

MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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George Trappe (†1798)

This engraving of George Trappe holding a copy of the Mennonite Privilegium was purchased last fall by Irvin B. Horst at a public auction in Haarlem (Netherlands). The engraving is presently displayed in the Menno Simons Historical Library at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. A photographic copy of the engraving may be ordered from the Historical Library.

The engraving is printed on 14.5 x 10.5 inch paper. The engraving by C. Knight shows Trappe sitting by a window holding the privilegium which reads: "*Der Kaiserinn Catharinen der Grossen, Privilegia für 270 Mennonisten Familien im Jahr 1787*". The caption to the photo reads: "*George Trappe Esquire, Directeur & Curator of the*

The Heinrich Voth Family: From Minnesota to Winkler to Vanderhoof

by Peter Penner

The remarkable picture of the Heinrich Voth family (see p. 2) was taken in 1916 at Bingham Lake (Carson), Minnesota. It was a propitious moment in the family's history. Elder Heinrich Voth (1851-1918) had retired after serving that congregation for nearly forty years. Through his work as a *Reiseprediger* (itinerant minister), he had been instrumental in the founding of the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church in 1888.¹ Subsequently he served as moderator of the *Bundeskonferenz* (General Conference), of the Central District Conference, and as a member of the early Board of Foreign Missions. His eldest son, Henry S. Voth (1878-1953), already a noted *Reiseprediger*, had just moved from Dallas, Oregon, to take over the family farm in Cottonwood County, Minnesota. In 1919 he moved to Manitoba where he became Winkler's leading minister in 1931 and served the Canadian MB Conference as moderator for over twenty years. The second son, John H., was home on his first furlough from India where he served as missionary. Meanwhile, Sara had married Aaron Dyck and Helen had married Peter Neufeld, a Winkler school teacher. The latter had twelve children, two of whom became prominent in the Vanderhoof story.

This entire family, except for Henry S. and John H., moved to Braeside, near Vanderhoof, B.C. in 1918. That short-lived epic had its beginning when America declared war on Germany in April 1917. Because Elder Voth was firmly committed to the position of biblical non-resistance, his two youngest sons, Isaac and Abram, who were most likely to be called to serve in the army, evaded the draft by making an

Colonie in Tauride." Beneath the caption it notes, "London, Published as the Act directs, August 13 th 1789".

Trappe (a German) was an emigration official employed by Prince Gregor Potemkin, governor general of New Russia. Catherine the Great gave instructions that the new territories she had acquired were to be settled with Russian peasants and foreign pioneers. Trappe was charged with the responsibility of inviting German settlers to the Ukraine.

In 1786 Trappe contacted Mennonites who were interested in migrating to Russia. He met with Frisian and Flemish communities. Trappe became very successful in influencing prospective settlers. But he was also concerned with the disunity between the Flemish and Frisian Mennonites in the Danzig region. He therefore enlisted the assistance of the Dutch Mennonites to help address this problem which he felt would hinder emigration to Russia.

This is the first time that we have seen this engraving. It would be of interest to the editors of the *Mennonite Historian* whether anyone else has a copy or has more information concerning its origin. (Photo: Courtesy of Menno Simons Historical Library)

Mennonites in the Soviet Inferno, 1929-1941

by Peter Letkemann

Sparked by the work of Harvey Dyck and an international team of scholars, Mennonites in many parts of the world have chosen 1998 to commemorate the victims of terror and repression in the former Soviet Union. My contribution to this commemoration has been the com-

compilation of a comprehensive name-list of victims, a continuation of the work begun some twenty years ago by George K. Epp. To date I have gathered well over 15,000 names, together with countless personal memoirs, letters, poems and phot-

(cont'd on p. 6)

abrupt decision to depart for Winkler, Manitoba. This destination was most natural, quite apart from the presence there of the Neufeld family, because Henry S. Voth had married Susie Warkentin, the daughter of the leading minister in Winkler, Johann Warkentin.

