



Jacob A Rempel and the Mennonite World Conference, 1925

In the summer of 1978 the roads for Mennonites around the world will lead to Wichita, Kansas, USA. Here the tenth Mennonite World Conference is to be held from July 25-31. Some communities may be sending delegates for the first time, while others have had regular representation ever since the beginning of this Conference fifty-three years ago.

Mennonites from the Soviet Union have found it difficult, indeed so far impossible to maintain the direct delegate contact which many other communities enjoy. Aeltester Jacob A. Rempel of Gruenfeld, south Russia, almost made it to Basel in 1925, but no one has followed his footsteps to the eight conferences which followed. Perhaps this time someone can.

Rempel's experience created an interesting, if brief and poignant chapter in the efforts of inter-Mennonite celebration and service. Well qualified for his assignment, Rempel nevertheless could not circumvent

entirely the fallout of international conflict which finally kept him away.

After teaching in village schools for a few years, Rempel had gone on to study at the **Predigerschule** and university in Basel. He returned to be ordained as a minister, and to continue teaching, first in the Chortitza **Zentralschule**, and then through a government transfer, at Yuzovka (renamed Stalino). Further involvements included that of instructing at the Nikopol gymnasium, and finally private lecturing at the newly-founded University of Ekaterinoslav where he was recommended as professor. In 1920 he was called to the University of Moscow. However he quickly lost his professorship when the rector learned that he was also considering another call to church work in the Mennonite community.

On May 2, 1920, Rempel accepted the invitation to serve as bishop of the Neu Chortitza Mennonite congregation, and soon after that to minister in that office to the

Nikolaital congregation as well. His area of work included 22 villages, requiring about 40 communion services annually, along with heavy pastoral duties, teaching at Bible Conferences, and ordaining many new preachers to replace those who emigrated or passed away.

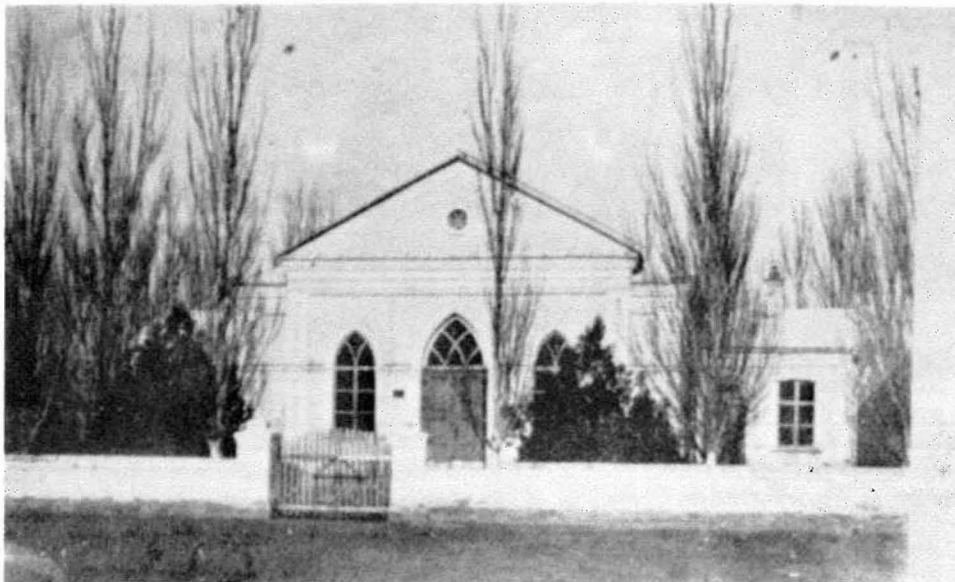
With his 1922 election as chairman of the KfK (**Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten**) came additional responsibilities which he carried for three years. He stepped down because he thought a change in leadership would be best for the church.

However, his tasks as a leader did not diminish. He continued to work with the KfK, particularly helping to head up the ministers' training school which he had recently organized. That he would become an important participant at the 1925 **Bundeskonzferenz** in Moscow was not difficult to foresee.

In itself an historic occasion for the Russian Mennonites, the conference shared the broader Mennonite consciousness of another moment of the past, the beginning of the Anabaptist movement in 1525. In 1923 Rempel had spoken with P.H. Unruh of Kansas, USA, about celebrating the 400th anniversary of the Mennonite church. He invited the American Mennonites to take initiative in planning the occasion.

