

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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The Mennonite choir in Donskoie, Pleshanovo (formerly Neu-Samara), USSR, on the occasion of the bicentennial celebration of Mennonites in the Soviet Union. The banner reads: 1789 — 200 years in Russia — 1989. The poster says: *Das schoenste Wappen in der Welt, das ist der Pflug im Ackerfeld.* [The most beautiful coat of arms in the world is the plow in the field.]

Photo: MCC, Akron, Pa.

A Message to Our Readers

We are pleased to send you this expanded issue of the *Mennonite Historian* as a special feature of Russian Mennonite Bicentennial celebrations in Canada in 1989. Mennonites first came as settlers to New Russia in 1788-89 and their descendants have lived in Russia and the Soviet Union for two hundred years — and a bit more by now.

It is striking to observe in recent times that thousands of Mennonites are leaving that country. Also, though, there has come a serious invitation from the Soviet government to return and occupy all the vacant Mennonite houses once more.

These and other related themes are touched upon in the articles and photos in this issue. We thank all those who contributed something to get it together and hope everyone can benefit in some way from what is found in these pages.

Ken Reddig and Lawrence Klippenstein

which their farming methods were unsuited.

Upon arriving at Chortitza in July of 1789, the Mennonite families were disappointed as they glimpsed the bare and hilly steppes that were to be their new home. The first few years, particularly the winters, were difficult. Many of the first colonists were town-dwellers and craftsmen and knew little about farming. Disappointment with the location led to outright hostility towards Bartsch and Hoepfner, who, the Mennonites believed, had betrayed their trust. This disappointment was compounded by a lack of religious and secular leadership. It was not until almost ten years after the founding of the colony, due in part to the influx of additional families, that the new colony achieved religious and economic stability.

The militaristic policies of Frederick William II, king of Prussia, undergirded by the threat of war with Napoleonic France, resulted in increased government pressure upon the Mennonite community which remained. In spite of government obstacles, some 193 more families, totalling 1,020 people, left for Russia in 1803. Some stopped in Chortitza, but the majority moved to a new settlement called Molotschna, as did the 165 families (953 people) who came in 1804.

The new settlers in the Molotschna Colony had several advantages over the Chortitza settlers. They came with leadership already chosen in Klaas Wiens, a person of considerable foresight and ability. They also benefited from the experience of the Chortitza col-

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Mennonites in Tsarist Russia and the USSR, 1789-1989: An Overview

by Ken Reddig and Lawrence Klippenstein

Throughout the eighteenth century, immigrants were enticed by various European governments to settle in their respective countries. Their rationale was the idea that the wealth of a country depended upon the size of its population, which would then have an effect on commerce as well as political and military security.

The Russian government first implemented a broadly-based immigration policy during the administration of Catherine the Great, 1762-1796. Among the many groups of people Catherine wooed to her newly-won territories, called New Russia, were the Mennonites residing in the Vistula delta region around Danzig. These Mennonites, descendants of Dutch Anabaptists, had begun immigrating from the Netherlands to the Polish lowlands in the mid-sixteenth century. By the late eighteenth century the area had come under Prussian rule. The Mennonites became increasingly disenchanted with restrictions placed on them by the Prussian government and began looking for a new future in a new land.

Following Catherine's 1785 immigration manifesto, Mennonites became interested in moving to Russia. Vice Regent Potemkin, a

confidante of Catherine's and a highly-placed government official, sent his emissary, Georg Trappe to visit and encourage the Mennonites around Danzig to emigrate to New Russia.

Following a positive report by two Mennonites, Johann Bartsch and Jacob Hoepfner, who selected Berislav as a proposed settlement site, a petition was presented to Potemkin regarding conditions which the Mennonites considered important prior to resettlement. These included recognition of religious freedom and exemption from military obligations. Other requests dealt mainly with various economic and social matters.

Despite strong opposition from Prussian authorities, groups of Mennonite families began the move to New Russia in 1788. By the spring of 1789, 228 Mennonite families had emigrated from various communities in the Vistula delta. Enroute to Berislav this first group was informed that, due to hostilities in the resettlement region, they would have to settle elsewhere, namely an area near Khor-titsa Island. The unexpected shift of location was not welcomed. Fully expecting to re-establish their traditional way of life and low-land agriculture, they were now to re-settle on the open steppes in an environment for

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onists regarding the country, land and climate. Since the Molotschna colony was larger, it was more attractive to immigrants who brought new ideas and were better educated. The result was a fairly rapid rise to prosperity.

The best-known example of personal success in the Molotschna colony was the first president of "The Agricultural Improvement Society," Johann Cornies. He was a prosperous farmer, who, with considerable aid from Russian officials, experimented with different farming techniques. In the process he developed methods of farming better suited to the climate and soil conditions of the region.

Sheep raising was the basis of the economies of both colonies until the 1840s, when Cornies presided over the move to grain production. He soon became well-known as an agricultural expert and his large estate at Iushanlee became a showplace for travellers. His interests broadened and eventually grew beyond agriculture to include education, industry, and the founding of new villages.

While the nineteenth century was one of rising prosperity for the Russian Mennonites, it was also a period of religious and some social reform. Four grassroots movements caused major realignments in the religious and social fabric of the colonies.

The first was the founding of the Kleine Gemeinde by Klaas Reimer in 1812. Through personal study, Reimer became convinced that the Mennonite church had deviated from the correct path. He attempted to found a strict, separated church community whose members followed what he considered to be the true Mennonite way of life.

Two other reforms took place almost simultaneously around 1860, the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church and the formation of the Templer movement. Like Reimer's reform, these were born of the influence of pietism and other religious movements sweeping across South Russia.

The Mennonite Brethren reacted to what they considered a stilted and lifeless church community. They promoted evangelism, missions, Sunday School work, publications and the introduction of gospel songs.

The Templer movement consisted of followers of theologian Christoph Hoffman. Their vision combined pietism, missionary zeal and rationalistic thinking. Their chief objective was to build a new temple in Jerusalem. Eventually they founded a settlement and church congregation called the Templehof.

The fourth reform dealt with land. Until 1840 there seemed to be no dearth of tillable land. However, increased immigration, rapid population growth, compounded by the government provision that a full farm must pass intact to a single family member caused problems for younger siblings. By mid-century well over half of all family heads were landless. A dividing line between the landed and landless split communities. The landless even-



The old 700-year old oak in Zaporozh'e (formerly Chortitza). L-r: Peter and Mrs. Ens, from the Orenburg AUCECB congregation, with Elfrieda and Peter Dyck, Akron, Pa. The couples joined the Russian Mennonite bicentennial celebrations held at this location in August.

Photo: Mennonite Reporter, Waterloo, Ont.

tually organized and obtained government permission to form daughter colonies and divide full farms into smaller units. Other measures, such as the development of manufacturing in a number of villages, saved the situation from further serious consequences.

National reforms of the 1860s in Russia brought one of the greatest tests experienced by the Mennonites up to that time, i.e. the proposal of a universal military conscription law in 1870. When half a dozen or more petitions to the government failed to renew the earlier privilege of total exemption, a large number of Mennonites decided to emigrate to Canada and the USA. Around 17,000 persons, comprising about a third of the Russian Mennonite population, left the country during the 1870s.

The others found the government's alternative service program, where young recruits worked in forestry camps, to be a satisfactory arrangement. This program remained in place until it was dissolved during the Russian revolution in 1917-1918.

With the new reforms came gradual changes in education and local administration. Attempts to resolve the landless problem led to the establishment of daughter colonies in the Caucasus area, the region of the Urals, and eventually also in Siberia. By World War I the total Mennonite community included around 100,000 persons.

By this time an extensive system of private Mennonite schools had been built up at all levels, including teacher training for their own institutions. Both the Mennonite Brethren

and the so-called *kirchliche*, or church, Mennonite congregations organized into conferences during the seventies and eighties. Trade, agriculture and manufacturing continued to develop significantly during the pre-war years.

The First World War brought into the open a growing anti-German, hence anti-Mennonite, feeling, harbored by many Russians during the previous decades. However, Mennonites could still sustain their exemptions from active military service through alternate service, in forestry work and medical corps service under the Red Cross.

The emergence of a Mennonite press and literature in the early 1900s was set back by the anti-German legislation of the war years, and then flowered for a few years during the early Soviet period. Signs of economic renewal under the New Economic Policy of Lenin brought new hope for many. Thousands of other Mennonites, however, decided that their future lay elsewhere and chose to emigrate to Germany, Canada and other countries. About 22,000 Mennonites left the Soviet Union in the period from 1923-1930.

