Cornies and other similar autocrats among the Russian Mennonites whose achievements - as breath-taking as they may have been - are but painful reminders of the unnecessary strife and disunity caused by the relentless and unyielding pursuit of modernization, particularly when implemented by self-appointed dictators and not by a democratically constituted process as was customary in traditional Flemish Mennonite culture.

David G. Rempel also challenges some of the myths surrounding the Chortitza settlement, particularly that of the great poverty of the Flemish pioneers. The myth arose "....among many of those who held land and wealth....[that] the cottagers, day labourers and the few shiftless ne'er-do-wells in most villagers stemmed from the vast number of improvident original emigrants. Although there might be a grain of truth in this idea, it is mostly false" (pages 9-10, 59). The myth - I believe - was unashamedly morphed into a larger than life "urban legend" by pietist hagiographers such as P. M. Friesen (page 91), apparently in the hope it would make easier their mission of converting Mennonites away from their traditional Christo-centric faith.

Those who question Dr. Rempel's observations should compare the property listings of the 1801 Old Colony census (published in *Diese Steine*, pages 653-665) with the 1808 Molotschna Revision (published in B. H. Unruh, pages 304-331). These sources demonstrate that the Chortitza settlers were wealthier or at least as wealthy as their Molotschna co-religionists. The relative success of the "Old Colonists" was also documented by Adolf Ehrt (*Das Mennonitentum in Ruszland*, page 96 and elsewhere) citing records of the "Forstei Service" which show that Chortitza was the highest assessed of the three original Gebieten or municipal jurisdictions, namely, Chortitza, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld. In the category of manufacturing in 1908, Chortitza alone outproduced the other two districts (Ehrt, page 89).

Mennonite communities like all human societies were never completely equal. Traditional Flemish Mennonite culture was founded on a biblically based vision of egalitarianism and communitarianism. Traditional values were eroded by the transition to capitalism and the conversion of Mennonites to more spiritualistic and vocally expressive religious cultures. Distinct social classes developed as a result. Rempel devotes an entire chapter to "Class Conflicts within the Khortitza Settlement" noting that "...ultimately 40 per cent of the Khortitza Settlement's population and two-thirds of Molochna's citizens were landless" (page 120). Rempel explains the development of the landless class and the later opportunity for revenge of the dispossessed during the Revolution when some of the "Nippaenja" such as "Mennonite brigand Petia Thiessen..." joined the Makhnovshchina and other anarchists (pages 217 and 248). Other Nippaenja became comrades and held positions of power in the village soviet: "Elated at the reversal of roles, the landless shut the former propertied elite out of the process....The property owners protested vehemently. Balkov retorted that if they caused the local soviet trouble, he would dispatch them to areas from which they would never return" (page 187).

Although D. G. Rempel devotes considerable space to the landless class he does not draw the connection between the development of the small "gutsbesitzer" and factory owner elite (2.8 % had 38 % of the wealth) at one end of the economic spectrum and the 40-70 per cent landless at the other. Adolf Ehrt, in contrast, identifies both as manifestations of capitalism and as reflecting the abandonment of traditional Mennonite ideals (page 96). The point is that modernizationist historians and social scientists should be more consistent as frequently only the positive aspects of the transition to capitalism are identified but only rarely is there any discussion of the negative consequences resulting from the breakdown of traditional social structures and mores. Rempel notes, also, that had the Mennonite community remained faithful to its traditional Flemish vision it would certainly have possessed the resources to eliminate landlessness and/or at least significantly reduce it (see Rempel, page 133). In this regard it appears that the modern Mexican Mennonite community has done a better job of establishing daughter colonies for their landless than their 19th century counterparts in Imperial Russia.

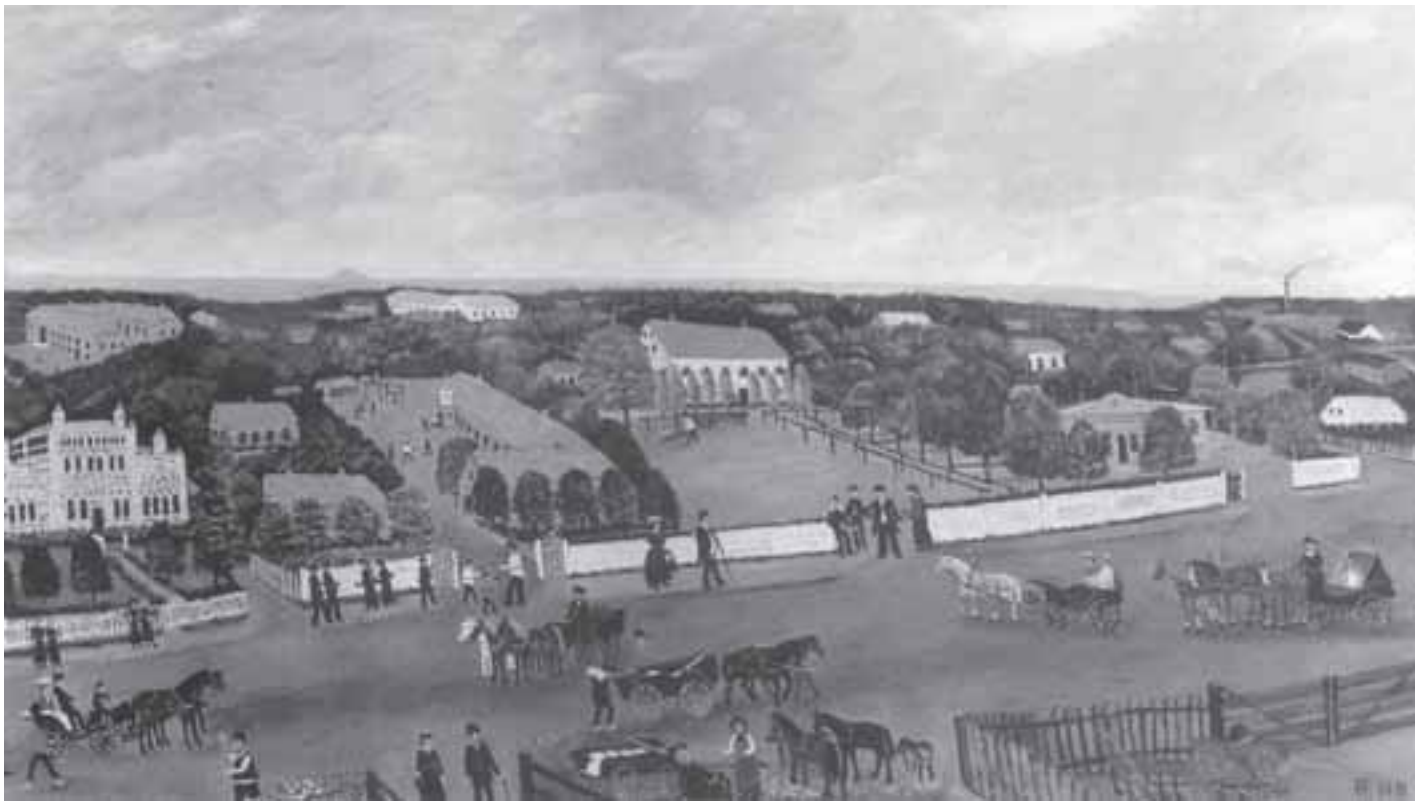
All religious societies have to deal with the tension "between the concept of a New Israel composed only of elect saints" and the genuine conversion of later generations already socialized in the faith. Belief typically becomes pro-forma. Americans Evangelicals, for example, have dealt with this by ritualizing the process of conversion, baptism and revival as rites of passage thereby guaranteeing that their offspring would be soundly converted and could then make a profession of communal obedience (testifying) and qualified to be entered under the covenant (see Robert Lindor, *Men. Life*, Dec. 1983, pages 17-22). Nevertheless, retention rates among the children of so-called Evangelicals are relatively low - presumably dissuaded by an extremely shallow religious culture. Conservative Mennonites have done this far more successfully with retention rates up to 80 percent for Amish and Old Colonist Mennonites. Christian formation of children in the home, community and church is at core of Flemish Mennonite faith and culture.

D. G. Rempel provides a characterization of this aspect of religion as practised in his parental home: "....there was little verbalizing of religion at home, and I believe that this was because our parents believed that actions speak louder than words" (pages 97-98). Rempel, however, did not recognize the centrality of faith, the church and community in shaping Mennonite life and culture and he refers to "their proforma baptism at age twenty, which they needed if they were going to claim such community privileges as marriage, eligibility for Alternative Service and voting" (page 124). His dismissal of the differences between the Flemish and Frisians as "...related to the settlers' obduracy and propensity to split hairs over meaningless matters" (page 10) is another example. In this regard David G. Rempel rises only marginally above the so-called Russian Mennonite intelligentsia of the early 20th century, whose almost complete rejection and lack of interest regarding their own Flemish faith, culture and history doomed them to intellectual impoverishment and decline as a people. By comparison, Adolf Ehrt - although a non-Mennonite - saw the Flemish Mennonites in Russia as a unique and homogeneous people thereby presenting the foundation for a more accurate and holistic portrayal.