Indeed, the Moscow conference as a whole felt a strong impulse to participate in this commemorative gathering. Rempel was asked to represent the Russian Mennonites after the anniversary gathering was finally scheduled for June, in Basel, Switzerland. B.H. Unruh, then resident in Germany, but a long-time respected church leader in south Russia, received an invitation to be a co-delegate for the south Russian Mennonite community. Soviet authorities affirmed their readiness to grant permission for the trip, and the Basel planners postponed their date somewhat, possibly to allow more time for the Russian Mennonite representation to make final arrangements. **(to be continued)**

This church house at Gruenfeld, south Russia, was built in 1909 and closed by government order 20 years later. It was reopened in 1941, but most of the village residents left during 1943. Photo from: Im Wandel der Jahre, ed. by Sara Heinrich DeFehr, 1975, p. 122.



Source: Alexander Rempel, "Rempel, Jacob A", **Mennonitisches Lexikon**, III pp. 470-474.

Russian Mennonite Studies Seminar Meets

For some years now a new interest in Russian Mennonite studies has become apparent. Partly stimulated by the discovery of new source materials, the upsurge is related also to events like the recent emigration of Mennonites from the Soviet Union to West Germany, and a growing awareness that this neglected area of research merits more attention than given so far.

The Institute of Mennonite Studies, Elkhart, Indiana, placed the topic on its agenda at its annual meeting in June, 1972. From it came a decision to assemble interested persons for the presentation of papers to stimulate discussion and further research in the field.

Planning such a seminar was undertaken formally in September, 1975, when the historical committees of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada and the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren set up a joint steering committee in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Two years later, with the help of a Schowalter Foundation grant and the continued encouragement of the Institute, the hoped-for conference became reality.

An average of seventy-five or more persons attended the five main sessions of a two-day Russian Mennonite studies seminar held on Nov. 11-12, 1977 at the campuses of Canadian Mennonite Bible College and Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Nearly a third of those present came from points in the USA, and the others from several Canadian provinces.

Major paper topics included a survey of Mennonite research materials in non-Mennonite archives (in this case, European) by Dr. P. J. Klassen, of Fresno, California, a study on the **Klein-Gemeinde** in Russia, by Dr. Carl Bangs, of Kansas City, Missouri, a study on Mennonites in the Soviet Union today, by Dr. Walter Sawatsky, of Neuwied, Germany, and an interpretive essay on continuity and change in nineteenth century Russian Mennonite communities, by James Urry of Canberra, Australia. Dr. Frank H. Epp of Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario read the latter paper, and also presented a public illustrated lecture entitled, "A Second Look at Russia".

The program further included research reports by Dr. C.J. Dyck of Elkhart, Indiana (a study of his grandfather's diary), comments on archival materials related to Pastor Eduard Wuest of south Russia, by Dr. Victor Doerksen of Winnipeg, Man., and illustrated (slide) remarks on Mennonite cultural developments in Russia by Dr. Cornelius Krahn of North Newton, Kansas.

Wide-spread interest in the event promised intensified efforts to locate other research materials and to utilize them in other studies.

The current needs of self-understanding and development of Mennonites from Russia both in the earlier and recent emigrations, and the intrinsic significance of an extensive chapter in the story of the total Mennonite experience validate this concern, and surely made the enterprise worthwhile.

Archives Convention

Twenty or more Mennonite archivists and librarians of Canada and the USA met on November 9 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

The all-day conference included discussions on inter-institutional communication, microfilming and microfiche production, collection of materials, planning joint projects and how to relate to other historical groups and organizations.

The group strongly affirmed a proposal by Nelson Springer of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen, Indiana, to make one institution in each church conference or major region the central repository for surplus periodical holdings related to that particular group. Springer reported the recent shipment of 140 boxes of such materials from Goshen to other libraries. Much of it went to newer

Mennonite collections being built up at the present time.

Represented at the seminar were the Centres of MB Studies of Winnipeg, Manitoba (MBBC), Hillsboro, Kansas (Tabor College), and Fresno, California (Pacific College); the Mennonite historical library and archives of Eastern Mennonite College (Harrisonburg, Va.), Goshen College (Goshen, Ind.), Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.), and Canadian Mennonite Bible College (Winnipeg, Man.), the Rosthern Junior College archives (Rosthern, Sask.), the archives and library of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society (Lancaster, Pa.), the Illinois Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society, and Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. (Steinbach, Man.). David Luthy, of the Amish Historical archives at Aylmer, Ontario, Dr. Peter Erb, of Conrad Grebel College archives at Waterloo, Ontario, and John Unruh of Freeman Junior College, Freeman, S.D. were unable to attend. However, they shared written reports with conference participants.