A very difficult period began with the takeover of the government by Joseph Stalin in 1925. After a few years of consolidating his power, Stalin initiated the collective farm program, and a vigorous policy of repressing all elements which in any way opposed his regime. Millions of people lost their lives in the wake of famine, dekulakization (eliminating all independent, better-to-do individuals), anti-religion campaigning and forced industrialization schemes of the 1930s. Several thousand Mennonites died under the "reign of terror" of those years.

The Second World War brought an end to the oldest Mennonite settlements in Ukraine. Many Mennonites placed new hope in the German invaders. The German defeat and retreat after the battles around Kursk in the summer of 1943 resulted in a mass evacuation — the Mennonites needed little encouragement to leave their colonies and trek to Germany, where they were promised a new life. A large number of these were repatriated to the Soviet Union after the end of the war, when the Red Army occupied a large portion of eastern Germany. Thousands of others had been forcibly evacuated to Siberia and northern Russia at the beginning of the war.

The terribly painful, and for many, fatal decade spent in labour camps and prisons after the war came to an end in 1955-56, when the strict, special residence regulations under which the Germans lived were lifted. The increased freedom allowed the reunification of families and movement to areas with better jobs and living opportunities. Many new communities arose in the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, while some of the older areas which had not been disrupted, the villages of the Orenburg and Barnaul/Slavgorod areas

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FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY

by Alf Redekopp

Die Rundschau Readers in Russia in 1885

The Mennonite newspaper, *Die Rundschau*, was founded in 1880. Five years later it had a circulation of about 2,400. In 1885 editor J.F. Harms, of Marion County, Kansas, was proud to report that of the almost 2000 North American paid subscribers, 746 lived in Kansas, and that over half of these lived in Marion County.

Alexander Stiega of Riga, Russia, a foreign subscription agent, secured about 400 subscriptions in Russia during those years. He submitted the names of the 1885 Russian Mennonite subscribers which were published in the May 6 and July 22, 1885, issues. These names may be of interest to family historians, if for no other reason than to establish that these people were living in a particular village in a particular year, and that they were *Rundschau* readers at that time.

Adelsheim: Gerhard Bergen
Alexanderfeld: Gerhard Isaak, Jakob Martens, Heinr. Peters, Gerhard Bergmann, Peter Berg, Heinrich Plett
Alexanderheim: Abraham Rempel
Alexanderkron: Cornelius Doerksen, Abraham Neustaedter, Heinrich Loewen, Hermann Klaassen
Alexanderthal: Daniel Siemens
Alexanderwohl: Aron Schellenberg, Jakob Thiessen, Martin Born, Heinrich Sommerfeld, Bernh. Rempel, Dietrich Warkentin
Alexandrovsk: Johann Heinrichs, Jakob Janzen, Jakob J. Janzen
Altonau: Johann Reimer, Franz Isaak, Jakob Enns, Jakob Dueck, Franz Janzen, Heinrich Neufeld, Abraham Matthies, Peter Warkentin, David Friesen, Franz Peters, Johann Schmidt, Johann Wiens, Klaas Wittenberg
Andreassfeld: Johann Neufeld, Heinrich Epp, Franz Neufeld, Gerhard Sawatzky, Aron Loepp
Berdjansk: Maria Guenther
Blumenfeld: Jakob Janzen, Jakob Berg
Blumenhof: Johann Toews, Jakob Wiens, Gerhard Wiens, Franz Janzen
Blumenort: Jakob Thiessen, Jakob Goerzen
Blumstein: Heinrich Wall, Gerhard Friesen, Abraham Isaak, Daniel Loepp
Buragan: Johann Isaak
Busai: Abraham Barg
Chortitza: Johann Epp (54 copies), Abraham Harder
Davidfeld: Abraham Klaassen
Ebenfeld: Heinrich Kaethler, Johann Wall, Abraham Schmidt
Eichenfeld: David Klaassen, J. Hildebrandt
Einlage: Peter P. Rempel (7 copies), Abraham Berg
Felsenthal: Kornelius Wolf
Fischau: Kornelius Spent, Jakob Doerksen, Johann Schulz, Abr. Riediger, Jakob Woelk, Daniel Penner, David Wiebe, Abraham Loewen, Johann Harder, Aron Dueck, Johann Harder, Nikolai Wiens, Aron Warkentin
Franzfeld: Johann Dueck, Jakob Fehr
Friedensdorf: Dietrich Geddert
Friedensfeld: Jakob Duerksen, Abraham Reimer, Jakob Berg, Martin Tielmann (14 copies)
Fuerstenau: Jakob Olfert, Heinrich Martens
Fuerstenwerder: Gerhard Thiessen
Georgthal: Kornelius Enns
Gnadenfeld: Dietrich Reimer, Gerhard Nickel
Gnadenheim: Jakob Epp, Katharina Kopp, Witwe A. Weier
Gnadenthal: Johann Schroeder, Fr. Rempel, Jakob Redekopp
Grandenthal (Asien): Joh. Wiebe
Gross Tokmak: Peter J. Wiens
Gruenfeld: Kornelius Enns, Kornelius Epp
Gulaipole: Peter Rogalsky, P. Harder, Abraham K. Janzen
Halbstadt: Gerhard Willms, Johann Giesbrecht

Queries

Bartel — Peter J. Bartel, b. Sept. 7, 1873, d. Apr. 19, 1920, first m. Nov. 2, 1894, to Helena Loewen, b. Aug. 25, 1874, d. Nov. 11, 1895, second m. Apr. 6, 1901, to Katharina Peters, b. Nov. 7, 1871, d. Mar. 1961. A son was born Sept. 3, 1895, most likely in Kronsgrarten or Felsenbach, who came to Canada from Steinau, USSR, in Oct. 1926, with his wife and 2 children, Mary and Jacob, settling in Herbert, SK. Anyone who has a record of this family, please write: J.A. Bartel, 430 Killarney Rd., Kelowna, BC, V1X 5C5. [Note: This item contains a correction from *Mennonite Historian*, June, 1989.]

Peters — Franz Peters, believed to have come to Canada in 1875 or 1876. Children: Frank, b. 1859, Anna, b. 1863, Aron, b. 1870, and Helena, b. 1880. Would like information about wife and of Franz and mother of children. Would also like to know of other children in this Peters family. Anyone who has infor-

feld, Jakob Toews, Wilhelm Toews, Aaron Enns, Abraham Klaassen, Peter Goossen, Kornelius Berg, Johann Toews, Gerhard Fast, Johann Kroecker
Pavlograd: Heinrich Thiessen
Petershagen: Johann Klaassen, Jakob Warkentin, Abraham Peters, Jakob Krueger, David Epp, Johann Krueger, Abraham Peters
Plattenhof: Jakob Hildebrandt
Pordenau: Johann Koop, Heinrich Koehn, Heinrich Spent, Heinrich Vogt
Prangenau: Absalom Engbrecht
Rohrbach: Jakob Warkentin
Rosengard: David Penner, Franz Peters
Rosenhof: Johann Thiessen, Martin Gehrky
Rosenort: Peter Holzrichter (7 copies)
Rosenthal: Peter Wall
Rudnerweide: Franz Funk, Kornelius Kliever
Rueckenau: Heinrich Suckau, Johann Loepp, Abraham Isaak, Kornelius Barkmann, Jakob Janzen, Klaas Wiebe, Peter Penner
Saronau: Abraham Matthies
Schoenau: Peter Isaak, Johann Dueck, Abraham Reimer, David Mecklenberger, Franz Epp
Schoenbrunn: Matthaeus Prinz
Schoendorf: Gerhard Enns
Schoenfeld: August Strauss
Schoenort: Heinrich Giesbrecht
Schoensee: Johann Doerksen, Jakob Neufeld, Jakob Bergmann
Schoenwiese: Isaak Enns, Heinrich Janzen
Serjefva: Jakob Janzen
Simferopol: Peter Widrich, Jakob Pankrat
Slavgorod: Jakob Thiessen
Somolovka: Jakob J. Reimer
Sparrau: Johann Goerzen
Staroe Berdka: Jakob Friesen
Steinau: Jakob Dueck, Peter Friesen
Steinbach: Jakob Schulz, Peter Friesen
Steinfeld: Gerhard Thiessen, Tobias Schmidt, Jakob Duerksen
Taschenak: Heinrich Janzen, Abraham Reimer
Tiege: Johann Krueger, Paul Koop, Abraham Isaak, Johann Isaak, Isaak Ediger, Johann Warkentin
Tiegenhagen: Jakob Penner, Jakob Schellenberg, Peter Friesen, Kornelius Fast, Dietrich Harder
Tiegenhof: Jakob Enns
Tiegerweide: Heinrich Neumann, Johann Funk, Johann Quiring, Johann Klaassen
Waldheim: Jakob Huebert, Dietrich Zacharias
Werchni Maits: Helena D. Heese
Wernersdorf: Abraham Born
Wiebenthal: Isaak Dueck
Wiesenfeld: J. Bergen, Cornelius Stobbe, Jakob Sawatzky
Wohldemfuerst: Jakob Giesbrecht, Jakob Goerzen, Abraham Wiens, Jakob Martens, Peter Franzen, Witwe Anna Reimer, Abraham Peters

mation, please write: Marjorie Voth, Box 668, Winkler, MB, R6W 4A8.