In April, 1918 Elder Heinrich Voth and his family joined a small pioneering movement to Vanderhoof. The young Peter Neufeld, already afflicted by tuberculosis, kept a personal diary of the trip and the first months at Braeside. He died there on 31 December 1918, a month later than his grandfather Elder Voth.² Young Peter died in the faith, but his short

pilgrimage as an adolescent had been a trial to all because, while studying at the Winkler High School, he came under the influence of Frederick Philip Grove,³ and developed a growing "hostility to the traditional faith and fundamental Christianity." It was believed he had imbibed agnostic tendencies when Grove encouraged him to read such literary classics as Byron, Shelly, and Keats. Grove only lasted a few years as principal of Winkler High School because of his "questionable stand toward Christianity."⁴

Peter's brother, John, wrote a history of the Mennonite attempt to find a footing in the Nechako Valley in 1978.⁵ He told how

Johann Warkentin had not given his blessing to this western trek. Johann had warned about new and worse temptations for the Christian community in a strange province. As it turned out, this settlement seemed premature and failed to achieve its early promise. There was no market for their produce, no employment for their hands. Economic and private disappointments brought them back to Manitoba. The death in November 1918 of their father and spiritual leader, Heinrich Voth was a particularly hard blow. He had just returned, tired, from the sessions of the Northern District Conference at Winkler and a visit to Bingham Lake, where Henry S. and Susie Voth were winding up their family affairs in Minnesota.⁷

Endnotes

¹ Peter Penner, *No Longer at Arm's Length: MB Church Planting in Canada* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1987), 10-11.

² "Personal Diary of Peter Neufeld, 1917-1918", edited by his brother, John V. Neufeld, 1978, 105 pp.

³ Among other critical books on this famous novelist, see Ronald Sutherland, *Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto, 1969). Sutherland's introduction tells of Grove's marriage to Catherine Wiens, who had come from Saskatchewan to teach in the Haskett school south of Winkler where Grove began his teaching career.

⁴ "Personal Diary of Peter Neufeld," p. 94.

⁵ "The Mennonite Settlement near Vanderhoof in the Nechako Valley" (1978); cf. Lyn Hancock, editor, *Vanderhoof: the Town That Wouldn't Wait* (Vanderhoof, 1979).

⁶ Peter Penner, "By Reason of Strength: Johann Warkentin 1859-1948", *Mennonite Life*, 33/4 (December 1978), p. 4-9

⁷ See Voth Family Collection, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg.



Heinrich Voth Family, 1916. Back row left to right: 1) Herman Neufeld, 2) Abram H. Voth, 3) Peter H. Voth, 4) Henry S. Voth, 5) John Warkentin, 6) Peter Neufeld (author of diary), 7) Henry Neufeld, 8) John V. Neufeld (author of Vanderhoof settlement story), 9) Isaac H. Voth;

Second from back, standing: 10) Jake Neufeld, 11) Helen Neufeld, 12) Viola Neufeld, 13) Jake H. Voth, 14) Aaron Dyck, 15) Luella Dyck, 16) Harry Voth, 17) Susie Warkentin Voth, 18) Esther Voth, 19) Mary Voth, 20) Peter H. Neufeld, 21) John H. Voth, 22) Elizabeth Voth (John's d.), 23) Sara Neufeld, 24) Margaret Neufeld;

Third row, seated: 25) Mrs. Jake Voth, 26) Sara Voth Dyck, 27) Sara Kornelsen Voth, 28) Elder Heinrich Voth, 29) Helen Voth Neufeld, 30) Maria (Epp) Voth;

Fourth row, children on riser: 31) Harold Voth, 32) Elizabeth Voth (Jake's d.), 33) Ernest Dyck, 34) Ruth Dyck, 35) Viola Voth, 36) Teddy Voth, 37) Sara Voth (H.S. Voth's d.);

Children seated in front: 38) John Lester Voth, 39) David Neufeld, 40) Margaret Neufeld, 41) Menno Voth, 42) Sara Voth (John's d.)

Peter Penner, Calgary Alberta, is Emeritus Professor of History, Mount Allison University, Sackville, New Brunswick.

Genealogy and Family History

by Alf Redekopp

Queries

JANZTEN/SUDERMANN: I am seeking contacts with anyone who has lived in, or had ancestors who lived in, Orihiv or Berdjansk, Ukraine. Both towns have had various spellings. My great-grandmother, Elise Janzten Claassen, was born in Orihiv in 1860. Her parents were Johann Jantzen and Elisabeth Sudermann. Elise's mother died at child birth. She was raised by her great-uncle and aunt, Rev. Leonhard and Maria Sudermann who lived in Berdjansk. They emigrated to the USA in 1876 and settled in Whitewater, Kansas. I am interested in the Mennonite communities in these two towns and any particular information about Johann Jantzen. Contact: Gerry Thierstein, 2525 Baxter Pl, Fort Collins, CO 80526-5360, USA. email: gerrythi@verinet.com

Rempel-Quiring-Derksen: I am searching for the ancestry of Anna Rempel born 1832. Her death certificate shows her father as N. Rempel. She married a Cornelius Quiring. There were two children by this marriage: Anna born 1858 and married an Andrew Hier, and Cornelius born 1855. After the death of Cornelius Quiring Anna remarried to Peter Derksen. They came to America and settled in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Anna died two years later on May 26, 1877. Contact: M. Derksen, 676 Ladore, Grand Junction, CO 81504. E-mail: millie@acsol.net.