Although the group did not formally organize, it plans to meet again in two years. James O. Lehman, Eastern Mennonite College, and Lawrence Klippenstein, CMBC, co ordinators of the seminar, were asked to do preliminary planning for the future as well.

Starting from centre front and going clockwise: Leonard Gross, Goshen; Nelson Springer, Goshen; John S. Oyer, Goshen; Lois Ann Zook, Lancaster; LaVernae J. Dick, Oregon (not visible, behind Lois); Ted Regehr, Saskatoon; Rachel Hiebert, Fresno (not visible); Margaret Kroeker, Steinbach (not visible); Grace Schowalter, EMC, Harrisonburg; Sharon Klingelsmith, Goshen; Cornelius Krahn, Bethel College; Marianne Harms, Bethel College; Peter Schultz, Ill.; Herb Giesbrecht, MBBC, Winnipeg; Wes Prieb, Tabor College; J.B. Toews, Fresno; Robert Kreider, Bethel College; Peter Rempel, MCC (Canada), Winnipeg (not visible); James Lehman, EMC; Lawrence Klippenstein, CMC Archives, Winnipeg. Photo credit: Dennis Stoez, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Provincial Societies

The by laws of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada state that the provincial Mennonite historical societies shall be the major constituent members of the national organization. The groups from Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. have already formally joined the national association. These comments indicate the types of activities carried on in the regional programs.

B.C. Mennonite Historical Society

An intensive membership drive has brought the total in B.C. to over eighty. The organization is completing a constitution. As projects it is encouraging the writing of local church histories, the establishment of a Mennonite museum, and the planning of a history writers' seminar in February. An important aspect of extension efforts was the society's exhibit at the recent MCC (B.C.) annual meeting. Rev. George Groening, pastor of the Eden Mennonite congregation at Greendale, is president of BCMHS.

Mennonite Historical Society of Sask.-Alta.

This society reported the opening of an archives facility at Rosthern Junior College. The Mennonite museum on the college campus at Rosthern will be receiving future attention from the society also. Its eighth newsletter reached 28 paid up members in December, 1977. A number of others remain on the "interest" list, and hopefully will join up also. The executive includes Blake Friesen, Edmonton, chairman; Ted Regehr, Saskatoon, vice-chairman; Lena Heese, Saskatoon, treasurer; Don Kauffman, Edmonton, secretary; and three directors: John A. Pauls, Rosthern, Dick Epp, Saskatoon, and Bob Kirkpatrick, Calgary.

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society

Henry W. Redekopp, Winnipeg, is newly-elected chairman of MMHS and Gerhard Ems, Winnipeg, serves as secretary, with Ed Friesen, Steinbach, the treasurer. Gerhard Lorenz is the chairman of the recently-organized Cultural Committee which succeeds the Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Committee, active from 1972-1976.

The Cultural Committee obtained a provincial Local Jobs initiative grant of \$6,600.00 in December. This money will make possible the beginning of the construction of a private school house on the Mennonite Village Museum grounds, as well as initiating an inventory of Mennonite photo collections in various locations of Manitoba. Dennis Stoesz, Winnipeg is doing the photo catalogue. He is presently active at the archives of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario

Projects and activities of the MHS have included the promotion of the film, "Trail of the Conestoga", sponsorship of field trips to

the Niagara Peninsula, and reprinting Dr. J. Winfield Fretz's book on Ontario Mennonites entitled, **The Mennonites in Ontario**. A Mennonite heritage information centre is being planned on the University of Waterloo campus; its focus will be the Pennsylvania German folk.

The MHSO executive includes Orland Gingerich, president; Herbert Enns, Waterloo, vice-president; and Lorna Bergey, secretary.

The material on this page was provided by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

„Der Rheinländer“
 einzige deutsche Zeitung Süd Manitoba's
 Herausgeber:
 The Gretna Printers, Gretna, Manitoba.

Has anyone ever seen a copy of **Der Rheinländer**? Its publication was first announced in **Der Mitarbeiter** at Gretna, Man., in January, 1908. Benjamin Ewert was with the Gretna Printery for about 15 years.