Some critique - The process of the editing of these memoirs is not explained. What was left out, what was retained, and more importantly, what was changed? The editor, Cornelia Rempel Carlson, does refer to "...the more ambitious effort of editing and - most often - rewriting the material" (page xiv).

For example, reference is made to the New Year's Eve activities of the Slavic neighbours, the "....peasants from the nearby Ukrainian village of Razumovka" (page 101). However the greeting of the supposedly Ukrainian neighbours is in Russian: "*Seiem, seiem, provivaiem, s novym godom pozdravliaem*".

One questions, therefore, was the editor trying to be politically correct by referring to all Slavic neighbours of the Mennonites as Ukrainians (an idea actively promoted by current Ukrainian nationalists)?; or were the Ukrainian villagers - similar to the Mennonites - also Russified by having lived in an Imperial Russian milieu for several generations, so that they spoke Russian when they visited the Mennonites?; or were the residents of Razumovka in the 1920s actually ethnic Russians - not completely unlikely, given that both Russian and Ukrainian peasants were resettled in the re-



Henry Pauls' beautiful painting of the Chortitza main street 1910 - Chortitza "old" colony, South Russia. The Mädchenschule (still standing) - left, the worship house - middle centre, and the Gebietsamt building - immediately to its right. The publishers have also included in the book the painter's poetic description of the street scene, "A Painter's Recollection of Khortitsa, 1910," pages 329-330, almost worth the price of the book on its own. The big man standing at the front gate of the church with the hat is Ältester Ohm Isaak Dyck (1847-1929) (see Pres.*, No. 21, pages 7-24) conversing with the local rabbi, teacher Penner and the local Russian Orthodox priest. Photo -* A Mennonite Family, *bookplates pages 124/125.*

gion after its conquest from Turkey (the modern-day population of Zaporozhe is still over half ethnically Russian). Presumably copies of D. G. Rempel's manuscripts are available in various archives so that historians may mine the material for such nuggets of interest.

One notable glitch: the beautiful painting of the main street of Chortitza by Henry Pauls reproduced on the dust jacket appears to be flipped with the Gebietsamt building to the left (south) of the church when in fact it is to the right (north) (see page 329). The painting is, however, correctly reproduced in the photo plates following page 224.

Some minor points of editing: Footnote 1 at the bottom of page 314 refers to the "spread of Baptism," presumably intended to refer to the spread of "Baptists" or "Baptists' religion". Footnote 1 for chapter 11 on page 315 incorrectly refers to the head of the Waisenamt as the "Waisenschulz" when in fact it was the Waisenältester or Waisenvorsteher. These items, however, are not serious and overall the prose reads well.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Rempel was not able to write and publish as prolifically as was warranted by his depth of scholarship and extensive knowledge. His memoirs, help to make up for this void and represent a major contribution to the Flemish Mennonite story in Russia. The readers owe daughter Cornelia Rempel Carlson and Professor Harvey Dyck a debt of gratitude for the years of work and dedication required to bring these invaluable memoirs to publication. Hopefully these memoirs, as well as Dr. Rempel's valuable 1933 thesis, can someday also be published in German.

D. G. Rempel's recollections speak for a rich and colourful Mennonite past. Those who are old enough and still familiar with the Mennonite art form of story-telling will find in these memoirs many a wonderful yarn and adventure which they will genuinely enjoy. The largest and most extensive chapters of the book deal with the outbreak of WWI and Rempel's account of his family's harrowing experiences and - far from certain - survival under the Makhnovshchina and the Soviets and add an analytical and personal perspective to these tragic events.

The memoirs of David G. Rempel demonstrate that he was a genuine folk historian and chronicler of his people in the best of the "old" Old Colonist tradition. The discriminating reader will not be disappointed.

Book review by Delbert Plett, editor.

Endnote: James Urry, e-mail to editor, Jan. 12/04. Heinrich Unruh memoirs, Conrad Grebel, Mss. 134.

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Forging a future out of desperate fires:

Erica Jantzen, *Six Sugar Beets: Five Bitter Years*, Pandora Press, 2003.

Edith Elisabeth Friesen, *Journey into Freedom*, Raduga Publications, 2003.

Here are two more stories of lives ripped asunder in the Soviet Union.

Erica Jantzen's book tells of the harrowing experience of Anna Kroeker – a sister of Jantzen's stepmother – as a young woman in Kyrgyzstan during the turbulence of the Stalin era. Because Jantzen is recreating a life, she gives Kroeker a fictive name, Mia Peters.

Staggering, how a seemingly small matter can lead to things of great consequence. Mia scoops up six beets on a muddy road – and gets sentenced to six years in Siberia (she was freed after five). Thousands of miles from her children, she helps construct a bridge, does railroad maintenance and works in a sawmill.

These are vignettes of incomprehensible privation: Mia's braids frozen to the canvas of her bed; the violent coughing and blinding headaches from her mind-numbing toil. She is sustained by several "God visions" that come to her like powerful cords of protection, assuring her that she and her family are in God's hands.

Jantzen's remarkable tale of faith and stoicism moves along like a locomotive. I could not put it down.

Edith Elisabeth Friesen's book is another heartrending tale. Friesen's mother and three siblings were caught in the Soviet Union in the1930s. Friesen had heard the stories all her life but they became real when, in 1997, she and her mother returned to Ukraine, to the world where Anne's "childhood came crashing down" and life on the run began.

Friesen's story reads like a courtroom drama, with the intermingled voices of her four characters and chunks of commentary from her as narrator.

Sometimes the commentary feels overly didactic, occasionally like an interruption, but for the most part it is helpful in filling in the gaps.

How hungry can a person be? Friesen's near-starving fugitives eat eggs from birds' nests, garlic, grass and horsemeat. How uncomfortable? Jammed in cattle cars with chickens, in barracks with bedbugs, in open boxcars in the freezing cold, children wailing. They run like animals before a forest fire, outfoxing all who would detain them.

In Vancouver, years later, Anne and her husband sponsor a family from Vietnam. Anne understands the losses boat people experienced – she, too, has cobbled together a new life from shards of loss.

Book review by Betti Erb. Reprinted from *Cdn. Men.*, Feb. 9, 2004, page 11.

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Ted Friesen, *Memoirs: A Personal Autobiography of Ted Friesen* (Altona, Man., 2003), 180 pages. Hardcover.

It wasn't until his retirement that Ted Friesen, a beloved, well-known and life-time resident of Altona, Manitoba, finally got serious about writing his memoirs. Even after he had started he kept asking himself: "Why do I want to write a memoir of my life? Is there enough richness in my life worth recording? What do I have to say to my family, friends and society at large that would justify writing my Memoirs, that would reward all the work involved?"

Fortunately he decided to proceed. Ted's life story and his reflections on family, church and community, and his view of history and the arts, and many other aspects of his experiences are rich with insights and information which are worthy to be shared with his family, friends and the broader community.

As a friend of Ted's and a former resident of Altona I am very pleased that Ted took the time to record his life story. In my school years in Altona I remember often going to the post office and general store owned by the Friesen family. This was where Ted worked. I remember his gentle friendliness and helpfulness.

Ted writes with modesty, but he is forthright. For example, he describes his relationship to his father as having been complex. Even though he rebelled at times against his father's "puritan lifestyle," he loved him and held him in very high regard. "This expressed itself more after his death," writes Ted. "One of those examples is the way we thought our father would have acted when we established business practices. Those principles are embodied in the policy structure of Friesen Corporation to this day."

His immediate and extended families are very important in Ted's life. He has dedicated his memoirs to his wife Linie and their sons: Eric, Paul and Tim and their families. He has also worked on the genealogies of several branches of his family, and he has been instrumental in organizing family reunions.

Other cultures and history have always intrigued Ted. He writes about Lou Erk, the local druggist, an immigrant from Germany, who helped to heighten his interest in history, the arts and literature.

Ted describes the great love his wife, Linie, and he have for music and travel. A major section of the book is devoted to highlights from some of the trips they have taken to Europe and South America and in Canada and the USA. He and Linie are also ardent concert fans, and they have hosted such renowned singers as Angela Hewitt, Tracy Dahl and Edith Wiens.