Dalke — Johann Dalke, b. Dec. 31, 1779, his wife Petronella Willems, b. Mar. 5, 1784, d. Sept. 22, 1874, in Molotschna Colony, a son Peter Dalke, b. Sept. 29, 1828, in Nikolaidorf, left Tiegeweide for America, arriving July 2, 1878, on the ship SS Strausberg at New York with his wife and 8 children. Anyone who can provide information about the parents, siblings or other children of Johann Dalke, please write: Harry Dalke, 4301 Motter Lane, PA, 17011, USA.

Diesing — Jacob Diesing, b. ca. 1850, married Maria Hinz, daughter of August Hinz of Neuendorf, Chortitz, and had at least two daughters. Jacob Diesing left Russia in October, 1887, for America where he initially worked in the New York area, after which he is believed to have gone to Kansas. It is also possible that he may later have gone to the Winkler, Manitoba, area. Anyone having any information regarding the birth and death dates and places, as well as information about the descendants, please write: Alf Redekopp, c/o Centre for MB Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5.

Cemetery Research

Descendants of the pioneers who homesteaded near Altona, Manitoba, around 1880, are in the process of restoring their family cemetery, located at Eigengrund. The cemetery dates back to 1884 when 3 of Jacob and Katharina (Schwartz) Braun's daughters died of the plague. Anyone who can assist in providing names of people buried in the cemetery is asked to contact: Wm. R. Braun, 46 Deloraine Dr., Winnipeg, MB, R2Y 1J5.

Resources for Russian Mennonite Genealogists: For the Period, 1789-1850

The two books commonly used when all personal family resources have been exhausted are Benjamin H. Unruh, *Die niederländisch-niederdeutschen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Ostwanderung* and Karl Stumpp's *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the years 1763-1862*.

Alan F. Peters of Fresno, California, has prepared a comprehensive index of all persons recorded in the family lists and other documents contained in the appendix of Unruh's book. This new resource will greatly reduce the time spent searching for a particular person.

Another recent study, by Marianne Janzen of Winnipeg, uses both the Unruh and Stumpp books and additional information from various genealogies to identify the original 228 Mennonite families who settled in Russia in 1789-90.

Both compilations are available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre or the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies.

Queries, etc., regarding the items on this page should be addressed to: Alf Redekopp, CMBS, 1-169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, Canada, R2L 2E5.

In Memory of Ältester Cornelius Regier (1742-1794), Heubuden, West Prussia

by John Dyck

The Mennonites emigrated from Prussia/Poland to New Russia in 1787-1789. Their first Ältester, Bernhard Penner, passed away on 29 July 1791. Johann Wiebe was chosen as his successor, who, although initially hesitant to accept the position, was provided with an assistant, David Epp.

Dissension developed in the new Chortitza congregation so Ältester Wiebe and a certain Jakob von Barmen were dispatched to Prussia to ask for help in resolving the dispute. Ältester Cornelius Regier and Minister Cornelius Warkentin volunteered to serve as mediators in Chortitza.

The two men came to Chortitza in April, 1794, and helped to deal with a number of problems in the new community. While they were there Ältester Regier became ill and passed away on 16 June. Warkentin returned home to bring the family of Regier and the church there the sad news of the passing of their beloved Ältester.

Someone wrote a poem of forty-six verses telling about these events, and offering a tribute to the deceased leader. The poem served as text for a hymn sung to the melody, "Mir nach, spricht Christus unser Held." Copies of this text can be found in the papers of Peter Dyck and J.J. Thiessen. The latter appears to have been sent in by Peter Wiebe, whose brief letter remained with the copy. Both copies are in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives.

Dyck's copy was transcribed by Johann Klassen of Neu Osterwick, and Wiebe's copy ends with the words, "Rewritten [*Geschrieben und erneuert*] in the Year of our Lord, 1825, October 25." An English version of the text published below may be obtained from the Heritage Centre.

The poem begins as follows:

Gott ist auf unser Wohl bedacht
Sein wachen Auge siehet,
Auch wenn der Mensch sich Unruh macht
Und keine Lieb mehr bliehet
Wie kränket dies das Vaterherz
Nicht wenig grämet ihm der Schmerz.

Viel Menschen sich vor wenig Jahr
Nach Rußland hin begaben;
Hier schien der Raum zu enge zwar
Weit besser da zu haben.
Weil sie daselbst Zehn Jahre freye
Auch Vorschuß da kein mangel seye

Bald herrschte unter ihnen Streit,
Zank, Missgunst, wenig Liebe,
Die Redlichkeit lag ganz beiseid
Es sah daselbst sehr trübe.
Das auch der Lehrer Sonnenschein
Fast niemand strahlt ins Herz hinein.

Wie kläglich sah es alda
Der Lehrer Muth wollt sinken



Ed Hoepfner, member of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada History-Archives Committee, presented a short talk at a Russian Mennonite Bicentennial celebration held on August 23 at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Over 100 people attended to hear a presentation by Lawrence Klippenstein on the Prussian Mennonite emigration to Russia, 1788-89 and to visit the Johann Bartsch and Jacob Hoepfner memorial markers at the museum. The markers were brought over from the former Chortitza about fifteen years ago. The group is gathered around the Hoepfner cairn.

Photo: Lawrence Klippenstein, MHC Archives

Als man da fast kein Anfang sah
Es half kein Drohen winken
So kam von da ein Ältester Johann Wieb
Mit noch einen her.

Der scheurte kein Ungemach
Den weiten Weg zu reisen
Und jene dort verwarne Sach
Uns mündlich aufzuweisen.
Zumahl war dies in seinem Sinn
Um jemand mit zunehmen hin.

Ein Ältester sollt es woll seyn,
Ein Mann der auch erfahren,
Da dessen Lebenswande fein
Sich miteinander Paaren.
Den wünschte er mit sich dahin
Durch den hofft er wird Ordnung blühn.

Auch könnt ihm unser Lehrer Zahl
Die Bitte nicht abschlagen
Zusammenkunft war dazumahl
Um sich zu unterfragen
Wer willig zu der Reis sich fand
Mit ihm zu fahren nach Rußland.

Dem hohen Alter fiel es schwer
Die Reise zu vollenden
Oft meinten sie durchs Loos der Herr
Wird denn woll den hinsenden
Den er dazu hat aufersehn,
Als ohne Loos woll nun geschehn.

Dar war der liebe werthe Mann
Der beynahe dreißig Jahren
So viel als fast ein Jeder kann
Uns weiß zu offenbaren
Es war Cornelius Regier
Uns Ehrwürdiger Ältester.

(to be concluded)

New Genealogy

Friesen, Adeline, *The Von Riesen-Friesen Story 1769-1987*. (Mountain Lake, MN: Private Publication, 1988). \$25.00. Contact C.J. & Adeline H. Friesen, Rt. 2, Box 139, Mountain Lake, MN, 56159, USA.

This book is the genealogy of Jacob and Abraham Friesen, sons of Jacob Von Riesen, who settled in Minnesota.

Genealogy Workshops

On May 29, 1989, the West Reserve Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society sponsored its third annual workshop in Altona. Over 60 people heard John Rempel and Bill Harms report on their work on the atlases, undertaken during the last several years. *The East Reserve Atlas*, 25 pp., published in 1988, is nearly sold out, and preparation of the West Reserve Atlas, expected to contain over 100 pages, is still in progress.