New Books

Epp, Frank H. **Mennonite Peoplehood. A Plea for New Initiatives**. Conrad Press, Waterloo, Ontario. 1977. 120 pp. Paperback. \$4.50.

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada Annual Meeting

Accepting the By-Laws of Incorporation, and appointing Lyle Friesen as full-time research assistant for **Mennonites in Canada, Vol. II**, became part of the action at the annual, Dec. 3 Winnipeg meeting of the directors of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. Four provincial Mennonite societies were officially represented, and observers from a fifth also attended.

Chairman Ted Regehr led discussions which focussed as well on reports from provincial societies (see elsewhere on this page) the Publication and Archives Committees of the Society, and on a progress report from Dr. Frank H. Epp, author of **Mennonites in Canada, Vol. II**. The book has been scheduled for completion on December 31, 1979, and four Society representatives to a Readers' Committee were chosen at this time.

The Society is awaiting the third of its special December issues of **Mennonite Life**, to be distributed to members early in the new year. Dr. Ted Regehr has been editing these issues. The arrangement with **Mennonite Life** is to continue for at least three more years, with Lawrence Klippenstein serving as editor for the Canadian Mennonite issues.

It was noted that **Mennonite Historian**

Froeschle, Dr. Hartmut, editor **Deutschkanadisches Jahrbuch**. 81 St. Mary Street, Toronto, Ontario. 1976. Published by the Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada, Inc. 304 pp. Hardcover. \$15.00.

Klippenstein, Lawrence, and Julius G. Toews, eds. **Mennonite Memories. Settling in Western Canada**. Centennial Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1977. Hardcover, 342 pp. \$15.00.

Leibrandt, Dr. Gottlieb. **Little Paradise. Aus Geschichte und Leben Deutschkanadier in der Country Waterloo, Ontario, 1800-1975**. Kitchener, Ontario, 1977. Hardcover, 416 pp. \$14.95. Mennonite contributions are noted.

Petkau, Irene Friesen, ed. **Yearbook 1977**. Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Winnipeg, Man., 1977. Paperback, 124 pp.

Rempel, Henry Peter. **Passages out of My Life**. The Edwin Mellen Press, Toronto and New York. 1977. Paperback, 96 pp. \$3.50.

Ryan, John. **The Agricultural Economy of Manitoba Hutterite Colonies**. McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, Ont. 1977. 306 pp. Paperback. \$4.95.

Smucker, Donovan E., ed. **The Sociology of Canadian Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish. A Bibliography with Annotations**. Wilfred Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ont. 1977. 232 pp. Paperback.

Thiessen, Jack. **Mennonite Low-German Dictionary. Mennonitisches Woerterbuch**. N. G. Elwert Verlag, Marburg, Germany, 1977. First edition. Paperback, 70 pp. \$20.00.

might become a vehicle for Society news, and the purchase of a page for its December issue was authorized. The director also proposed co-operation with MCC (Canada) in production of a new brochure about Mennonites in Canada. Immediate microfilming of early MCC (Canada) records (1964-1970) was endorsed; funds for the project have been allocated in the 1978 budget.

Discussion of the proposed Application and By-Laws for Incorporation, headed by John Wiens of Scarth, Simonson in Winnipeg, led to acceptance of the proposal. Some final suggestions were considered in adoption.

The directors recognized with appreciation the work of the terminating treasurer, Ruby Weber, and research assistant, Helen Epp, both of Waterloo, Ont. They also accepted the proposed 1978 budget of \$14,200.00. Executive members for the new year will be: Ted Regehr, Sask., chairman; George Groening, Chilliwack, B.C., vice-chairman; Sam Steiner, Waterloo, Ont., treasurer; Ted Friesen, Altona, Man., secretary; and Art Driedger, Winnipeg, Man., representing MCC (Canada), as fifth member.



This woodcut is among the illustrations of **A Russian Dance of Death**. It is entitled "A Terrorist Interrogation". All the woodcuts were provided from the personal archives of Dr. Neufeld.

A witness of Makhno's reign of terror

Like thousands of other Mennonites, Dietrich Neufeld experienced the holocaust of the Russian Civil War. A young teacher in Khortitza at the time, he had the foresight and courage to keep a daily journal of his experiences and thus preserved a unique record of violence and suffering. After his dramatic escape from Russia in 1920, Neufeld published his experiences in three German booklets which were well-received in Germany and other European countries.