Even though he was a bit of a rebel in his younger years, he became a person of deep faith. He writes how in the early 1950s, when he was moving into his 30s, he rededicated himself to the Christian faith, and he has been an active participant in the Mennonite church at the local, provincial and national levels ever since. He was a founding member of the Altona Mennonite Church, and he served on a variety of MCC and conference committees. He was a very active member of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

During World War II he declared himself to be a conscientious objector to war, and he did not go into the military, even though two of his brothers did. In the book he tells how he and his brothers continued to be close even though they had not taken the same path on the CO issue.

The foregoing are but a few brief glimpses into the life of Ted Friesen as told in his memoirs. It is an enriching story, full of interesting details and good examples. Thank you, Ted, for having shared your story with us.

Reviewed by Larry Kehler, 440 Best Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3K 1P3, who in his earlier careers served with the D.W. Friesen company several times - in the print shop, and as short-term interim editor of *The Canadian Mennonite* and the *Altona Echo*. Larry and his wife Jessie also served as interim pastors of the Altona Mennonite Church for a year (1997-98), where the Friesens are members. Linie and Ted provided them with bed and breakfast and warm hospitality several days each week during most of that year.

Editor's Note: Ted was also involved in an earlier publication entitled *David W. Friesen: A Tribute* (24 pages) as well as several family books on his maternal Klippensteins as well as Friesen families. Ted and the Friesen family have always been dedicated patrons of Mennonite writings and publications and *Preservings* extends its sincerest congratulations on the completion of this important project.

To order the "Memoirs" contact Ted Friesen at Box 720, Altona, Manitoba, Canada, R0G 0V0 or phone 1-204-324-5406.

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Gerhard Driedger, *The Werder: The land between the Vistula and the Nogat* (**3rd** Ed.) (Lethbridge 1995, 157 pages, softcover.

This book is a delightful history of the Vistula delta, ancestral homeland of most Prussian, Russian and Canadian Mennonites, and therefore of interest to students of Mennonite history. It is well written (although some "Germanisms" do exist and a very few typographical errors, which I understand will be corrected in a 4th edition), clear and concise, and easy to read. For a quick overview of the Werder, one could not wish for a better presentation. The author, while drawing on many comprehensive sources, and while fairly general in his approach, nevertheless manages to instill a

Ted Friesen, supporter and patron of the Mennonite community. Cover of Memoirs: A Personal Autobiography of Ted Friesen.

freshness and excitement to the material.

The strength of this work lies in the concise and accurate description of the general, geographical, and cultural history of the Werder. This history is closely tied to geographic problems (related to Vistula flooding) and cultural changes, described by the author. One wishes the author had expanded more on the relationship between the Poles and the Teutonic knights, on the great landowners (the monasteries and the wealthy families (eg. the Loitzes), and political events in general. However, that might have made the work much larger and unwieldy, and that was not, it seems, the intention of the author. Of particular interest is the account of many local usages, words, and names. A clear explanation of landownership under the "Kulmer Recht" versus leasing as "Emphyteutic" owners is provided here. Origins of many place names are discussed in terms of Slavic, German and Prussian roots, as well as other technical terms such as the difference between a "damm ' and a "wall". The various floods over time and their extent are discussed in detail.

The weakest portion of this book is that relating to the Mennonites, although not specifically meant as a Mennonite-Werder history. Given that the Mennonites owned 20-25% of the Werder land circa 1788, and given that the author is of Mennonite background, one would have expected a more detailed or at least more accurate treatment of the Mennonites. For instance, the Münster struggle is described as a "riot"(p.49), and the David v. Riesen affair is very poorly depicted in terms of v. Riesen having "dared to defy the Elders" (p.89)[see v.Reiswitz/Waldeck: "Beitrage" (1821) (pA3I33) for a more accurate accountj. One senses the author is really not interested in, or sympathetic to the Mennonites in general. If I might say so, this appears to be the case of most Prussian or German Mennonite historians.

The abundance of Werder detail makes this work a useful quick reference. The 17 maps are well laid out, and particularly interesting are the maps detailing the villages founded (with dates) in

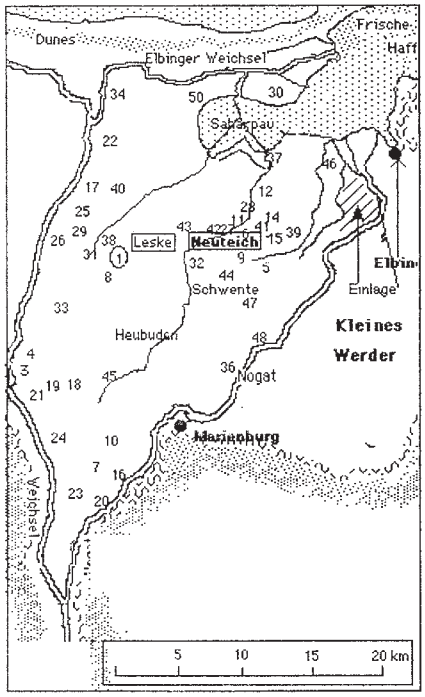
the era of the Teutonic knights and those founded by Mennonites.

Book review by Henry Schapansky, 108-5020 Riverbend Road, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5J8.

Horst Gerlach, *Die Rußlandmennoniten: Ein Volk Unterwegs: 4. Auflage* ("The Russian Mennonites: A People on the Way") Weierhof, IV re-edited and expanded publication 2002, 235 p. (plus 76 photo pages in colour). 27 EU/US. Order from Mennonitische Buecher, Am Gerbach 3, D67295 Weierhof, Post Bolanden. Fax# 0049-6352-74025.

In 1992 the first edition of this book appeared containing only 128 pages. The fourth edition contains 235 pages in addition to 75 photos pages in colour, for a total of 311 pages. The title of the book indicates the contents, namely The Russian Mennonites: A Wandering People. In the first edition of this book, the author, Dr. Horst Gerlach, writes that he has been involved with the Russian Germans for 20 years. At the time of the publication of Volume IV this time span has been extended to 30 years. The Russian Mennonites, A Wandering People have been incorporated into the author's heart, one might say. In the foreword to the fourth edition the author writes, "It is explicitly these wanderers around the world, whose ancestors came from Russia to the USA and Canada in 1875, and later migrated to Mexico, Belize, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina to whom this fourth edition is dedicated. They can all join in with all of Christianity in the song: "From the rising of the sun, till its setting that night, praised be the name of the Lord."

Villages established prior to 1356.



Villages according to Gustav Fieguth

1- Groß Lichtenau	1254
2- Neuteichsdorf	1310
3- Ließau	1316
4- Barendt	1321
5- Lindenau	1321
6- Marienau	1321
7- Mielenz	1321
8- Klein Lichtenau	1321
9- Tannse	1321
10- Altmünsterberg	1321
11- Ladekopp	1324
12- Petershagen	1328
13- Neuteich	1329
14- Fürstenau	1330
15- Groß Mausdorf	1332
16- Schönau	1333
17- Schöneberg	1334
18- Gnojau	1338
19- Kunzendorf	1338
20- Wernersdorf	1340
21- Altweichsel	1340
22- Bärwalde	1342
23- Groß Montau	1342
24- Biesterfelde	1343
25- Neukirch	1343
26- Palschau	1344
27- Tiege	1345
28- Orloff	1349
29- Schönhorst	1349
30- Tiegenort	1349
31- Prangenau	1350
32- Eichwalde	1351
33- Damerau	1352
34- Fürstenwerder	1352
35- Neumünsterberg	1352
36- Schadwalde	1352
37- Tiegenhagen	1352
38- Parschau	1355
39- Lupushorst	1361
40- Schönsee	1334

Additional villages listed by Weber:

41-Rückenau	1312	46-Jungfer	1332
42-Mierau	1318	47-Irrgang	1341
43-Bröske	1318	48-Halbstadt	1351
44-Leswitz	1321	49-Reimerswalde	1356
45-Simonsdorf	1323	50-Brunau	1356

7-Villages established by the Teutonic Order until 1356

Gerald Driedger's, The Werder, *contains many interesting maps including Map No. 7 (page 144) showing 50 villages established in the Werders by the Teutonic Knights before 1356.*

The author was to make his first contacts with Russian Germans in 1945 when he, as a 16-year old lad, was deported to the Soviet Union together with other Germans. It was there that he also met up with Volga and Black Sea Germans, likewise sent to the Soviet Union. Years later, when he was back in Germany again, the idea hit him to depict the fate of the Russian Mennonites within the framework of the Russian German experience. With this noble aim in mind, this voluminous and multi-faceted work came into being. In addition, the author visited the Mennonites in many parts of the world; Russian, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia and the USA, but particularly Canada. While travelling, he took photos and conducted interviews, collected data, narratives of experiences, depictions and pictures.