Another attraction at the workshop was a demonstration by Ed Falk, Winkler, on how he uses his computer in genealogy work.

An East Reserve Mennonite Genealogy workshop took place at the Steinbach Regional School on September 25. Al Hamm was in charge of the program. About 25 persons attended. The main presentation was by Lawrence Klippenstein of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, dealing with resources available at the Centre. Bill Schroeder was there to discuss maps for Mennonite research and Margaret Kroeker represented Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. Henry Fast had a display of cemetery studies done by students of the Steinbach Regional Secondary School.



A baptism service held on the Dnieper River at the time of the Russian Mennonite Bicentennial celebration held at Zaporozh'e (old Chortitza), Ukraine, in mid-August. These people will become members of the Baptist Church in Zaporozh'e.

Photo: Neil Janzen.

The Mennonite Bicentennial Celebration at Zaporozh'e

by Neil Janzen,

president of Mennonite Economic Development Agency (MEDA)

Zaporozh'e, Chortitza and the Dnieper River are names filled with the emotion of Mennonite history. Good times as well as violence, famine and death are linked with those places.

On our flight from Moscow to Zaporozh'e I happened to sit beside a couple, *Aussiedler* from Frankenthal in Germany, who were returning to the Soviet Union to participate in the bicentennial celebrations. When explaining that I was part of a group of business people coming to look at the economic situation facing the Mennonite people in the Soviet Union, they seemed appreciative but skeptical. They could not fully appreciate our assumption that there might be a future for business enterprise among the Mennonites in the Soviet Union. "The Mennonites want out" was their clear statement.

Those of us on this mission, Art DeFehr, Tara DeFehr, Arthur Block, Milo Shantz and later also Johannes Reimer and Harry Giesbrecht, were more immediately interested in the bicentennial celebration itself. Viktor Fast, a leader in the Mennonite Brethren congregation at Karaganda, was the key person in the organizing group for the bicentennial celebrations.

The hospitality of the Mennonites and Baptists and, for that matter, the Soviet people generally, was evident immediately on our landing in Zaporozh'e. Though unexpected guests, we were immediately invited to participate in the weekend of activities.

Several hours later we were on a cruise ship together with 250 others, mostly Mennonites, with the largest contingent from Karaganda. The two hour cruise around Khortitsa Island

on the Dnieper River was a great introduction. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon on the wide, clean Dnieper River, busy with barges, hydrofoils and pleasure craft. Relatives and friends were meeting — perhaps after a long period apart.

Our small group was trying to find out who all these people were, perhaps in anticipation of finding a relative connection. Then suddenly a choir or informal group burst into song. The tour guide gave up announcing every passing landmark.

But some sights did not go unnoticed! There was the huge hydro-electric dam on the Dnieper. Many people, including Mennonites, who worked on the original dam, died under the severe conditions at the construction site. Some wondered where the site of the first Mennonite settlement was located. An old cemetery: Who lies buried there?

On this Friday afternoon a good number of people were enjoying the sandy beaches on the Dnieper River, on the Khortitsa Island side. They were oblivious to the painful history we were being reminded of as the ship slowly made its way around the island.

The celebration continued with a church service at the Evangelical Baptist church. The church was located in the former village of Schoenwiese, now incorporated into Zaporozh'e. It had been built with funds contributed by Mrs. Lepp, wife of one of the partners in the Wallman and Lepp wagon factory.

The church service began at 6:00 p.m., concluding some three and one-half hours later. It included five sermons in German, four in Russian, three reports, as well as three poems, ten songs by a choir and two by our tour

group. Simultaneous translation took place for the Russian-speaking members of the local congregation who sat outside of the sanctuary in deference to the many visitors at this special service of remembrance. Attendance was around 350.

On Saturday morning some 1500 people gathered on the banks of the Dnieper River to witness the immersion baptism of 51 individuals, both young and old, some Baptist, some Mennonite. The arriving witnesses were welcomed by a brass band which pumped out tunes reminiscent of a college football game. Spirits were high and there was a sense of excitement in the air.

The baptismal candidates in their white attire were already lined up when we arrived. Curious onlookers joined the crowd, Saturday beach-goers sunbathed nearby, but many edged closer to see what was happening. Boaters slowed down as they passed this strange scene, others stopped and dropped anchor. The local police were present for crowd control reasons and watched intently but not at all suspiciously. A news reporter from Tass and another from *Moscow News* were present.

The choir sang, several sermons in Russian followed, and then the baptism — in three rows, with white flowers scattered on the water. The Island of Khortitsa and the river barges and hydrofoils provided the backdrop for the scene. An incredible event.

The baptism over, the candidates were accepted into membership. An appeal was issued to others to respond with a commitment to faith. A number responded and tearfully shared their confession with the gradually dispersing crowd. The Bibles and literature were distributed to those wanting it. They were snapped up quickly. The police chief requested and received a Bible.

The afternoon was given to touring the area — the 700 year old oak tree, the former village of Rosenthal with its *Mädchenschule*, *Zentral-schule*, Wallman home and the Wallman and Lepp employees hospital, a teacher training center. Then came the Khortitsa Island Museum. One member of our group commented on the lack of Mennonite history in the museum. Apologizing for her oversight the tour guide showed us two cups that were artifacts of the Mennonite period!

Because of our flight schedule we could not attend the Sunday celebration in the stadium. However, we felt as though we had already experienced the highlight of the weekend and so left not feeling too disappointed.

Reports received along the way from participants in the event filled in the gaps. Some 10,000 to 12,000 persons had gathered for the final event. Hardly ten percent of those present were Mennonite. Because of the good publicity given to this event, many local people came out. Some 1000 responded to an invitation to enquire further about a faith commitment. According to one observer perhaps 250 of these made significant faith decisions while the others and many besides received Bibles or religious literature.

REFLECTIONS ON COLLECTIONS

by Jim Suderman

Olga Rempel — MG XX 59

Olga Rempel was born to Aron P. Toews and Maria Sudermann on 5 April 1913, at Nieder Chortitza, Ukraine. The Toews family lived in several villages before settling in Rosenthal-Chortitza in 1922. Jacob Regier, whom she married in 1935, was arrested and exiled in 1937. Olga journeyed to Germany in 1943 and emigrated to Canada in 1947. In 1957 she married Nick Rempel, who passed away in 1969. Olga presently resides in Virgil, Ontario.

The centrepiece of the collection is the diary of Olga's father, Aron P. Toews, kept during his exile in Siberia, 1935-36. There are a number of other documents relating to Toews including one in Russian, dated 1908, and Olga's biography of her father. The materials, including some correspondence, came together through the publication of Toews' diary under the titles *Einer von Vielen* (German) and *Siberian Diary* (English).

A number of autobiographical sketches of Russian Mennonites, mostly women, including a longer autobiographical manuscript of Tina Warkentin, are present. There is only one document, dated 1931, relating to Jacob Regier.

Non-textual items are five photos, all published in *Einer von Vielen/Siberian Diary*, five maps, of marginal value to the collection, one of which shows regional boundaries, railroads and canals in European Russia, 1908, and a sketch by a "Fr. A. Epp" of Camp Konradsheim, W. Prussia, 1946.

Katherine Hooge — MG XX 105

Katherine Hooge was secretary of the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council from 1923 to 1964. She organized the CMRIC records for the archives in 1964 when MCC took over the activities of the CMRIC. She presently resides in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. These materials provide rare insight into the activities of the Mennonite emigration organizations in Russia, which worked with the Canadian and American relief organizations.

Unique within the Heritage Centre collection are two maps and a document, all in Russian, describing the official transference of the Abram A. Bergmann estate to the joint ownership of his three daughters, one of whom was Katherine's mother. The estate was located near the city of Ssolenoje, north of the Chortitza colony. The daughters subsequently divided the estate among themselves. The maps and document illustrate these aspects of the estate's history.

The *Verband der Mennoniten Süd-Rußlands*, later the *Verband der Bürger Holländischer Herkunft*, is represented in correspondence, 1921-27, and minutes and reports, 1924-27. Some items also refer to the *Allrussische Mennonitische Landwirtschaftliche Verein*, 1927.