Al Reimer has translated the three books and combined them into a single volume entitled **A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine**. Part I depicts in grim detail the horrors of the Makhno occupation during the winter of 1919-20. Part II is a heart-rending account of the massacre at Zagradozka (the author's native settlement) in which 200 people were slain in one horrendous weekend. Part III describes the author's thrilling escape from the Russian nightmare.

The terror of life under Makhno is vividly portrayed in the following excerpt from the journal:

Suddenly we heard a noise coming from a bush nearby. The blood froze in our veins as we stood rooted to the spot staring at each other. I remember thinking that the eyes of the girls looked as if they were already taking leave of this world. The suspense seemed to stretch the moment into an eternity.

Then, instead of a shot or a cry of triumph, we heard a man's voice

whispering to us in Low German: "Have they forced you out too?" My wards immediately recognized the voice as that of a neighbor.

"I've been hiding here for hours," he told us quietly. "The men who stayed at our house last night ate our best food and slept in our beds. This morning they tried to kill me. The shot missed and I ran out to the back garden." He looked inexpressibly sad. "Now I'm hiding here but I don't know what's happened to my family. Have you seen my wife and children?" he asked with pathetic eagerness.

We had to confess that we hadn't. "My boots," he pointed to his bare feet. "I was forced to take them off and hand them over. Then they demanded the gold that I was supposed to have buried. We Germans are supposed to have everything: gold, money, clothes — all in an unending supply," he added bitterly.

He groaned with pain as he tried to stand up. They had flayed his back with *nagaikas* in an attempt to make him reveal his "hidden" possessions. I turned away so as not to show my emotions. What are they doing to us? Is there no escape? I can't see any. We are lost.

The book has been carefully annotated and edited so that the author's experiences can be read against the historical background of the times. Since Neufeld did

not dare mention names in his secret journal, the translator has supplied the identities of the characters in the narrative wherever possible.

A Russian Dance of Death was published for the Mennonite Literary Society by Hyperion Press, a new Winnipeg publishing house. It contains 142 pages, is bound in soft cover and priced at \$6.95. The book may be ordered from the publishers at 61 Gertie St., or from Fellowship Bookstore, 302 Kennedy, in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Dr. Al Reimer is Professor of English at the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Recent Publications

Friesen, Richard J. "Saskatchewan Mennonite Settlements. The Modification of an Old World Settlement Pattern," **Canadian Ethnic Studies**, IX, No. 2, 1977, pp. 72-90.

Heidebrecht, David P. **Ein Holperiger Lebensweg**. Clearbrook, B.C. 1977. Paperback. 144 pp. \$5.50. Memoirs.

Hein, Gerhard, ed. **Ufa Settlement**. Winnipeg, Manitoba. 1977. English trans. of German edition published 1975. 197 pp. Paperback. \$7.00. Order from Mrs. H. F. Klassen, 54 Noble Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Janzen, Mary Dirks, **God's Mercy and Man's Kindness. The Batum Story**. Memoirs of Mennonites who left the Crimea in Russia in the early 1920's and came to America via Batum and Constantinople. 1974. 55 pp. Paperback.

Lohrenz, Gerhard. **The Fateful Years. 1913-1923**. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1978. Paperback, 142 pp. \$4.50.

Matson, Louise Klassen and Margaret Anderson. **Louise**. Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. 1977. 134 pp. Paperback, \$1.95. The story of a Russian Mennonite family.

Rempel, Olga. **Wer Nimmt Uns Auf?** CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1978. Paperback, 42 pp., \$2.00. A drama about the 1940's migration from Russia to Canada. Write to: 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Wpg.

Rimland, Ingrid. **The Wanderers. The Saga of Three Women Who Survived**. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1977. 323 pp. Hardcover. \$8.95.

Schultz, A. J. **Memoirs and Reflections**. Cambridge, Ontario. 1977. 116 pp. Paperback. \$5.00. Order from author at 799 Concession Rd., Cambridge, Ontario.

Von Rosenbach, Maria. **Family Kaleidoscope. From Russia to Canada**. Vancouver, B.C. 1976. 162 pp. Paperback. The story of an Old Believer Russian family which migrated to Canada after W.W. I.

Wiens, Peter B. **Wenn der Farmer Schriftleiter Wird**. Saskatoon, Sask. 1978. 310 pp. Paperback. \$7.00. A collection of 233 editorials by the former editor of **Der Bote**. Order from P. B. Wiens, 1640-9th Ave. North, Saskatoon, Sask.