Contentually the volume transpires as follows: Initially the origin and the treks of Anabaptist-Mennonitism are sketched and then, in more detail, the migration of the Mennonites from Prussia to Russia is developed. This is followed in several chapters by describing the Mennonites institutionalizing themselves in Russia: self-administration, schools, community and church life, daughter colonies, freedom from military service (or lifting of same) and missionary efforts. The author pays particular tribute to the difficult times of the Russian Mennonites: First World War and Civil War, the "lash of Communism" - under which, and from which, many of Mennonites living in Canada today suffered greatly - the catastrophe during the Second World War and the deportation of Mennonites to the terrible Stalin GUlags. This horrible fate in which thousands of Mennonites met an untimely death is illustrated by the author by vivid personal accounts. It is downright exhilarating to read these episodes. The assembling of the Mennonite flock and the care of re-settlements and the significance of it all for Germany is also described and depicted by an important essay by John N. Klassen.

In the final chapters, the author concentrates on the route of these people to Canada (Chapter XV); the settlements, congregations and schools and the reasons which led to their migrations to South America.

In Chapter XVI he explores their further treks to Middle and South America: Mexico, Belize, Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia. The author (Chapter XVII) pays particular attention to the Bolivian settlement and this for a good reason: The Working Community of Re-Settlers (AGUM) in Germany with some 21 active churches has initiated the Bolivia-Assistance-Programme. Containers with essentials and clothing items as well as books have been sent to Bolivia in order to support our extended Mennonite family.

This volume is generously illustrated with photos, drawings and maps, adding to a clear and attractive tome. The new addition of the book contains 58 black and white and 132 coloured photos. I hope that the book experiences a wide audience. It promotes the feeling of togetherness and the consciousness who we as Russian Mennonites are in terms of identity, where we came from, and where our tasks in the future lie.

Reviewed by Gerhard Ratzlaff, Archives Director, Evangelical University, Asuncion, Paraguay.

Jack Thiessen, *Mennonite Low German Dictionary: Mennonitisch-Plattdeutsches W÷rterbuch* (Madison, Wis: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2003), 520 pages.

"Eene plautdietsche Welt" Many readers of this review will vividly remember growing up in "eene plautdietsche Welt," whether in Steinbach, as I did, or in some other "pure" Mennonite community. Plautdietsch was taken for granted as the colloquial language of Mennonites in the old days. But like many other minority languages in this age of electronic mass communication all over the globe, it is in danger of being pushed aside and eventually obliterated by big imperial languages like English. On the bright side, while the use of Plautdietsch is declining in North America, it is still holding its own in South America and parts of Europe. And it certainly helps that it has been turned into a literary language, beginning with Arnold Dyck's marvelous Low German stories and plays and continuing to this day with engaging writers like Reuben Epp and - most prolifically - Jack Thiessen.

And now, as the ultimate bonus, we have Thiessen's much-needed and definitive new Low German dictionary, which I confidently predict will never be surpassed. It offers not only a rich assortment of words and definitions, but also provides valuable insights into Mennonite society and culture as reflected in our inimitable Plautdietsch. It is in itself "eene plautdietsche Welt" that feels as warm and secure and intimate as the world many of us grew up in. Thiessen is much more than a lexicographer - a dictionary maker; he is also a masterful story-teller, humorist and social historian, and has enriched his dictionary with fascinating bits of Mennonite folklore, verses, songs, proverbs and social history. His humorous, frank and at time startling illustrations and comparisons will have all but the most prudish users of this dictionary chuckling constantly.

Thiessen's deep love of Plautdietsch and its fascinating potential for literary expression, combined with his long-standing studies of the language (starting with his doctoral thesis on it many years ago) have given him an unsurpassed mas-

tery of our colorful language.

Thiessen published an earlier version of his dictionary in 1999, but in my review of it at the time, I pointed out that outstanding as this new dictionary was, it was really only half a dictionary in that it had no English to Plautdietsch section to balance the Plautdietsch to German and English section. This new edition not only has both halves but has been enlarged by many new words and additional lore and now contains over 13,000 entries.

Whereas the preceding edition was published locally by the Hanover Mennonite Historical Society, this new edition was published by the prestigious Max Kade Institute at the University of Wisconsin, giving it not only a wider endorsement but valuable advance publicity. Although a sizable volume, it has an attractive and very readable format with an arresting photo of a dignified, church-bound Old Colony Mennonite couple on the front cover.

Readers of this dictionary will not only enjoy looking up words but will have fun just browsing in it. They may not always find the words they are looking for because unfortunately Plautdietsch still lacks a standardized spelling system, a problem that can make the search for certain words a little more difficult. However, they will have no trouble finding the entertaining and informative notes and illustrations scattered throughout this generous volume. If they pay close attention they may even hear the voices of past generations of Mennonites to whom Plautdietsch was their Laundessproak, in which they expressed the only way of life they knew or ever wanted to know.

In fact, as I write this I can hear my eight, long-departed Kehler uncles - all groote Schnetterietasch - laughing their heads off: "Waut, een plautdietschet Weadabüak? Nä, Junges, daut bruck wie nijch. Wie weete je aul dee Weada." [What, a Low German dictionary? C'mon, guys, we don't need it. We know all the words.] Yes, that generation still knew all the words, but we no longer do.

If you don't believe me, test yourself with words like "Schintjeschwoaga," "Jülbassem," "Schmaundjoop," "Schoosebräatja," "Chelodne," and "Baulabuss". You may be in for some surprises-and there are many more like them!

Thanks to the life-long dedication and unmatched linguistic skills of Jack Thiessen, "disse plautdietsche Welt" is now yours to enjoy. And if you spend enough time with it you might even bring a big smile to the sober church faces of the Mexican Ooltkolonia couple on the cover, not to mention to the already beaming face of Jack Thiessen in New Bothwell.

Reviewed by Al Reimer, 115 Wordsworth Way, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3K 0J6. For Al Reimer's review of Dr. Jack Thiessen's earlier Low-German to German Dictionary, see *Pres.*, No. 15, pp. 167-8.

Brad S. Gregory (ed.), *The forgotten writings of the Mennonite martyrs* (Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2002) (Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica VIII) (Kerkhistorische bijdragen XVIII) xixi,403 p., ISBN 9004120874.

Since research for his doctoral thesis at Princeton University, Gregory has added further studies published under the title, *Salvation at Stake, Christian martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (1999), and he concluded that there was much more to the topic of Anabaptist martyrdom in the Lowlands than presently known. Obviously in North America these studies were mainly the domain of Tieleman Jansz. Van Braght's *Bloedigh Tooneel of Martelaers Spiegel* (1660, 1685) and contemporary scholarship in the English language relies heavily on this material. Gregory's discoveries in the Doopsgezinde Bibliotheek (Anabaptist Library) include rarely used books of martyrdom not included in the Van Braght-canon, introduced already by his article in: *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen* 19 (Anabaptist Contributions) (1993), 81-106. This research forms the format for the *Documenta Anabaptistica Neerlandica* at hand (before us).

In the introduction to the text Gregory states that Van Braght was more the messenger of the tidings and that Hans de Ries earns the credit for the edition of 1615 in his *Offer des Heeren* which is based on new material of the times; the reason for a new historiographic and receptive phase being introduced. This was a thorn in De Ries's eye in which he "annexed" the martyr texts by way of new arrangements. These were known prior to him by word of mouth from orthodox Mennonites from the Old Flemish and Old Friesians to whom this material had been passed on verbally (dating prior to the Flemish-Friesian schism of 1566/67) and which led to the body of the text of *Offer des Heeren* being greatly expanded. Gregory claims that De Ries "stood above the involved parties" which were the criteria for the acceptance or rejection of material.

The latter is evident according to Gregory, 400 years after the fact, since De Ries included in this edition representative martyr texts which through him not only came to light but also into usage. De Ries was familiar with both the pro and cons of the context of the times but since these did not fit into his concept of a neutral strategy, he left them out. The texts which met the standards of his position were those which accented the content of the letters rather than those dealing with the persona of the authors. De Ries took from Joos Verkindert (+1570) many individual letters but not those which dealt much about speaking about the ban but rather those for not exercising it.

For the sake of uniformity, some of the texts by Thijs Joriaenz (+1569), a Flemish leader and a participant in the Friesian-Flemish conflict, in which the Friesians are criticized, are not included. Whereas Gregory, with respect to De Ries' position of reconciliation, does not differentiate since he is of the Waterlander persuasion, which took a hard position against the ban, and so he chooses his texts accordingly. The choice by Jacob de Roore, in his letters, is presumably assuming a conciliatory position to the Waterlanders, in which Gregory chooses a position of non-involvement.