Toews: I am looking for information on the descendants of Isaac A. Toews b. 1888 who had a son Jacob b. 1915 and a daughter Klara b. 1921. Contact: Jacob D. Harder, 194 Oeming Road, Edmonton, AB T6R 2G2.

Recent Books

Delores (Loewen) Harder. *Dedicated to Heinrich Loewens and Sara Toews* (Winnipeg, MB : Private publication, 1998) unpaginated.

This item was prepared and distributed at a Loewen reunion in Gretna, Manitoba

during the summer of 1998. The book traces the family history of Heinrich Loewen (1823-1908) and Sara Toews (1827-1889) who initially lived in the Molotschna Colony, then in the village of Heinrichfeld in the area known as Puchtin, and emigrated to Manitoba, Canada in 1876 settling in Silberfeld in the Mennonite West Reserve. There are chapters on the descendants of each of their five children which survived to adulthood. Contact: Delores Harder, 7 Bethray Bay, Winnipeg, MB R2M 5R2.

Carl E. Hansen. *Jacob and Justina : the Odyssey of a Family* (Morganstown, PA : Masthof Press, 1998) 202 pp.

This book contains the story of Jacob Johann Friesen (1898-1985) and Justina Aaron Warkentin (1896-1967) of the Rosemary, Alberta area. The appendices contain the genealogical data of their ancestors and descendants. Contact: Carl E. Hansen, P.O. Box 101539, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ronald J. Friesen. *Van Riesen - Friesen Family History* (Victoria, BC : Private publication, 1997) 111 pp. plus appendices.

One of the appendices in this book is a translation of the personal family register kept by Abraham Friesen (1858-1935) who came to Canada from Neu Osterwick, Russia in 1890 and settled near Rosthern, Saskatchewan in 1891. Contact: Ronald J. Friesen, 1551 Prairie St., Victoria, BC V8N 4P4.

Ronald J. Friesen. *The Family History of Wilhelm and Katharina Wiebe* (Victoria, BC : Private publication, 1996) 59 pp. plus appendices.

This book traces the family history of Wilhelm Wiebe (1868-1944) and Katharina Braun (1869-1953) who trace their ancestry to the Bergthal Colony in Russia and came to Manitoba in the 1870s. Wilhelm Wiebe was a nephew to the Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe who led one group of immigrants. Contact: Ronald J. Friesen, 1551 Prairie St., Victoria, BC V8N 4P4.

First Mennonite Settlers to Russia 1789-1828

For many years the main sources of genealogical information regarding the first generations of Mennonite settlers in Russia were Benjamin H. Unruh *Die niederländisch- niederdeutschen Hintergründe der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen im 16., 18., und 19. Jahrhundert* (1955) and Karl Stumpp *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862* (1978).

More recently the series of articles by Henry Schapansky on the first settlers to the Old Colony published in *Mennonite Family History* from 1990 to 1998 have added to the knowledge of the early migration period of Mennonites to Russia.

The Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has this year begun a project to compile, translate and publish some of the archival documents which relate to these early settlers. Some of the materials will come from St. Petersburg Microfilming Project collection of 29 reels acquired by the Mennonite Archival Centres in Winnipeg, Clearbrook and Fresno between 1995 and 1997, and translated by a summer student worker. Others will be the documents discovered and transcribed by Peter Rempel, Moscow. Included will be 11 lists of Mennonite families who received passports from the Russian Consulate in Danzig between 1819 and 1828, 46 lists of Mennonite families who received funds while passing through the border at Grodno between 1803 and 1809, and another 16 lists of new arrived Mennonite families in Chortitza and Molotschna detailing their assets.

A significant amount of material will still need to be translated from Russian. The Genealogy Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society plans to begin publishing these materials by late 1999. The committee welcomes donations. Cheques can be made payable to the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and designated for the Genealogy Project.

Send inquiries to Alf Redekopp, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or 169 Riverton Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5. E-mail: aredekopp@confmenno.ca

mhc
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Gallery Opening A Crowded Success

It was obvious that Mennonites appreciate art by the great number of people who attended the opening of the renewed Gallery at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. In spite of it being the night of the Grey Cup parade, MCC annual meetings and various other events scattered throughout Winnipeg, the gallery was over-crowded with people.