Members of a group of seven Mennonite artists who held an exhibition of their work at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery recently. (l-r): Agnes Dyck, Gerald Eidse, Tina Buller, Peter von Kampen, Elsie Krueger, Arthur Kroeger. Missing is Alma Neufeld.

Photo: Gerhard Ens, *Der Bote*

Morning and Evening: Images of Africa



An exhibition of paintings, photographs and poetry by Grace and Ruth Rempel is on display in the Gallery. The exhibition can be viewed from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday to Friday, and 1 to 9 p.m. on weekends. Over 100 people attended the open house for this exhibit on September 29.

A substantial portion of the autobiography of B.B. Janz, who headed the *VMSR/VBHH*, is included. Most of these items are detailed in John Toews' section on sources in *Lost Fatherland*.

The last file contains original material: Janz correspondence on Heiratsfragen, 1947-54, Janz's 1939 article, "Bin ich ein Nationalsozialist? Bewahre!" in *Der Bote*, and materials on Witmarsum, Brazil, 1947-59, and Fernheim, Paraguay, 1934-53.



MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE GALLERY



Henry Pauls, formerly of Morden, Manitoba, recently donated a model reconstruction of the village of Grigorievka in Ukraine, established by the Mennonites in 1889. Standing (l-r): Dr. Leo Driedger, Winnipeg, Mrs. Katie Pauls, Henry Pauls, builder of the model, and Jake I. Pauls, Winnipeg.

Photo: Agnes Dyck, Winnipeg

Centre Receives Ratzlaff and Toews Collections

Two significant collections of personal papers have been deposited in the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg. The first is the collection of papers, manuscripts and correspondence of the late Eric L. Ratzlaff. Ratzlaff edited the *Mennonitische Rundschau* for 12 years and served as radio speaker for two German radio programs and authored numerous historical books. His historical interest concentrated on the story of the Mennonites in Wymyschle, Poland, where Eric was born and received his education. His papers include a wide range of materials such as sermons, correspondence, manuscripts and documents.

The second collection consists of the sermons, correspondence and manuscripts of the late Dr. John A. Toews. Dr. Toews was well-known to Canadian Mennonites as professor and president of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, and author of several books, including *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers*, the standard English work to this day. His career spanned almost every level of Mennonite Brethren Conference activity. The papers reveal his wide-ranging historical interests, peace activities and include documents relating to his inter-Mennonite associations.

Both collections are valuable assets to the holdings of the Centre. While not yet fully organized, the papers of both collections are available to researchers.

Early issues of *Friedensstimme* Sought

The Centre for MB Studies is attempting to locate copies of the first three years of the Russian MB publication, *Die Friedensstimme*. This paper was begun by Abraham Kroeker and his cousin Jacob in 1903. Due to czarist censorship it was first published in Berlin, moving to Halbstadt, Taurida, in January of 1906. To date no copies of the first three years of its publication are extant.

The Centre is looking for any copies, or even portions of copies of these first three years. If you have any information or know of someone who may have information as to where copies may be located, please send that information to the Centre.

Genealogical Guide

A guide to the genealogical resources of the Centre for MB Studies has been prepared by Alf Redekopp. The guide lists the many compiled volumes in the Katie Peters genealogical collection as well as other published genealogies in the holdings of the Centre. A brief index to some of the more prominent family names is included. Copies of the guide are available for \$10.00 plus \$2.00 for shipping and handling. Please write the Centre for your copy.

New Publication: Manitoba MB History

In early July a history of the Manitoba MB Conference was published by the Centre for MB Studies. Written by a former minister and school teacher, William Neufeld, the volume describes the development of this provincial conference, its congregations and institutions.

The story of the Manitoba conference is also the story of the larger Canadian MB Conference. It was in 1888, near the small village of Burwalde, that the first MB church was founded as a result of missions activity by two MB ministers from the United States. (See issues #2, 3, 1988 of the *Historian* for this story.)

Copies of this book are available for \$19.95 from the Centre for MB Studies, or from Kindred Press, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5.

Film Series Update

The film series featuring Dr. J.B. Toews is not fully subscribed for the fall and winter. If you or your congregation would like to book the series, please notify the Centre of the dates you desire to show the series. Videos of the series are still available for purchase.

Archives Evening Hours

As in the past, the Centre for MB Studies will be open to the public for research Tuesday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. These hours are in addition to the normal 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. hours. Every Tuesday evening a member of the archives staff will be available to assist researchers with their particular projects.



Notes on the *Mennonitische Rundschau*: The 1880s

by Bert Friesen
Rundschau Indexer at CMBS

Rundschau content for these years was fairly standardized. It consciously aimed at a Russian Mennonite readership, both in North America and Russia. *MR* was a vehicle to keep fellow Mennonites informed about happenings in their respective communities and in the world around them. It included local reports of the Mennonite communities in Russia, North America, and in some parts of Europe. Secondly, there were articles of practical value to the life in these communities. And finally, there was always a section on world news as well.

Local reports carried information about crops, weather, family life (including births, baptisms, marriages, anniversaries and deaths) and church life. Agricultural information concerned the varieties of crops, commodity prices, crop yields, and quality of produce. References to weather noted its relevance to agriculture, although major storms and extremes in temperature were cited also.

Details about family life varied. Health problems were often mentioned with comments on their effect on the community. The column included information about friends and relatives not necessarily living in the community of the correspondent. Some of this information was passed on to readers of the newspaper from personal correspondence or from visits.

One finds quite a number of detailed accounts of trips to Europe and North America. One trip of special interest was the internal migration of Mennonites from southern Russia to Central Asia under the leadership of Claas Epp. Also included are details of church life, along with accounts of major festivals, conference proceedings, ordinations and the formation of new congregations.

The "practical" articles cover a very wide spectrum. Some dealt with aspects of agricultural life, referring to subjects such as housing for hogs, treatment of diseases for livestock, and proper use of manure for various crops. Advice on treatment for health problems varied from homeopathic methods to folk medicine. These pieces gave advice on how to conduct one's life and how to handle ethical issues. Education was another topic of interest which was important to community life.

A final section consisted of news about the global scene, often covering the major events of the day. These could range from the assassinations of Czar Alexander II and of American President Garfield, to the Riel Rebellion of 1885 in Canada. To a large extent the emphasis seemed to centre on North America and Europe where the Mennonites lived. Occasionally Africa, Asia and South America were mentioned as well.

Again, it should be noted that the content

(cont'd on p. 10)

The British Colonial Office and Russian Mennonite Settlement in Canada, 1872

by James Urry

Late in 1870 the Russian Mennonites learned that the Russian government intended to introduce a system of universal military service which would involve the conscription of all its citizens. In response various Mennonites petitioned the government to reconfirm the *Privilegium* awarded to them in 1800, thereby continuing to exempt Mennonites from any legislation which might subject them to military conscription. Other Mennonites investigated the possibility of emigration, particularly to North America.

Early in 1872 the British consul at the port of Berdiansk, James Zohrab, forwarded to London a request he had received from leading Mennonites, for information on the possibility of settlement in Canada. Thus began a long and complex process of negotiation involving the British Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and the Canadian government, eventually resulting in the emigration and settlement of thousands of Mennonites in western Canada.

A number of the details of the correspondence and reports involved in this process of negotiation have been published, most notably by Ernst Correll.¹ The major source of these papers has been the National Archives of Canada. However, the British government did not forward to Canada all the papers involved in the exchanges with its representatives in Russia. The numerous internal memoranda and marginal notations on official documents made by officials in the Foreign and Colonial Offices, absent in the Canadian archives, can be found only in the Public Record Office in London, England.² My aim in this article is to examine an unexplored aspect of the emigration negotiations, i.e., the response of leading officials in the Colonial Office to the Mennonite request regarding possible settlement in Canada.

Much of the correspondence between the Mennonites in Russia and the Canadian government was channelled through the Foreign Office via the Colonial Office. At this period the Canadian government did not possess a ministry of foreign affairs; instead it relied on the British Foreign Office to conduct its external affairs. The Canadians dealt with the Foreign Office only through the Colonial Office.