However, Gregory states that this matter warrants further investigation. De Ries allowed himself to be persuaded mainly by motivations of content and that on account of the varying tastes in hymnological matters of the time which were gradually departing from the specific genre since 1615. Moreover, eight of the 20 songs here included are the more or less forgotten, but are included in Philipp Wackernagel's book *Songs of the Dutch Reformed* of 1867 which in 1965 was re-published photo-mechanically. Of the forgotten songs I have located seven with texts by Christiaen Rijcen while Carel van Mander is included with an arrangement of one "classic" martyr's song (p. 359-380).

A further sub-chapter of the introduction, in which a general characteristic of the texts here represented is given, deals with the individual important and more contentious observations. Thus, Gregory by way of a continuation of Samuel Cramer's introduction of his publication of *Offer des Heeren* (II Part of *Bibliotheca Reformatorica Neerlandica*, 1904) reaches other deductions regarding the Anabaptist texts. He is convincing in stating that the original producers of the texts of the published letters are mainly based on the biblical annotation on the margins. Gregory's studies and conclusions have led directly to the previously named texts to be electronically reproduced to be brought to the light of day as well as the transcript of the handed down letters by Jeroen Segers (see my article in a previous publication).

I honestly wish that the hand written manuscript collection had come to light much sooner: the date is not given in Gregory's *Salvation at stake* - in excerpts of this text edition these should have been located. He is right in observing the strongly biblical content of these letters, and the fact that these are/were written in custody without a Bible or a testament to hand; he refers to the Bible in jargon terms as a "natural apparel", tailor made for him. His challenge to research this material ("it might help us to reconstruct Mennonite biblical culture," p.xxxiii, footnote #47), should not have been - as far as I am concerned much too modestly on his part - limited to a footnote. In this context I make reference to a highly intriguing letter by Henrick Alewijnz(note 8, p. 37-39), in which Alewijnz refers to as 'condensed content' which amounts to a written poetic epistemology, a guide in 12 of written martyr poetry in waiting (pending).

The 94 representative forgotten martyr pieces (among which are 20 songs), carefully edited and conscientiously noted - the book is an edited study with exclusively text-critical commentary - is a veritable source of sterling quality. In addition to the 10 texts and songs by Henrick Alewijnsz (+1560 in Middelburg), 17 by and of Jacob de Roore (+1569 at Brugge), five by Thijs Jorianensz (1569 in Muiden), 18 by Jan Verkindert (+1569 in Antwerp), three by Hendrick Verstraeln (+1571 at Rupelmonde), three by Jan Woutersz van Cuyck (+1572 in Dorderecht), 16 by Reytsee Aysses van Oldeboorn (+1574 de Leeuwarden), and that concludes the contents of the four texts dealing with the trial and three in 1592 of the martyrs Bartolomeus Pantyn, Michiel de Cleercq and Calleken.

With regards to Gregory's presentation of the texts - conscientiously edited/published by Brill - I would like to make the following criticism. In his description of the sources (Intr., p. xix-xxv) I miss the location (with library signature) of the edited text of the copy forming the basis of observations. As to the one (No. 9, p. xxiii; University Library of Leiden) which refers to the Anabaptist Library, which is not based on the IDC-micro-fish version of the books located there does not help the user directly regarding the bibliographical works of ref-

erence of Vander Haeghen and Valkema Blouw, according to the references made.

Valkema Blouwes Typographia Batava (hereafter: TB) further states that for eight of the 10 published sources a second copy is known; compare: in Univ. Library-Leiden, and three in Amsterdam, on the basis of which a text collection had been possible in order to arrive at a good transcription. This is a must for providers of texts and for published sources of the times from the early perspective of which note should be made and taken of the advantages of so-called corrections regarding the persons involved. In the collection of Sommige brieven by Joos Verkindert (No. 6, p. xxii) that may well have led to a different reading of the text. Here the edition of 1577 has been used, attributed to Valkema Blouw (TB No. 5217) and the Scyhinckel-Hendricksz-pers te Delft, while the Uni. Library of Leiden has one unique copy from 1572 from which Valkema Blouw (TB No. 5216) reasons that this copy may well have been published in 1579.

Based on this technically edited base of origin Gregory has not included some of this material and one misses some references and for example on page 85 where a short footnote regarding the "Sermon about the Grey Brother, named Cornelis (the famous `Brother Cornelius')" is right; the same applies to the exemplary `Sebastiaen Francken Cronijck' (p.93). Gregory here provides some enlightening annotations and information, as for instance on page 136, Note 257, page 250 Note 20 (in The Netherlands) and 22. His abbreviations are used according to standard usuage. Personally, I would have opted for oldest before older, instead of the old, he uses (with references to Dirck Philips, p. 196) and in the second letter by Reytse Ayssesz to his church (No. 65 p. 287) the passage the dead (being) O. B. but rather angst before the text to make it read the dead O(lder) B(oorn).

This type of commentary is a demonstration of commonality rather than a signaling of fundamental shortcomings. This sort of publication, of source material combined with a date registry, should be an addition to all further research in this area. It has earned a respectable place next to van Bragt (a new text edition and a modern English version of this classic) and next to Cramers edition of the *Offer des Heeren*, from which many generations of scholars of martyr's literature may draw great profit.

Book review by Piet Visser, Jachtenlaan 20, 1503 HV Zaandam, Netherlands, translated from Dutch to English by Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell, Manitoba, reprinted from *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, nieuwe reeks 29 (2003), pages 279-282.

Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake. Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass/London, Harvard University Press, 1999), Pp. 528. ISBN 0-674-78551-7.

Brad. S. Gregory, in this voluminous work considers martyrdom at the time of the Reformation and researches the methodological question of the historical attempts at conciliation. His research included northwest Europe (England, France, the Lowlands and the German-speaking areas) whereby the author attempts to assume an inter-confessional position. Herein lies the originality of the work: Gregory approaches the martyrdom of the three great streams, Protestant, Anabaptist, and Catholicism as an entity - an enormous undertaking in light of the variety and wealth of material on which this the research is based.

This book therefore presents a wealth of historical and bibliographic information. Much of the material utilized by the author is original, particularly, the martyrdom of the late Middle Ages which is based on the Lollards and the Hussites, with the Lowlands soon relegated, somewhat, toward the fringe of things.

This book first presents a general description of martyrdom and from there it offers a short indication of the Middle Age concept of Martyrdom and its sufferings; on the one hand, the readiness of the martyrs to be persecuted and, on the other hand, their willingness to die after confessing to a defense of their faith. The most consequential part of the book is dedicated to the three martyr traditions which are treated in a special main body. There we find the treatment and discussions regarding the anti-martyrology (which deserve serious attention next to martyrology itself) and a broad analytical interpretation of various martyrdoms. Gregory presents a widely-based source material and a usable index and two verses from Maeyken Wens and her son (1573) to the respectable S. Cramer and Van Bragt.

The "Weltbild" of the Middle Ages overlaps in all three streams and reveals many common elements: statements from Scripture, the reconciliation and its implications for earthly matters, life after death, conciliation through Christ, the importance of justice and the proper walk in life. Then he deals with various forms of suffering as they apply to extreme conflict situations necessary for a basis of communality (Gemeinschaft). Only then follow the hermeneutics: an interpretation of Scripture and at to how the individual can make such meaningful to his life. Then follow matters relating to baptism: does one have assurance of salvation before God and is adult baptism necessary or is justification possible by faith alone? Gregory posits a litany of articles plus transubstantiation, faith and revelation and all are found insufficient to meet the questions posed by logic (344). On the other hand, he identifies the theme of *sola scriptura* as the spirit of the Middle Ages which was likewise found lacking. Martyrdom confirms the juxtaposition of differences and leads to the indefensibility of the practices that emerge.

Martyrdom is the inevitable result in a world of absolute hierarchy where scripture is interpreted unilaterally. This would lead to a total impossibility of religious tolerance as it was prior to the 16th century. The author explains that only the Anabaptists understood this in its every implication, while the Catholics and Calvinists, a pluralistic company, demonstrated radical divergent views leading to such sharp differences of position. Martyrdom and pluralism united present an important insight into the thinking of that time.

The main section regarding the Anabaptist martyrs is somewhat shorter than the respective analysis of the Protestants and the Catholics. First a general introduction of Anabaptism is presented beginning with the developments in Switzerland, then in southern Germany, Austria, Thomas Müntzer, Hut, *et. al.*, before arriving in the Lowlands. Sources of German-speaking Anabaptists have been the object of vigorous research and comparative analysis as they apply to the Lowlands. The author presents a necessary oversight regarding the developments of the well-known leaders such as Menno Simons and Dirk Philipsz. Less attention is given the developments as they transpired in the southern Netherlands. Then attention is directed to the martyrs in *Offer des Heeren* and Van Braght (II part) originating in Flanders, and characterized by resistant prejudice.