The exhibition featured works of Ray Dirks, MHC Gallery Curator, and works of Yisa Akinbolaji, a Christian artist from Nigeria now studying in Winnipeg.

With several hundred people standing in the gallery, a brief program began with the CMBC chorus, directed by Bernie Neufeld, singing several well-known German Hymns. Heritage Committee Chair Paul Friesen thanked sponsors of the Gallery and noted that the Heritage Centre

has now been in operation 20 years. It was made possible through the vision and the generosity of the P.W. Enns Family Foundation. The program ended with quite different music as the drum and dance group from the Immanuel Fellowship (a local Nigerian congregation) performed pieces which symbolized praise to God, invitation to worship and bringing God back into our various areas of work.

During the program Ray Dirks outlined the vision of the Gallery. He noted that with God at its heart and Mennonite/Anabaptist values and distinctives guiding its soul, the gallery desires to help art and artists find a place of relevance in the church. The gallery will feature artists from within the Mennonite community and of other faith communities in Canada. The gallery will be a place to learn from each others communities, work with minorities and immigrant groups and reach out to learn from and experience the talents and ideas of artists from other countries—especially where our missions and service organizations have a presence.

The whole event, the gallery, its vision and exhibitions was blessed by Pastor Deborah Olukoju of Immanuel Fellowship in a prayer of dedication. The exhibition remains open to the public until December 30, 1998.

Upcoming Events at the Mennonite Heritage Centre/Gallery

November 20 to December 31, 1998

Passage: A journey through the career of Gallery Director Ray Dirks. From the roots of his grandparents in Russia to his experiences in various African countries.

January to February 1999

Refreshing Winds: An exhibition of Art in worship to coincide with the worship conference, by the same name, planned by CMC and Concord College.

Heritage Centre/CMBC Winter Courses

The Mennonite Heritage Centre, together with CMBC, is offering the following evening courses beginning in late January 1999. Please call the Mennonite Heritage Centre to ensure your enrollment in a course, in case we are over-subscribed. Registration will take place the evening of the first class. Costs are \$100 for eight-week classes and \$50 for four-week classes. Please call 888-6781 for further details.

January 21 – March 18, 1999 (No Class February 18)

Eight Week Classes:

Low German Reading, with Adolf Ens instructor

Conversational Low German II, with Ted Klassen instructor

Art instruction, with Ray Dirks instructor

Four Week Classes:

Mennonite Genealogy, with Alf Redekopp instructor (January 21, 28, February 4, 11)

A Guide to Writing Memoirs, with Edith Friesen instructor (February 25, March 4, 11, 18)

Note: During these weeks of instruction the Mennonite Heritage Centre will stay open from 6:30 to 9:30 PM for researchers. Please avail yourself of this evening opportunity to use the resources of the Heritage Centre.



Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery Opening, Nov. 20, 1998. Photo by Aiden Schlichting Enns, Canadian Mennonite.

Some Recent Acquisitions

The following list is a selection of some of the major recent acquisitions at CMBS. The Centre would like to thank the donors.

1. "The Gracious Visit of the Czar in Lindenau, Molotschna 1818" / written by Peter A. Riediger. — 1955. Donated by Margaret Riediger, Coaldale, Alberta.
2. "Lost Homeland : Diary of a German colonist Abram Abram Klassen / translated by Linda Matties. — 45 pp. This item covers the experiences of A.A. Klassen (1885-1949) in Russia, Germany and in Paraguay. Donated by Linda Matties.
3. "My Life Story : Heinrich Abram Reimer 1850-1929" / translated by Harry Reimer. — 1997. — 15 pp. This item is a translation of a 1927 document. Donated by Helen Reimer Bergmann, Virgil, Ontario.
4. "Of things remembered : recollections of war, revolution and civil war 1914-1920" / by John G. Rempel and David G. Rempel. — ca.1980. — 263 pp. Donated by Johannes Reimer.
5. Mennonite Community Orchestra materials. — 1984-1992. This collection includes copies of programs, 14 audio cassettes and 2 videos of performances and photographs. Donated by Bertha Klassen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
6. John Esau Photograph collection. — ca. 1949. — 64 photographs accompanying negatives. This collection consists of photographs taken of student life at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College (now Concord College), Winnipeg. Donated by Helen Toews, Coaldale, Alberta.
7. Katie Funk Wiebe Photograph collection and other materials. This acquisition included photographs from Blubber Bay (a C.O. Camp during the 1940s), photographs of life at MBBC during the late 1940s and early 1950s, photographs of life in Saskatchewan and others photographs. Donated by Katie Funk Wiebe, Hillsboro, Kansas.
8. Abraham and Maria Friesen photograph collection. — 1885-1908. — 15 photographs. These items depict the life of the early Mennonite Brethren missionaries to India. Donated by Elvira Goerz, Kitchener, Ontario.