Zohrab's first despatch to the Foreign Office concerning the Mennonite request for information was dated February, 1872. It was forwarded to the Colonial Office where officials summarised its content in the form of a minute for the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The summary was prefaced with the comment "This is an important letter."³ Henry Holland, the Assistant Secretary of State for the Colonies, noted that the Mennonites were specifically enquiring about the attitude of the Canadian authorities to military exemption:

The Mennonites appear to have conscientious scruples to any part direct or

indirect in Military Service, which would, I suppose include the Militia. But special exemption may be made in their favour in Canada under such regulations as the Gov[ernor] in Council may appoint, so that it is not probable that any difficulty would arise on this point.⁴

The Secretary of State, that is, the Minister responsible for the Colonial Office, Earl Kimberley, noted his agreement with Holland's comments and ordered the correspondence be forwarded to the Governor General of Canada, Baron Lisgar. But he added a short note in his own hand to Holland's comment on military service: "They ought to pay a tax in lieu of service."⁵

Following a meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council in April, 1872, Governor General Lisgar informed the Colonial Office that the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence had confirmed that the Mennonites could be exempted from military service under existing statutes.⁶ This information was forwarded via the Foreign Office and Consul Zohrab to the Mennonites in Russia, who were not satisfied.

In July, 1872, Zohrab forwarded a letter from one of the leading promoters of emigration, Cornelius Janzen, requesting further details particularly with regard to the long-term nature of the exemptions and the exact role of the Governor General, who, the report noted, could, "from time to time," prescribe conditions and regulations.⁷ The Canadian reply was received in September and the relevant passage in the statute was more clearly explained:

...the constitution does not confer upon the Governor General in Council any power to over-ride or set aside, under any circumstances, the plain meaning of the Statute law, and he [the Minister of Agriculture, to whom the original request for further information had been sent] recommends that this explanation be conveyed to the Mennonites in Russia.⁸

In the minute to this reply the officials at the Colonial Office once again noted their concern over Mennonite objections to military service. Robert Herbert, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote:

If the Canadians should succeed in peopling their territory to a large extent with men who refuse to defend themselves (they talk here of 60,000 to 80,000 people) they will find themselves some day in a very awkward position. Under the clause quoted, any sect may declare its regulations opposed to service, & it may become a religion to decline to defend one's own hearth. If these people are placed in Manitoba, where there is every prospect of fight-

ing, the Canadian forces will have to be sent & maintained to protect the district — which I presume will be made to pay heavily, and to be impoverished. We are not unconcerned in this matter.⁹

Earl Kimberley scribbled beside Herbert's comment on the possible high costs of defence: "but the Mennonites may pay the expenses."¹⁰ Were these concerns of the Colonial Office genuine? What was the "prospect of fighting" in Manitoba?

Britain's relations with the United States had been strained since the American Civil War in the 1860s. It was only with the signing of the Treaty of Washington in May, 1871, that relations between the two countries improved.¹¹ There had been concern on the part of the British that their colonies in North America might be invaded by American troops. The establishment of the Canadian confederation in 1867 had been intended in part to strengthen the political position of the colonies to resist the threat of American interference in their affairs. The threat of invasion, however, remained and a number of incidents, such as the Fenian raids launched from United States territory in 1870 and the involvement of Americans in the Riel rebellion, caused concern in government circles in both London and Ottawa. They were uncertain about Canada's ability to defend itself, particularly in Manitoba.¹²

When in 1872 the Mennonite request for information about emigration to Canada was received in London, William Gladstone's first Liberal government was in power. The Liberal administration was committed to a programme of reform, including military reform. Colonial garrisons were reduced in many parts of the world, including Canada, this in spite of Canadian protests at the reductions.¹³ The British government felt, however, that the Canadians should bear the major responsibility for the defence of their own borders with minimal hope of assistance from Britain. During the earlier discussions concerning the issue of troop withdrawals and Canada assuming responsibility for its own defence, Earl Kimberley noted in his private diary that he personally would prefer to see the Canadians raise their own militia and not depend upon British troops:

What an absurdity it is that a colony containing between three and four millions of white people should throw the burden of its defence on the people of the United Kingdom, who are man for man less able to bear the cost than they are, not to mention that Canada obtains the whole advantage of our navy, and of diplomatic and consular services for nothing. A connexion based on such grossly unequal terms cannot last. It seems more doubtful whether we could in any case defend Canada against the United States, but it would be idle even to attempt it, unless the Canadians will them-

(cont'd on p. 9)

Mennonites, 1789-1989

(cont'd from p. 2)

for example, could regain some of their former energies.

The mid-sixties, seventies and eighties brought another option to the Mennonites of the Soviet Union — that of emigrating to Canada and West Germany. Thousands of families decided to move during these years, and the termination of the mass departure is not yet in sight. Some congregations have been closed down, while the memberships of most others have dramatically declined.

What have these two centuries of Mennonite life meant for those who experienced it from 1789 till the present? What meaning have they for their fellow-countrymen, who have watched what happened in the Mennonite communities throughout this period? What has been the role of divine intervention, and the significance of God's leading during these 200 years? Will the impact of these centuries be with us all in the years to come? Why did the story turn out the way it did? Is there a future for Mennonites in the Soviet Union? These questions have been asked more often recently, and, one may predict, they will be asked again. A few weeks ago some Mennonites celebrated two hundred years of life in Russia and the USSR. Many more were making preparations to emigrate. Clear answers to these questions seem to elude everyone. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" is the basis, though, on which people keep moving on.

Sources

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Publication Honours Gerhard Lohrenz

Title: *Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988. Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*

Editor: Dr. John Friesen

Publisher: CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 0M4.

The book will be available in November. It will be hard bound, 400 pages in length, and will sell for \$22.50.



Sponsored by the History-Archives Committee,
Conference of Mennonites in Canada

The Colonial Office and the Russian Mennonites

(cont'd from p. 8)

selves keep up a strong & efficient military force.¹⁴

It is quite clear, therefore, that the concern of the Colonial Office officials over the possibility of large-scale Mennonite immigration to western Canada was based on prevailing opinions of the threat of American military involvement in Canadian affairs and the need for Canada to maintain its own militia. But the Canadian government was eager to obtain Mennonite immigrants to pioneer new lands in the west, in part to prevent American settlement in the area. Better to secure the economic potential of the prairies with good farmers, than worry about a military threat which might never eventuate. The non-resistant Mennonites were obviously valuable immigrants and the Colonial Office's doubts on their willingness to defend Canada's borders were, thankfully, never put to the test.

James Urry is a professor at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Endnotes

¹Ernst Correll, "Mennonite Immigration Into Manitoba: Sources and Documents, 1872, 1873," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 11 (July, 1937) 196-227; (October, 1937) 267-83.

²Of particular interest are the diplomatic concerns of the British concerning the activities of the Canadian government in promoting emigration from Russia and the activities of its agent, William Hespeler. Those researchers who have depended only on the Canadian papers have misunderstood the complex issues involved because the Foreign Office censored the documents it forwarded to Canada. I hope to discuss these issues at greater length in a future paper. On the Colonial Office at this period see J.C. Sainty's *Introduction to Colonial Office Officials*. (London: Institute for Historical Research, 1976).

³Zohrab's dispatch in the Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 65/842 reprinted in part in Correll, "Mennonite Im-

migration," 211-13; Colonial Office response by WD to Mr. Holland in PRO, Colonial Office (CO) 42/711, February 24, 1872.

⁴PRO, CO 42/711 Ibid. The appropriate statute is also noted by Holland: 31 Vict. C40 117. Holland had been the legal advisor to the Colonial Office from 1867 to 1870, see Sainty, *Colonial Office Officials*, 42.

⁵PRO, CO 42/711 Ibid.; John Wodehouse, 1st Earl of Kimberley (1826-1902) was Colonial Secretary from 1870 to 1874.

⁶PRO CO 42/706 Dispatch no. 5202 (26 April 1872); Correll, "Mennonite Immigration," 217-18.

⁷Zohrab to London with a copy of Janzen's letter of 9 June is in PRO FO 65/842 Consular 17; Correll, "Mennonite Immigration," 222-23. See also Gustav E. Reimer and G.R. Gaedert, *Exiled by the Czar: Cornelius Jansen and the Great Mennonite Migration, 1874*. (Newton: Mennonite Publishing Office, 1956), 57-58.

⁸Clerk of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office, 25 September 1872, PRO, CO 42/708; Correll, "Mennonite Immigration," 270.

⁹PRO, CO 42/708, 9 October 1872.

¹⁰Ibid., 11 October 1872.

¹¹See Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), Chapter 8.

¹²C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871: A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government*. (London: Longmans, 1936), Chapter 8; Prichard A. Preston, *The Defence of the Undefended Border: Planning for War in North America, 1867-1939*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977).