Gregory understands martyrdom not as fanatically extreme but as an exemplary model, a model which is generally regarded and praised as such. The author thereby strives to break with 'reductionist theories' (similar to post-structuralism), observing that the religious understanding and conduct of the martyrs during the 16th century was of a high order. The worship experience of 16th century mankind, in general and the martyrs specifically, should be taken seriously. The paternalism, invariably involved, which is so much part of life at the time hinders the reconstruction of the scene of the age and research of it. The ensuing theological discussions should not be interpreted in terms and basis of economics, psychology or sociology but on the basis of prevailing material and understood on those terms.

Without insights into the dogma and spirituality the Reformation cannot be understood. Politics and the church were intimately interwoven with the result that theology of the times was deeply involved in the culture. The emphasis is on a respectable attitude (position) as Gregory has undertaken in this new orientation. Only by following this approach can martyrdom be fully and really understood; also by divesting the research from current methodological and reductionist practices of recent historical writings (351).

All the while the author now and then pleads for an integration of different approaches (13). He is obviously pursuing historical evidence and not motivated by ecclesiastic considerations in his attempt to elucidate religious traits and actions thereby preventing his consciousness from falling into the biblical scholarship as a measure of reality. In my opinion this is only possible if you distance yourself from the complexities of your own faith and formulate a social entity which is attracted to one's own consciousness.

Thus themes of social power and powerlessness daily play a role in 16th century theology, of the faithful (martyrs) of whom its was expected that they might lapse into atheism (350) or at least reflect on it. If the legitimation transpires by way of theological constructs but which makes little sense for theology as an isolated motivation as opposed to isolating power in an analysis of power structures in society's formulated death penalties as a 'Foucauldian claim' (81). It is possibly more appropriate to ask the question whether the ecclesiastic motivation has equal place alongside the many aspects which dictate man as an acting essence. In every case the religious experience attracts to itself another form of observation and also this non-enforcement is explained away by the sociological hook (barb). Gregory has been

successful in portraying the martyrs as people who died true to their faith.

Further, we notice that in the justification by faith of the Anabaptists and by faith alone (198) no general consensus is a given. The *sola scriptura* can well be intertwined into the texts but the *sola fide* demands much imagination, particularly as it applies to the Lowlands.

Gregory has taken a very courageous approach in elevating martyrdom over the confessional limitations as a refuge of faith. This book offers, as well, a unified overview of martyrdom in the 16th century and the communal (gemeinschaftliche) elements and he discovers these among the different and differing streams of belief of the times. His observations are consistent from beginning to end. His work, therefore, deserves high praise. Moreover, this research of the literature of martyrdom deserves more attention than anything dealing with this topic to date.

Book review by Marjan J. Blok, St. Johns International School, 146 Drive Richeille, Waterloo, Belgium, 1410, translated from Dutch to English by Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell, Manitoba, reprinted from *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, nieuwe reeks 27 (2001), pages 277-279.

John Staples, *Cross-Cultural Encounters on the Ukrainian Steppe: Setting the Molotschna Basin, 1763-1861* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), 256pp. $50.00.

The last decade represents a special breakthrough in the development of Mennonite historiography. The evaluation of Mennonite history based on primary sources about Russia and Ukraine previously not available, can be characterized as a "judgement by a foreigner (an unknown)." The world of Mennonite history lost its insularity and monotony and developed a dynamic diversity provoking new thematic dimensions previously unexplored.

It is noted that the work by John Staples is not exclusively "Mennonite." As opposed to his predecessors, he approaches the evaluation of colonization from a regional perspective, namely, the Molotschna river basin. This study concentrates on individual, national, and confessional colonization streams, which were not only objects of the colonization and the recipients of various Russian assistance or subsidies, but subjects as well (participants, initiators).

In all this, the author pays particular attention to the history of the Mennonite community, the fate of which developed most successfully during the time of adaptation. J. Staples attempts to research the reasons for their successes and the failures of other groups. The titles of the individual chapters confirm its regional character. My main objective in this review is to emphasize the valuable theoretical results of his work which have no comparisons in previous historiography.

In Chapter II J. Staples demonstrates his general analysis and understanding of the colonization process. The author claims that the state regarded all colonists as subjects; the degree and nature of this guardianship depended, above all, on the interest of the state and its maximum profit to be realized from and through them. For this reason the state drafted particular colonization strategies for the development of individual groups to be settled on new land. For example the government understood full well that the Russian State peasants (farmers) would not be successful without the support of the state.

The government proceeded with particular care with individual sects (Duchoborzie, Molokans) as well as with the Nogasiens. With regards to the Nogasiens, it was the objective of the state to "civilize" them. The fact that the Duchoborzie received the status of "re-settlers" and various protective measures was based on a personal view of the liberal Alexander I, as well as the fact that the Duchoborzie would then be under his legal guardianship. The German colonists and Mennonites belonged to a category which would best be served by supplying them with land. They were under the supervision of the Guardianship Committee and therefore had certain initial advantages (a head start). I would dispute the author's conclusions in that it was incorrect to regard the initial government subsidies as an important factor in the economic success of the Mennonites in later times.

In Chapter III the author presents an analysis of the process of adaptation of various groups of settlers from 1783 to 1833. He reconstructs the economic development of individual settler groups up to the time of the drought and epidemics. In our opinion the chapter is not as complete as it could be, particularly regarding the relationship between the meaning of the term "adaptation" and the suggested time period.

The author notes that under the conditions of the steppe region, cattle production was the only secure economic choice of the settlers. In order to understand the concept, the author claims that for every colonization group the process of adaptation depended on two factors: economic background and the degree of economic activity and knowledge of a market economy. It was characteristic of the Russian farmers and the Nogasier to maintain a passive relationship with their environment. The author claims that the tradition of the nomadic people was deeply rooted in the subconscious of the Nogasier and that they were resistant to change. On the contrary, the Russian farmers adapted quickly. This is demonstrated, for example, in a very rapid transition in their economic activity in favour of raising cattle. However, the author states, that the Russian farmers displayed no interest in the market economy.

At the beginning of the process of adaptation, the researcher emphasises, in particular the religious factor as one of the important elements leading to economic success. Since the Duchoborzie and Molokans found themselves in a strange environment, they banded together and quickly realized rapid adaptation. In describing the individual stages of the economic development of the settlers, the author describes that, in particular the Mennonites' religious quarrels of the 1830-40s and the economic differences in the 1850s-60s period, are inter-related with the problems of the initial stages of the settlement. The problems of the 1840s were results of the natural geographic isolation of the communities and the two-power-system in the colonies (secular and religious). The basis of the land conflict of the 1860s was a dearth of land within the time frame of adaptability, since the best lands had already been utilized for use. This resulted in a shortage of land which confronted each successive generation.

The author regards the years 1832-34 (drought and epidemics) as the turning point in the development of an economic structure in the Molotschna. The problem resulted from the inability of the government to recognize the peculiarities of the demographic situation in the Molotschna basin. As John Staples claims, the government plan was to continue developing this region as opposed to focusing on the economic stability of this region since, in the previous period, various settlers already had problems of land shortage.

The most important part of this research by J. Staples is the chapter about Johann Cornies to which his work is dedicated. As the author claims, the Mennonites fulfilled their complex mission as intended by the Russian government while at the same time becoming a model in the important economic process of the region. In our opinion the author has presented the most detailed, original and complete analysis of Cornies' work, without precedent in history. The views of this reformer and his perspectives and strategies of the development of Mennonite society, started in the 1820s and achieved their zenith in the 1840s. The author depicts Cornies not only as a worldly man but also as a religious leader. Cornie's organizational abilities were more in evidence at the time of his forestation work (1830) and the Agricultural Society (1836), by which the Welfare Committee tried and introduced the progressive ideas of the Regulations for Settlement upon the Mennonite settlements.

According to the author the first attacks against Cornies were mounted by the opposition in the 1830s. Cornies himself admitted that the basis of these conflicts lay in the differences between secular and religious forces. The author states that the Agricultural Society was a mechanism whereby Cornies implemented his program of modernizing upon Mennonite society, including the market economy. J. Staples states that some of the projects by Cornies had a welcome character. He tackled the problem of the land shortage but, only partially resolved the problems for those who had no access to land. He was the first, according to J. Staples, who had the idea of subdividing the standard 65 desjatin Wirtschaften - the first of which came into effect in 1845.

The model of a modern Mennonite society, was based on scientific theoretics. Cornies was bent on realizing the entirety of the reform program and therefore clung to the authority with which the government had endowed him. The famous Warkentin matter was of a political nature. One of the results of this event was the deliberate destruction of those who opposed Cornies' system of administration.