Brochure Advertising P. M. Friesen's *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft*

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies recently acquired a copy of a 16-page brochure or prospectus advertising the release of the volume by P.M. Friesen in 1911. This "brochure" was published by Raduga Press and consisted of a brief general description of the volume, 20 selected photographs or illustrations, an order form and short reviews by the following nine prominent Mennonite leaders: Heinrich Dirks, Heinrich Unruh (Halbstadt), Peter Braun, Johann Horsch, Jakob Kroecker, Bertholdy (editor of the St. Petersburg *Sonntagsblatt*, David Epp, K. Wilhelm (editor of the *Odessaer Zeitung*) and Heinrich Unruh (India). The copy was obtained from the Mennonite Historical Library in Goshen, Indiana.

For Sale

1. *Mennonitische Rundschau*, bound vols. 1966-1970 and many issues from the 1920s.
2. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vols. 1- 4. Contact the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies for details.

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More on Russian Mennonite Brethren Congregations in Saskatchewan

There have been several responses to the article which appeared in the September issue of the *Mennonite Historian*. Particularly significant was the fact that one reader recalled seeing copies of the original records (Russian) of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Blaine Lake. As a result the Centre has now received the congregational records of the Petrovka Mennonite Brethren Church, later Blaine Lake Mennonite Brethren Church and now called Blaine Lake Gospel Chapel. The records were donated by Arnold Stobbe and include membership records and minutes from the years 1917-1940 and 1965-1997.

Another reader wrote indicating family ties to the Melashenkos who were founding members of the Arelee Mennonite Brethren church and requested copies of translated sets of minutes.



Mennonite Brethren Church in Sulzovka, ca. 200 kms. west of Omsk with elder Philip Friesen and assistants Ottmar and Bruno Hildebrand, taken in 1998. Photo: Courtesy of Peter Rempel, Winnipeg.

Soviet Inferno *(cont'd from p. 1)*

ographs. This material should be ready for publication by the end of next year.

In this, the second in a three-part series of articles, I can offer only a brief glimpse into the years from Fall 1929 to June 22 1941. This was a tragic period during which all Mennonites in the Soviet Union - men and women, young and old - endured the agony of hunger and disease, and the loss of loved ones sent into exile as "kulaks," or imprisoned and executed as "enemies of the people."

Compared to the millions of deaths in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Volga region, the number of Mennonites who starved during the great terror-famine of 1932-33 was relatively small, thanks again in part to the assistance provided by North American and European Mennonites. Only 22 deaths were reported in the Khortitsa region and 213 in the Zagradovka villages.¹ The total of 265 victims in the Mennonite villages west of the Dnieper represented just over 1% of the population. Other Mennonite regions also seem to have recorded few losses.

The majority of victims during the twelve-year period from Fall 1929 to June 1941 fall into the categories of those who were dekulakized (*entkulakisiert*), or those who were arrested (*verhaftet*) and executed or sent to the Gulag.

Families selected for "dekulakization" were disenfranchised (deprived of the right to vote), dispossessed (robbed of their livestock, machinery and household possessions), and evicted from their homes. Some were allowed to remain in their villages, at least temporarily, living with family or friends, or in make-shift hovels on the outskirts of the village. Others were banished from the village but allowed to remain in the region. Many were sent to newly established "kulak" settlements, such as Oktoberfeld and Neuhoof in the Molochnaia region.²

Some families (including that of my own grandfather), recognizing the fate that awaited them, chose to flee the village before they could be exiled. Many sought refuge in large industrial towns such as Zaporozhie or Stalino (now Donetsk), or in the Caucasus.