¹³Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power*, 295. Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*, Chapter 10, Preston, *The Defence of the Undefended Border*, Chapter 2.

¹⁴*A Journal of Events During the Gladstone Ministry, 1868-1874*, by John, First Earl of Kimberley. Edited by Ethel Drus. (London: Royal Historical Society, Camden Miscellany XII, 1956), 17-18; see also Stacey, *Canada and the British Army*, 245-46 for further evidence of Kimberley's attitude on this issue at this period.



November 9-11, 1989

Symposium on the Bicentennial of Mennonites in Russia

Registration: \$20.00 per person, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Thursday, November 9
CMBC, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg
Inquire about preregistration from: John Friesen (204) 888-6781.

Banquet: 6:30 p.m., Saturday, November 11 at MBBC, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg.
Banquet precedes closing lecture by Dr. Al Reimer, University of Winnipeg: *Peasant Aristocracy: the Mennonite Gutsbesitzertum in Russia*. Banquet fee: \$15.00 per person.
If you wish to register for the banquet only, call John Friesen at the number above, before November 6.

Rundschau: The 1880s

(cont'd from p. 7)

was targeted for Russian Mennonite readers. There was some news by and about Swiss Mennonites and Hutterites, but only at actual points of contact. These would include meetings of church leaders or of assistance in the emigration process. The latter sections were of general interest and would have attracted some readers.

Researchers may be drawn most of all to items in the first category. It is certainly a section rich in details about day to day life. Those reading through these materials should be well rewarded for their efforts.

New Anabaptist Video Available

A new video entitled "The Birth of Anabaptism" has just been completed by the Historical Commission of the MB Conference. This 30-minute VHS video is narrated by Dr. Abe Friesen of the University of California, Santa Barbara. It is available for purchase from the Centre for MB Studies at a cost of \$30.00 plus \$2.00 for postage and handling, or for rental at a cost of \$5.00, plus \$2.00 postage and handling. The video is suitable for college, high school and adult Sunday School classes. It is amply illustrated with scenes of prominent figures and places relevant to the rise of the Anabaptist movement.

P.M. Friesen Reprint

The Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof, BRD, and Logos Verlag, Bielefeld, have reprinted P.M. Friesen's *Die Altevangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Rußland (1789-1910)* (ca. 1000 pp.).

It is available in hard cover and paperback editions estimated at \$45.00 and \$35.00 Can. respectively. Send orders to: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 0M4.

Historical Society News

Saturday, March 18, was a very special day for the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. The board of directors and interested friends gathered at the Mennonite Heritage Centre site on Luckakuck Way in Chilliwack. Area MLA, John Jansen, and Mayor John Les were on hand to present the Society with a GO B.C. grant of \$122,067.00. The grant will be used in the construction of the first building at the Heritage Centre.

Some 220 guests attended the annual fund-raising dinner of the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, held April 22 in Leamington. Three local area Mennonite pioneers were recognized for the contributions to the community and presented with special plaques. Jacob Driedger and Margarethe Rempel began their Essex county years as part of the Mennonite settlement on Pelee Island. Rev. Isaac Tiessen, now of Strathroy, was very active in organizing worship services for the immigrants of the 1920s.



Daniel Janzen of the Wolfsburg Mennonite Church presented one of the papers at the Russian Bicentennial symposium held at the Bechterdissen (Bielefeld), West Germany, on September 4-9. Over a hundred people regularly attended five sessions a day during the symposium. It was sponsored by Logos and the Mennonitische Geschichtsverein. The papers presented will be published in the near future.

Photo: George K. Epp, Winnipeg

Correction

This photo was published in the *Historian* 14 (December, 1988), 8, with an incorrect caption. The corrected caption is printed below.



Bethel Mennonite Church, Sargent and Sherbrook, baptismal group, 27 May 1945. Front row (l-r): ?, Ethel (Funk) Petersen, Susan Neufeld, Nettie Fehr, Anne (Reimer) Penner, Bernice (Friesen) McTavish. Second row (l-r): ?, Tinie (Friesen) Funk, Annie (Zacharias) Menke, Tina Schroeder, Kathryn Dyck. Third row (l-r): Dora Klassen, Doreen (Friesen) Raymond, Annie Schroeder, ?. Back row (l-r): Rev. Benjamin Ewert, John Thiesen, David Friesen, Hugo Hildebrand, Arthur Rempel, Jacob Fehr, Henry Unruh, Peter Schroeder, Abe Friesen, Norman Friesen, Rev. I.I. Friesen.

Photo: Elsie (Mrs. I.I.) Friesen and Art Rempel
MHC photo 352:2

Book Reviews (cont'd from p. 12)

regional Soviet government reveal the acute dilemma of a believer representing a religiously and ethnically isolated community in a revolutionary and atheistic environment.

Jantzen and his wife escaped to Germany when the situation became too perilous. Until his death in the Netherlands in 1959, he promoted missions to the Slavic and Moslem people in the east.

However, as contacts with Soviet Moslems are being strengthened, the true significance of this unique autobiography may actually be the inspiration given to further exchanges by a pioneer missionary among the Moslem people of Soviet Central Asia.

Inquiries about purchasing these volumes should be directed to the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 0M4.

Peter Rempel works in the Winnipeg office of the Mennonite World Conference.

Bartsch, Anna, *The Hidden Hand*. (Winnipeg, Man., and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1988). 234 pp., pb., \$12.95.

Reviewed by Gerry Derksen

The Hidden Hand is a translation of the author's own story, initially published in German in 1982. The outline of the book follows the geographical movement in Anna's life — from Russia to Canada to Africa and finally back to Canada. Her account of family life in south Russia gives one a vivid sense of the contrast between the comforts and security of the pre-revolution days and the terror

which characterized life in the Mennonite colonies following the revolution.

The opportunity to emigrate to Canada came in 1927, when Anna was thirty years old. Soon afterward, while attending Winkler Bible Institute, she met Heinrich Bartsch. In a matter of months the two were married, and Anna became, by her own admission, "a devoted wife." The rest of the book amply bears out the truth of this testimony. Heinrich proved to have a rather impulsive and independent spirit, often making decisions which were hardly in Anna's best interests. Yet Anna uncomplainingly accepted her husband's leadership in the home, surrendering personal and family interests for the cause of Christ, as understood by Heinrich.

The call to missionary service, however, was clearly felt by both Anna and Heinrich. To their dismay, neither the MB churches nor the MB missions board were prepared to give the needed financial support. The decision to proceed to Africa in the absence of official church backing was a courageous one, but raises important questions regarding the role of the church in the discerning and sending out of workers.

Although representing a period of only ten years in Anna's life, their ministry in the Belgian Congo occupies the main portion of this book.

Much of today's reflection on the missionary activity during the colonial era is of a critical nature, finding fault with both methods and underlying ideology. The value of Anna Bartsch's account lies in the fact that it does not reflect this critical spirit. Written nearly half a century later, *The Hidden Hand* allows the reader to enter once more into the mindset of that period. Having read the book, one can better understand the concern to bring western civilization to the natives as part of a holistic gospel. The easy cooperation

with the colonizing powers makes a little more sense.

The author's main concern in writing this book, however, is not to reflect on the missionary enterprise, nor to provide a historical record of an earlier era's missionary activity. Rather, the book is a testimony to the hidden hand of God in the author's life. The reader cannot help but be impressed by the vibrant faith of Anna Bartsch, a faith which clearly provided strength and courage in circumstances that would have been otherwise impossible to cope with. More than that, however, the reader is confronted with a God who hears the prayers of his servant and who intervenes to guide and to save.

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Book Notes

Alice Fleming, *The King of Prussia and a Peanut Butter Sandwich* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 42 pp., hdc., US\$12.95, is a children's version of the story of Kansas Mennonites and Turkey Red wheat. While the book is quite readable, the author's wish that all historical facts in the book be accurate unfortunately did not come true.

Gerhard Ratzlaff has published his second *Deutsches Jahrbuch für Paraguay 1989*. Like the first one in 1988, this slim booklet contains only a few articles specifically about Mennonites. (113 pp., pb., \$6.00).

Robert Kienzle has edited and published a brief biography of Heinrich Wiebe under the title *Vom Bauernjungen der Ukraine zum Schulrat in Paraguay* (86 pp., pb., DM 5,-). Kienzle's contact with Wiebe came during the latter's 24-year stint as teacher and employee of the German embassy with special responsibility for German private schools in East Paraguay.

David Hein has compiled and published an account of Mennonite mission work in the northern Chaco region of Paraguay under the title *Die Ayoreos — unsere Nachbarn* (216 pp., pb., DM 17,-). The fatal wounding of missionary Kornelius Isaak drew widespread attention to the first Mennonite contacts with the Moros (1947). Fellow missionary Hein has used published accounts (especially from *Mennoblatt*) as well as his own diary to trace the story through to 1988.

Peter Bergmann, *Ein Brief des Diktators* (Bielefeld: Kleine Verlag, 1988) [169 pp., pb., DM 21,50] gives an eye witness account of 1950 to 1951 in Orenburg, USSR, following the receipt of a letter from Comrade Stalin upbraiding the collective farm for its failures to meet production quotas.

Another Orenburger, Karl Fast, has recently reprinted his *Gebt der Wahrheit die Ehre!* (Winnipeg: Canzona Publishing, 1989) [324 pp., pb., \$13.00]. First published in three parts (1950-1952) and long out of print, this fascinating account of the fate of thousands of German Russians under the Soviet regime is now again available.



The Kleefeld Coop records were recently deposited at the archives. At the moment they are in cartons as seen above. In due time they will be sorted, cleaned and boxed for permanent storage. If you have any records you would like to deposit here, call 1-204-888-6781 and ask for Jim or Lawrence to make arrangements for transfer.

Photo: Greg Janzen, CMBC

BOOK REVIEWS

Toews, John B. *Perilous Journey: The Mennonite Brethren in Russia, 1860-1910* (Winnipeg, Man., and Hillsboro, KS: Kindred Press, 1988). 94 pp., pb., \$12.95.

Reviewed by John Friesen

The founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia has been studied by numerous people. So why another study? What does this slim book by John B. Toews contribute that is new or different?

One new contribution of this study is that it utilizes the personal diaries of two Russian Mennonites, David Epp and his son Jacob, whose descendants brought these writings to Canada. The diaries were written in the period 1830-1880. They inject a feeling of immediacy which is frequently missing in historical studies.

David Epp was a farmer-minister in the Mennonite Church in Chortitza and Jacob Epp was also a farmer-minister, coming from the Judenplan area. Toews uses the diaries as the basis for much of his analysis for the years before the formation of the MB Church in 1860. He uses other personal accounts published in various papers as well.

A second new contribution is the setting of the MB origins within their religious, social and political contexts. His analysis of the social problems of the Mennonite community is based largely upon the Epp diaries. Jacob Epp particularly laments the increasing drunkenness, violence and sexual immorality within his church. Religious problems receive the most detailed discussion.

Toews notes some of the conditions of the old church and characterizes in some detail the emphases of the new movement in both Chortitza and Molotschna. The discussion of the political problems within the Mennonite community is helpful in that Toews describes the conflict between the ecclesiastical authorities, who were building the "City of God," and the civil authorities, who represented the "earthly city." In the author's view the ecclesiastical authorities capitulated to the civil authorities when the MB movement began.

Toews' main interest is in discussing the early MB movement. On the positive side he sees the movement as allowing an outburst of freedom from established rituals and creeds. There is a new emphasis on grace and assurance of salvation. This results in a new emphasis of discipleship. Some of the ideals and enthusiasm of the early Anabaptist movement were recaptured.

On the negative side he sees excesses of enthusiasm. Generally, though, he sees the early MB movement quite positively. He reserves his negative evaluation for later developments in the MB Church. It is his view that by the turn of the century the early freedom had largely been lost, and a narrow, exclusive spirit had emerged. The social conscience was eroded and discipleship became a new legalism. The form of baptism became a matter for exclusion and conversions followed set patterns. The vision of openness

and freedom was later taken up by the Evangelical Mennonite Church (*Allianz Gemeinde*).

In the final pages of the book Toews asks why the three Churches did not merge during the early twentieth century. Their theology and practices were very similar. He rejects the idea that the stumbling block was primarily the increasing narrowness of the MBs and suggests that it was probably more due to the fact that the old church had lost the concepts of the pure community and of the believer's [sic] church.

Toews' interpretation of the spiritual pilgrimage of the MB movement is enlightening and provocative. After reading his interpretation, one has the feeling though, that some questions still remain unanswered. One question is, should the formation of the MB movement be explained primarily on the basis of problems and shortcomings in the old church, and on the basis of the collision of two different theologies with quite different assumptions. Another question relates to ecclesiology. Does Mennonite ecclesiology base itself primarily on a perspective of community, or on a perspective of purity?

Toews' book shows the "perilous journey" reform can take. It may also become the basis for further analyses of such an enterprise in a Christian community.

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Derksen, Peter (Isaak). *Es wurde wieder rubig. Die Lebensgeschichte eines mennonitischen Predigers aus der Sowjetunion*. (Winnipeg: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1989), 183 pp., pb., \$11.00.

Epp, Peter. *Ob tausend fallen... Mein Leben im Archipel Gulag*. (Weichs: Memra-Verlag, 1988), 206 pp., pb., \$10.00.

Jantzen, Hermann. *Im wilden Turkestan: Ein Leben unter Moslems*. (Giessen/Basel: Brunnen Verlag, 1988), 302 pp., pb., \$8.00.

Reviewed by Peter H. Rempel

In his memoirs, Peter Derksen provides a rather straightforward autobiography of a *kirchliche* Mennonite minister in the Soviet Union. His ministry began in 1928 in Chortitza, after the major migration in which many ministers left for Canada. It was disrupted by alternative service, persecution and imprisonment during the 1930s.

Derksen could be with his family during the westward evacuation of the Mennonite colonies to German territories in 1943, but soon after the Soviet occupation and their forced repatriation, he was arrested for his religious activities and sent to a labour camp. After his release in 1955 he was active in the re-building of Mennonite church and family life in the new setting of Soviet Central Asia until his emigration to West Germany in 1979.

The introductory notes for each chapter provide the historical background for this rather unadorned recounting of personal sto-

ries. However, they cannot provide Derksen's personal reflections on them. There are some pointers toward their deeper meaning and impact, but one wishes for more. The articulation of this perspective in the author's own words, on the suffering of a people would have made this a more interesting and enlightening life-story of a devout minister.

Peter Epp's life story parallels that of Peter Derksen in many respects. Two major differences are that Epp experienced compulsory state service as a soldier in the German army during the Second World War and that his full and conscious commitment to Christian faith came after experiencing the traumas of hunger and persecution, warfare and forced labour.

In his struggle to survive physically, emotionally and spiritually through these trying and often desperate situations, Epp was guided more by the fundamental values of decency and diligence instilled by his parents and community than by a conscious personal commitment to his God. Nevertheless, in retrospect, he recognized that he was sustained and protected by this God. This conscious and articulated gratitude makes his re-telling interesting and edifying reading.

Epp not only shares candidly of his personal pilgrimage. He also describes vividly many of the persons who shared or shaped his fate. This is indeed a fine Mennonite microcosm of Solzenitzyn's *Gulag Archipelago*.

Both accounts are less than complete, and therefore perhaps disappointing, in that neither recounts in a systematic way the Mennonite story in the post-Stalin era. However, it may be too soon for us to be told the complete story of this period, which had its own internal and external tribulations for the Mennonite people.

The great trek of Mennonite settlers to Central Asia in the 1880s is a widely known episode of Russian Mennonite history. The founding of several Mennonite settlements in Turkestan which lasted until the 1930s, when they were forcibly disbanded is a less known story. That a dynamic missionary among the Moslem peoples of Central Asia emerged from this exotic migration is cause for surprise and fascination.

Hermann Jantzen, born in 1866, grew up in a family which remained loyal to its trek leader, Klaas Epp, even after many other followers separated to form distinct settlements or to emigrate to the United States. As a youth, Jantzen worked in the court of the Khan in Chiva and thereby gained an intimate knowledge of the language and customs of the Kazakh people. With this training, he became an influential official in the Russian administration imposed on Central Asia. Eventually he dedicated his life and unique talents to be an independent evangelist among the Moslem tribes.

Jantzen's memoirs are fascinating firsthand accounts not only of the Mennonite trek and settlement but also of the encounter between the Asiatic Moslem tribes and the Russia, then later Soviet, regimes. His experiences as a deputy of the Mennonite settlements to the

(cont'd on p. 11)