By way of an evaluation of Cornies' work the author states: "Not all elements of the successful Mennonite development could be permanently introduced into the economic culture of other settler groups. I would here like to use the term `uniqueness' without fear in describing the model of Mennonite development." The author, however, also depicts an alternative to the development of the Mennonite economy as presented by the Russian State farmers. According to J. Staples, in the 1830s,

after the Russian farmers had recognized the model of land partitioning, within a farming community, they concluded that this would lead to poverty. But did the Russian farmers offer an alternative with additional perspectives as to how to resolve the shortage of land? No.

The government had always been critically inclined towards the economic abilities of the farmers and hardly ever leant an ear to their requests. It is highly probable that the re-settlement of the Russian farmers in this region was not based on economic considerations but on political considerations. As opposed to the Mennonites, the Russian farmers were very insular in their social organization. This and other factors resulted in their society being relatively impotent towards government.

John Staples' focuses on land shortages in the 1860s in the Mennonite colonies. The problem is traced to peculiarities in the development of Mennonite economics in previous times. By attempting to resolve the problem of land shortage by renting Nogaier land, the Mennonites stimulated the development within the Nogaier settlements of a one-sided model. By so doing, according to J. Staples, the Mennonites were indirectly responsible for the eventual re-settlement of the Nogaier in Russia. In total, the scarcity of land was a combination of several circumstances: loss of Nogaier land and the economic instability resulting from the Crimean War.

In his concluding remarks the author presents an answer to the question: which changes did Mennonites succumb to within the time of adaptation during the first half of the 19th century. The author concludes that at the beginning, their "Weltanschauung" was similar to that of the Russian peasants because they lived under and with similar economic possibilities. The process of the economic development of the Mennonite settlements bore an exclusive character, leading to the previous Mennonite peasants becoming farmers, wage labourers and entrepreneurs. The society which had a united character during the beginnings, was based on the principle of equality. The strategy and the main factors, leading to the economic success of the Mennonites were: recognition of an independent religious identity, reform measures by Cornies and to recognize and adopt the agricultural conditions.

According to the author, the most important is the third factor: the potential of the management of their land resources leading to the evolution within the Mennonite society of a civil (secular) administration which became the active "agent" of economic activities.

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Translated from Russian to German by Adina Reger and translated from German to English by Dr. Jack Thiessen.

Michael D. Driedger, *Obedient Heretics: Mennonite Identities in Lutheran Hamburg and Altona during the Confessional Age* (St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Burlington, Vt: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2002), 224 pages. $99.95 (US).

In recent decades historians of the Radical Reformation have made significant progress in elaborating on the complexities of 16th century Anabaptist beginnings. This book advances the field of scholarship by examining subsequent developments in post-Reformation religious life in the Mennonite community living in and around Hamburg and Altona, in north Germany. The author, Michael Driedger, who teaches at Brock University, Ontario, has joined a growing number of scholars who have begun to pay attention to the process of identity formation typical of churches during the confessional age (ca. 1550-1750). As a way of surviving amidst religious conflict, churches during this time period, among other things, wrote confessions of faith, produced catechisms, developed liturgies, produced songbooks, and established rules and regulations for pastors to follow as they led their congregants throughout the church year. While the discussion surrounding the topic of confessionalism has usually focused on the structural similarities between Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed institutional cultures, Driedger is one of the first to bring Mennonite confessional developments into this larger discussion, and, in the process, has raised important questions related to current methods of historical research and interpretation.

The research presented in the book provides new information concerning how the Mennonites survived as a minority people in a time of significant transition and change. In the seventeenth century, Mennonites held on to certain traditional Anabaptist distinctives, yet at the same time they became increasingly involved in the broader socio-economic sphere, and demonstrated an increasing level of conformity to the political order (Hence the oxymoron "obedient heretics" in the title of the book). In this context conflicts ensued, not only among Mennonites, but also between them and other religious groups. A central argument of the book is that when Mennonites experienced periods of conflict, rather than weakening Mennonite identity, their self-understanding was actually strengthened. Mennonite identity was strongest precisely in times of public controversy. Conversely, as controversy diminished, standards of identity became more flexible.

A main assumption of the volume is that it is normal for groups to change. In the past, Anabaptist historians assumed that early sixteenth century Anabaptism "embodied the timeless, true and pure expression of Anabaptism: all later forms which differed from this supposedly pure, original form were bastardized and corrupted" (5). Driedger believes that this approach is unhelpful to present-day historians because it interprets diversity as a problem; it implicitly frowns upon historical development, and insists that religious groups must have an unchanging, core character. While Driedger believes that there are dimensions of Mennonite belief that have remained relatively constant over time, it is fair to say that groups change.

Historians should, therefore, be wary not to develop false intimacies with the past, or succumb too easily to golden age theories that support their own ideological convictions and commitments.

The book is well written. The opening chapter begins with a description of the transition of the Hamburg and Altona Mennonites, from a persecuted minority group to a minority group that found growing acceptance in an increasingly tolerant milieu. The second and third chapters of the book draw attention to the internal challenges that Mennonites faced as they sought to adjust to their new context. Driedger brings to light a largely forgotten history concerning the Dompelaars, a group within the Mennonite community advocating baptism by immersion. Here we are reminded that the Mennonite Brethren were not the first Anabaptist group to practice this baptismal practice. Driedger also takes into account the various ways in which Mennonites secured religious practices that gave routine to their way of life. For instance, they practiced adult baptism, and developed a system of lay leadership, which came to fulfill a role similar to the clergy of the other churches. They also developed institutions and administrative bodies to strengthen local congregational life, and to promote inter-Mennonite cooperation. A central dimension of Mennonite confessionalism was the adoption of confessional statements summarizing the essential beliefs of the community. The Mennonites of Hamburg and Altona joined some of the Dutch Mennonite networks that advocated strict adherence to confessional statements, but Driedger observes that not all Mennonites gave equal weight to the significance to these documents. Evidently, "there was not merely one but rather several brands of Mennonite confessionalism" (74).

The fourth chapter attends to the paradigm of confessionalization; the remaining chapters of the book give attention to the doctrines of nonresistance and oath swearing, as well as to the growing Mennonite practice of marrying outside community boundaries. Driedger pays attention not merely to the official statements and positions of the Mennonite community, but also examines the way in which Mennonites actually practiced their faith in daily life. He believes that studying the official standards alone gives an incomplete picture of Mennonite life. By focusing too narrowly on official pronouncements, historians overlook the contradictions between what people say and what they actually do. His research highlights the fact that for Mennonites, there was often tension "between official standards and the daily practice of faith" (129). In addition, Driedger points out, Mennonites did not always define themselves on the basis of confessional affiliation. Often other affiliations-familial, ethnic, professional and political-took precedence.

Based on impressive archival research, Obedient Heretics sheds new light on important details about Mennonites in northern Europe, and also brings to the surface older material that has long since been lost to English-language historiography. Overall, the book advances the discussion on questions related to method and interpretation, and contributes admirably to the perennial question of Anabaptist-Mennonite identity.

This review was originally published in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (July 2004), pages 451-453, but has been abbreviated and slightly modified for *Preservings*.

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Miriam Toews, *A Complicated Kindness* (Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2004), 246 pages, $29.95

Miriam Toews is one of our most gifted Mennonite writers, and that's saying a lot because our generation has produced a number of brilliant writers who are giving Mennonite writing a prominence never seen before. That she is a native Steinbacher is an added bonus for many of us. While her first three books were well received by both readers and critics and won literary prizes, they did not quite become bestsellers.

But with *A Complicated Kindness* she has hit the jackpot both artistically and in popularity. This new novel has been on Canadian bestseller lists for months and is being published in both the US and Britain and will certainly be translated into other languages. It is receiving enthusiastic reviews everywhere and is sure to win her more literary prizes.

So what's so great about this novel set in East Village, a barely disguised Steinbach? There are many things that make this book an exciting reading experience, so let me concentrate here on some of its major strengths and perhaps a few minor weaknesses. We must begin (and end) with Nomi Nickel, the highly intelligent and sensitive 16-year-old narrator and dominant character who tells her basically sad story in a pert, wisecracking style that makes the reader smile and laugh and feel tears welling up at the same time. Nomi is about as far from your traditional God-fearing, hard-working and soberly living Mennonite as you can get. She is, in fact, the exact opposite: a rebellious, free-thinking skeptic and irreverent dreamer, a super-smart, albeit often confused teenager whose desperate cynicism is at odds with her vulnerable, generous and idealistic nature.

Her family is Nomi's one refuge in an unforgiving, fundamentalist community dominated by "The Mouth", a bigoted minister and, ironically, the brother of Trudie, her mother. Sadly, by the time the novel opens that refuge has already split apart, with first her older sister Tash and then her mother leaving home without a trace-Tash because she can't stand the suffocating Mennonite atmosphere any longer and Trudie because she has been excommunicated. Nomi is left with only her eccentric father Ray, a passive and half-hearted conformist who reminds one again of Toews's own father, whom she depicts so vividly in her memoir *Swing Low: A Life*. As Nomi puts it in her witty way, the community enforced by The Mouth offers no compromise or middle course: "You're good or you're bad. Actually, very good or very bad. Or very good at being bad without being detected."

Tash is Nomi's idol and model. Tash is the uncompromising voice of reason, the defiant nonconformist who does what she pleases and has nothing but contempt for The Mouth and the spiritual gulag he controls. Hers is the bold voice of satire and to heck with the consequences. She scoffs at her sister's at times child-like innocence and gullibility and carries off her own rebellion with dramatic flair.

Mother Trudie is also a rebel at heart but because she belongs to an older generation where rebellion was simply out of the question for a girl, she has forced herself to struggle along as an obedient wife, mother and church member. However, her rebel nature, stimulated by her daughters, does finally rise to the fore, and in an ugly showdown with her brother The Mouth she crosses the line and is excommunicated. She is forced to abandon her family because she is now a pariah who is no longer allowed direct contact with the family she loves.

What gives this novel much of its spontaneity and narrative energy is its form: it's actually an extended monologue in which wickedly clever, never-at-a-loss-for-words Nomi tells her story directly to the reader. Everything she has experienced is filtered through her mind and feelings and recalled in her own whimsical words. The dialogues of the various characters are given without quotation marks as remembered and reported by the narrator in her own words. It's as though Nomi is confiding everything with complete candour to a close friend. Steeped in pop culture-pop music especially (in itself a language of youthful revolt)-she enlivens and illustrates her wry comments with pop lingo and the lyrics she knows so well. And no matter how depressed (or hung over) she is, the energy and passion that drive her mind and imagination never flag. She expresses even her most serious thoughts and insights in colorful pop culture slang.

And what are we as Mennonite readers to make of Nomi and the repressive Mennonite community she rejects and longs to escape? She is convinced the Mennonites "are the most embarrassing subsect of people to belong to if you're a teenager." According to her, the people of East Village "can't wait to die" and drag themselves through life only so that they can get to heaven one day. Nomi is lusting for a larger, freer world: "I just want to be myself, I just want to do things without wondering if they're a sin or not. I want to be free." Her Mecca of freedom is New York, her image of servitude is to be forced to spend her adult life working at Happy Family Farms, the local chicken slaughterhouse. In the meantime she tries to find temporary freedom by adopting a reckless life style that includes drinking, smoking pot and spending wild nights away from home with her boyfriend.

Nomi's situation becomes ever more barren and depressing as her father sells piece after piece of their house furniture and she still has no word from her mother or sister. And then The Mouth triumphantly arrives one day with the news that Nomi has also been excommunicated-"shunned, banished, exiled," in her own desperate words. Shortly after, Ray also departs, leaving her only the family car and instructions for selling the family house. But instead of surrendering to despair, this radical teenager consoles herself with a vision in which she imagines herself happy again with her scattered family reunited; she is even willing to forgive East Village for all it has done to her. "East Village," she says, "has given me the faith to believe in the possibility of a happy family reunion some day." And while this faith may be no more than a "beautiful lie," as she puts it, it is in her mind a kind of redemption that she is willing to accept.

What Mennonite readers of *A Complicated Kindness* should keep in mind is that this novel is not designed as a vicious, all-out attack on Mennonitism and a narrow, isolated way of life that is, in fact, rapidly disappearing. East Village is a fictional version of Steinbach and should not be equated with a real Mennonite community now or in the past. The very idea of several family members being excommunicated individually from a contemporary Mennonite church is an anachronism that is only real in fiction. What Toews is giving us is a satiric view of the dark underside of Mennonitism, and it's worth reminding ourselves that every community and its way of life, including the church, has a dark underside that needs to be exposed and confronted in one form or another. To deny that such a negative side exists in our Mennonite world is to endorse precisely the repressive good or evil world in which Nomi experiences so much suffering and spiritual confusion. To an older generation Nomi's rebellion may seem somewhat extreme and self-indulgent, but at least she has valid reasons for taking the path she does and has the advantage of following the example of others. As yours truly discovered a generation earlier, rebellion for an ambitious Mennonite youngster was no easy matter and was made even harder when there were no precedents or models to be followed.

As for the novel's weaknesses, they are minor ones that in no way detract from its splendid achievements. Nomi's sarcastic references to Mennonite history and its heritage-the world of the Mennos, as she calls it-usually come in the form of cheap shots that are often ludicrously inaccurate, historically speaking, as when she states that, "the Russians took everything away from the Mennos and sent us all packing when life had been so coarse and sweet back there on the banks of the Vistula." Mennonites left the Vistula behind in Poland before they moved to Russia! One would like to think that these historical errors are merely those of teenaged Nomi and not the author's, but that is not made as clear as it might have been. Nomi also has a problem with Plautdietsch-"the old language of our people"-which in her mind reflects the community's backward status and therefore draws her contempt as well. The trouble is that whenever Nomi does quote something in Low German the words are embarrassingly misspelled, something Toews could have checked in the Low German dictionaries now available.

What matters in the end is that Nomi, for all her contempt, bitterness and confusion, has come to understand that even a community as cruelly restricted and blindly conformist as East Village redeems itself with a complicated kindness, that is with a ray of goodness and grace that shines through the dark shadows of the community. Hard as it may be to understand and appreciate, it is there in the end. And this theme of ultimate kindness as a form of redemption for Nomi stretches into the universal theme of loss, suffering and redemption. That this universal theme emerges in the end, though somewhat ambivalently, attests to Miriam Toews's skill as a novelist. Her caustic wit and unrelenting irony, enjoyable as they are in themselves, lead inexorably to a conclusion that goes well beyond mere entertainment. It should come as no surprise that *A Complicated Kindness* is far more than merely a "Mennonite" novel and that it is being read and enjoyed all over the novel-reading world.

Reviewed by Al Reimer, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Above: *Annie Giesbrecht and Tina Loewen help selling cheese at the grand opening of Lamesa, the giant cheese factory at Campo 70 (see page 73 inside for the story). Photo -* Deutsch Men. Rundschau*, Okt. 6/04, front cover.*

Right: *Governor Patricio Martinez receives a recognition for his support of the new cheese factory at Campo 70, Mexico, from President Heinrich Loewen. Photo -* Deutsch Men. Rundschau*, Okt. 6/04, rear cover.*

Diplomats visit Mexican Mennonites.
On June 10, 2005, the Ambassadors to Mexico of Germany, Netherlands, Italy, India and Sweden, paid an official visit to the Governor of the State of Chihuahua, touring the city of Chihuahua, the state capital. The following day they visited the Mennonite Colonies in Cuauhtemoc. Here the wives of the Ambassadors model the traditional Old Colonist kerchiefs which they received as a gift from the "Centro Cultural Museo Menonita, A.C.", the Mennonite village museum: l.-r. Ele Kotsch (Germany), Jean McGerry Van De Velde (Netherlands), Yen Huyhn Thi Tempesta (Italy), Hal Raman (India) and Ewa Polano (Sweden). Photo - Deutsch Men. Rundschau*, July 5/04, rear cover.*

Cornelius Peters, Campo 117, Mexico, swathing his alfalfa. A typical landscape in the Bustillos Valley. There is nothing more trilling for a farmboy than to drive through 100 km. of beautiful Mennonite corn fields and dairy farms in northern Mexico. Photo - Deutsch Men. Rundschau*, July 19/04, front cover.*

Left: *The majority of North American Evangelicals now practice American civil religion whereby God has become the God of America and acting in accordance with its national interests. See pages 41-47 for the article by Dr. Robert D. Linder.*

Below: *A local school teacher lays a wreath at the newly unveiled Lichtenau train station memorial, June 5, 2004. The bench symbolizes people waiting at the station for a train - perhaps for exile to the east, or flight to west. See page 56 for the story. Photo - courtesy of Adina Reger, Weißenthurm, Germany.*

Above: *The Molotschna Bicentennial was officially celebrated in Halbstadt, Molochansk, June 6, 2004. Halbstadt Mayor Anatoly G. Smerdov and two young ladies bring forward the bread and salt, a traditional Ukrainian welcome. Photo - Johannes Dyck, Bielefeld, Germany. See page 55 for the story. The city of Moloschansk has a population of 10,000.*

Below: *The city of Zaporozhe as seen from the Island of Chortitza bridge, view to the east. The Mennonite village of the Island of Chortitza was located immediately to the right. Photo - Johannes Dyck, Bielefeld, Germany.*