The number of families "dekulakized"

per village varied from region to region, and ranged from 10% to 25% of the population. In the four villages of the Yazykovo Settlement (Nikolaipol, Franzfeld, Hochfeld and Adelsheim), 54 families (some 200 persons, or 11% of the population) were dekulakized, but not all were exiled. Of the 11 families evicted from Franzfeld in 1930, only five were shipped to the North; 6 families, including that of my great-grandfather David Letkemann, were sent to other settlements in the Khortitsa region.³

In Nieder Khortitsa 12 families were evicted - 8 were allowed to resettle within the region, while 4 were exiled to Siberia. One of these families was that of Heinrich Pankratz. In the summer of 1929 they were dekulakized and sent to live in a poor *Lehmhütte* (clay hut) outside the village of Kronstal. They were given a small parcel of land to grow potatoes and vegetables. The following year they were resettled to Neuendorf, along with many other "kulak" families. In Spring 1931 they were loaded onto freight cars at the Kanzerovka station and shipped to Sverdlovsk.⁴

A report from Molochnaia relates that over 230 families were evicted from their homes early in 1930. The first group of 34 families were loaded into freight cars and shipped to Tomsk, Siberia. Ten days later another 200 families were evicted from their homes and sent to a new kulak settlement near Hochstädt.⁵

In the Crimea, 24 Mennonite families were exiled from Spat on 24 April 1930.⁶ In the Trakt Settlement, 41 families (199 persons), or about 15% of the population, were exiled to Karaganda in the summer of 1931.⁷

In the settlement of Alexandertal (Alt-Samara) a total of 55 families (331 persons) were exiled during the years 1930-31. The first 36 families (233 persons) were exiled on 30 March 1930 - sent by train to Arkhangelsk, 837 km. north of Moscow, and unloaded in the wilderness. They established the settlement of Kholmoleyevo, where all able-bodied men and women, even young boys and girls of 16, were required to do forestry work. Statistics for Kholmoleyevo are appalling: 49 persons died within the first year, 81 persons were subsequently arrested and shipped on to prisons or other

labour camps. Three more groups of families were exiled from Alexandertal in 1931: in January 1931, the Hermann Riesen family (5 persons) and the David Janzen family (5 persons) were exiled to the Omsk region. Four families (31 persons) were exiled in February 1931 to the region beyond Lake Baikal in Siberia. In June 1931 another twelve families (52 persons) were exiled to Kazakhstan. These 55 "dekulakized" families represented 25 percent of the population of Alexandertal.⁸

In total, I would estimate that at least 2,000 Mennonite families - more than 10,000 persons - were "dekulakized" during the years 1929-32. I have been able to identify less than a quarter of them by name.

The "dekulakization" campaign was accompanied by a vigorous anti-religious campaign. Many ministers, deacons, and choir directors were arrested and exiled - in some cases wives and families voluntarily went into exile with their husbands and fathers.

Arrests began in the late 1920s and escalated during the course of the 1930s. Several hundred men and women were arrested in November 1929 in Moscow; some are known to have died in prison, but most were released after several weeks and sent into exile together with their families.

Comparatively few Mennonites were arrested or exiled during the ensuing years from 1933 - 1935. In villages west of the Dnieper, for example, there were a total of only 70 arrests: 27 in 1933 (10 of these in Einlage), 19 arrests in 1934, and 24 arrests in 1935.

Since few Mennonites were members of the Communist Party, few were affected by Stalin's purge of the Party, which began early in 1933 and ended officially on December 26 1935.

Among those arrested in 1933-36 were the remaining Mennonite religious leaders, including men such as *Aeltester* Heinrich Winter and Aaron P. Toews, who had somehow escaped arrest during the earlier "dekulakization" campaign of 1929-32. These arrests were part of Stalin's ongoing assault against traditional religious and moral values. By the end of 1936 most churches had been closed and the buildings confiscated by the state. They were turned into clubhouses, theatres or warehouses.

Some 8,000 to 9,000 Mennonite men were arrested during the "Great Terror," which began in the Fall of 1936 and ended by late 1938. The majority were taken between June 1937 and August 1938. A small number of women were also taken, especially in the large industrial centres such as Khortitsa (9 arrests) and Einlage (17 arrests).

Fairly complete lists are available for forty-nine Mennonite villages in Ukraine west of the Dnieper River - including the settlements of Khortitsa, Yazykovo, Zagradovka, Nepluievka, Borozenko and Shlachtin-Baratov. For the period 1937-38, these lists show a total of more than 1,800 arrests (8.2%) in an estimated 1937 population of 22,000 persons. Figures for the Molochnaia villages also show about 1,800 arrests in a population of 20,000 persons.

The ratio of arrests varied considerably from one village to another. For example, in the village of Blumenfeld (Nepluievka) 37 men (14%) of an estimated 250 inhabitants were arrested during the "Great Terror"; in the village of Bahndorf (Orlovo) in the Memrik settlement, 26 men (8.6%) from a population of 300 persons were arrested between May 1937 and February 1938. In the village of Kondratievka (Borissovo Settlement) the ratio was even higher: 75 men (18%) from an estimated population of 400 persons were arrested during the years 1937-38.

On the other hand, in Alexanderkrone (Zagradovka) only two of its 170

inhabitants were arrested. The village of Rosengart (Khortitsa) also suffered relatively few arrests - only ten men (3.3%) were taken. The reason cited in contemporary sources for this "lenient treatment" was that Soviet officials used Rosengart as a model collective farm to display to the many foreign visitors who came to view the nearby Dnieprostroi hydro-electric dam.

In total, an estimated 10,000 Mennonites were arrested in the years 1933-1941 (to date I have identified 3,720 by name). This number seems small, even insignificant, when compared with the millions of arrest victims in the Soviet Union as a whole. Statistically, the arrest ratio among Mennonites was at least four times higher than the national average revealed in recent KGB statistics.⁹

The end of the "Great Terror" in 1938 did not bring an end to the suffering of the Mennonites. There was a brief respite after the signing of the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR on August 23, 1939, but the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22 1941 fanned the flames of the Inferno anew. The fateful consequences will be discussed in the closing article of this series.

End Notes:

1. Karl Stumpp, *Bericht über das Gebiet Kronau-Orloff* (Berlin, 1943), "Tafel A" and *Bericht über das Gebiet Chortitza* (Berlin, 1943), 7. The most comprehensive study of this famine is Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (New York: Oxford University Press,

1986).

2. Colin P. Neufeldt, "Through the Fires of Hell: The Dekulakization and Collectivization of the Soviet Mennonite Community, 1928-1933," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 16 (1998), 9-32. On Oktoberfeld, see J.A. Neufeld, *Tiefenwege*, p.44; and the poem "Oktoberfeld, du öder und verlass'ner Ort," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 29. Oct 1930, 10.

3. Julius Loewen, *Jasykowo*, 56.

4. Information provided by Mrs. Sonia (Pankratz) Klassen.

5. "Brief aus Süd-Russland," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 11 Jun e1930, 7.

6. Aron Toews, *Mennonitische Märtyrer*, Volume 1, p.106.

7. Information provided by Johannes Bergmann.

8. Information provided by Wilhelm Claassen and Jakob Klassen.

9. Peter Letkemann, "Mennonite Victims of 'The Great Terror,' 1936-1938," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 16 (1998), 35-37.

Peter Letkemann is an organist and historian living in Winnipeg.

Renewed Request for Photographs from Russia

A request has been received by the Mennonite Heritage Centre for photographs of Mennonites in Russia. While both the Centre for MB Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre have a large collection of such photographs, we are aware that many more still exist of which we do not have copies. We are looking for photographs from before the turn of the century through the 1960s.

If you have photographs of which you would be willing to let us make copies, please contact Abe Dueck at 204-669-6575 or Ken Reddig at 204-888-6781 to make arrangements.

Medical Researchers Need Your Help

Dystonia is a neurological condition which can include blepharospasm, torticollis (wry neck), spasmodic dysphonia, writer's cramp or more generalized involvement of many body parts.

If you or a relative have any form of dystonia, please contact us and provide details about you dystonia. We are searching for branches of two large Mennonite families with dystonia. Even if you are the only known relative in your family with dystonia, it will still be helpful for our research.

Please contact:

Deborah Raymond, MS, Beth Israel Medical Center

Department of Neurology, Suite 2R 10 Union Square East, New York NY 10003

Phone: 212-844-8719 Fax 212-844-8707

Email: draymond@bethisraelny.org

In Memorium

The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies and the Mennonite Heritage Centre would like to thank Elma Schemenauer for a generous donation in memory of **Dr. John C. Sawatsky**, a psychologist who died in Toronto on November 13, 1998.

Book Reviews

Jacob A. Loewen. *Onze ieashte Missjounsreiz – ouda: Waut jie emma fonn'ne Missjoun weete wulle, ooba kjeena junt fetale deed – Iearnstet, Shposjet, en Wichjtjet ut'e Missjoun* (Abbotsford, B.C: Private Publication, 1997) 222 pp.

Reviewed by Titus F. Guenther, instructor at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg.

After introducing himself briefly and naming his reasons for a book *opp Plautdietsch* (Low German), the author shares 36 rivetting short stories with the readers, and concludes with *Daut Aunhenjzel* (Appendix), explaining the Low German Alphabet as well as his newly developed *Shriewwiez* (spelling method) -- Loewen served as Language Consultant for the American, and later, United Bible Societies for many years, developing simple spelling systems for some two hundred languages (p.13).

The author's rationale for writing this Low German book on missions is at least four-fold: (1) to experience the sheer joy of telling stories *opp Plautdietsch*; (2) to convey important lessons through these stories of missionary experiences to *onze Meniste* preparing them better to relate with understanding to the growing number of diverse immigrants to Canada; (3) to foster an appreciation for the Low German Language; and, (4) to make these stories available to the many Mennonites whose only language is *Plautdietsch*. If they are to learn new things it will have to be *opp Plautdietsch* -- a lesson Loewen learned from literacy campaigns on the mission field (p.8f., *et al*).

The book offers readers a rich storehouse of spell-binding, entertaining, instructive and edifying mission stories, all *opp Plautdietsch*!, transporting us into the enchanting and frightening landscapes of other cultures and peoples to whom the author related during his mission assignments in Colombia and Panamá. The stories give us a vivid glimpse of the author's adventuresome and perilous mission journeys to the native hinterlands in tropical jungles and mountains; they tell

us of native hospitality, strange foods and differing views of nudity; of tensions between fellow missionaries. But above all, they allow us to look in on the historic struggles between the spirit world of animist societies and the Spirit of God in the gospel -- the latter conveyed in post-Enlightenment western cultural garb. At times the missionaries found they were standing in the way of the Spirit's work, as in faith healings which the natives sought to accomplish with them present.

While these stories convey insights about inter-cultural relations, they also help us to understand how our own culture works. They tell of reversals in which the missionaries learn profound lessons from the aboriginal people. For example, from the village drunk Loewen learns that *uck en Missjounoa mott sick dan en wan emool bekieare* (even a missionary must be converted from time to time), because the Indian remonstrates in his stupor after Loewen drags him out of the village, blurting out the words: "When I'm sober and able to find my way around, you're my friend, but when I'm drunk and need you, you treat me like this!" This led Loewen to see that he had acted more like a Pharisee than like the friend of sinners. *Ekj deed opp'e Shtad Buse...* (I repented on the spot...), he relates.

Or imagine reading this *opp Plautdietsch*: A certain missionary prepares to return to his dying father. The Indians commission their best carver to fashion a wooden figurine of God, adorned with colourful feathers to send to the dying man. The missionary had previously admitted that neither he nor his wise old father had ever "seen" God. The Indians sent this touching message to the old man: "We are convinced that no human should have to die without having seen God. We are thus sending you a little replica (*Aufbildungk*) of God. We didn't have time to make you a really beautiful God, but we hope that this one will be good enough, so that when you arrive on yonder side in the realm of God, you will recognize God, and that you won't feel too out of place in His presence. Greetings to our *Oulash* (ancestors) there, when you arrive in God's terrain! Tell them that we continue to remember them! All the best. *Dee Menshe* (The People)."

The book contains many spelling errors

or inconsistencies (beyond the listed "errata"; e.g., *Hieze* and *Hiezje*, p.128) but is quite reader friendly otherwise. It should be publicized widely in Low German communities, among people interested in missions who still speak *Plautdietsch*, and in seniors' homes. I would also invite the Low German class at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, to consider this as one of their text books. I plan to make this book a Christmas present to my father (80) in the *Altenheim* in Loma Plata, Paraguay, where in 1963 I heard Loewen's unforgettable lecture series *opp Plautdietsch* about the Lengua Indian culture, with its fascinating spirit.

Book Notes

by Ken Reddig

A fine illustrated book entitled *The Amish and Their Neighbors: The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822-1860* has just been published by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. Written by Lorraine Roth, the book is based on numerous sources, including a large body of records discovered in the Archives of the University of Toronto. The book is well illustrated with many fine pictures of the region. The book retails for \$ 20.00 and is available from the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario or the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.

One of the smaller Mennonite Church denominations were the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Blending anecdotal and sociohistorical analysis, Calvin Redekop in his book *Leaving Anabaptism: From Evangelical Mennonite Brethren to Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches*, examines how over a period of a century this group found itself "leaving Anabaptism." He identifies dynamics pertinent to minority religious groups facing majority cultural assimilation. Published by Pandora Press this 265 page book retails for \$29.00 and is available in Mennonite bookstores.

Ken Reddig is the Director at Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba.