

THE MENNONITE SELBSTSCHUTZ IN THE UKRAINE: 1918-1919

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

By

© Josephine Chipman

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

March 1988

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-51650-X

THE MENNONITE SELBSTSCHUTZ IN THE UKRAINE:  
1918-1919

BY

JOSEPHINE CHIPMAN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1988

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my warm appreciation to my supervisor Dr. O. W. Gerus for his patient assistance, and to Dr. J. E. Rea for his guidance and good counsel. I am indebted to both the Centre of Mennonite Brethren Studies Archives, and the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, in Winnipeg. Without their resources this thesis would not have been possible. A special thank you goes to Lawrence Klippenstein for his generosity in sharing material from his personal files.

I am grateful to my family for their faith in me, especially to Paul without whose insight and encouragement this work would not have been completed.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents who have helped me more than they know.

I am deeply grateful to both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their financial assistance in the form of a Special MA Scholarship, and to the University of Manitoba for a Graduate Fellowship. Thank you for enabling me to pursue and complete this degree.



## Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	8
II. Mennonite Pacifism: Its Nature and Early History	
1. Switzerland: The Origins of Anabaptism.....	8
2. The Netherlands: Evolution of Mennonitism.....	17
3. Prussia: Beginning of a Cultural Identity.....	28
4. Russia: Conditions of Settlement.....	36
III. Pacifism Tested: Conditions in Russia that Set the Stage	
1. Isolation of the Mennonite Community.....	48
2. Increasing Wealth and Materialism of the Colony..	55
3. Weakening of the Colony's Religious Base.....	60
4. Political Developments in Russia.....	67
IV. Evolution of Self-defense Within the Mennonite Colony	
1. The Growing Need for Protection of Property.....	83
2. Organization of Self-Defense Units During the German Occupation.....	97
3. The Lichtenau Conference and its Consequences..	107
4. Organization of the <u>Selbstschutz</u> after German Withdrawal.....	114
V. Self-defense in Action	
1. Military Encounters.....	133
2. Defeat of the <u>Selbstschutz</u> .....	143
3. Makhno Retaliates.....	153
VI. Conclusion.....	166
Appendix.....	174
Bibliography.....	205

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mennonite pacifism has its roots in the sixteenth century Anabaptist movement of western Europe. For centuries the Mennonites interpreted their pacifism in terms of non-resistance. However, during a period between 1918 and 1920, Mennonite colonists in the Ukraine organized a unit for self-defence known as the Selbstschutz. The purpose of this study is to determine why a people historically committed to peace abandoned their principles and resorted to force.

The subject of Mennonite non-resistance in general, and the Selbstschutz in particular, has received little attention from historians. Books dealing with Mennonite history refer to the Selbstschutz fleetingly, if at all. Frank Epp, for example, in his two volume study of the Mennonites in Canada devotes less than a page to the Selbstschutz, describing it as a "hastily assembled Home Defence" and concluding that the "Mennonites paid dearly for their resistance".

<sup>1</sup> Similarly brief is C. Henry Smith's treatment of the subject which concludes that "In later years, the older generation of Mennonites, as represented in conferences, officially condemned the Selbstschutz as a tactical blunder, as well as a violation of their traditional peace principles."<sup>2</sup>

One historian who has discussed the Selbstschutz in some detail is Lawrence Klippenstein.<sup>3</sup> In his dissertation he deals with the Selbstschutz within the larger context of Mennonite pacifism. In the chapter "Revolution and the Civil War" Klippenstein looks at the Selbstschutz as one aspect of the Mennonite response to the terror in the Ukraine. He speculates that few Mennonites had thought through the concept of pacifism to its ultimate conclusion which is, of course, that one must be prepared to suffer and die for the peace principle if necessary. When called upon to make a firm commitment to non-resistance at the All-Mennonite Conference<sup>4</sup> they side-stepped the issue, concluding that each man must be allowed to follow his own conscience. The failure of the Conference to take a united stand against self-defence allowed those who favored arming the colonies to do so openly and aggressively. In spite of the fact that armed resistance seemed justifiable to many Mennonites at the time, some of those who compromised their ideals were left with troubled minds. Klippenstein raises the question, "Why was it that the peace principle had been so readily subdued when put to the test?", but he does not pursue an answer.<sup>5</sup>

One of the sources Klippenstein used was John B. Toews who has made the most thorough study of the Selbstschutz to date.<sup>6</sup> Toews, however, is not as objective as Klippenstein and it is evident that he believes it was a mistake for the Mennonites to take up arms. He maintains that "In the end the Home Defence contributed to more death than it

prevented"<sup>7</sup> He claims that it also had serious consequences for the future because, "From the standpoint of the Bolshevik government which gained control of Southern Russia by 1920, the Selbstschutz shattered a peace witness lasting more than a century...official memories of the Mennonite warriors were difficult to erase".<sup>8</sup> Not all Mennonite scholars share Toews' view, however. Gerhard Lohrenz, who participated in the events in the Ukraine, contended that the Mennonites had no alternative to armed resistance. It would appear from preliminary study that Mennonites are divided on this issue and it is the intention of this paper to explore both points of view.

If the Selbstschutz has received only fleeting mention from Mennonite writers, it has been almost completely ignored by non-Mennonite historians who have paid scant attention to any area of Mennonite history or even the broader field of Anabaptist history. One of the reasons for this may be that Anabaptism was never considered a serious alternative to either Protestantism or Catholicism. Members of the new group were treated as heretics in Roman Catholic territories and as seditionists in Protestant lands. According to R. J. Smithson, a non-Mennonite historian, the leading reformers regarded the Anabaptists at first with tolerance and then with fear. Luther exhibited tolerance until he realized that the new movement was making "astonishing progress".<sup>9</sup> Then his growing fear of Anabaptism as a serious rival to the Lutheran Church led him, in 1531, to agree that its adherents

should be put to death.<sup>10</sup> Calvin warned that "Liberty must not degenerate into licence. The Anabaptists...pretend to be spiritual; but they are devils who endeavour to pervert all humanity, and to throw it into horrible confusion....".<sup>11</sup>

When we realize that Mennonite historiography is chiefly the product of Mennonite writers, we can understand why it tends to be theological rather than intellectual in its approach. One Mennonite author, James Stayer, recognizes this problem.<sup>12</sup> He calls himself a "profane" historian with a liberal perspective...treating Anabaptist and other teachings on the Sword [the use of force] from the standpoint of intellectual history rather than that of theology." He charges his colleagues with having been primarily interested in the interpretation of Anabaptist history as it relates to the Church, but he does give them credit for having done the most important work on Anabaptism. He believes that the "profane" historian has an important task, which is "to learn from them [the "insiders", in this case the Mennonite Church historians], and to engage them in dialogue. And that is what this paper will attempt to do, to look as a detached "outsider" at a subject which still causes heated debate within the Mennonite community where mention of the word Selbstschutz generates one of three responses: Either a firm refusal to discuss the subject; a lengthy justification of their own or a relative's participation in self-defence; or, in the case of those who refused to arm themselves, the conviction that because they had put their faith in God they

were spared the full force of terrorist vengeance.

The primary sources from which this paper draws are, of necessity, limited. There are three reasons for this: First, because the early Anabaptists did not attempt to document their beliefs in a formal way, they did not generate a legacy of objective writing. Secondly, legal documents such as church registers and property records were lost when the Mennonites fled from one country to another. Thirdly, and perhaps most serious for the purposes of this paper, during the terror in the Ukraine records were destroyed, both accidentally through fire and intentionally so that they would not fall into the wrong hands. Fortunately, however, there is a great deal of primary source material available in the form of eye-witness accounts and correspondence written during, and subsequent to, the civil war in the Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> This material tends to be highly personal and subjective and any discussion of principles involved is generally theological rather than historical. These accounts do, however, present a very moving and immediate portrait of the times from the point of view of a people caught up in circumstances they were unable to alter or comprehend.

The focus of this paper will be to determine why some Mennonites in the Ukraine resorted to the use of force after centuries of non-resistance. Questions which will be explored are: How had the Mennonites previously dealt with threats to their pacifism? In what ways was the situation in the Ukraine different from previous Mennonite experience?

Was the Selbstschutz formed as a result of a united stand taken by the Mennonites and thus a conscious deviation from, or a change in, the basic Mennonite belief in non-resistance? How was the Selbstschutz actually formed and organized? Was it purely defensive in character or did it also assume an offensive role? What were the consequences for the Mennonites of abandoning their peace principle and resorting to the use of force?

## FOOTNOTES

1. Frank Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), p.146.
2. C. Henry Smith, Smith's Story of the Mennonites. (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981), p.316.
3. Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations: 1789-1936". Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984.
4. The All-Mennonite Conference was convened in Lichtenau, Molotschna, between June 30 and July 2, 1918, in an attempt to avert a division among the colonists over the issue of self-defence.
5. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p.267.
6. John B. Toews, "The Halbstadt Volost 1918-1922. A Case Study of the Mennonite Encounter with Early Bolshevism", The Mennonite Quarterly Review, (hereafter cited as MQR), (Oct. 1974), pp. 489-514; "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite 'Selbstschutz' in the Ukraine (1918-1919)", MQR, (Jan. 1972), pp. 5-40; "The Russian Mennonites and the Military Question", MQR, (April 1969), pp. 153-169.
7. Toews, "Origins", p.39.
8. John B. Toews, Czars, Soviets & Mennonites. (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1982), p. 92. Toews treatment of the Selbstschutz in this book is based on his earlier articles.
9. R. J. Smithson, The Anabaptists: Their Contribution to Our Protestant Heritage. (London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, nd.), p. 79.
10. Ibid, pp. 180-181.
11. Ibid, p. 188.
12. James M. Stayer, Anabaptism and the Sword. (Lawrence Kansas: Coronado Press, 1972), p.6.
13. Listed in the bibliography under Primary Sources.



## II. MENNONITE PACIFISM: ITS NATURE AND EARLY HISTORY

### 1. Switzerland: The Origins of Anabaptism

The Mennonites, first known as Anabaptists, emerged in history during the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> They have been described as the most separated brethren of the Protestant Reformation. They were separated not only from the Catholics but also from the Protestants, and sometimes from each other. Anabaptism was a radical Christian movement that rejected the foundations upon which sixteenth century church and society rested. It grew out of the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland which was led by Ulrich Zwingli, a contemporary of Martin Luther. Like Luther, he preached against the system of indulgences, clerical celibacy and mercenary armies. Like other men of the Middle Ages, he thought of society as a single Christian body but he envisioned a non-Catholic reformed state church in which the entire population in a given geographic region was enrolled. Some of Zwingli's more radical disciples, although agreeing with him on such major issues as the abolition of the mass, the rejection of celibacy, the dissolution of the monasteries and convents, and the use of the vernacular instead of Latin, could not accept his tolerance of images and pictures nor his

assumption that the state should be decisive in matters of religion.<sup>2</sup> The dissenters turned exclusively to the New Testament for their authority. Meeting frequently in each other's homes for Bible study, they concluded that a genuine reformation could not proceed from society as a whole, but rather must come from a dedicated nucleus of true believers who lived by their faith. True believers were people who, at a mature age, voluntarily became disciples. They were not those who were baptized into the church as infants without conscious decision.

The group of dissenters consisted at first mostly of Swiss ecclesiastics and academics. Their difference with Zwingli and the civic authorities focused on infant baptism and the battle lines were drawn when, on January 18, 1525, the Zurich council ordered baptism within eight days of all unbaptized children, the end of special Bible study meetings, and the banishment from the city of non-resident radicals. New laws calling for punishment of dissenters by fines, exile and imprisonment, were written into the statute books. The rebels were not to be so easily silenced, however. As is often the case, persecution served only to strengthen their resolve, and they continued to meet and study secretly.<sup>3</sup>

An attempt to document Anabaptist beliefs was made in 1527 at Schleithem in Switzerland in what is known as the Schleithem Confession of Faith. The seven articles of the Confession dealt with:

1. Baptism, to be given only to adult believers, and to

exclude all infant baptism, "the highest and chief abomination of the pope".

2. The ban, or excommunication, as a means of discipline . within the church.
3. The breaking of bread, or communion, "in remembrance of the broken body...[and] shed blood of Christ".
4. Separation "from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world", especially "devilish weapons of force - such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use".
5. Pastors in the church, to be chosen from the congregation.
6. The "sword", or non-resistance, which will be discussed below.
7. The oath as an act of ultimate loyalty to rulers.<sup>3</sup>

Article 6 is of special significance to this paper since it is the first recorded mutual statement of the Anabaptist position on the use of force.<sup>4</sup> It states that , amongst themselves, "only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death". In answer to the question of "whether a Christian may or should employ the sword against the wicked for the defense and protection of the good", the reply is that "Christ teaches and commands us to learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart and so shall we find rest to our souls"...and that "worldlings are armed with steel and iron,

but the Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God". Article 6 ends with an appeal for unity:

In brief, as is the mind of Christ toward us, so shall the mind of the members of the body of Christ be through Him in all things, that there may be no schism in the body through which it would be destroyed. For every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed.

How prophetic these words would prove to be!

The Confession was adopted at a Swiss Brethren Conference in 1527. Later that same year, at a conference of Anabaptist leaders held in Augsburg, those present committed themselves to be faithful even in the face of persecution and death.<sup>6</sup>

Church and civic leaders saw the movement for what it was, non-recognition of their authority, and they met the threat head-on.<sup>7</sup> Felix Manz, the first martyr of the Anabaptist cause, was forcibly drowned in the Limmat River on January 5, 1527, when he refused to recant.<sup>8</sup> Others were burned at the stake, beheaded, disemboweled, or buried alive. Those who were fortunate enough to escape Switzerland sought refuge in Southern Germany, Tyrol, Austria, and Moravia, as well as regions of the Upper Danube, the Rhine Valley and the Netherlands. But even outside of Switzerland there was no sanctuary, especially after Anabaptism was outlawed throughout the empire in 1528.<sup>9</sup> Some managed to find refuge on the estates of sympathetic nobles where their simple lifestyle, loyalty and diligence earned them protection.<sup>10</sup>

The geographic isolation of early Anabaptist groups and the frequent loss of their leaders contributed to extensive diversity. Historians have identified as many as forty Anabaptist groups in the sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Internal disagreements on the fundamentals of the faith also contributed to the growing diversification. That the Anabaptists should be prone to dissension was inevitable given the nature of their faith. Frank Epp summarizes their dilemma in this way:

Among the Anabaptists the variety of responses and the resulting bifurcations were almost endless. Two paradoxical principles to which they adhered contributed to the divisions. On the one hand, they recognized no external religious authority such as was enjoyed by the Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists. They had no popes or princes. The new authority of the Anabaptists was the Christ of the Bible, but since they all were priests, at least in theory, there tended to be as many interpretations of the Bible as there were Anabaptists or Anabaptist leaders with strong opinions and leadership.

Secondly they also insisted on a pure church. Reacting to the undisciplined state churches, they exercised rigorous discipline, frequently carrying to extremes their concern for correctness in liturgical, cultural and moral practices. Having rejected the normal flesh-and-blood battlegrounds of the state churches, the Anabaptists often found their contest with the evil one within the Anabaptist kingdom itself.<sup>12</sup>

This tendency toward fragmentation sometimes referred to as the Tauferkrankheit or Anabaptist Sickness, precludes lasting unity and has resulted time and again in atomization and migration. The early Anabaptists themselves recognized this problem and, at such gatherings as the ones at

Schleitheim and Augsburg, attempted with limited success to reconcile their differences.

## FOOTNOTES

1. For further reading on the origin of Anabaptism in Switzerland see Epp, Mennonites in Canada, and Smith, Smith's Story. In Chapter I, Smith focuses on the differences which led to the break with Zwingli and on leadership among the dissenters. For a non-Mennonite view of Anabaptism see Smithson, Anabaptists. Smithson, as an objective "outsider", is perhaps better able to see the Anabaptist movement within a broader historical context. Especially relevant is Chapter VIII which deals with the life and work of the foremost early leaders, Conrad Grebel, Balthasar Hubmaier, Hans Denck, and Pilgram Marbeck. He discusses the reasons for Grebel's break with Zwingli and the attitude of the leading
2. For details on the break between Zwingli and his disciples, see, William R. Estep, The Anabaptist Story. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), pp.10-13.
3. John C. Wenger, "The Schleithem Confession of Faith," MQR, XIX (October 1945), pp. 247-53. This is the first publication of an accurate English translation direct from the original German print. The Articles are not a formal creed, but rather a statement on urgent issues. According to Estep, "The Schleithem Confession was not intended to be a doctrinal formulation. There are no strictly theological concepts directly asserted in it. Such topics as God, man, the Bible, salvation, the church, and eschatology are not discussed. The articles are concerned with order and discipline within congregations. ...The Articles are in the nature of a church manual.", Anabaptist Story, pp.41-42. The Swiss Anabaptists never produced a formal doctrine, possibly because, after the first generation, they had lost their intellectual leadership. Another perhaps more important reason, according to Estep, is that "The primacy of the Scriptures in Anabaptist life discouraged the formulation of creeds that would tend to take precedence over the Bible." The foundation of their theology was the Bible interpreted through Christ and they took very literally the phrase, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ". pp.130-133.  
 Stayer, writes that there was "a nonresistant teaching in gestation among the Swiss Brethren before Schleithem and there were deviations from the separatist nonresistance after Schleithem. Nevertheless, the Schleithem synod marks the formulation by the Swiss Brethren leadership of an influential and distinctive teaching on the Sword that was now the common property of

the sect, rather than the private thinking of some of its leaders." Anabaptists, p. 130.

4. Although Grebel, Manz, and their associates had expressed themselves as relying entirely upon the help of the Spirit, ("The sword of the Spirit was to be their only weapon". Smithson, Anabaptists, p.43.), they had not attempted to document their beliefs in a formal way.
5. Wenger, "Schleitheim Confession". Wenger's translation of the Schleitheim Confession can be found in the appendix.
6. Smith, Smith's Story, p. 21. The meeting came to be known as the Martyrs' Synod because most of those present met a Martyr's fate soon after. The congregation in Augsburg in 1527 numbered about 1,000. Three years later there were few Anabaptists left in the city.
7. The City Council issued a series of mandates or decrees against the Anabaptists. The first, on January 27, 1525, required those who had refused to have their infant children baptized must do so within a week. The second mandate, only a few weeks later on February 1, required that all children be baptized at birth. Pastors who refused to comply were to be arrested and imprisoned. Through this edict, baptism became an ordinance of the civil power. A decree on March 5, 1526, ruled that those who baptized others or submitted to rebaptism should be "drowned without mercy". See Smithson, pp. 45-55.  
 Regarding the decrees issued against the Anabaptists and details of Anabaptist martyrdom, see: T. J. van Braght, Martyrs' Mirror (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1950). English translation 1964. See also Anabaptist Letters from 1635 to 1645, translated from the Ausbund by John E. Kauffman. These excerpts from letters written by the Swiss Anabaptists to their brethren in Holland describe the methods used by "religious and secular agents" to try to force the Anabaptists to recant. When a "heretic" was imprisoned, his home and possessions would be immediately confiscated and sold, even if other members of the family attended the state church. Children were separated and scattered among strangers. Kauffman believed that "agitators" and "rioters", greedy for goods and property, "stirred up the State Church people so that they thought they were doing God's service".
8. For details of Manz' death sentence see Smithson The Anabaptists, pp. 50-51. He was to be bound, cast



into the water, and "his goods...confiscated by my lords". See also Martyrs Mirror, p.415.

9. On January 4, 1528 an Imperial mandate was issued which imposed the death penalty on all who espoused Anabaptism. This mandate was ratified at the Diet of Speyer, 1529, when it was decreed that "re-baptizers and re-baptized, all and each, male or female, of intelligent age, be judged and brought from natural life to death, without antecedent inquisition of the spiritual judges". Smithson, Anabaptists, p.59. Smithson quotes one source as claiming that in a few years some 2,000 or more Anabaptists were put to death. One study, quoted in Estep, Anabaptist Story, states that from 1525 to 1618, 715 executions of Anabaptists took place in Switzerland, south and central Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia. To these he adds 130 "probable executions". Estep says this figure does not include 600 alleged executions at Ensisheim or 350 at Heidelberg. p.50. The Martyrs Mirror gives details of just over 900 executions between 1525 and 1660.
10. The Langrave Philip of Hesse was one of the most tolerant rulers. He hoped to reconvert the Anabaptists to the State Church by persuasion rather than by force. Smithson, Anabaptists, pp.59-62. According to Estep, p.50, Philip of Hesse was the only ruler in Europe who refused to put Anabaptists to death.
11. Smith, Smith's Story, p.13. Many Anabaptists who escaped from Switzerland founded congregations, some as large as 1,500 members, in large cities nearby. Strassburg became a haven for dissenters in part because of its geographic location, but chiefly because in that city exile and imprisonment were the severest forms of punishment. Cornelius Kkrah, Dutch Anabaptism, Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 87. Estep states that Strassburg was "a haven for all varieties of radical Protestants due to the hesitations of its government about formalizing a Reformed religious establishment." Even Strassburg was no longer safe, however, after the edict of 1528 which forced Anabaptists to disperse and seek refuge in more remote areas. Smith Smith's Story, p.12
12. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p.39.

## II. MENNONITE PACIFISM: ITS NATURE AND EARLY HISTORY

### 2. The Netherlands: Evolution of Mennonitism

As they fled Switzerland and scattered throughout Europe, the Anabaptists split into groups which became more and more separated from each other, not only physically but also spiritually. That the groups should develop along different paths was inevitable given the nature of Anabaptism and the fact that the congregations were autonomous and isolated from each other. Some of the smaller congregations eventually died out or were absorbed by larger groups. Others groups such as the Hutterites<sup>1</sup>, the Amish<sup>2</sup> and the Mennonites developed their own special brand of Anabaptism that has survived to the present day. Although there is no one single reason why this happened, certainly strong leadership was an important factor. Hans Hut, from whom the Hutterites take their name, and Jacob Ammann, father of the Amish, were both exceptional leaders. But the man who was to have the greatest influence on Anabaptist thought and who would gain the largest following, was Menno Simons.

Simons, a Dutch Catholic priest, was having increasing doubts about certain Roman Catholic beliefs, notably transubstantiation and infant baptism. He was already

attracted to the Anabaptists when the Muenster massacre occurred in 1535,<sup>3</sup> causing him to make his final break with the Catholic Church and accept rebaptism. Although urged by those who recognized him as a leader, Simons refused for some time to assume that responsibility because of his "limited talents, great ignorance, weak nature, timidity of flesh, the unbounded wickedness, perversity of the world, the powerful sects, subtlety of different minds, and the heavy cross". Eventually, after a great deal of agonizing, he permitted himself to be ordained an elder in order to help "these pious God-fearing children, who erred as innocent sheep having no shepherd".<sup>4</sup>

The Anabaptists were indeed sheep in search of a shepherd. Ever since the death of their original leaders in Switzerland, groups had been drifting off to follow various brethren who formulated their own versions of the Anabaptist vision. Some had gone so far as to abandon the peace principle and resort to violence.<sup>5</sup> It was Simons who turned the northern Anabaptists firmly in the direction of passivism and obedience. He stressed that, as Christians, they were permitted to use only a "spiritual sword". They "must take up the Apostolic weapons" and lay aside the "armor of David".<sup>6</sup> Menno spent much of the next two decades hiding from his persecutors, visiting small groups of Anabaptists, counselling, baptizing and building up congregations, first in Holland and later in other areas of northern Europe. The followers of the movement as he re-fashioned it were totally

peaceful, shunning the sword even in self-defence. They were generally obedient to their overlords and had no intention of overthrowing any government. Nevertheless, the establishment feared them.<sup>7</sup>

The fear, as is so often the case, stemmed from lack of understanding. It was natural that many of the unusual religious practices of the Brethren should be misunderstood and (often willfully) misinterpreted. The secret meetings at night, held in out-of-the-way places, were made the basis for charges of immorality. Because they refused to have their children baptized, they were called soul murderers. Marriage by their own ministers instead of the regular clergy made them adulterers and branded their children as illegitimate. More serious, from the standpoint of the state, was the refusal of the Brethren to take the oath, hold office, or go to war. The authorities regarded them as rebels against the government. Fear of all mass movements among the common people was aggravated by the peasants' revolts that were occurring throughout northern Switzerland and southern Germany at this time.<sup>8</sup> The bitter persecutions, which continued until the end of the sixteenth century sent a continuous flow of refugees from the Netherlands in all directions but especially to eastern Europe and to England.<sup>9</sup> Congregations began to appear in northern Germany, Prussia, and Poland.<sup>10</sup> Menno Simons, although a hunted man with a price on his head, died a natural death in 1561.<sup>11</sup> He left behind a considerable body of writing and a dedicated

following of "Menno"nites.<sup>12</sup>

Those Mennonites who remained in the Netherlands increased in numbers and, after 1576 when William of Orange drove out the Spaniards and replaced Catholicism with Calvinism, were able to improve their status.<sup>13</sup> However, in spite of the stable existence they enjoyed during William's reign, or quite possibly because of the absence of outside interference in their lives, dissension began to spread again. Eventually two distinct streams of Mennonitism developed. The controversy centered around the extent to which the ban and a related practice, avoidance, should be applied as a means of disciplining members. The ban had developed partly in reaction to the corruption so prevalent within both the Catholic and Reformed churches. The Mennonites made the way of life straight and narrow; the state churches left it broad and open. The latter had no way of correcting gross sin, a matter which they regarded as the function of the state. According to Menno's ideal the regenerated Christian church must be pure and undefiled in conduct as well as in belief. He believed that the only means of discipline by which a free, voluntary church could be kept up to such a high standard was through applying the ban to exclude and expel the unworthy. For their authority the Mennonites cited Matthew 18:15-18.<sup>14</sup> The ban might be applied in three different forms, according to the seriousness of the fault - admonition, with hopes of a reconciliation; denial of access to the communion table; and

finally, expulsion from membership for gross sin. The practice of avoidance was used as a follow-up, or reinforcement, of the ban. This meant that the one excommunicated was to be "avoided" or ostracized by his former fellow members, not only in religious fellowship, but in all business and social relations as well. The scriptural basis was Paul's injunction "not to eat" with an unfaithful member in 1 Cor. 5:11.<sup>15</sup> Controversies regarding the ban centered around whether a gross sinner should first be admonished and given time for repentance before expulsion, or should he be expelled immediately after his guilt was established? The problem with avoidance was, how far should it be carried? Should a husband and wife shun one another, and if so, did this include the marriage bed?

The stream of Mennonites which became known as the Flemish were generally less rigid in all their practices including the application of the ban. The other group, the Frisians, were more rigid and autocratic and favored the strictest possible discipline. In a determined attempt to heal the differences and achieve consensus, the Mennonites held a peace convention in Dordrecht in 1632. The Flemish and Frisian preachers present agreed upon 18 articles as a basis of union. This agreement, known as the Dordrecht Confession of Faith, has become an important guide to Mennonites everywhere. The more conservative Mennonite bodies in America still recognize it as their official statement of faith and it has been much used as an instrument

of catechetical instruction in preparation for baptism.<sup>16</sup> Dordrecht was a major step toward unity within the Mennonite Church but, because it did not resolve the issue of use of the ban and avoidance, it became a source of contention and a cause of further division. As defined in articles XVI and XVII, these methods were to be used for the excommunicant's "amendment" and not his "destruction". "We must not treat such offenders as enemies, but exhort them as brethren...to bring them to a knowledge of their sins and to repentance". Just how far avoidance should be carried was not clarified however. In spite of the fact that the Dordrecht Confession was signed by both Frisian and Flemish Mennonites, the compromise did not last. The rift was never really healed and the divisions were carried into Prussia and later to Russia. Within the two groups, subdivisions began to appear, not so much from basic theological differences, as from varying approaches to congregational discipline and liturgical practices.<sup>17</sup>

If the Dordrecht Confession of Faith did not spell out clearly how far the ban and avoidance should be carried, it was perhaps even more vague on the issue of non-resistance. Article XIV states that "Christians shall follow only the law of love, manifesting to enemies the same spirit of love and forgiveness as did Jesus being Biblical nonresistants in suffering and abuse. They shall pray for their enemies, comfort and feed them, and seek their welfare and salvation: all this in obedience to the express teaching of Christ". It

is the sort of idealistic statement of principle that leads to endless interpretation when put into practice. If we keep in mind that an inherent feature of the Mennonite faith is that each believer must interpret the Bible for himself, it is easy to see how the Dordrecht Confession left the definition of non-resistance open to discussion. To summarize, it was in the Netherlands that Mennonitism developed as a unified branch of Anabaptism. Several factors were responsible for this development. First the religious climate in the Low Countries was favorable to the growth of a more personal Christianity than either the Catholic or Protestant Churches offered. The background of Christian mysticism there and the influence of Erasmus' writings had made the Dutch more receptive than their European neighbours to Anabaptist teachings.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the relentless persecution to the south had driven thousands of religious refugees to the Low Countries.<sup>19</sup> There was thus a large nucleus of believers anxious to share their faith with others. The third factor was the timely emergence of a strong leader in the person of Menno Simons. Paradoxically, it was also in the Netherlands that the divisions emerged which were to plague the Mennonites for centuries. The inability of the Mennonites to achieve a consensus there was a symptom of the Tauferkrankheit which has plagued Mennonites throughout their history and which has prevented them from establishing a unified church.



## FOOTNOTES

1. For an introduction to the Hutterites see: Victor Peters All Things Common: The Hutterian Way of Life (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965).
2. For an introduction to the Amish see: John A. Hostetler, Amish Society (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963).
3. Smith, Smith's Story, pp.56-57. At Bolsward, near the Frisian village of Witmarsam which was Menno's home, a group of three hundred Anabaptist men, women, and children, had taken refuge in an old cloister. They were attacked by a small force sent against them by the provincial governor. Most of them, including Menno's own brother, were killed. See also Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism. According to Krahn the incident speeded up Menno's conversion and development. He quotes from Simon's own writings, "The Blood of these people, although misled, fell so hot on my heart that I could not stand it".
4. Smith, Smith's Story, p. 59.
5. According to Smithson, "The removal of these [the original martyred] leaders allowed men of inferior gifts and outlook to assume control of the movement in certain quarters, with disastrous consequences.", p.114. The most notable case of misguided and disastrous leadership was that of the Muensterites, revolutionary radicals who seized the city of Muenster in 1534. The resultant bloodbath confirmed the opponents of Anabaptism in their harsh evaluation of the movement. The Muensterites came to be regarded by most outsiders as typical Anabaptists. Thereafter, the tags of "revolutionaries," "anarchists," "polygamists," were applied with renewed vigor. Anabaptists, pp. 44-47. According to Estep, "This fiasco, [the Muenster episode] the most serious aberration of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, has long been exaggerated out of all proportion to its true importance. It strengthened the position of those who persecuted the Anabaptists and left the name of Anabaptist in odious repute." Anabaptist Story, p.1. See also Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p. 123.
6. Stayer, Anabaptism, pp. 310-311. Stayer gives a good account of Menno Simon's position on non-resistance.
7. Whether the fear was well-founded, is of course, a matter for speculation. Some scholars believe that Anabaptism

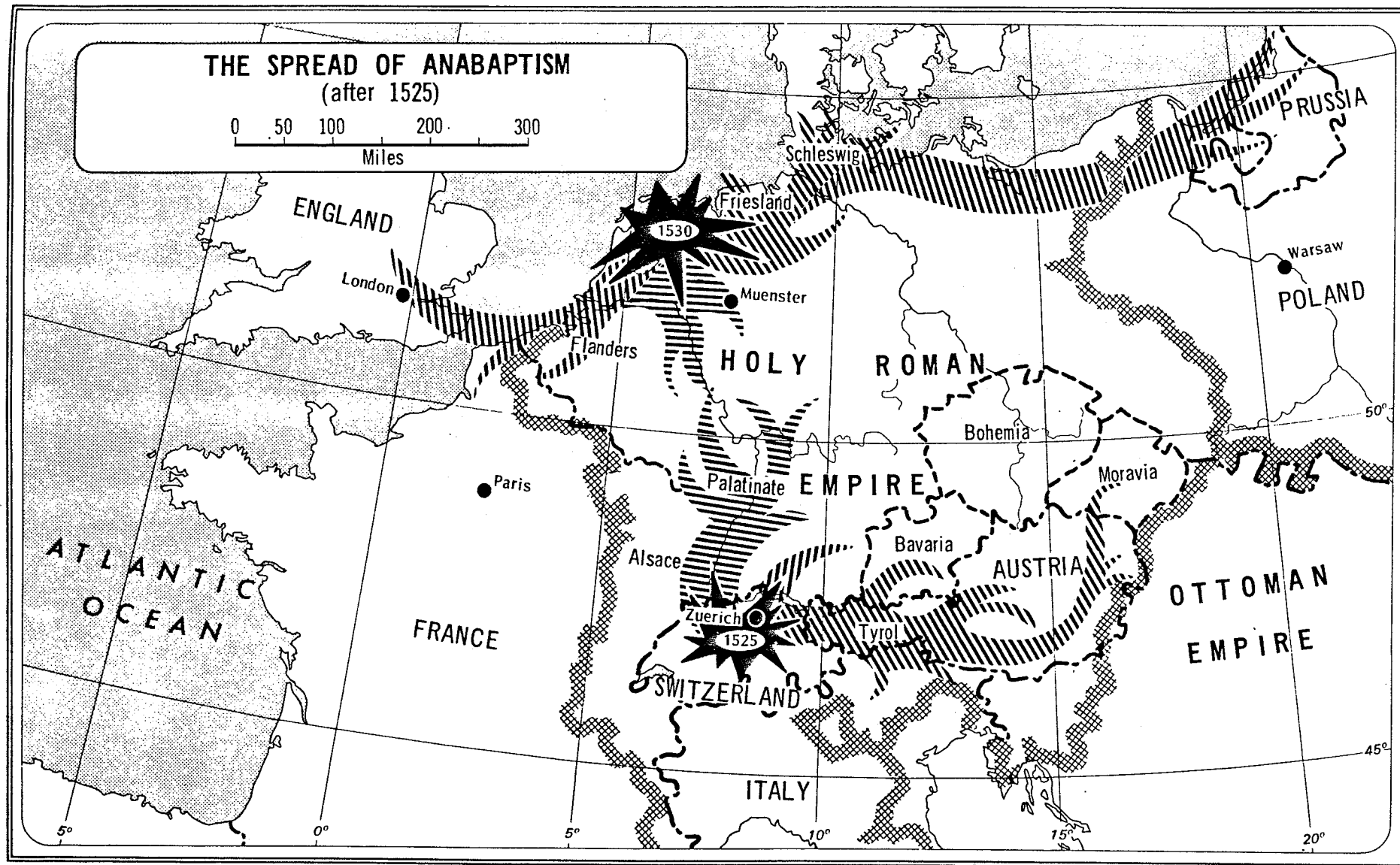
stood in the forefront of the struggle for religious liberty and was the source and channel for the ideas of toleration which later became dominant in England and America. Harold Bender in The Anabaptists and Religious Liberty in the Sixteenth Century, illustrates this point with quotations from Ernst Troeltsch, Ernest Payne, Johannes Kuhn, and Rufus M. Jones. Jones in his Studies in Mystical Religion wrote, "Judged by the reception it met at the hands of those in power, both in Church and in State, equally in Roman Catholic and in Protestant countries, the Anabaptist movement was one of the most tragic in the history of Christianity: but judged by the principles which were put into play by the men who bore this reproachful nickname, it must be pronounced one of the most momentous and significant undertakings in man's eventful religious struggle after the truth. It gathered up the gains of earlier movements, it is the spiritual soil out of which all nonconformist sects have sprung and it is the first plain announcement in modern history of a program for a new type of Christian society which the modern world, especially in America and England, has been slowly realizing - an absolutely free and independent religious society, and a state in which every man counts as a man and has his share in shaping both Church and State." According to Smithson, "This sect soon became a powerful menace to both State and society. Zwingli recognized that in the persons of these fanatics the cause of Reform had met a more dangerous enemy than in Rome itself". Anabaptists, p. 170.

8. "The Peasants' War (1524-1525) did not make the lot of the Anabaptists easier; that war had aroused among the ruling classes a desire for revenge, so that by the close of the conflict they looked upon every sympathizer with the lower classes as a deadly enemy, however peaceably inclined he might be, and decreed that he could not be too cruelly punished." Smithson, Anabaptists, p. 58
9. The distance between Holland and England is short and, once there, the refugees were separated from their persecutors by the English Channel. Smithson quotes from one source that "refugees by the thousand [sic] left Holland for the harbour of refuge in the great island kingdom". Anabaptists, p. 193. The Anabaptist presence in England led to the founding of the Baptist Church there and also influenced the Quaker dissenters who emerged in England about 1650. Bender, Religious Liberty, p. 5.
10. For further reading on the spread of Anabaptism throughout Europe see, Smithson, Anabaptists, Chapters III, IV, and V.; Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, Chapter VIII,

and Estep, Anabaptist Story, pp. 72-107.

11. Bender, Religious Liberty, p. 14. Details of the decree against Menno Simons can be found in Martyrs Mirror, p.466.
12. Although at first a derogatory ephithet, the Mennonite label became proper and respectable, and proved useful to Menno's followers as a means of distinguishing themselves from the Muensterites. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p.36.
13. The decree by which William of Orange proclaimed that "no one shall be persecuted on account of his faith", is reprinted in Martyrs Mirror, p. 1054.
14. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained a brother.  
But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.  
And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.  
Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
15. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner: with such an one no not to eat."
16. The text of the Dordrecht Confession, as found in Wenger The Doctrines of the Mennonites, (Scottsdale, 1952), pp. 78-86, is reproduced in the appendix.
17. Although the division between the Flemish and the Frisians was caused primarily by religious views, differences in culture and background also played a part. Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p.214. According to Krahn, "These groupings spread from Friesland through all provinces of the Low Countries and along the North Sea and the Baltic coast wherever Mennonites resided. They became so deeply ingrained that even in 1788 when Mennonites from the Danzig area intended to migrate to Russia, they were urged by the Russian representatives to give up their differences as Flemish and Frisians so that they could come to the country of their choice as one group of Mennonites.
18. Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p. 27.

19. Krahn quotes a figure of 60,000 refugees from the south to the Low Countries. p. 211.



## II. MENNONITE PACIFISM: ITS NATURE AND EARLY HISTORY

### 3. Prussia: Beginning of a Cultural Identity

The Dutch Anabaptists who fled from the Netherlands during the persecutions of the sixteenth century became the nucleus of the Mennonite congregations in Prussia. It is this stream of Mennonitism, which later moved on to Russia, with which we are here concerned. The actual area of settlement was West Prussia and the region of the free city of Danzig.<sup>1</sup> Although Danzig itself had attracted Dutch businessmen and settlers since the Middle Ages, the city was not so eager to welcome religious refugees. In 1535, the Danzig city council requested that the major Dutch ports prevent Anabaptists from boarding ships destined for Danzig. The council's request may have reduced the flow of refugees from Holland to West Prussia, but it certainly did not put an end to it. The fugitives, who were primarily Mennonites, were able to find a haven in two of the suburbs of Danzig, NeuSchottland and Hoppenbruch. These places, which were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Leslau, had been destroyed by fire. Therefore, the bishop welcomed those who could help to rebuild the towns and develop new industries. Once the various authorities of the Prussian lowlands saw

what the skill and diligence of the Dutch refugees accomplished in making waste land useful, contracts were offered to them to invite others in their homeland to join them. A great drainage program was initiated to conquer the Vistula Delta area and a Mennonite was sent to invite settlers from the Low Countries to assist in the project.<sup>2</sup>

The first Mennonites arrived in the area of the Vistula Delta sometime between 1540 and 1549.<sup>3</sup> They were for the most part, craftsmen, small businessmen, sailors, and farmers intent on working hard to establish themselves.<sup>4</sup> The great skill of the Dutch Mennonites in draining marsh lands by means of dams and canals made them invaluable to their Prussian landlords. They turned the lowlands of the Vistula into veritable gardens. They themselves became well-to-do and their landlords wealthy. The latter protected them and later made it possible for them to acquire precious documents of privilege.<sup>5</sup>

The Mennonites preserved the Dutch language and traits of Dutch culture well into the eighteenth century. Only gradually did they begin to use a Low German dialect in their daily life. This dialect, Mennonite-Platt or Plaut-Dietsch, is still the basic mother tongue among descendants of these Mennonites wherever they have migrated. In an age that was largely illiterate they set up their own schools for the purpose of teaching their children to read the Bible. The language of instruction in the village schools was Plaut-Dietsch. Even after about 1765 when there was a

gradual substitution of High German in their churches, Plaut-Dietsch remained the language of instruction in the village schools and in daily life. Mennonites learned High German only later in Russia.

The Mennonites did not experience the kind of religious persecution in Prussia which they had suffered in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Even so, an organized church was slow to develop. It was not until 1660, over a century after their arrival in Prussia, that the Mennonites were granted permission to organize a regular congregation and yet another century elapsed before they were able to build a second church. In 1788 there were still only 468 rural and 156 urban communicants.<sup>6</sup> Though small in size, the congregation was nevertheless a strong and dedicated body of believers. Membership was a serious commitment entered only through adult baptism, a meaningful ceremony that was not to be taken lightly. Candidates could be kept back from baptism because of ignorance concerning religious matters or because they were leading a worldly life. Church organization was a model of democracy, except for the fact that women were completely excluded from the hierarchy. An "elder", ordained by the laying on of hands, led the congregation. His duties were to preach, cure souls, exercise discipline and leadership, baptize, dispense the Lord's Supper, and consecrate the elected teachers, preachers, and deacons. All of these together constituted the church council (Lehrdienst). The "brotherhood", however, was the final authority, the real



sovereign law-making body, and consisted of all the mature male members of the individual congregations under the leadership of the church council. By majority vote the "brotherhood" decided all important financial matters, questions of excommunication and readmission, and the acceptance or rejection of the council's resolutions. The brotherhood elected its preachers, teachers and deacons, usually through secret ballot. The candidates were either recommended by the council or else the congregation voted without any previous slate of candidates. The elder was elected from the ranks of the preachers, who were essentially candidates for that position.<sup>7</sup>

The long period of relative peace in Prussia provided opportunity for the development of a Mennonite cultural identity. The Mennonites avoided contact with outsiders, especially educated people and clerics. This was an understandable reaction considering that it was these people who had been responsible for their persecution in the past. They became more and more withdrawn from active involvement in society, evolving into a close-knit community of hard-working people who wished only to be left in peace to farm and raise their families. They kept to themselves, worked hard, and prospered.

As they increased in numbers and in prosperity, the Mennonites were once again perceived as a threat by the authorities. Their status, although periodically confirmed by charters of privilege, was far from secure. They had to

make numerous compromises in their beliefs in order to placate the authorities and to receive the protection these charters afforded them. The question of military service in particular surfaced repeatedly causing a great deal of anxiety.<sup>8</sup>

The matter of military service became a crucial issue during the reign of the militarily ambitious Frederick II (The Great). In his policy of militarization he was supported by the Lutheran state clergy. Thus, once again, church and state united against the Mennonites. Toward the end of the 18th century a compromise was reached whereby the Mennonites were taxed 5,000 Thalers annually for the support of military schools. The contribution was, in reality, "recruit money". The Mennonites had not achieved recognition of their conscientious objection to personal military service but had merely purchased religious toleration. In order to stop the spread of this military exemption, the government imposed severe restrictions on the Mennonites. It banned further immigration, forbade the acceptance of new members into the Mennonite congregations and decreed that all children of mixed marriages had to be brought up in the confession of the non-Mennonite partner. But it was the restriction placed on land ownership that had the most serious consequences for the future of the Mennonites in Prussia. Mennonites were henceforth allowed to buy land only from other Mennonites except by special permit.<sup>9</sup> Those Mennonites who gave up their non-resistant status, however,

could buy all the land they wanted. The expanding community was left with few options. They could continue to divide the farms they already owned, a short-term solution since families were large. Alternatively, the young men could establish themselves in a trade or find employment outside the Mennonite community which was, of course, exactly what the government wanted since it would lead ultimately to integration. The only permanent solution, was emigration.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p.216. The territory was originally occupied by the Teutonic knights. The western part of the possessions of the Teutonic knights, West Prussia, on both sides of the lower Vistula, was ceded to Poland in 1466.
2. Ibid.
3. Peter M. Friesen, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Christian Press, 1978), p.43. Friesen's book is, according to him, a "free and unabridged" rendering of a work published in Berlin in 1821 by two non-Mennonites, Baron von Reiswitz and Professor Wadzeck, Beitrage zur Kenntniss der Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Europa und Amerika. This publication was commissioned by the Prussian Mennonites. Friesen does make use of supplementary material but the bulk of his text consists of quotations from Reiswitz and Wadzeck. See also, Krahn, pp.216-217.
4. Quite possibly this explains why there is a lack of literature on this period of Mennonite history; the settlers had neither the time nor the energy for creative pursuits. Also, we should keep in mind that this was a relatively peacefully period of Mennonite history and so there was never a flow of letters from the persecuted and imprisoned as there had been in Switzerland.
5. See Friesen, pp. 46 and 47 for description of the ongoing debate between noblemen and the Danzig city fathers with regard to privileges that had been granted to the Mennonites, as well as for details of the charters of privilege of 1650, 1660, 1694, 1732 and 1736. The content of all these documents apparently conveyed the message "that one must protect the Mennonites because they were a useful people; the ancestors of the kings had brought them out of the Netherlands in order to cultivate the Marshlands."
6. Ibid, p. 59.
7. See Friesen, Brotherhood, Appendix I, "A West-Prussian Mennonite congregation in the years 1778-1795", pp. 58-64.
8. An incident which occurred during the reign of Frederick I caused the monarch to be less favorably disposed towards the Mennonites. "Two Mennonite 'tall fellows,' who had been acquired for his favorite plaything, the 'tall guard'

--that is, had been coerced--had to be freed in accordance with the Mennonite privileges. Similar recruiting incidents occurred repeatedly; although they were always nullified as illegal, they nevertheless caused much fear, qualms of conscience, and often severe and bloody abuse." See Friesen, p. 49.

9. Friesen, Brotherhood, p. 50.

## 11. MENNONITE PACIFISM: ITS NATURE AND EARLY HISTORY

### 4. Russia: Conditions of Settlement

As prospects for the future of the Mennonites in Prussia dimmed, a door of hope opened to the east. In 1763, Catherine II of Russia issued a manifesto inviting foreign settlers from Western European countries to settle in the vast uninhabited areas of Russia. The area with which we are here concerned, the southern Ukraine, had been the domain of the Ukrainian Cossacks since the 15th century. Although the territory had changed hands several times, the Cossacks considered it theirs.<sup>1</sup> The Cossack organization, which had developed in response to the need for defence against the continual raids by the Crimean Tatars, was a frontier society organized like a military camp with its own government, code of rules and customs.<sup>2</sup> Their fierce spirit, effective guerilla tactics, and the solidarity between the various Cossack groups created a fighting machine which the Ottomans considered their chief enemy and the major anti-Turkish military force in 16th century Europe.<sup>3</sup> The Cossack territory acted as a buffer, often protecting the two Christian kingdoms, Poland and Russia, from invasion by the Tatar bands.

Although the Cossacks ruled supreme on the southern steppes, they were not the only inhabitants. The Nagaians, a nomadic people who had descended from the remnants of the Golden Horde, also made their home there. They were agriculturalists who lived chiefly by raising cattle and keeping bees.<sup>4</sup> Other inhabitants of the steppe included runaway serfs, for whom the area was a place of refuge from persecution,<sup>5</sup> and a few Ukrainian nobles who, for reasons of their own, had taken possession of some of the land.<sup>6</sup> By the beginning of the 18th century a sprinkling of homesteads and small settlements had developed spontaneously in the Southern Ukraine, their people engaged in agriculture, stockbreeding, fishing and hunting, but few had titles the land.

It was not until after 1740, however, that the Russian government, which had annexed Ukraine in 1654, began to take an interest in settling the area. By a series of decrees, permission was given to refugees from Poland to settle there. Recruiting agents helped those willing to move, organized villages and acted as intermediaries between settlers and the administration.<sup>7</sup> In 1751, displaced Serbians from the Ottoman Empire were encouraged to settle in the Ukraine by the Russian government "which sought by all possible means, but at the least possible cost, to secure the frontier of the Empire against Turkish and Tatar incursions".<sup>8</sup> The settlement, which became known as Nova Serbiya, was a foreign military colony with a special administrative, social, and economic order.<sup>9</sup> The Cossacks complained that their domain

was being infiltrated, and tried by various legal means to retrieve their land. Despairing of obtaining help from the government, they began to take the "liberation" of their lands into their own hands and destroyed several settlements.<sup>10</sup> Thus began the Cossack harassment that plagued the new settlers of the Southern Ukraine for some time.

In 1764, a new period in the history of the region began when it was designated a Russian province.<sup>11</sup> The principal hope in creating the province of New Russia was to turn the Cossacks into peasants and to colonize this region and strengthen the Russian influence there. Two years earlier, the new Empress, Catherine II, issued a manifesto in which she invited all foreigners to migrate to Russia and promised them "the Monarch's favor". The manifesto was translated and sent to Russian ministers resident at various European courts.<sup>12</sup> In a subsequent manifesto Catherine established a Chancery for the Protection of Foreign Colonists at the head of which she placed her powerful favorite, Count Orlov.<sup>13</sup> Agents were sent abroad to encourage those willing to immigrate to Russia. Two hundred thousand rubles were assigned by the government for provisioning the colonies and for the construction of factories and mills.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that recruiting agents who brought in settlers were paid for each individual settler and received commissions for large numbers of immigrants.<sup>15</sup> It was thus to the agents' advantage to convince large groups of people



to immigrate, and also to avoid questioning their prospective "clients" too closely. "On the contrary, people were lured by promises of every kind of advantage".<sup>16</sup> As a result of the government's efforts, 117 new colonies were founded, scattered throughout various provinces.

None of these initial settlements, however, was Mennonite.<sup>17</sup> It was not until about twenty years later that the Russian viceroy Potemkin began to perceive the Mennonites as prospective settlers, and dispatched his immigration agent, Georg von Trappe, to visit to their settlements in Prussia.<sup>18</sup> Trappe realized how ideally suited these sober and industrious farmers would be as immigrants. It is also possible that he anticipated a considerable commission if he could interest large numbers of Mennonites in moving.<sup>19</sup> Trappe's invitation to the Danzig Mennonites to emigrate found a ready response. In the late fall of 1786, they sent two representatives, Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch, to spy out the land in New Russia. These two deputies, claiming to represent between 270 and 300 families, made an exhaustive search of a number of areas recommended to them by Potemkin's agent, a Major Meier, and eventually selected a site for a large Mennonite settlement on the Lower Dnieper near Berislav, not far from Kherson.<sup>20</sup> On April 22, 1787, Hoeppner and Bartsch submitted a twenty-point petition to Potemkin at Kremenchug requesting various forms of assistance, permanent exemption from military service, and specific guarantees in the matter of religious beliefs and

practices.<sup>21</sup>

Hoepfner and Bartsch had to wait a good many weeks before they were able to get Potemkin's approval of their petition. The chief reason for the delay was that Potemkin was occupied with preparations for a journey Catherine was making to the Crimea. During her stop at Kremenchug, Potemkin presented Hoepfner and Bartsch to Her Imperial Majesty who insisted that they join her on the journey to the Crimea. Concerned at the delay, they nevertheless felt they must obey what they took to be an order. On their return from the Crimea, having at last obtained the viceroy's approval to their petition, Hoepfner and Bartsch requested his permission to go to St. Petersburg in order to obtain there from the highest government authority, a ratification of the agreement. Potemkin's reaction was hostile, but in the end he was persuaded by their argument that they wished their understanding to be certified by the government, a permanent and lasting institution. While in St. Petersburg, Trappe obtained for them an audience with the heir to the throne, Paul, and his wife. The meeting was to have lasting benefits for the Mennonites later.<sup>22</sup>

Their mission crowned with outstanding success, Hoepfner and Bartsch, returned to Danzig in the late fall of 1787. The deputies' glowing reports of the proposed site's location and climate, and the generous terms of the agreement they had made with the Russian government, kindled intense emigration fever.<sup>23</sup> The Prussian authorities, nervous at the prospect

of a mass emigration of useful citizens, embarked on a strenuous propoganda campaign aimed at dissuading the prospective emigrants. When that failed to dampen Mennonite enthusiasm, they resorted to delaying exit permits, and then to outright refusal to grant prosperous Mennonites the right to leave the country. And so it was mainly the poorer members of the Mennonite community who emigrated from Prussia to the Ukraine; the sons of farmers who had been unable to buy or lease land, and hard-pressed tradesmen and craftsmen (blacksmiths, cartwrights, carpenters, cabinetmakers, tanners, harness and saddlemakers, tailors, cobblers, watchmakers, spinners, weavers, millers and brewers). They had very little to lose by leaving Prussia and saw an opportunity to better their status through emigration .<sup>24</sup>

In the fall of 1788 two groups of emigrants numbering 228 families left for the Ukraine.<sup>25</sup> When the advance party, which included Hoeppner, arrived at Kremenchug, the seat of Potemkin's headquarters, they were given the unpleasant news that the Mennonites would not be allowed to proceed to Berislav, allegedly because of its proximity to the theater of war being waged with Turkey. In its place, Potemkin had chosen a new site for them at the junction of the Dnieper and Khortitsa Rivers. The site, a former Cossack stronghold and one of the numerous estates which Potemkin owned throughout New Russia, was a high plateau dissected by innumerable deep ravines. Much of the land was unsuitable for agriculture being either heavily wooded or covered with massive rock

formations. Potemkin refused to listen to Hoepfner's objections and simply issued orders to proceed to the designated area. The emigrants, anxious to build shelters before winter and afraid of jeopardizing the financial aid promised them by the Russian government, reluctantly gave in to Potemkin's demands.

In 1797 a second group of 118 families arrived from Prussia. These families formed the nucleus of the Khortitza colony. Between 1803 and 1806 further pressures in Prussia resulted in a new wave of emigration and by 1819 the settlement consisted of 560 families with a population of 2,888.<sup>26</sup> By 1835 there were two large colonies of 75 villages on 413,000 acres of land. The second colony grew up along the Molochnaya River, east of the Dnepr, the first immigrants arriving there in 1803. Between 1803 and 1808 a total of 365 families settled there and by 1835 migration to the Molotschna came to a close with a total of 1,200 families and an estimated population of 6,000.<sup>27</sup>

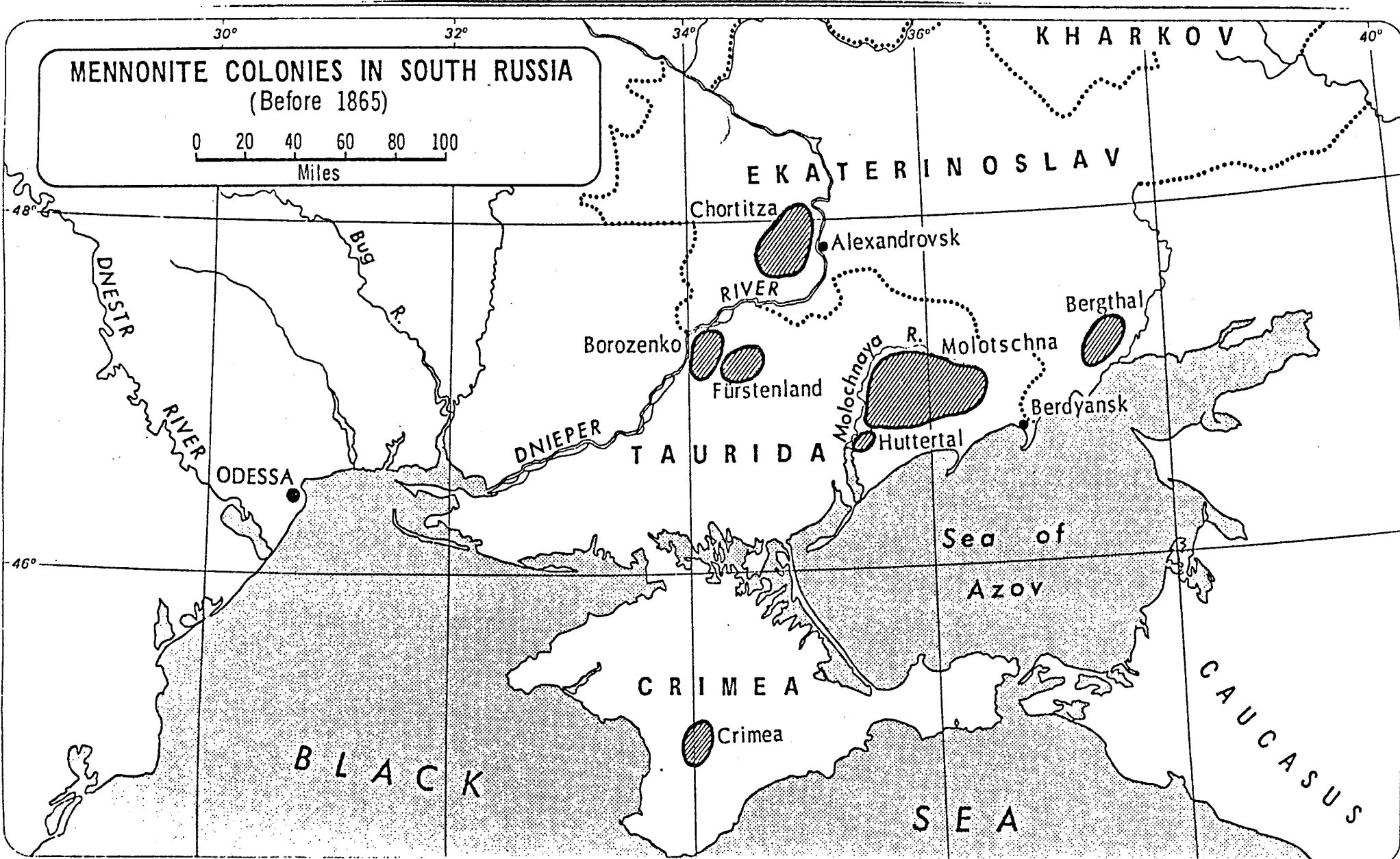
These two "mother" colonies as they were later called, the Khortitza and the Molotschna, were different in character right from the beginning and developed in different ways. Chortitza has been called the Old Colony because it was the original of the two but it was also "old" in the sense that it was not as progressive as its neighbour. The Molotschna became more prosperous and progressive than Khortitza for several reasons. The Mennonites who settled there had been more prosperous to begin with in West Prussia. Also, since

they were not the first to arrive, they were able to profit from the experience of the Shortitza settlers. A third advantage the Molotschna Mennonites had, and one that was of utmost importance to a community based on farming, was that the soil was better and the land flatter.

Any differences that existed amongst the Mennonites themselves seemed to be unimportant, however, considering the fact that their major dilemma was solved. More than three centuries after their Anabaptist ancestors had taken a stand against church and society, it seemed that the Mennonites had at last found a home in Russia. Their struggle for freedom to live according to their beliefs was over, their rights guaranteed in a document approved by the Russian government.

**MENNONITE COLONIES IN SOUTH RUSSIA**  
(Before 1865)

0 20 40 60 80 100  
Miles



## FOOTNOTES

1. The development of Ukrainian Cossackdom embraces approximately 120 years, (15th and 16th centuries), during which period most of the Ukrainian lands were incorporated into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later were annexed to Poland. See Habsburgs and Zaporozhian Cossacks, The Diary of Erich Lassota Von Steblau, ed. by Lubomyr R. Wynar, (Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1875), p.28. See also Conrad Keller, The German Colonies in the Southern Ukraine 1804-1904, n.p., n.d. Trans. by A. Becker. Vols. I-II. Originally published in German in Odessa, 1914, Vol. 1, p. 7.
2. See Habsburgs and Zaporozhian Cossacks, p.28 for a description of their life-style as well as their highly effective military tactics. For clarification of the various segments within the Cossack society, see p. 30.
3. The reference given by Wynar for this conclusion is a recent study of Turkish archival materials concerning the Cossacks' anti-Turkish activity, p. 52, footnote 75.
4. Keller, German Colonies, pp. 9 & 10.
5. N. D. Polons'ka-Vasylenko, The Settlement of the Southern Ukraine (1750-1775), (New York: The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S., Inc., 1955. Polons'ka-Vasylenko considers the voluntary colonization of the Ukraine by fugitives to be very important. Nationalities that settled there included Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Georgians, and Hungarians, pp. 240 and 251.
6. Polons'ka-Vasylenko, Settlement, pp.32 & 33.
7. Ibid, pp. 26 & 27.
8. Ibid, pp. 43-45.
9. Ibid, p. 181.
10. Ibid, p. 73 and pp. 291-293.
11. Ibid, p. 183.
12. Ibid, p. 201.
13. Ibid, p. 202. For further reading on the relationship between the Empress and Count Gregory Orlov, see Zoe

Oldenbourg, Catherine the Great, (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Random House, Inc., 1965.), pp. 267-272. His position, according to Oldenbourg, resembled that of a morganatic husband.

14. As a basis for comparison, before 1914 the ruble (100 kopecks) was worth \$.51 (also pre-1914).

A document which reflects the contemporary views on colonization and gives details of how the decrees were carried out, still survives. It is the "Plan for the Colonization of the Province of New Russia", confirmed by the Senate on April 2, 1764. It is unique in that it also served as a set of laws which remained in effect in New Russia up to the 1780's. The document itself is too lengthy to incorporate into this paper. Instead, the discussion of its contents, as found on pages 202-211 of Settlement, has been included in the appendix. It is interesting that the authors of the plan viewed the region as a wilderness with neither population, laws nor customs, a virgin territory to be settled. It is also interesting that in that same year, 1764, Catherine decreed the introduction of serfdom in the Ukraine, and several million peasants who had been free became serfs overnight. Oldenbourg, Catherine, p. 286. Polons'ka-Vasylenko claims that landlords in the Ukraine, lacking control of their peasants, had been pressing for more restrictions for some time. Settlement, pp. 282-285.

15. Ibid, p. 239.

16. Ibid, p. 236.

17. N. J. Kroeker, First Mennonite Villages in Russia, 1789-1943, (Vancouver, B.C.: by the author, 1981), p. 22. Kroeker theorizes that Catherine's Manifesto was never actually circulated in Polish lands because the Empress did not wish to antagonize Prussia. Prussia had made no secret of the fact that it had designs upon Danzig and had adopted a course of action aimed at reducing that city to a state of economic ruin, thus rendering it dependent upon Prussia. Kroeker finds no evidence that the Mennonites of Danzig were aware of Catherine's appeal before 1786.
18. David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia", MQR XLVII (October, 1973), pp. 279-308, and XLVIII (January, 1974), pp. 5-55. When this article was published, Rempel was Professor Emeritus of History at the College of San Mateo, California. In his writing he makes use of approximately 12,000 pages of archival



material from the Russian State Archives.

19. Kroeker, Mennonite Villages, p. 22. Kroeker claims that von Trappe had received substantial estates on the condition that he install a certain number of families from abroad as tenants. Possibly this was another reason for his interest in the Mennonites. Rempel's view is that Trappe had been forced to forfeit a large estate because he had failed to live up to the conditions of ownership. The Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna, Paul's second wife, for personal reasons, had repeatedly appealed to Potemkin that Trappe's estate be restored, and although this was never done, Potemkin did concede to make Trappe his immigration agent. Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth", pp. 278-279.
20. Ibid, p. 281.
21. Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth", pp. 282-286. Rempel's examination and discussion of the deputies' Twenty-Point Petition and Potemkin's responses are reproduced in the appendix.
22. Ibid, p. 287.
23. During the deputies' absence, Frederick II issued the order of cabinet which forbade Mennonites to enlarge their land holdings. See previous section of this paper, pp. 28-35.
24. Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth", p. 291.
25. Eagerness to emigrate was stimulated by an edict in 1787 imposing further restrictions on the Mennonites.
26. Emigration received an added impetus in 1800 when the privileges granted the Mennonites by Catherine were codified by her son, Paul, in a document that was afterward regarded by the Mennonites in Russia as their bill of rights. This document, which became known as the Privilegium, is reproduced in the appendix.
27. Adolf Ehrt, Das Mennonitentum in Russland von seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart, (Berlin, 1932). These figures are arguable. Rempel gives statistics that are slightly different from Ehrt's. He points out why it is impossible to give specific figures as to the number of families and the number of persons comprised by them, who left Prussia and Danzig during these emigrations. In the first place, many migrants had to slip across the border by cover of night because of the endless obstacles which they encountered from the delaying tactics of the

officials in issuing passports and exit permits. Other reasons which account for conflicting statistics are due to the incompleteness of Prussian, Danzig and Russian archival records, or due to their inaccessibility to the student. Rempel's source is, "The most ambitious attempt and painstaking effort to compile the record...made by Benjamin H. Unruh and a number of his associates.

### III. PACIFISM TESTED: CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA THAT SET THE STAGE

#### 1. The Isolation of the Mennonite Community

By 1870, the original two compact Mennonite settlements in Russia, the Chortitza and the Molotschna, had branched out into many thriving "daughter" colonies.<sup>1</sup> Each colony consisted of several villages in which the land was held in common by all the families. All the land was the collective and indivisible property of each village. It was apportioned in such a way that every family obtained the heritable possession of a specific measure of arable land, usually about 175 acres. Each farmer thus became a shareholder in the village. The remainder of the land was reserved for the common use of the village community, such as pasture, hayland, and bush, or it was rented to private individuals, the rent collected becoming part of the community income. If the family died out, the farm reverted to the community. Individual families could not sell, mortgage, or partition their holdings. Collective land ownership was one of the characteristics that distinguished the Mennonite community from the surrounding Russian peasant society. Another important difference was the way that the community was organized. At first the immigrants attempted to settle in exactly the same manner as they had in Prussia, that is, each

homesteader built individually on his own farm. However, repeated raids by Tatars who stole their cattle and horses soon forced them to move closer together. Compact villages with dwellings arranged in rows along the road became the pattern of settlement. As in the ancestral Netherlands and Friesland, the barn and house were attached and around them the settlers planted flower gardens and trees. Within this sheltered environment the Mennonites found protection from outside threats and enjoyed the companionship and help of neighbours. The system also served to isolate them from the influences of the larger society and made it possible for them to develop and maintain their identity as an ethnic community.<sup>2</sup>

The economic base for the village was agriculture. During the first decade land cultivation played a minor role in the economy, because pioneer conditions made large-scale grain farming impossible, and distances to markets made it unprofitable. Thus stock farming, particularly the breeding of sheep, became the chief occupation. The settlers had brought with them a considerable number of horses and Frisian cattle and by cross-breeding these with local stock, they created livestock of superior quality. It was not until about 1850, when approximately one-third of the land had been ploughed, that the production of wheat began to assume importance. Originally farmers raised summer wheat but they gradually introduced hard winter wheat.<sup>3</sup>

The success of the village system depended on smoothly functioning local government. From the beginning, the

Russians left the Mennonites alone to develop their own administration because, according to Catherine's Manifesto of 1763, all foreign settlers in Russia were to enjoy complete autonomy in the administration of their own internal affairs. Each village became a governing unit for its own schools, roads, insurance, fire-fighting, poor relief, and land apportionment. Each village had an assembly headed by a Schulze (mayor), two Beisitzer (assistants), and a clerk. Schulze and Beisitzer were elected by the village assembly's majority vote for a period of two years. Originally, only landowners were eligible to vote and occupy offices. The clerk was a hired official. The Schulze was responsible for the economic and cultural welfare of the village. It was his duty to settle all disputes between the settlers and to enforce the simplicity of life. With the right to interfere in every sphere of the settlers' activities and private lives, he could easily become a dictator if the assembly failed to check him. However, the Schulze was a servant of the assembly and his power was held in check whenever the assembly used its authority effectively. The assembly elected village officials and school teachers, levied taxes, maintained a fire department, regulated the organization of fire insurance, and took care of such matters as inheritance and the care of the poor and aged.

The village system that the Mennonites developed in Russia became basic to their way of life. It provided the framework around which the community grew and prospered, but the foundation of that community was their faith. It was their

faith that had been their common bond since the sixteenth century separating them from the rest of society.

Paradoxically, it was also their faith that caused them to be divided amongst themselves. From the beginning of their sojourn in Russia, the settlers were not a homogenous people expressing their religion in a united way. The immigrants had come from different settlements in Prussia and were not immediately compatible with one another. Their numbers included not only farmers, but blacksmiths, cartwrights, carpenters, tanners, harness makers, tailors, cobblers, spinners, weavers, millers, etc. Vast economic disparities existed among them, and they held varying cultural and religious viewpoints. A more serious obstacle to unity was the fact that the Frisian and Flemish divisions which had been carried over from the Netherlands to Prussia had not been reconciled.<sup>4</sup> The two groups differed in the forms through which they practised their religion. For example, one party preferred sermons to be read, another not to have them read. One group baptized by pouring water, another by sprinkling. One Aelteste (elder) brought the communion bread to the people, while another expected the recipients to come to him. There were also differences of viewpoint in ordination, marriage and excommunication. During the immigration negotiations the Russian agent, Von Trappe, had sought to unite the Flemish and Frisians in a single brotherhood but among the emigrants no competent leader agreeable to both sides could be found so that the emigrants went to their new foreign home without a church organization.

After much quarreling among themselves, the groups appealed to the mother church in Prussia which sent out two elders to settle the dispute. A tolerable relationship was established, elders and ministers were chosen and ordained, but a union of the two congregations never did occur.<sup>5</sup>

In the early days the cultural and religious life in the Molotschna colony was on a higher level than in Chortitza. This was probably due to several factors. The Molotschna Mennonites had stayed in their home country longer, had there undergone more influences in education and were generally of a higher economic status. They were a more united group when they arrived in Russia than were their predecessors in Chortitza, being mostly of the Flemish branch and so it was not difficult to organize them into one congregation. There were disagreements and subsequent separations but the differences were never as great in the Molotschna as in Chortitza.

Allowed the freedom to organize their own community, the Mennonites in Russia developed a government that suited their own needs and was virtually independent of outside authority. They became an institutionally complete society with little need or desire for contact with the impoverished and illiterate peasants who were their neighbours. Contact with the outside was almost exclusively limited to commercial dealing, that is the buying of necessities which were not produced in the colonies and the selling of surplus produce. Although the Ukrainian peasants were sometimes employed as labourers, especially at harvest time, the Mennonites tended

to regard them as lazy and untrustworthy. The peasants on the other hand, angry and frustrated after centuries of oppression, were understandably jealous and resentful of the increasing prosperity of these foreigners who spoke German and kept to themselves.

Protected by the Russian government yet isolated both geographically and culturally from the Russian and Ukrainian people, the Mennonites created an autonomous "nation" within a nation that became known as the "Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia". Even under conditions as ideal as these, however, the Mennonites could not achieve harmony. Their religious energies turned inward and surfaced in petty arguments over doctrine. In Frank Epp's words: "In the self-contained commonwealth the continuous struggle for a superior righteousness (i.e. religiousity, real or artificial) expressed itself not so much with reference to outside enemies as with regard to internally felt threats."<sup>6</sup> The isolation and freedom that might have produced a unified Mennonite Church, in fact spawned further division.



## FOOTNOTES

1. See Appendix for a list of daughter colonies with date of founding, number of villages, acreage, and population figures.
2. For a more detailed description of the early colonies see E. K. Francis, In Search of Utopia, (Altona, Man.: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), pp. 20-27, as well as his article "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba: A Study of Their Origins," Agricultural History, XXII (1948). The best source however is Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth".
3. It was this wheat, rust-resistant, winter-hardy and superior for baking, that the settlers brought to North America and which became one of the important factors in their success as grain farmers there.
4. Frisian-Flemish differences have been discussed in a previous chapter of this paper, "Netherlands: Evolution of Mennonitism". For further reading see Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth", pp. 291-292. In Rempel's words, "This differentiation between the Frisians and Flemish in regard to occupations and material possessions at the time of settlement, as it was to be the case for several generations to come, was all too often combined with long-standing disputes between them in matters of orthodoxy of belief and strictness of church discipline. These were matters of ancient dispute which the ancestors of these people had brought with them from the various provinces of the Low Countries some two centuries earlier....And they continued to plague the Chortitza settlement through many decades of the nineteenth century."
5. Frank Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 163.
6. Ibid.

### III. PACIFISM TESTED: CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA THAT SET THE STAGE

#### 2. The Increasing Wealth and Materialism of the Colony

The bulk of Mennonite wealth was created in Russia. Some of the early settlers, to be sure, possessed considerable capital which they increased in Russia, but many of those who later accumulated fortunes started with virtually nothing. During the early years of pioneering and hardship the settlers found considerable difficulty in adapting their farming methods, learned in the fertile soil and abundant rainfall of the Vistula Delta, to the requirements of the Russian steppes. It took years of experimentation before they learned how to combat drought, grasshoppers and crop failures. They occupied themselves in the early years chiefly with stock raising, sheep breeding, and general farming to meet their home demands. Flax, tobacco and bee culture were at first substantial sources of income. The silk industry for a while assumed some importance. Fruits and vegetables, especially watermelons, found a market in the larger cities nearby.<sup>1</sup> In the beginning, farming methods were primitive and implements were of the crudest sort. Seeding, harvesting, and threshing were all done by hand. When we realize that the wheat was

threshed with a flail, and that the first sign of progress was the substitution for the flail of a large cylindrical stone drawn over the threshing floor by horses, we begin to understand the state of agriculture during the early days of settlement.

After this initial period of hardship and adaptation, most Mennonites prospered and many became very wealthy. A combination of circumstances made it possible for them to do so. According to James Urry:

This prosperity, however, was not the result of God's special favour upon His chosen people, nor a consequence of any inherent Mennonite genetic superiority over their Slav neighbours. Mennonite religious ideology, which stressed hard work and a frugal life-style, certainly contributed to their economic development but the Mennonites had settled in a region which particularly favoured their prosperity. New Russia had one of the fastest expanding economies of any region of the Empire in the nineteenth century....Mennonites were ideally suited to take full advantage of the situation. In this regard the beneficence of the Russian government in the first seventy years of settlement should not be forgotten. The Mennonites received special loans, stock advice and other favours not generally available to most Russians.<sup>2</sup>

In 1830 agricultural development in the Mennonite colonies was given a tremendous impetus. In that year some of the more far-sighted farmers, encouraged by the Fuersorge-Komitee of Odessa, organized the Agricultural Improvement Society (also referred to as the Agricultural Commission). The first president of the association, Johann Cornies, was a prosperous farmer of the Molotschna colony. Under his presidency the organization exerted far-reaching

influence during the next twenty years, not only upon the farming methods of the Mennonite colonies but also upon their whole economic and social life. Cornies successfully demonstrated on his estate which crops were most suitable for the steppes. He introduced the practice of summer fallowing and the use of fertilizers, four-year crop rotation, the breeding of improved strains of livestock, and the use of more efficient farm machinery. His estate became a showplace for travellers and he was visited by many government officials including both Alexander I and Alexander II.<sup>3</sup> Cornies' leadership, coupled with the rapid industrialization of Europe toward the middle of the nineteenth century and an increasing demand for grain, laid the foundation for the expansion of grain farming on the Russian steppes.

The shift to intensive grain growing also provided an important boost to Mennonite industry, then in its infancy. Up to 1861 most Mennonite industry had barely progressed beyond the level of village crafts.<sup>4</sup> At first mostly wagons and simple agricultural equipment were produced, but as the need grew, larger factories were built to manufacture modern machinery such as threshing machines and steam engines. Massive capital was involved and large profits were made.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the increased wheat production, the milling industry developed. A trading class evolved which included grain merchants and agents for imported machinery. Many of these merchants lived outside the colonies in the chief ports and urban centres.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of the majority of the Mennonites who settled in Russia may not have been to become wealthy, but only to secure a comfortable existence for their large families. Nevertheless, by 1914, the colonists were involved in a sophisticated market economy, based on the investment of considerable capital in land and machinery and the employment of external labour. Members of the most well-to-do families tended to associate with one another and to intermarry thus combining the fortunes of the wealthiest Mennonites in Russia and developing a Mennonite elite.

In Russia, the Mennonites created not only a distinctive way of life, but also a world of prosperity beyond the wildest dreams of the first settlers. Wealth, however, is never without its problems and in a society supposedly based on religious principles its accumulation can have serious consequences. A wealthy man may look down on his poorer neighbours as lacking the will to work and improve themselves. He may let economic interests and self-interest overrule concern for social justice and communal responsibility. His aim, often, is to increase his wealth even at the expense of others. The matter of protecting his possessions becomes very important. Does his belief in non-resistance begin to change? It would be difficult indeed, if not impossible, for him to "turn the other cheek" if his estate was plundered and burned.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See Smith, Smith's Story, p. 263, and James Urry, "Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth and the Mennonite Experience in Russia", Journal of Mennonite Studies (hereafter cited as JMS), (Winnipeg, Man.), Vol. 3, 1985, pp. 7-35.
2. Urry, "Through the Eye", p. 14.
3. Ibid, p. 15. See also Smith, Smith's Story, p.265.
4. Before 1861 the largest concern was Johann Klassen's cloth factory in Halbstadt, but this never employed more than one hundred workers. Urry, "Through the Eye, p. 16.
5. Ibid, p. 17.
6. James Urry, "The Closed and the Open: Social and Religious Change Amongst the Mennonites in Russia, 1789-1889", unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1878, pp. 440-47.

### III. PACIFISM TESTED: CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA THAT SET THE STAGE

#### 3. Weakening of the Colony's Religious Base

For the Mennonites, church, schools, and language were inseparable. It was necessary that each individual learn to read in order that he could interpret the Bible for himself. The schools, which were run by the church, reinforced religious values and the values of the Mennonite agricultural society. After a maximum of eight years, and usually less, a child's education was considered complete. The reasoning was that further study would only lead the child away from God and from the land. "Je gelehrter, desto verkehrter".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless education was a very important matter and even in the first years of settlement each village had its own school following the example of the home community in Prussia. The first teachers were farmers or craftsmen who carried on their trades in addition to teaching the children. Instruction consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion, with emphasis on memorization, the Ten Commandments, hymns, and penmanship.<sup>2</sup> The language of instruction was German<sup>3</sup>, a right the Russian government had promised the Mennonites. They had been granted the freedom to educate their children as they wished, and indeed, from

1789 to 1881 the Russian authorities hardly concerned themselves with Mennonite schools. Supervision of the schools was the duty of the Church elders and preachers who were not responsible to any central organization until 1869, when a Mennonite School Board was organized.<sup>4</sup> This changed in 1881 when all schools in Russia came under the control of the national department of education, and the teaching of Russian as a separate subject became compulsory. After 1890, as part of a rigorous program of Russification, Russian became the compulsory language of instruction for all subjects except German and religion.<sup>5</sup>

The early school, as described above, served the needs of the settlers very well during the pioneer years. By 1830, however, the progress of the settlements was such that the primary needs of providing food, clothing and shelter were well met and secondary needs could be considered. One such need was the problem of providing adequately trained teachers. To this end, in 1820, a group of far-sighted men in the Molotschna settlement formed a school association under the leadership of Johann Cornies. To head this institution, or Vereinsschule, they brought from Prussia, a trained teacher, Tobias Voth. Both Voth and his successor, Heinrich Heese, encountered Cornies' displeasure and left for Chortitza where Voth established a private school, and Heese founded that colony's first secondary school for boys. This Zentralschule, similar to a German educational institution, was the first of many throughout the colonies, serving



primarily to train Mennonite teachers. Although the German language prevailed in these institutions, the Russian language was introduced to enable Mennonites to associate with Russian neighbours and become more useful citizens.

As a result of the opening of the Zentralschulen and, later on, the Maedchenschule (schools for girls), the educational level among Mennonites rose rapidly.<sup>6</sup> The Zentralschulen and Maedchenschulen served as a prerequisite for entrance in the third and fourth class of the Russian Gymnasium (School of Commerce) and technical schools. It was not long before the Mennonites opened their own private school of commerce, the Kommerzschule in Halbstadt. By the beginning of the twentieth century Mennonite students were enrolled in universities in Odessa, Kharkov, Kiev, Moscow, and Petersburg. Some were able to go even farther afield to institutions such as the University of Basel, the Evangelical Seminary of Basel, the Barmen Theological Seminary, the Hamburg Baptist Seminary, the Seminary of Neukirchen and universities in Berlin, Jena, Heidelberg, and Basel.<sup>7</sup>

The effect of these developments in education was profound. The fear that education would lead their children away from the land and away from God was well-founded. Change began with the introduction of European-trained teachers in the secondary schools. These teachers were not revolutionaries but they could hardly escape the influence of the "other worlds" in Germany or Russia into which they had been submerged for three or four years of training. As the

students were introduced to Goethe, Schiller and Pushkin they were also being exposed to other ways of life and other values, to a broader Weltanschauung. The original motive behind setting up secondary schools had been to provide trained teachers for Mennonite schools, thus improving the quality of education without hiring non-Mennonite teachers whose influence might be undesirable. In so doing, however, the early planners opened up a "Pandora's Box". True, many young Mennonites, inspired by their teachers, themselves became teachers, but many did not. Others trained as doctors, lawyers, and engineers. By the early twentieth century this educated professional elite constituted a distinctive group in Mennonite society, an intelligentsia, who were at the forefront of Mennonite cultural achievements in the years before 1914.

There was yet another factor which contributed to the rapid advances in education among the Russian Mennonites after 1870. This was the fact that during the 1870's about a third (some 18,000) of the Mennonite population left Russia forever. This exodus resulted from Czar Alexander II's program of Russification which effectively ended the special privileges enjoyed by the German colonists. Russian was to be the official language and was to be introduced as a subject of study in all the schools. All the German schools were henceforth to be supervised directly by the imperial educational authorities. Military exemption was to be abolished.<sup>8</sup> The Mennonites who emigrated to North America

were those who were less willing to accept change and more determined to maintain their religious convictions. They were also, generally, the less affluent members of the colonies who did not have as much to lose by leaving. Those who remained in Russia were the more flexible and progressive who had begun to fit into the Russian culture. They were also, as a rule, wealthier and had more to lose by leaving. One result of this huge migration was that it cleared the way for new developments, or, if you will, progress in education.

Within a century, the Russian Mennonites "progressed" from a simple, relatively poor and uneducated people to a class society with its hierarchy of wealthy estate owners, factory owners, businessmen and an educated intelligentsia. What effect did this growing worldliness and sophistication have upon the spiritual base of the colony? In the early days of Mennonitism, there was a strong sense of "us against the world", and indeed, this had been the case. The Anabaptists were rebels but with a strong pacifist conviction and when persecuted, they fled. Along with peace and prosperity in Russia came complacency and a desire to maintain the status quo. It was no longer "us against the world" because they were becoming part of that wider world. It seems inevitable that their increasing worldliness would undermine and weaken the religious base of their community. What had been a living faith became a more intellectualized religion, mechanical rather than vital. The young people, no longer as strictly brought up in the church, were as open to

excitement and adventure as youth anywhere. The Mennonites were losing sight of the importance of bringing up a child "in the way in which he should go" and would later wonder why the child departed from it. In the words of one Mennonite scholar:

They had shifted from viewing themselves as a religious community to an idea of themselves as an elite group of colonists whose task was to present the world with a model image of an enlightened and perfected people. Thus they changed from being an inward looking religious society dedicated to following a narrow path in opposition to the world, to an open culture which was above the world in its advancement, knowledge, and way of life. The sense of "being different" thus shifted from one of a religiously orientated life style to one of a superior cultural tradition in which religious differentiation was no longer the key marker but merely one amongst many.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p.338.
2. Kroeker, Mennonite Villages. Chapter 9 deals with early education, describes various schools, teachers, gives class lists.
3. Although Low German was spoken at home, High German was used in Church and as the language of instruction in school. There were several reasons for this, the most practical one being that the Low German the Mennonites spoke had developed orally and did not have a written form. Aside from that, the Mennonites had great respect for German culture and tradition. But probably the most important reason was that they used the German Bible and since the most important goal of education was to teach children to read the Bible, it followed that they must be taught the language.
4. David G. Rempel, "Mennonite Migration to New Russia", MQR IX (July, 1935), pp. 109-128.
5. Ibid.
6. See Smith, Smith's Story, p. 270-271 for statistics.
7. Ibid.
8. The Mennonites petitioned for, and were granted, continued military exemption but with the stipulation that they engage in a form of alternative service at their own expense. This is discussed in the next chapter, "Political Developments in Russia".
9. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 170.

### III. PACIFISM TESTED: CONDITIONS IN RUSSIA THAT SET THE STAGE

#### 4. Political Developments in Russia

The political climate prevailing in Russia during the latter part of the eighteenth century was entirely in the Mennonites' favour. It would seem that their emigration to the Ukraine lay within the providence of history. At a time when events in Prussia were conspiring to drive them away, Catherine II was scouring Europe for just such industrious and resourceful people to settle the area she had recently won from the sultan of Turkey. Once Catherine's objectives had been achieved, however, and the steppes had begun to develop into productive farmland, the Russian government began to see the Mennonites in a different light.

The political climate which had favored them now turned against them. As a result of Russia's disastrous defeat in the Crimean War in 1856,<sup>1</sup> Tsar Alexander II initiated sweeping reforms which had serious implications for the Mennonites.<sup>2</sup> By emancipating the serfs in 1861, he set the stage for the land distribution problem. By granting limited local selfgovernment to county boards (zemstvos) he eroded Mennonite autonomy. By introducing conscription he threatened one of their basic religious beliefs. By

implementing a program of Russification he denied them the right to control the education of their children. The effect of the Alexander's policies was to negate the terms of settlement under which the Mennonites had agreed to come to Russia. They believed, and rightly so, that the government had gone back on its word.

As a result of the government's about-face, nearly one third (about 18,000) of the Mennonites in the Ukraine emigrated to the United States and Canada.<sup>3</sup> They responded to the threat to their way of life by fleeing, just as their ancestors had done for centuries. It was, generally speaking, those Mennonites who were most adamant in their refusal to bear arms who left. The ones who remained in Russia were those who, for one reason or another, were more ready to compromise. Either their belief in nonresistance was already wavering or else they were less willing take a stand for their principles. This erosion of the colonies' pacifistic base had serious consequences later when Mennonite nonresistance was subjected to its ultimate test.

Before the mass exodus from Russia, the Mennonites had made an attempt to argue their case with the Russian Government. They sent a delegation of elders, teachers and administrators to St. Petersburg to remind the authorities of the terms of their Priviligiun. At this meeting the authorities suggested that the Mennonites consider the option of medical service in lieu of active duty. The delegates explained that their constituents would not consider

alternative service and that such a compromise would not prevent emigration. And indeed it did not. A plan for military exemption was eventually worked out but by that time the migration plans were already well underway. The more orthodox Mennonites interpreted any obligatory state service as a compromise violating their peace principle and as a direct pressure for assimilation. They had no intention of changing their plans to emigrate.

For the Mennonites who remained in Russia the migration of their brethren ushered in an era of change. The new decrees forced them to interact more directly with the Russian world, especially with regard to the military exemption. When negotiations with the government were concluded in 1880, the Mennonites were exempted from military service but on condition that they participate in a form of state service, the cost of which was to be born entirely by their community. These concessions were to apply in times of war as well as in times of peace. The work consisted of planting and cultivating forests on the steppes of South Russia. It was the responsibility of the Mennonites to build, repair, heat and light the barracks, provision and clothe the men, pay their travel expenses to and from the forestry stations, pay the salaries of the preacher and household manager of each camp, and pay the State an annual rent for the land used for housekeeping purposes at each site. The government was to bear the hospital expenses, furnish workshops and tools, and pay each worker a wage of



twenty kopeks for each day actually worked. The number of Mennonites in service averaged about 1,000 a year. The cost of maintaining them by the Mennonites amounted annually to about 200,000 rubles, which was raised by a special levy called the "barracks tax". General oversight of the camps was entrusted to a Mennonite Forestry Commission.<sup>4</sup> With the implementation of the Forestry Service Program, Mennonite pacifism entered a new era in which their pacifism became state-regulated.

During the 1880s and 1890s Russia entered a period of rapid modernization and industrialization which had a profound effect on the Mennonite colonies. They had resolved, at least temporarily, the military question and had adapted to the reforms in education and local government. With circumstances in their favor, they were now able to concentrate their energies on economic development. For the Mennonites who remained in Russia, the late 19th and early 20th centuries spelled prosperity the like of which they had never before experienced, a "Golden Age of Mennonitism".<sup>5</sup>

The "Golden Age" was not without its problems, however. The Mennonites were no longer as isolated as they had been and yet they remained a people apart. One historian describes the phenomenon as a "relatively open economic relationship to the larger society [which] co-existed with a considerably more restricted cultural and religious interaction with the outside."<sup>6</sup> Internally the colonies were increasingly threatened by acculturation. By 1900 Mennonite

schools were dominated by teachers who were fluent in Russian. Sons and daughters were leaving the colonies to establish themselves in urban centers. A kind of Russian-Mennonite patriotism was developing and yet in the eyes of the Russian public they were German. In a country attempting to acculturate non-Russian elements they were viewed with increasing hostility. Anti-German writers stirred up public feeling against the Mennonites. Resentment grew against a people "who find themselves with privileges such as presently the residents of the Russian villages would never dream of".<sup>7</sup> Now on the defensive, the Mennonites needed to prove their loyalty and good will towards the nation. Where indeed did they stand?

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 provided an opportunity for the Mennonites to prove their loyalty to Russia. Some men left for the front as medical volunteers; 83,940 rubles were raised to support the Red Cross; and colonists were encouraged to undertake care of wounded soldiers and to support their families for the duration of the war. It seems that the majority of Mennonites were anxious for a national victory and helped as best they could either voluntarily or on request. There were, however, those Mennonites who disapproved of participation. These disagreements became a Conference issue at a special meeting convened on September 17-18, 1904, at Karassan in the Crimea. Opposition was expressed to volunteering for medical service since this allowed recruits to have direct contact with the

military on a one-to-one basis. Medical service, it was argued, was worthwhile, but should be done in hospitals owned by the Mennonites themselves. When the war ended without victory, the Mennonites sent a letter to the tsar expressing their loyalty, but also aimed at maintaining their non-resistant position in the future:

We Russian Mennonites wishing to submit our feelings of boundless love and unfailing submission at the throne of His Majesty bend our knees with millions in Russia before the Most High, praying for the well-being of His Royal Majesty and the royal family...May the words of Christ on the Sermon on the Mount find their fulfillment in His Royal Majesty, the giver of peace, and the freedom of belief and conscience, when he said: 'Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the earth....8

The Russo-Japanese War threw the Mennonites into a situation that was entirely new to them. Up until then they had defined their non-resistant position either through martyrdom or by flight. Even the compromise of forestry service was a kind of flight in that they were still not facing up to the real question. If they were not going to fight, then who would fight for them when the need arose? Loyalty to a motherland had not previously entered into the picture. They were forced to think, and in doing so became divided over the question of whether or not they should make a contribution to the war and, if so, in what way? The coming decade would reveal the problem more clearly.

The Russo-Japanese War put pressure on the Mennonites to reconcile their non-resistant stance with their obligations as citizens of Russia. At the same time they were also being

subjected to a different kind of pressure. During the Revolution of 1905 peasants in many parts of Russia rose up in arms against landowners, often destroying whole estates. Although the Mennonite colonies remained insulated from the most severe violence, they were not completely untouched. The villages on the fringes of the colonies and the large Mennonite estates situated just outside the settlements, were in an especially vulnerable position. As incidents of robbery, illegal wood-cutting, and deliberate crop damage increased, the residents began to devise means of protecting themselves against peasant incursions. This will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.<sup>9</sup>

The manifesto of October 17, 1905, was welcomed by the Mennonites. The emphasis on religious freedom and the apparant change in attitude towards minorities gave them reason to hope that their privileged status would have a more secure basis in law. The hope that Mennonites would be represented in the Duma proved to be unrealistic. Again they petitioned the government for assurances regarding their non-resistant status but before the exemption issue could come up, the Duma was dissolved. Mennonites fared no better in the Second Duma. The Third Duma had one Mennonite representative, an estate owner, Hermann Abramovich Bergmann who reported regularly to the Mennonites in the Friedensstimme. Fearing for their non-resistant position, the Mennonites elected a three-man Glaubenskommission, or Commission of Faith, which was to speak on all religious

questions for the total Mennonite body in Russia. Another area of concern was the growing hostility against non-Russian landowners in Russian territories. A bill proposed by Prime Minister Stolypin which would prohibit sale of land by, and rental to, Germans and other non-Russians in order to stop the "peaceful" invasion by foreigners, failed to pass the Third Duma but nevertheless succeeded in creating fear among the Mennonites.<sup>10</sup>

To the Mennonites' disappointment the October manifesto did not usher in a period of new freedom and tolerance for minorities. Quite to the contrary, it made them realize that the privileged position they had enjoyed under the Tsar could possibly be eroded under a more representative government, especially in the area of property ownership. On the other hand, debate had been stimulated in the Mennonite press on important issues, especially the issue of non-resistance. Some Mennonites felt that forestry service ought to be abandoned and that military service in non-combatant forms would be more realistic, that they had no moral right to ask for special considerations. The big advantage of forestry service was that it kept the young men together against outside influences to which they would be subjected as regular medical volunteers. Some felt, however, that the financial obligation of the forestry camps was too heavy. One contributor to the debate became unknowingly prophetic. He supported non-resistance but suggested that one ought to remain non-judgmental about those whose conscience might

persuade them to undertake self-defense on some occasion.<sup>11</sup>

The Russian Mennonites had begun for the first time to think about the dilemma of their non-resistant position in relation to their obligations towards their homeland. With Russia's entry into the War in 1914, they were forced to think about it even more seriously. All Russian Germans (more than two million in number) found themselves in a distressing situation, summoned to defend their homeland against a people who were culturally next-of-kin. For the Mennonites the problem was compounded by the fact that they refused to bear arms. In the eyes of non-German Russians they appeared to be siding with the enemy. Letters and editorials in Friedensstimme and Botschafter discussed Mennonite obligations. Articles such as the following reveal the sincerity and sense of responsibility of the majority of the colonists:

We Russian Germans have a dual obligation: together with our Russia brethren we need to stand for the freedom and honor of Russia. With our means we must support the families who have gone to war. Also, we must make it clear that we have been suspect without reason of having secret relationships with Germany. We need to show that we have kept the promise of faithfulness made by our forefathers...our confession forbids us as Mennonites to spill blood, but binding wounds we hold to be our sacred duty. Medical service is open to us. We are certain this means that doctors and nurses to form a Mennonite medical corps will become available....<sup>12</sup>

The initial Mennonite response was immediate and positive: pledges of assistance in healing the sick and wounded, plans to establish a 100 bed hospital for

servicemen, plans to receive wounded in private homes, an initial donation to the Red Cross of 75,000 rubles, a decision to set up a committee of 14 persons to supervise the granting of aid to families of soldiers, and to immediately make available 25,000 rubles for this purpose, appeals for volunteers for hospital service on the front lines, as well as private donations of flour and money. In response to a request from the central government zemstvo office, 400 medical orderlies volunteered for service. The majority of these young men were from the ranks of the Chortitza foresters. A Mennonite Unit Service Centre <sup>d</sup>under the auspices of the All-Russian Zemstvo Union was established in Moscow to oversee the orderlies.<sup>13</sup> During the course of the war, 5,000 to 6,000 Mennonites served as medical corpsmen. Mennonites who were eligible for service could choose either the forestry camps or medical service on trains or in hospitals.

In spite of their contributions to the war effort and their declarations of loyalty to their country, the Mennonites were still considered "Germans". Cries of "German exploitation", and "inside enemy" hounded them. Anti-German war propoganda and official decrees did not distinguish between Mennonites and other Germans. Suppression of German papers included Mennonite publications.<sup>14</sup> Directives from the capital that there should be no advertising or speaking in German in public, that all preaching should be in Russian, and that assembly of Germans in groups outside church meetings was forbidden, lumped the Mennonites together with

all other Russian-Germans. Searches by local police for hidden wireless equipment and even pigeons which might be used as messenger birds deepened the pain of affrontery throughout the Mennonite community.<sup>15</sup>

Incredible as this treatment seemed to the Mennonites, by far the most threatening action was the land liquidation laws which became effective on February, 1915. Their goal was the liquidation of all land held by enemy nationals.<sup>16</sup> At first the Mennonites were not affected, although thousands of Germans elsewhere were forced to flee their homes. When the Mennonites saw their names beginning to appear on the land inventory lists, they petitioned the authorities. They based a plea for exemption from the land laws on the claim that they were actually not of German, but of Dutch extraction.<sup>17</sup> A government commission appointed to investigate the matter concluded however, that Mennonites were German by cultural affinity, if not by origin, and that they were thus also subject to expropriation. For reasons which are not clear, the Tsar decided to investigate the Mennonite case with the result that in January of 1917, the colonists learned that they would be exempted from the land liquidation laws.<sup>18</sup>

Had the Mennonites known that only a month later the Tsar would no longer be in power, they might have been less pleased at the success of their petition. As it turned out, however, the change of government worked to their advantage in that it suspended further land liquidation action for the duration of the war.<sup>19</sup> Hopes that the Tsar's abdication



might bring a quick end to the war faded almost immediately as the new government called for a vigorous offensive. There was increasing public pressure for Mennonite participation in active duty at the front. The possibility of defeat made the refusal of the Mennonites to fight less justifiable than ever. In Ekaterinoslav, veterans marched through the city with banners claiming "The Mennonites must go to the trenches". Unrest mounted in the countryside aggravated by problems with food supply. Some Mennonite villages began to organize "home guards".<sup>20</sup>

Under these trying circumstances, the General Conference of Mennonites convened in Neu-Halbstadt on June 16.<sup>21</sup> The delegates reasserted their traditional views on the military issue, summing up the resolutions as follows:

The Conference takes an unmoving stand on the principle of non-resistance remaining as it is, firmly grounded in the spirit of the gospel, an essential and unchanging tenet of the Mennonite confession of faith. According to the teachings of Menno Simons, Mennonites regard it as their sacred duty to serve their fatherland faithfully, but without shedding blood.<sup>22</sup>

And so far they had managed to do just that, to serve their fatherland without shedding blood. Their non-resistance had, however, become state-regulated and had a price attached to it. Mennonite non-resistance had been made possible through privilege. It would soon face the test of real personal suffering.

One delegate, although agreeing in principle with the Congress resolution, expressed the view that "one might even

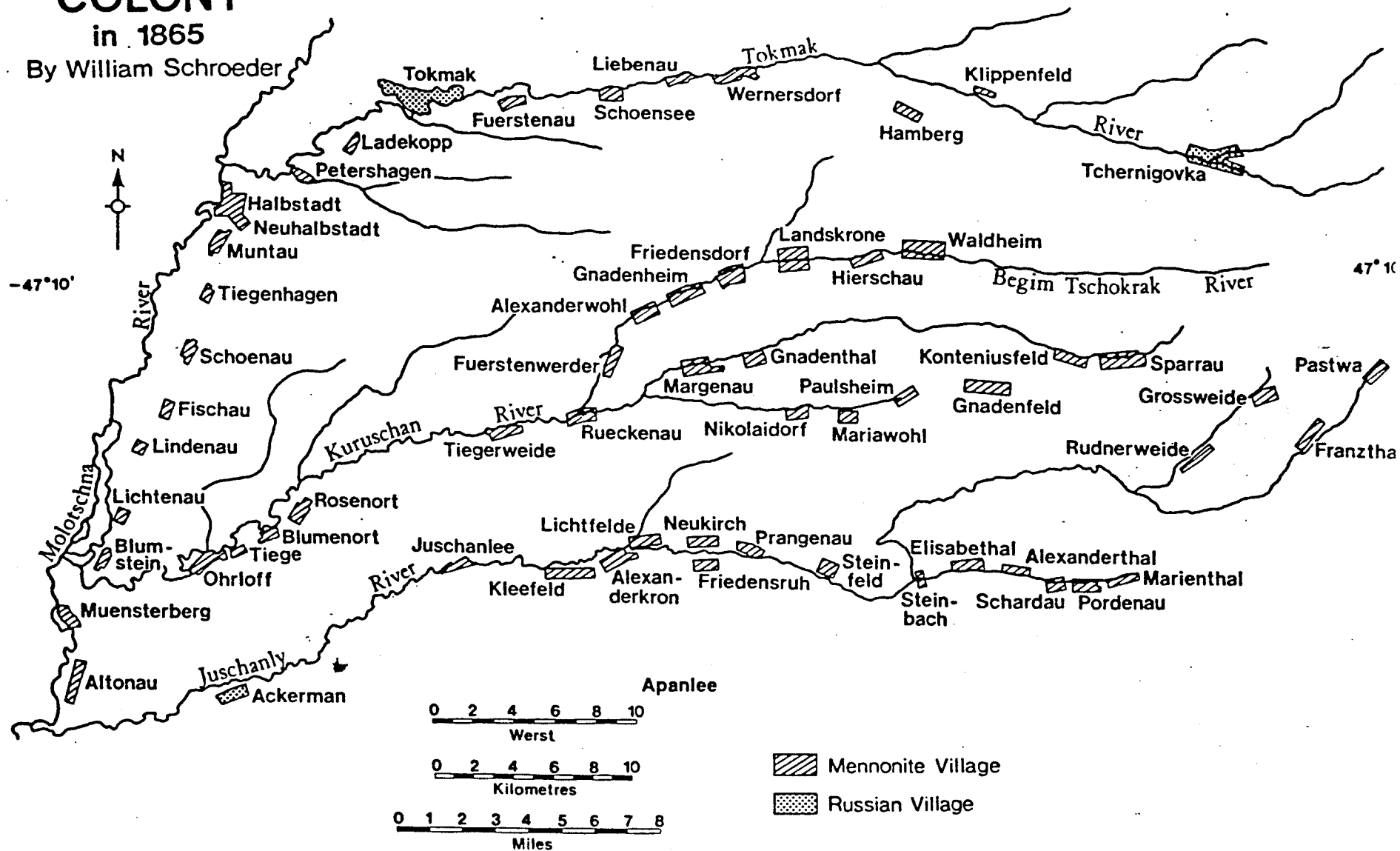
admire the zeal and bravery of a non-believer fighting to protect the country of his wife and children", and stressed "unqualified tolerance toward those who took up arms, a move which in any case needed to be a matter of each person's own conscience".<sup>23</sup> This view would gain majority support at the next conference when the question of armed resistance became a vital issue, when non-resistance faced the test of personal suffering.

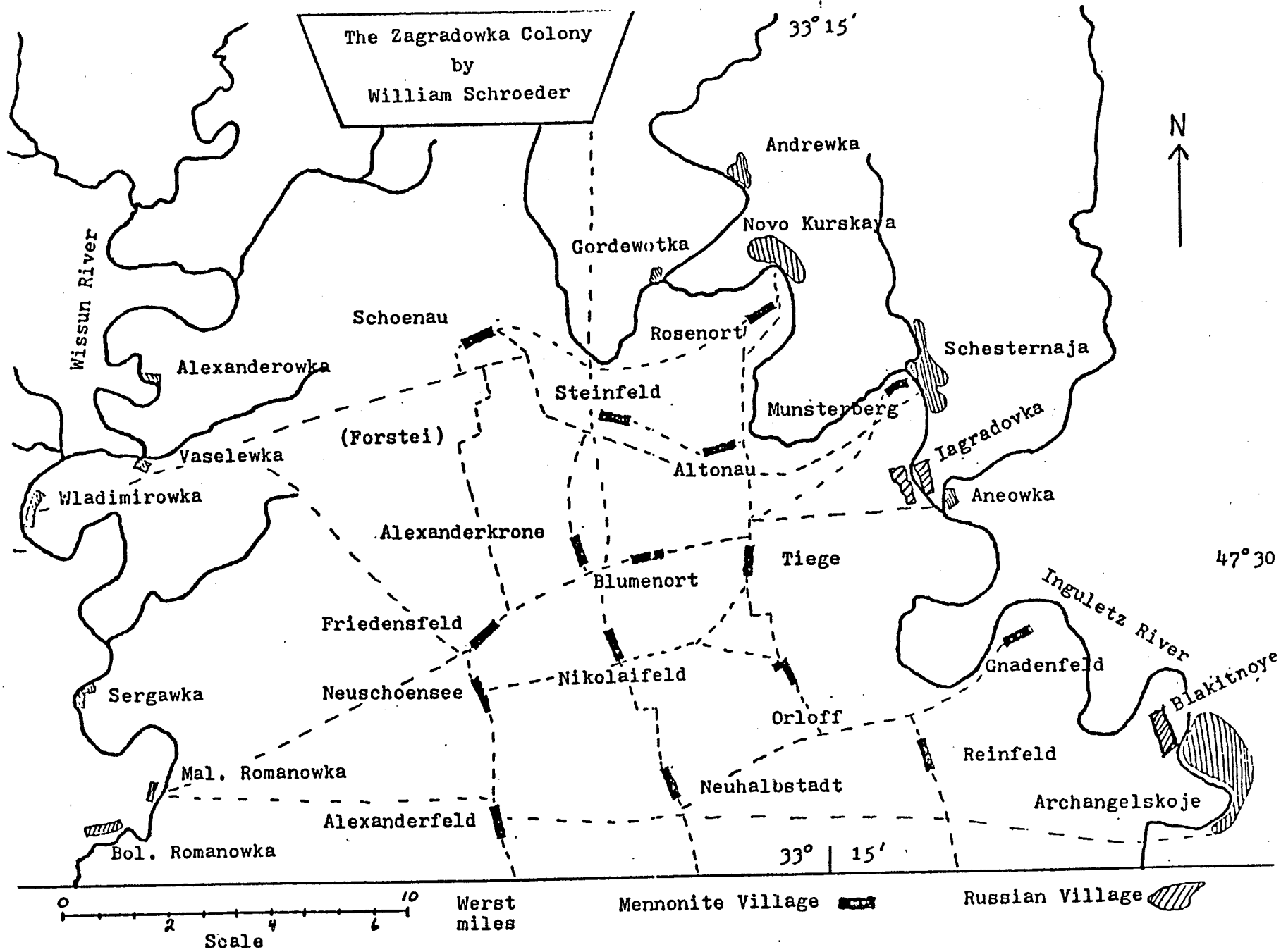


# MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

in 1865

By William Schroeder





## FOOTNOTES

1. The Mennonite contribution during the Crimean War was considerable and included podwods, or convoy trips, to the front lines. In March, 1854, 500 transport wagons left the Khortitza colony to begin the first of a series of trips to the front lines. Mennonites also cared for wounded soldiers in their homes. During one period as many as 5,000 soldiers received care in the Molotschna colony homes. For details see Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", pp. 34-37.
2. Donald W. Treadgold, Twentieth Century Russia (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), p. 9. For details of how the reforms affected the Mennonite Colonies see Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifiism", pp. 43-53; and Epp, Mennonites in Canada, pp. 184-185.
3. Rempel, "Mennonite Commonwealth", pp. 35-36.
4. Ibid, pp. 36-37. Klippenstein gives details of how the camps were organized and run, "Mennonite Pacifism", pp. 85-89. See also Smith, Smith's Story, pp. 299-300.
5. Several excellent photographic records of the "Golden Age of Mennonitism" have been published. In the Fullness of Time. 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia, (Kitchener, Ont.: by Aaron Klassen, 1974), edited by Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel; Gerhard Lohrenz's Heritage Remembered. A Pictorial Survey of Mennonites in Prussia and Russia, (Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1974); and Forever Summer Forever Sunday, (St. Jacobs, Ont.: Sand Hills Books, Inc., 1981), edited by John D. Rempel and Paul Tiessen.
6. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 126.
7. Ibid, p. 121.
8. Ibid, p. 134. See pp. 129-135 for details regarding Mennonite participation in the Russo-Japanese War.
9. In 1900 eighty to ninety per cent of the Russian people were peasants. Although freed from serfdom in 1861, they were still bound to the village commune and were under a heavy burden of redemption payments for land they had received at emancipation. See Treadgold, Russia, pp. 21-22. Treadgold summarizes the events leading up to the Revolution of 1905 on pp. 54-56. The revolution, which was the culmination of the desire among all sections of

the population for greater participation in government, had many causes: peasant poverty, harsh industrial conditions, widespread demoralization as a result of Russia's defeat at the hands of Japan, and resentment at the crude workings of Tsarist autocracy.

10. See Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", pp. 135-147 for details of the relationship between the Mennonites and the Duma.
11. Ibid, p. 151 for a table illustrating Mennonite contributions of money and recruits to the forestry camps. Details of the ongoing debate among the colonists regarding their participation in this form of alternative service can be found on pp. 147-149.
12. Ibid, p. 160.
13. Ibid, pp. 164-180 details the Mennonite contribution to the war effort.
14. The last issue of Friedensstimme was dated November 5, and the Mennonitisches Jahrbuch and Christlicher Familienkalender dated their final annual issues 1913 and 1915 respectively. Klippenstein p. 187.
15. Some local police went so far as to look for bombs in pickle jars. Klippenstein, p. 189.
16. Ibid, pp. 191 and 192. See also Giesinger, Catherine, pp. 245-246.
17. The "Dutch origin" theory, termed "Hollaenderei", did not receive the wholehearted support of the entire Mennonite community. Dyck wrote in his diary on March 15, 1916, "It seems we lack faith in God.... Other Germans who want to remain German and not become Dutch suddenly, are not making many efforts, or expenses as we Mennonites are, and nothing will happen to them as to us Mennonites ...". Giesinger writes that "Their claim in 1915 that they were Dutch, with 'not a drop of German blood in their veins' is hardly tenable". Although there were people of Dutch origin among the West Prussian Mennonites, there were undoubtedly Germans also, and the whole group had become culturally German before any of them migrated to Russia. Catherine, p.251.
18. It was rumored that the tsar's move had been prompted by a bribe of hundreds of thousands of rubles. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 196. Klippenstein gives unpublished diaries as sources for this statement.

19. Ibid, p. 197.
20. From the diary of Peter J. Dyck, April 20, 1917. Dyck's diary has been edited by his son John P. Dyck and published privately as Troubles and Triumphs, (Springstein, Manitoba 1981).
21. See the minutes of the General Conference of Mennonites, June 16, 1917, pp. 401-402 in The Mennonites in Russia from 1917-1930: Selected Documents, (Winnipeg, Man.: Christian Press, 1975), edited by John B. Toews. Hereafter this publication will be referred to as Documents.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.



#### IV. EVOLUTION OF SELF DEFENCE WITHIN THE MENNONITE COLONIES

##### IN THE UKRAINE

##### 1. The Growing Need for Protection of Property

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time and place when the Mennonites began to think in terms of self defence. At first there seems to have been a gradual increase in the number of nightwatchmen in response to need within each village. Most of the villages had for some time employed a guard. Gerhard Lohrenz, who grew up in Zagradovka, explains why these guards were necessary:

Most of the Russian villages were very large and had a heavy proportion of totally dispossessed citizens. A typical landless peasant would own a hut and a few animals, horses and cows, but very little pasture. Thus he was in the habit of turning his animals loose in order that they might find feed for themselves. Dozens of these roaming animals would come into the Mennonite fields, feed off the crop and trample a good deal of it into the ground. Many of the Russian peasants would also regularly steal harvested grain from the Mennonite fields, or their corn or watermelons.<sup>1</sup>

The guard was usually a mounted and armed Cossack who sometimes beat the Russians who were caught stealing, or impounded the animals found in the Mennonite fields. The Russians, of course, resented this bitterly. As peasant unrest grew during the years preceding the Revolution of 1905

the matter of protecting Mennonite property became a more serious problem. With the advent of the War it became imperative. Peasants from the surrounding countryside, emboldened by anti-German propaganda and the fall of Tsarism, felt justified in robbing their well-to-do "German" neighbours. The hope that the new Provisional Government would establish law and order dwindled as the situation deteriorated. Accounts of robbery and violence during this period can be found in many Mennonite diaries and papers:

The villages on the edge of the settlement were being raided by bandits, first at night but lately even by day. These bandits robbed the farm yards and took wagons and horses and anything else that they wanted.<sup>2</sup>

Joh. Peters had three horses and a droschke stolen last night....Heard that there was a robber attack at Martens' in Schoensee the day before yesterday....They took Heinrich's money, about 200 rubles, and two gold watches, brooches, etc. from the bureaus. Then they forced Heinrich to go with them to the mill office. They broke the window and climbed in. There they found 600 rubles in change. When their look-out on the street heard footsteps, he called to the rest. Brother Heinrich immediately jumped out of the window after them. Then they shot at him, and at young Reimer, who was on his way home loitering about.<sup>3</sup>

Added to that [the war] are local disorders. Not long ago twenty thieves broke into our neighbor Suderman's home. Thank God it didn't cost any lives but it still was awful.<sup>4</sup>

The robberies are becoming more and more serious and will become worse during the fall and winter.<sup>5</sup>

After the November Revolution, by which the Bolsheviks proclaimed power in Russia, attacks on the colonies became bolder and more frequent. There were several factors

responsible for this increase in lawlessness. First, as already mentioned, war propoganda had stirred up resentment against Germans. The fact that these "Germans" (the Mennonites) were well-to-do, aggravated the situation. Secondly, under the general amnesty declared by the Provisional Government, prisons were opened releasing hoards of convicts to roam the countryside plundering and terrorizing at will.<sup>6</sup> Added to their number were soldiers who were deserting the front by the thousands, many of them armed and living by their wits off the land as they made their way home.<sup>7</sup> But perhaps the most important reason for the accelerating violence was the disorder that existed in the Ukraine before the Bolsheviks were able to consolidate their control.

The Bolsheviks first invaded the Ukraine in early January of 1918. Within a few weeks they had occupied most of the eastern region and by the end of the month were in Kiev; by January 5 they had occupied Alexandrovsk and the nearby Mennonite town of Einlage; by January 5 they had extended their control of the Old Colony to include Chortitza, Kronsweide, and Neuenberg.<sup>8</sup> The take-over was violent and disorganized. Early in February, the Alexandrovsk soviet sent an armed representative into the Chortitza volost to collect a "contribution" of two million rubles (about one million dollars). To guarantee collection, the Guards took hostages who were released upon full payment three weeks later.<sup>9</sup>

The inhabitants of the Molotschna Colony, were not treated so leniently. The prime target in that colony appears to have been the town of Halbstadt, which was the seat of the colony's administration as well as its cultural and industrial center. There is some disagreement as to the exact date when Red Army troops first occupied Halbstadt but it seems clear that early in February the region was subjected to a period of extortion and violence which has gone down in Mennonite history as the "Halbstadt Days". Roving Red soldiers collected money and valuables at gunpoint. They "requisitioned" cattle, produce, household goods and personal effects and, by seizing hostages, they extorted large sums not only from individual landowners but also from entire villages.<sup>10</sup> On February 16, the soviet declared a state of war in the volost. Next day it arrested several Mennonites, placed them before a military tribunal, and sentenced six of them to death, including a former landowner, a teacher and a businessman. The sentences were carried out immediately.<sup>11</sup> Versions of this incident vary. According to one diary:

Horrible things have taken place in Halbstadt these last few days. Seven people have been shot, including our neighbor Mr. Suderman who had fled there with his family. A fourteen year old boy is also one of the victims.<sup>12</sup>

Another recollection of these events is somewhat different:

On that day [Feb. 17] six Mennonites were shot in Halbstadt [sic], among them two teachers of the local Kommerzschule, Hausknecht and Peter Letkemann, and the well-known estate owner Jakob Sudermann. They were murdered without the

benefit of any court. Besides them, a boy of 16 and a young man of 18 years were also murdered. This was done by a bloodthirsty band who had descended upon the town and proclaimed themselves <sup>13</sup>the representatives of the new government.

When they began to realize the seriousness of their situation, some of the Molotschna Mennonites belatedly considered taking action. On February 6 at a large assembly at the Zentralschule in Ladekopp, residents discussed the possibility of taking over the administration of the municipality from the soviet but it was too late by then to begin organizing. By February 8 "all government [was] now in the hands of the soldiers, the workers, and the farmers" [sic] and the "dictatorship of the proletariat [was] complete". The Mennonites did, however, manage to gain control of the Waisenkasse, removing the money to a private home and "Piesklov, the chairman of the [newly created Bolshevik] municipal government promised to keep his hands off this business".<sup>14</sup>

Molotschna and Chortitza were not the only Mennonite colonies in the Ukraine to suffer during the political upheaval. In Zagradowka too,<sup>15</sup> "As soon as the Czarist government had fallen, nightly attacks by robber bands became the order of the day. People feared for their life [sic]".<sup>16</sup> The bandits became bolder and bolder. In the village of Tiege, when the lone nightwatchman proved to be "completely useless" the guard was increased to four men in two shifts. All males between 18 and 60 were required to participate.

With the arrival of the Bolshevik troops the situation became even more tense. Here too, as in Chortitza and Moltschna, the invaders demanded "contributions" of money and goods.<sup>17</sup>

Even as the Bolsheviks were attempting to implement Lenin's decrees, representatives of the Ukrainian nationalist movement were in the process of negotiating a separate peace with the Central Powers.<sup>18</sup> After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in February 1918, the Ukrainian government appealed to the Germans for assistance against the Bolsheviks. The return to order and stability was not as immediate as the Mennonites hoped it would be, however. Before the German army was able to establish a presence in the Ukraine the bandits and marauding soldiers intensified their activities.

It was during this period that a notorious Ukrainian peasant, Nestor Ivanovych Makhno, began to gain a following among his people. Anarchist, bandit, murderer, terrorist, saint, hero, are some of the labels that have been applied to him. Whatever else he may have been, he was without doubt a leader who was able to focus the peasants' anger and frustration and turn it to his own purposes. Makhno, or "batko"<sup>19</sup> as he was known to his followers, was born to a peasant family in the village of Gulai-Polye on October 27, 1889.<sup>20</sup> He received his "education" during the nine years he spent in Butyrki Prison in Moscow. There he seems to have developed his deep hatred for prisons and authority, and there his anger and rebelliousness were given ideological

direction by the anarchist, Peter Arshinov.<sup>21</sup> The anarchists believed in absolute freedom of the individual. They opposed the state and sought its abolition. They were against all of the values of the contemporary society - political, moral, and cultural. Total liberation of the human personality from the fetters of organized society was their ideal. Moreover, they rejected not only the Bolshevik communes but also the workers' trade unions because they believed that only unorganized individuals were safe from coercion and thus capable of remaining true to the ideals of anarchism.<sup>22</sup>

When Makhno returned to Gulai-Polye, burning with idealism, he was received as a hero, as one "returned from the dead".<sup>23</sup> He immediately set about organizing the village according to his anarchist ideal. "With a firm hand Makhno swept aside or ignored all other parties and took control of Gulai-Polye and the surrounding country".<sup>24</sup> Ideally this process was to have been peaceful and orderly,<sup>25</sup> but somewhere along the way either Makhno's sense of mission became blurred or else he was not as solidly in control as he would liked to have been. The methods he employed to "requisition" goods from the "haves" and "distribute" them to the "have-nots" became increasingly violent. In his wake he left chaos and terror. His following grew rapidly, attracting many who were only interested in free goods and plunder.<sup>26</sup>

All through the summer and into the fall of 1917, Makhno led peasant attacks on landowners' estates in the vicinity of

REGIONAL MAP OF THE UKRAINE BETWEEN 1919-1920



The Makhnovite region, with Gulai-Polye as its centre, indicates roughly the area under Makhno's direct control during his strongest period, 1919-1920.

Source: Dietrich Neufeld, Russian Dance of Death, translated and edited by Al Reimer, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press, 1977), p. 128.



Gulyai-Pole. It has been said that "Using the black flag as their emblem, his followers behaved like devils loosed from hell, terrorizing the countryside by their bloodthirsty and brutal treatment of their enemies".<sup>27</sup> These enemies included the Mennonite colonists who were, in the eyes of the Ukrainian peasant, members of the bourgeois class. Between April 15 and 17, just prior to the arrival of German troops in the Ukraine, the violence reached its peak. It was during this period that the idea of organized self-defense seems to have taken root and begun to grow among the colonists. One eye-witness described the acceleration of defense activities in Halbstadt:

...Before the next night (April 16) our families fled, so that there were mostly men left in the village. Also, guns have been received from Tokmak for our militia men... the guard in the village has been strengthened further. Besides the armed riders, half of the village stood guard during the first half of the night, and the rest took the second watch.<sup>28</sup>

The inhabitants of Tiege in the Zagradowka Colony devised an effective method of dealing with marauders. When the regular guard proved insufficient, a group of 18 young men decided to organize themselves secretly for self-defense. They had weapons of a sort, Strohstoেকে, clubs and torches and had devised a unique method of sounding an alarm. They stationed themselves in hedges throughout the village and when suspicion was aroused one of them would throw a lighted torch into a yard, thus alerting the rest who would rush to the spot within minutes. The group apparantly was so

"secret" that everyone soon knew about it and it was not long before the entire village, including the preachers, gave it full support. They still did not have any real weapons however, and so it was decided to send three men as a deputation to ask the advancing German army for help. The three survived a Red ambush along way and managed to make contact with a German regiment at Kriwoj Rog. At first the German officer did not trust them but after they convinced him of their sincerity, he ordered a company with a field-cannon to accompany them back to Tiege and to fire a few shots over the neighbouring Ukrainian villages along the way.<sup>29</sup>

In summary then, it is evident that the Mennonites had for some time prior to 1918 found it necessary to protect their property from theft and destruction. At first a single nightwatchman sufficed but as the frequency and violence of bandit attacks increased, it became necessary to strengthen the guard. Eventually some villages devised a rotating system of guards which involved participation of all the able-bodied males. There is no evidence up to this point of an overall plan for defence nor even of any coordination between villages. An air of secrecy prevailed because many Mennonites held firmly to their belief in Wehrlosigkeit. Even so, it would seem that all the colonists, whatever their belief, benefited from the protection offered by the guard. The Mennonite churches took no open or organized stand on the issue. However, a comment by one eye-witness is quite

revealing: "Alle waren sie dabei. Alle Prediger jeder Schattierung." (Everybody was for it. All the preachers of every persuasion.)<sup>30</sup> It would be interesting to speculate as to how the situation might have developed had the Germans not occupied the Ukraine.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Gerhard Lohrenz, Fire over Zagradovka, (Steinbach, Man.: by the author, 1982), p. 12. B. J. Dyck in a letter to B. B. Janz, September 1978, gives a similar description of the armed Cossack guard but goes on to say that there were heated arguments among the Mennonites as to whether or not hiring such a guard was consistent with their non-resistant position. See "Hier kurz etwas ueber den Selbstschutz der 'wehrlosen' Mennoniten im Sueden Ruzslands [sic] vom Juli, 1918 - Maerz, 1919." B. B. Janz papers.  
According to Klippenstein, "As far back as late March, 1883 [when] the Mennonites had their first encounter with nomadic and marauding tribesmen.... [who] began to break into houses, looking for money or clothing, and setting the buildings on fire as they left...the dilemma of whether or not to fight back faced the Mennonites almost daily." The senior leaders allowed only canes, clubs and sticks for defense. The cold-blooded stabbing of one of the settlers finally brought the crisis to a head. "After much debate the Mennonite settlers found an uneasy compromise...the community hired two armed Cossack guardsmen to protect the settlement." The watchmen were paid 12 rubles a month. "Mennonite Pacifism", pp. 113-114.
2. Gerhard Lohrenz, The Fateful Years 1913-1923, (Winnipeg, Man.: by the author, 1978), p. 85.
3. Dyck diary entry for April 10, 1917.
4. Peters, Gerald, ed. Diary of Anna Baerg 1916-1924, Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1985, entry for July 3, 1917.
5. Dyck diary entry for August 31, 1917.
6. A general amnesty was declared by the Provisional Government after the downfall of Tsarism in March, 1917, Chamberlin, The Russian Revolution, Vol. 2, p. 233. See also Michael Paliy, The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno 1918-1921. An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976), p. 25. Diary entries such as that of Anna Baerg on March 31, 1918 indicate the fear created by these released convicts. She tells of a rape committed in a nearby village by "this Lunov character...They say he had been put in an asylum for a similar crime, but when the Revolution began and all the prisons were opened, he was

free to do as he pleased..."

7. Palij writes that early in 1918, there were close to one hundred thousand Russian officers in the main Ukrainian cities, and that the movement through the Ukraine of active and demobilized soldiers, especially deserters, made it difficult to maintain order. Anarchism, pp. 25-26. An eye-witness to these events, Gerhard P. Schroeder, writes that many of the soldiers were still armed. Miracles of Grace and Judgement, (Lodi, Calif.: by the author, 1974).
8. Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, p. 409.
9. John B. Toews, Lost Fatherland, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1867.), pp. 25-26.
10. Ibid, p. 26. Toews claims that losses in the Halbstadt volost approached three and one-half million rubles (approximately one and three-quarter million dollars). He describes the murder, robbery, and violence during the Bolshevik occupation of Halbstadt in "Volost", pp. 489-514. See also George G. Thielman, "The Mennonite 'Selbstschutz' in the Ukraine During the Revolution", The New Review X, (March, 1970), 50-60; and Frank H. Epp, Mennonite Exodus, (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1962), p. 33.
11. Toews, "Origins and Activities", p. 14.
12. Baerg diary entry for February 6, 1918.
13. Lohrenz, Fateful, p. 85.
14. Dyck diary entries for February 5 to 8, 1918. The Waisenkasse contained the funds of the Waisenamt which was an organization set up for settling the accounts of the estates of orphans and widows. The orphans' funds were safeguarded until they reached the age of 21. Trustees for widows, and guardians for minors were appointed to take responsibility for their money. The Waisenamt also functioned as a bank to give loans. See Kroeker, Mennonite Villages, pp. 116-118.
15. Zagradowka was founded as a daughter colony of the Molotschna in 1871. See chart in the appendix.
16. Letter from A. A. Wiens to B. B. Janz, "Anfang des mennonitischen Selbstschutzes wie ich ihn miterlebte", B. B. Janz papers.
17. Ibid

18. After the tsar's abdication in March 1917, the Ukrainians attempted to form their own government under the Central Rada, or council. It was this leadership body that asked for a separate peace with the Central Powers and signed the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk on February 9, 1918. Lenin and his new government did not agree to the treaty until March 3. See Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, Vol. 1, Chapter XVIII, "Brest-Litovsk: The Struggle for Peace"., pp. 389-413. According to Chamberlin, "The Peace of Brest-Litovsk sounded the deathknell of the newly established Soviet regimes in Ukraina and in Finland. In Ukraina the small, poorly trained Red force which had been able to overcome the still weaker troops of the Rada, proved quite unable to resist the regular German and Austrian armies." p. 408.
19. Batko in Ukrainian literally means "little father". Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, Vol. 2, p. 233.
20. Ibid.
21. Victor Peters, Nestor Makhno. The Life of an Anarchist. Winnipeg, Man.: Echo Verlag, 1876, pp. 26-28. According to Peters, Makhno seemed to have acquired his sense of mission while in prison, probably due to Arshinov's influence. See also Chamberlin, Vol. 2, pp. 233-236.
22. For further reading on the anarchist point of view, see Peters, Makhno, pp. 28-29; Palij, Anarchism, chapter 5, "The Anarchism of the Peasants and Makhno"; and Peter Arshinov, The History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921. (Detroit: Black & Red, 1974).
23. Peters describes Makhno's triumphant return in Makhno, p. 28.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid, pp. 29-31.
26. Ibid. For a description of Makhno's terrorist tactics see pp. 31-33.
27. Giesinger, Catherine, p. 262.
28. Dyck diary entry for April 15 and 18, 1918. Thielman writes, "Prisons were opened and bands of freed convicts and political prisoners streamed out to plunder the countryside. Under the impact of this harassment the Mennonites eventually changed their attitude toward the doctrine of nonresistance, a principle deeply imbedded in

their religious faith and practice." "Mennonite Selbstschutz", p. 51.

29. Wiens, "Anfang". Wiens was one of the three men sent for aid.

30. Ibid.

#### IV. EVOLUTION OF SELF DEFENCE WITHIN THE MENNONITE COLONIES IN THE UKRAINE

##### 2. Organization of Self-Defense Units During the German Occupation

By 1918, after four years of war, the Central Powers were casting about for new sources of food and raw materials and they looked to the Ukraine to replenish their supplies. The Ukraine, struggling to establish its independence and faced with the threat of Soviet domination, needed a strong ally. That they should turn to each other for help was understandable. On February 9, 1918, the Ukraine put an end to its participation in the War by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. On February 17, the Central Rada appealed to the Central Powers for assistance in repelling the Bolshevik invasion.<sup>1</sup> A day later, the Germans under Field Marshal von Eichhorn advanced into the Ukraine. Meeting no resistance from the fleeing Soviet armies, they took Lutsk on February 19, and Zhitomir on February 24. By March 2, Kiev was in German hands and other points in southern Ukraine were held by Austrian troops. By the end of April, German and Austro-Hungarian forces had effectively occupied all the Ukraine, the Crimea, and areas adjacent to the northern Caucasus.<sup>2</sup>



The arrival of German troops caught the Mennonites by surprise. The Mennonite world had isolated itself from the mainstream of events and existed within a sort of vacuum, relying to a great extent on rumours for information. Feelings of disbelief and then of relief swept through the colonies:

Then [with the German occupation] came a short respite, during which tears and repentance were turned into expressions of gratitude and joy....This was a most welcome<sup>3</sup> period of peace, a breathing space sent by God.

Never in the history of the colonies had there been such celebration and expression of joy as<sup>4</sup> on the day of the coming of the German armies.

Hurrah! Our liberators have finally arrived - not quite, actually, but Melitopol, the neighboring town, has been taken. This time it's the truth.<sup>5</sup>..But we want to thank God for our liberation.

✧  
About 5 o'clock a long train of Prussians arrived in Halbstadt. They were greeted joyfully by the populace. It was such an up-lifting sight that one's eyes filled with tears.<sup>6</sup>

On April 19 the first trainload of German troops arrived at the Lichtenau Station in Molotschna.<sup>7</sup> One observer described the atmosphere of mystery and excitement that preceeded the arrival of the troop train...."big things are happening. Our tormentors have suddenly disappeared .... People are rushing to the railway depot".<sup>8</sup> Apparently there were no Russians or Ukrainians among this group, only Mennonites and a few Germans from nearby Prishib. "Tables were brought and set up on the platform; and as if by magic

coffee and cookies and other foods appeared. Mennonite girls stood behind the tables ready to serve....A train slowly approached. Soldiers in German uniform stood on the locomotive."<sup>9</sup> Then an incident occurred which shocked many of those present. Three prisoners, well-known bandits and murderers, were brought forward from one of the coaches and shot by the Germans in sight of everybody. To be sure, they were murderers, but they were also Ukrainians and they were being shot by German invaders in a town populated by German-speaking people who were welcoming them with joy and celebration.<sup>10</sup> The Mennonites thus firmly identified themselves with their "liberators". Had the Mennonites known, or even suspected, that the Germans would be forced to evacuate the Ukraine within nine months, they might have behaved quite differently.

The jubilant welcome extended by the Mennonites to the occupying troops was, in retrospect, a mistake and was remembered by the local inhabitants when the power structure in the Ukraine changed. Another mistake made by some Mennonite individuals was also remembered and bitterly resented by their neighbours. During the German occupation, Hetman Skoropadsky<sup>11</sup> launched a program of restoring confiscated property to its previous owners throughout the Ukraine. The German army was used as the instrument of this policy. There were instances where Mennonites accompanied German military units on house-to-house searches in order to identify culprits and retrieve the stolen goods.<sup>12</sup> A

Mennonite eyewitness gives his version of the attitude of the villagers regarding the return of their goods:

"Did you hear the cannons thunder this morning?" asked one neighbor of another.

"Yes, they say it is the German army which is coming closer to our vicinity. Our storekeeper came from the city last night, and he brought us the news that the Germans are only about twenty miles from here."

"That is great. We will get all our property back from these thieves and let them feel how wrong it is to steal and plunder."

"If only the German army would come a little bit faster," said the next neighbor. "Don't you think we should send a delegation secretly and tell them that we will help them if only they will help us to get back our property?"

"I think it is very risky to do, since you cannot tell how things will turn out. I prefer to wait."<sup>13</sup>

But the attitude of the local peasants was quite different:

They wished they would have the chance to keep everything they had gotten from their wealthier neighbors. It was so nice to sleep on these cozy pillows, the like of which they had never had before. It was so bright by the light of these good kerosene lamps, the like of which they had never possessed previously. And these good horses...It was such a pleasure to work the fields with them....the most bitter anger he [the peasant] felt was when the former rich landowner came accompanied with foreign soldiers and demanded his property back....Not only the livestock, but all other articles had to be returned. It seemed funny at times to see and hear how these rich women went to the houses of the poor and demanded back their pillows, lamps, chickens, pets and jars. Here is where the real hatred was engendered....We, including myself, did not realize that by being tolerant and willing to part with some of our earthly possessions, we could perhaps have saved many lives later on.<sup>14</sup>

Not all of the Mennonites pursued the return of their stolen property and for this reason, some sources argue, these

people escaped the retribution which followed on the heels of the German withdrawal.<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to assess just how much collaboration there actually was between the Mennonites and the occupation armies, but it seems to have been considerable. There is even reference to Mennonites loaning funds to the German occupation government.<sup>16</sup> Certainly in the eyes of the Ukrainian peasant, Mennonite behavior during the German occupation proved that their loyalties lay with the Germans and that they were actually collaborating with them.

It has been pointed out that for some time before the arrival of German troops, Mennonites had been organizing at the local level to deal with the pillaging and daylight robbery which had become so commonplace throughout the region. The German presence not only allowed the Mennonites to organize openly but encouraged them to do so by providing arms and leadership. According to one participant:

We had the attitude before, but then they [the Germans] trained us. We young boys had to go out to Halbstadt, which was about 6, 7 kilometers away. We had to get up at about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning when it was dark yet in summer and were trained there three hours, come back and sleep in the afternoon and then take in for faspa [afternoon coffee], after lunchtime in the afternoon, after coffee, we had to go for another three hours. For six hours they would train us.<sup>17</sup>

Whether participation in the drilling exercises was voluntary is unclear. In the above quotation the phrase "we had to" is used repeatedly giving the impression that they had no choice. Other sources use similar expressions such as they

were "required to" and they were "conscripted".<sup>18</sup> One historian, on the other hand, uses terms such as "urged to join" and "standard policy", implying that there was freedom of choice.<sup>19</sup> Two of the more objective primary sources suggest that, although the Mennonites were not conscripted, there was considerable pressure on them to organize. The Germans, for reasons of their own, encouraged them in every possible way, even resorting to threats.<sup>20</sup> Impetus seems also to have come from the Mennonites themselves:

The German occupation also gave a tremendous impetus to translate into reality plans which a number of young Mennonites, with the support from prosperous farmers, had recommended in various Mennonite colonies even prior to the arrival of foreign troops. Their contemplated plans, strongly resisted by the Mennonite clergy and many of the elder servicemen of World War I, urged the organization of a Selbstschutz.<sup>21</sup>

It would, of course, have been in their own best interests for the wealthier landowners to encourage formation of a self-defence organization. Schroeder expresses the view that the Mennonites had become far too materialistic and that protection of property was probably the chief motive behind the self-defence movement.<sup>22</sup> Dyck is of the same opinion and claims, moreover, that the participants in self-defence were paid:

As of today, the drill will take place in our meadow. A German lance-corporal has been assigned to them as drillmaster. In payment, the participants in the Selbstschutz have been promised Stiefelgeld...by the village.<sup>23</sup>

And in an entry eleven days later:

In the evening, there was a village meeting at

our house, regarding the Stiefelgeld. Actually, the promise of 250 rubles Stiefelgeld was made too hastily. As a result, some of them joined the Selbstschutz merely for money. Such Stiefelhelden...are unreliable and unwanted. It would have been best to draft men of a certain age for the guard. Then there would have been no accusations by the farmers and those that do not own<sup>24</sup> land, and no Stiefelgeld would have been needed.

And two months later:

At the village meeting today it was decided to cover the costs for the Stiefelgeld, as well as other costs, by collecting two-thirds as a<sup>25</sup> property tax, and one-third as a head tax.

It would seem then that participation in the Selbstschutz was voluntary, but was encouraged by landowners who were willing to pay others (the less wealthy among them) for protection.

The idea of self-defence gained momentum and its proponents became increasingly bold. On April 23 at a district meeting at Halbstadt delegates agreed that a self-defense organization for the colony had become an absolute necessity. A proposal by the German Captain Mueller found unanimous support. The security force of the volost was set at 32 men and leadership of the unit was placed in the hands of J. F. Sudermann.<sup>26</sup> By May 18 Selbstschutz units had been formed in Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld, Tiege, and Tiegenhagen in the Molotschna Colony. Some Mennonite villages, however, decided against organizing. At Grigorievka a majority of men, led by Jacob Krahn and the minister Jacob Berg, successfully withstood the efforts of the local German commander to create self-defense units.<sup>27</sup>

And so as the War neared its end in the autumn of 1918,

the young Mennonites were happily participating in military "games", while their elders were meeting to organize self-defense units, all with the help and encouragement of the German officers. A question which comes to mind is, if the Selbstschutz was purely defensive in character, as many Mennonites claimed, why was it necessary to begin organizing and training it during the German Occupation? Given the welcome they extended to the Occupation troops, it would seem that many, if not most, of the Mennonites believed the Germans were in the Ukraine to stay. Why then the need for "self-defense"?

## FOOTNOTES

1. Xenia Joukoff Eudin, "The German Occupation of the Ukraine in 1918. A Documentary Account", Russian Review I (November, 1941), pp. 90-105. Eudin quotes from instructions of the German Foreign office to Baron Mumm, its representative in Kiev, on March 26, 1918: "...Our military intervention in the Ukraine is justified by the request of the Rada for help. We have recognized the Rada as the legal government of the Ukrainian Republic and have concluded peace with its representatives. The above facts must determine our further relations with the Ukraine if we wish to be consistent in our policy. Moreover, the main purpose of our occupation is to secure the export of grain from the Ukraine to countries of the Central Powers. p. 93.
2. Henry Cord Meyer, "Germans in the Ukraine, 1918. Excerpts from Unpublished Letters", Slavic and East European Review, hereafter cited as SEER, IX (April, 1950), 105-115. See p. 105.
3. Bernhard J. Dyck, "Something about the 'Selbstschutz' of the Mennonites in South Russia" (July, 1918-March, 1919), JMS, Vol. 4 (1986), 135-142. See p. 136.
4. "The Mennonites of South Russia During the Time of the War and the Revolution", Christian Monitor, August, 1920, p. 625. The account, translated by the editor, was written by a prominent South Russian Mennonite and brought from Russia by G. G. Hiebert.
5. Baerg diary entry for April 17, 1918.
6. Dick Diary entry for April 19, 1918.
7. Toews, Origins and Activities, p. 15.
8. Lohrenz, Fateful, p. 89.
9. Gerhard Lohrenz, Storm Tossed. The Personal Story of a Canadian Mennonite from Russia, (Winnipeg, Man.: by the author, 1976.), p.11.
10. Ibid, p. 11.
11. For a detailed account of how the Occupation Army overthrew the Rada and installed their puppet government under the Hetman Skoropadsky, see Eudin, "German Occupation", p. 96; and Basil Dmytryshyn, "German Occupation of the Ukraine, 1918. Some New Evidence?", SEER, X (Autumn/Winter, 1965-1966), pp. 79-92.



12. Toews, Czars, p. 82.
13. Schroeder, Miracles, pp. 28-29.
14. Ibid.
15. See H. Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe u. Treue zum Kaisertrone erhaelt einen Schlag u. wird schwer gepruft.", p. 1, B. B. Janz papers.
16. Epp, Exodus, p. 33.
17. Interview with Mr. John Dyck for the motion picture "And When They Shall Ask, the Story of the Mennonites from Russia", Dueck Film Productions Ltd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.
18. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 224.
19. Toews, "Origin and Activities", p. 16.
20. According to Gerhard Schroeder, German officers, and to a lesser extent, Austrian officers, strongly encouraged the institution of such self-defense units, in part because of the dangers of bandit attack on their own small garrisons and lines of communication. See Miracles, p. 29. B. J. Dyck thinks that the example set by the German soldiers was an important impetus to acceptance of the Selbstschutz idea. "...through their courageous, bold actions against the Anarchists, the first flickers of the 'Selbstschutz' were fanned among our men into a blazing fire as never before .... 'These are real men, all right, they aren't afraid, they keep on going, they help us even though they don't know us.'" "Something About the
21. Schroeder, Miracles, p. 29.
22. Ibid.
23. Dyck diary entry for July 4, 1918. Stiefelgeld translates literally as "boot money" but probably has a broader meaning and possibly equates to our term "pocket money".
24. Ibid
25. Ibid, September 5, 1918.
26. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p.224.
27. Ibid, p. 225.

#### IV. EVOLUTION OF SELF DEFENCE WITHIN THE MENNONITE COLONIES IN THE UKRAINE

##### 3. The Lichtenau Conference and its Consequences

The time had come for the neutral Mennonite community to clarify its position on self-defence. An opportunity to do so presented itself at the meeting of the General Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia in Lichtenau on June 30 to July 2, 1918.<sup>1</sup> Chairman, J. Janzen, a minister from Tiege, set aside the conference agenda and called on the members to consider first the question that was threatening to divide their community. He asked them to address themselves specifically to a directive from the German military commander at Berdiansk requesting that a self-defense militia be formally established in all the German colonies of the Ukraine. He awaited a reply by July 4 along with names of all congregations which opposed this military measure.<sup>2</sup>

Chairman Janzen, in his opening remarks stated that Mennonites as a whole had already forsaken nonresistance. Mennonites, he said, must either repent or divide into armed and unarmed, whereby nonresistance would become a matter for each individual. The debate began with a discussion of the

Biblical basis for non-resistance, went on to reflect on the legacy of Anabaptist nonresistance, and the importance of a reliance upon God for protection. Those who rejected nonresistance contrasted the ideal with the reality, claiming that the practice of the ideal in the present circumstances was impossible. The immediate reality for some delegates was fear of bandit reprisals should the occupation army withdraw from the Ukraine. Throughout the debate, there was evidence of an awareness of responsibility to Russia in view of privileges granted the Mennonites in the past. However, as is so often the case at conferences, the delegates discussed the topic (in this case non-resistance) from every conceivable point of view and yet missed the main point. This point, which is central to the ideal of non-resistance, was raised by one of the delegates, G. Rempel. What he said, basically, was that non-resistance could not exist without privilege, that is without the protection of the state.<sup>3</sup> Rempel's statement fell on barren ground as succeeding delegates hastened to make their own presentations.<sup>4</sup>

The debate dramatically illustrated how divided the Mennonite community was with regard to non-resistance. The delegates finally elected a commission to formulate a resolution which could be presented to the conference. This resolution reaffirmed the Mennonite belief in nonresistance, but advocated tolerance for individual church members not sharing this view. The commission's reply to the German commander was that the Mennonite position had actually little

to do with the Germans, in effect that it was really none of their business. Representatives were elected to go to the German headquarters at Berdjansk, Melitapol and Tokmak to make the necessary clarifications in person ("muendlich die noetigen Erlaeuterungen machen"). The conference granted its members the right of private interpretation on the question of pacifism and in so doing gave recognition to the status quo.<sup>5</sup>

The Lichtenau Conference had effectively given carte blanche to proponents of self-defense to continue organizing. By early summer regular defense units had been established in several villages in the Molotschna (Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld, Tiege, Tiegenhagen, Ladekopp, Muntau). According to one source, all men between the ages of 19 and 25 "should" report for drilling exercises and in some areas most men up to 40 volunteered.<sup>6</sup> Another account states that the participants were those between 18 and 20 and several older individuals who were more or less motivated by the love of adventure. The writer goes on to describe the drilling:

On the village green there were drills in German fashion: the various weapons which could be found were shouldered. German officers, non-commissioned officers, sergeants and other adventurers drilled our lads to their heart's content whereby the German anthem was sung with great enthusiasm.

And from P. J. Dyck's diary:

The Selbstschutz from Ladekopp, Halbstadt, Muntau and Tiegenhagen held war maneuvers [sic] in the meadows, roads and woods of Tiegenhagen. The Bayerische [Austrian] cavalry practiced on their big Oldenburgern [breed of horses].<sup>8</sup>

In Zagradovka colony, in the village of Tiege:

In the month of May, on the village meadow, the first big target practice by Mennonite youth took place. But there was no work for this Selbstschutz. Why, the Germans were there. Over the summer it stayed peaceful.

Leadership seems to have come from German Army officers but there is evidence of considerable Mennonite participation at subordinate levels.<sup>10</sup> A cavalry unit of 10-12 men and a machine gun unit stood on guard in every village with the Germans supplying the guns and ammunition.<sup>11</sup> Some of the Mennonite units performed gymnastic feats at the Ludendorffeste in Halbstadt and other centres. These festivals, named in honour of the German Field Marshal Eric von Ludendorff, were patriotic celebrations organized by the German Army in various places populated by German settlers. Festivities included patriotic speeches and dancing to a military band. The social implications of participation in these events disturbed many Mennonites. J.P. Epp cites the "tactless familiarity with the occupation army through the Ludendorffeste and the moral surrender of our youth to the military by our fathers" as contributing factors to the emergence of the Selbstschutz.<sup>12</sup> Excerpts from diaries tend to support this view:

The civilians [Mennonites] took part in these festivities enthusiastically....I am not aware that any cultural activities took place. The most important thing was to drink beer, which our youth were thoroughly introduced to....The whole affair demoralized our society. It got in touch with the outside world and out of our isolation, much to our detriment.<sup>13</sup>

What must the Germans think of us? A number of important people have already criticized the conduct of our girls with the German officers. The noble and true womanly pride seems to have been lost in this generation of women....That has been proven by the latest "Ludendorf" [sic] festival (At present there are a great many of these so-called Ludendorf festivals in Russia, given by the German soldiers in order to raise spirits. Their success has been enormous. The major ingredients of these festivals are marching music, soccer, and dancing.) There are probably a lot of Mennonite women who don't take part, and perhaps the above mentioned are only the sad exceptions. Nevertheless, the disgrace seems to fall on all.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, it can be said that the Lichtenau Conference was a perfect example of Mennonite Taufferkrankheit in action. The delegates, unable to arrive at a consensus, left the ultimate decision up to individual conscience. By failing to condemn the Selbstschutz, they allowed its proponents to organize openly. But by failing to approve the Selbstschutz, they deprived it of the support that would have enabled it grow into a strong and unified force. Outsiders did not make allowances for those individuals who made the agonizing decision to abstain from fighting. In their eyes, the Mennonites as a group (not only some of the Mennonites) were hypocrites who used the non-resistance argument only when it suited them.<sup>15</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. The General Conference of the Mennonite Congregations in Russia, grew out of a rather informal counsel of Mennonite elders of Russia. Their chief concerns were the question of military conscription and the Russianization of the Mennonite schools. Growing necessity for official Mennonite representation in dealing with the government prompted them to organize officially in 1883. Until 1910 the organization dealt primarily with internal church matters. With the year 1910 great changes were inaugurated. The list of delegates and the program had to be submitted to the Russian government for approval prior to receiving official permission for holding the conference, which was from then on always held in the presence of a government representative. All minutes had to be kept in the Russian language. During the war years, 1914-1916, no conference sessions were held.
2. Toews, Documents. The minutes of the 1918 General Conference of Mennonites in Russia, held in Lichtenau, are recordedd on pp. 404-427.
3. Ibid, p. 412.
4. Peter H. Rempel, "Nonresistance without Privilege. The Dilemma of the Russian Mennonites 1917-1927", unpublished paper, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, 1976.
5. Klippenstein, expresses it this way: "With understandable latitude the delegates had side-stepped a head-on confrontation over the issue of arming the colonies, while insisting that in the essentials of their faith nothing had changed." "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 229.
6. "Hier kurz etwas", B. B. Janz papers.
7. J. P. Epp, "Die Entstehung des S. Schutzes", B. B. Janz Papers, published as "The Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine. An Eyewitness Account," in ML XXVI (July, 1971), pp. 138-142 as edited by John B. Toews.
8. Dyck diary entry for August 8, 1918.
9. Translated from p. 2 of "Anfang".
10. Toews, "Volost", p. 494.
11. Toews, "Origins and Activities", p. 16.

12. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 1.
13. Dyck diary entry for July 4, 1918.
14. Baerg diary entry for July 23, 1918.
15. A. N. Ipatow, Wer sind die Mennoniten? (Alma, Alta.: Verlag Kazakhstan, 1977), p. 34. Ipatow writes that the Mennonites changed their religious principles like a chameleon. "So wechselten bei den Mennoniten ihre Art der religios-sozialen Prinzipien gleich einem Chamaeleon."



#### IV. EVOLUTION OF SELF DEFENCE WITHIN THE MENNONITE COLONIES IN THE UKRAINE

##### 4. Organization After German Withdrawal

In accordance with the Armistice of November 11, 1918, the Central Powers began withdrawing their armies from the Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> The Occupation Command, which had controlled the Ukraine through its puppet government under Hetman Skoropadsky for less than eight months had succeeded in its goal of procuring large quantities of foodstuffs and raw materials for military use and civilian consumption back home. The occupation left the Ukraine depleted both economically and politically. Because the Occupation Command had controlled by force, its withdrawal resulted in chaos which paved the way for the Bolshevik return to the Ukraine. Had the Germans adopted a policy of strengthening and supporting the Rada, the Ukraine would not have been left without leadership during the crucial period following withdrawal of the occupation troops. As it was, the stage was set for civil war. Over the next two years the Ukraine became the battlefield on which the future of southern Russia was decided. Between 1918 and 1920 there were more than a dozen changes of regime as Reds, Whites, and Anarchists swept back and forth over the Ukraine. The term "Reds" generally

**Source:** N.V. Riasonovsky. *A History of Russia*, p. 465

**Source:** N.V. Riasonovsky. *A History of Russia*, p. 465

- ← Farthest Russian advance  
in Germany and Austria, 1914

- x Major battle sites

- ## Principal Russian railways



refers to Pro-Bolshevik forces, fighting under the red flag of the new revolutionary government. The counter-revolutionaries, or "Whites" were a voluntary army which represented all the various anti-Bolshevik groups, generally right wing and favoring the old tsarist regime. The White Army, under General Denikin and later General Wrangel, established fronts in Samara, the valley of the Don River, South Russia, North-West and Far Northern Russia. As the conflict progressed, it became evident that the decisive battles would be fought on the South Russian plains. In the resulting confusion, anarchists and lawless elements had free reign. By late fall of 1918 the Whites, under General Denikin, had made major advances in South Russia, developing a major center of resistance around Ekaterinodar in the Kuban, and at Kiev in the Ukraine. The major forces of the offensive did not reach the Ukraine until the spring of 1919, but by the late fall of 1918, a segment of the army under General Tillo had advanced as far as Melitopol, and some of the Russian officers had penetrated the Mennonite colonies.<sup>2</sup>

Long before February 1, when the last German units departed from the Ukraine, Makhno's bands had resumed their terrorist activities.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the summer and fall of 1918, they increased in number and strength and openly interfered with the shipment of grain, cattle, and supplies to the Central Powers.<sup>4</sup> The Germans, in retaliation, executed individual bandits and occasionally levelled to the ground entire villages suspected of housing guerrillas.<sup>5</sup> The

partisans in turn took open revenge against colonists who were suspected, often not without reason, of being on the side of the occupying troops.<sup>6</sup> As rumours of the Central Powers' impending defeat spread throughout the colonies, so did fear. Lawlessness increased, especially on the outskirts of the Molotschna where the large Mennonite estates were located. On Apanlee, just south of the Colony, the residents lived in dread:

Last week there was a holdup at one of the local farms. No one lost his life, but horses and clothing were stolen....unrest and terror are emerging everywhere. One band of terrorists is particularly prominent,<sup>7</sup> headed by a man who calls himself "Makhno."

And on September 25 on Peter J. Dyck's estate to the northwest of the Molotschna:

K. Loewen's son, David, accompanied Mrs. Gooszen....to Rosenhof to get some of her things. They were shot and killed near Gooszen's Ekonomie (estate).<sup>8</sup>

And on September 29:

Mill owner Fast and his family were murdered at the station in Grieschino. Nearby, at Yurjewka, Mrs. Thomas Wiens and two of her sons were killed....in Herzenberg three families were murdered.

Makhno's next target was the small outlying villages on the fringe of the colonies, particularly those in the neighbourhood of his home base in Gulai Polye. Victims of the terror sought refuge in the larger towns in the center of the colonies. Accounts of the horror suffered by the refugees, the looting, burning, rape and murder, inflamed the already fearful colonists.<sup>10</sup> Gerhard Schroeder, a teacher in

Schoenfeld in the Mennonite settlement of Brasol located on the northern fringe of the Chortitza Colony, described the sense of urgency that gripped the residents:

One Sunday morning in October of this year [1918], while enroute to church services, I was surprised to see the streets so deserted. There was neither person nor vehicle visible anywhere. My apprehension grew as I entered the church.... Everyone waited with some foreboding. Finally, the pastor, Rev. Jacob L. Dyck entered the sanctuary. He went to the pulpit and quietly announced that word had been received that Makhno with a sizeable force had arrived in a neighboring village about eight miles distant from Schoenfeld. It was clear to everyone what this meant--murder, looting and raping. Thereupon Rev. Dyck asked the assembled for advice as to what the community should do in the imminence of a possible early arrival of the brigands. I recall a man, possibly in his forties, getting up and suggesting that since many of the inhabitants had plenty of rifles and ammunition in their homes [underlining is mine] the best procedure would be to have everyone go home, pick up his weapons and return to Schoenfeld and be prepared for self-defense. I do not recall whether there was much discussion on this recommendation, but the pastor asked for those in favor of the suggestion to rise. The majority of the men did.

But there were also voices of opposition, particularly from members of our Bible study and prayer group. And then there was the old Mrs. Warkentin, mother of one of the deacons of our church, who advised that we stay in church and pray. Her advice went unheeded. The meeting closed without any attempt to hold a service. The men<sup>11</sup> went home and soon returned with their arms.

As it turned out, Makhno did not advance to Schoenfeld, but sent word the next day that he would leave the village unharmed if the residents would surrender all their weapons at a specified place. This they did.

Panic gripped the colonists as they began to realize the

horrible reality of their helplessness in the face of Makhno's forces. With growing urgency, church and community leaders discussed the burning question of self-defense. Special district meetings were held throughout the Molotschna Colony.<sup>12</sup> At the Halbstadt volost meeting in Rueckenau, refugees demanded revenge and recovery of their stolen property.<sup>13</sup> A proposal to arm all the men between 30 and 37 came before the assembly. The responses varied and procedures became stormy but in the end all resistance to the idea of organizing was beaten down. When a Rosenort representative, Peter Bergmann, appealed to Mennonite tradition and reliance on God, chairman Henry Schroeder shouted at him to "Get out!". When Bergmann continued to protest, Schroeder yelled, "Lead him out!". Needless to say, the proposal to arm was carried.<sup>14</sup>

A similar mood prevailed in Alexandertal. In that village, the leading men of the Mennonite Brethren church were opposed to armed resistance. Two days before the general meeting, the minister Heinrich Goossen, made an appeal from the pulpit based on Isaiah 59:1 and 2: "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear dull that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you." On Tuesday when the assembly convened, the members found that a German-speaking officer, a non-Mennonite, had been invited to the meeting and had been made chairman. The officer shouted:

You farmers destroy the weeds among your grain, without pangs of conscience. Who is Makhno? A weed that is worse than weeds, and he must be destroyed. Furthermore if a rabbit destroys a young tree in your garden, you shoot without further consideration. Who is Makhno? An animal, worse than an animal who must be shot down. If there is someone here who for conscience' sake does not wish to take a<sup>15</sup> gun and shoot Makhno, please identify yourself.

The minister who had spoken on the preceding Sunday replied, "I am one who on the basis of God's Word will not take a gun." The officer replied, "We will place you before a court of White officers and shoot you down like a dog."

At a meeting in the Gnadenfeld volost, a minister from the Mennonite Church in Rudnerweide called for the assembly to reassert a four-hundred-year loyalty to the peace principle. "Spit in his face!" the chairman shouted. "My finger will pull the trigger as long as it has the power to do so!" Here too, the assembly decided in favor of compulsory mobilization.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile individual churches in villages like Alexandertal, Halbstadt, Rueckenau, Tiegenhagen, Sparrau, and Waldheim held special meetings to clarify their position on the subject of organizing a Selbstschutz. Most of the 57<sup>17</sup> villages of the Molotschna pledged to support organized self-defense, but a few resisted the pressure to conform. Petershagen, although it lay directly along the northern front later established by the Selbstschutz, remained non-resistant as did Fischau, Rudnerweide and Pastwa.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to say whether the decision to organize

for defence reflected the feelings of the majority of Mennonites. Important questions such as these are often resolved, not by the majority, but rather by a vocal and energetic minority. According to Lohrenz, many people, even if they did not speak up when they should have, still clung to the principle of non-resistance and refused to be armed. It can not generally be said that members of one Mennonite church took one position and those of another church took a different position. The conflict cut across groups. Nor was it only militants like the chairman of the Alexandertal meeting who favoured resistance. Among those in favour were also respected and gentle men. They saw the savage deeds that were being committed - torture of innocent people, murders and fearful rapes - and they honestly believed that it was their duty to prevent such outrages, no matter what the cost. They cited the Bible: Abraham had armed his servants to save Lot, David had killed Goliath, Samson the Philistines.<sup>19</sup> There were, to be sure, also those Mennonites whose motives were not so selfless. According to some sources, the wealthier colonists were generally pro-Selbstschutz.<sup>20</sup>

Group pressure notwithstanding, the decision as to whether a man should take up weapons remained essentially his own. Numerous personal accounts, some quite dramatic, have been written by Mennonites justifying their decision to join the Selbstschutz. One participant for example, a married man of thirty from Halbstadt, claimed that the answer came to him



with absolute clarity when he saw women refugees from Prischib, covered with blood. They had been raped and had their breasts cut off. His only thought was to get home as fast as he could and shoulder his rifle.<sup>21</sup> Another young Mennonite recounts how he had lived his non-resistance until the age of thirty-four, serving with the Red Cross during World War I. The turning point for him came after hearing refugee reports of the brutal crimes perpetrated against women by the bandits. "I bought myself a gun and placed myself in the ranks of our Selbstschutz."<sup>22</sup> Accounts such as these lead one to believe that the Selbstschutz grew, not out of careful community deliberation, but rather from individual commitment based on the instinct for survival. To put it simply, the Selbstschutz grew out of fear.

In November, a formal organizational meeting was held in the Molotschna village of Tiegerweide, at which the volosts of Prischib (non-Mennonite Germans), Halbstadt, and Gnadenfeld agreed to combine their resources for armed resistance.<sup>23</sup> Each volost appointed a small coordinating body known as the Management (Wirtschafts) Committee. The Committee had direct links with Mennozentrum<sup>24</sup> and the administrative organs of the churches. From this it would appear that there was full agreement between the Selbstschutz leadership and Mennonite officialdom.<sup>25</sup> And yet, according to one participant, "The masses (Mennonites as a whole) knew nothing of all these procedures." He makes the following illuminating observation regarding the nature of Mennonitism:

Throughout the centuries Mennonitism developed an organizational talent which at times is downright secretive, more derived from instinct than the task at hand - like one finds in ants, bees and termites. For example one comes to a Mennonite conference with hundreds of delegates. One consults, proposes, talks, resolves, in spite of the fact that everything has been regulated<sup>26</sup> and decided long before by a few brethren.

There is little information available as to how the Selbstschutz was actually organized. There are probably a number of reasons for this. If, as Epp claims, the masses were kept in the dark, then it is quite possible that few records were kept. In any case, what we are left with is letters and the diaries of individual colonists. This kind of record can be inaccurate, especially in times of crisis when rumours abound. In addition, many of these letters and personal accounts were written with the benefit of hindsight and often for the purpose of self-justification. There is another reason for the lack of reliable information regarding organizational details. Records of that kind could be dangerous if they fell into the wrong hands and so many were destroyed. N. J. Kroeker, chairman of the self-defense committee in Chortitsa was forced to make a swift decision as to what to do with the papers belonging to his unit:

In the fall 1919 the huge army of bandits under their leader Makhno suddenly stormed through Khortitsa coming from Isium and going to Pology. I just happened to be in the barbershop near the bazaar. Barber Losiey talked to them and we were left alone. Then as soon as there was a lull as it seemed I slipped out by the back door and made my way to the volost. Not a soul was around. The doors stood wide open, the shelves had been smashed and papers were widely

strown [sic] on the floors. My desk, however was untouched and I quickly unlocked it. Hurridely [sic] I snatched all the papers of the "Selbstschutz" (self-defense) which contained all the lists of names of enrolled members, and burned them in the oven. This was just in time because our Russian custodian later informed me that the bandits had been searching for them.<sup>27</sup>

Even from the limited information that has come down to us, it is quite clear that the Selbstschutz was more than a spontaneous attempt by residents to defend their own property. It was organized, and, considering the desperate race against time, quite well organized. According to J. P. Epp, an active participant in the Molotschna Selbstschutz:

A Selbstschutz committee was elected to organize the villages; establish telephones and transport; build fortifications and trenches (at Hamberg and Klippenfeld); organize infantry, cavalry, mounted infantry and unified service branches; set up machine guns and one light field battery; supply materials to care for the families of impoverished Selbstschutz participants; establish a medical corps<sup>28</sup> and a staff for discipline and court-martial.

The picture that emerges as we read Epp's account is this:

There were twenty companies of infantry (of which seven came from the German Lutheran villages to the north of the Molotschna) numbering about 2700 men in all, and a cavalry of 300 divided into five detachments.<sup>29</sup>

Leadership at the highest levels was in the hands of German Army officers.

"These had left the German army because they had found somewhere a sweetheart by some large-scale farmers or

landowners or because they feared a court-martial upon their return to Germany."<sup>30</sup> Some sources add that leadership also

came from White Army officers, this as early as November of

1918 before the White Army occupied the Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> One participant states that German soldiers who had trained the colonists during the summer were left behind to give leadership and training after the occupation forces withdrew.<sup>32</sup> Whether they were left behind for that purpose, or whether they deserted, it is clear that some German officers did remain in the colonies and that they played an important part in organizing and training the Selbstschutz.<sup>33</sup> Later the White Army played an important role in the Selbstschutz organization and command. More will be said about this in the next section.

The self-defense units had little, if any, difficulty obtaining weapons. During the spring and summer, guns had been made available to the Mennonites by the occupation forces from the German Command in Melitopol.<sup>34</sup> In the fall of 1918 as the German army withdrew it "left plenty of weapons in the hands of the the colonists, including many Mennonites. By some the weapons were intended to be used solely for the purposes of self-defense, while others possibly hoped to use them to avenge themselves for the sufferings".<sup>35</sup>

An eye-witness states that "most Mennonites in his village returned their arms to the Germans except for fourteen who were "more sensible" and hid their weapons."<sup>36</sup> Another eyewitness who was in his teens at the time recalls:

And yet, we played soldiers all the time. Guns were to be had anywhere, as much as you like, as many as you like. All we needed to do, go to

the riverside and pick them up. The river was in many instances, the front. And we didn't have to look very far before<sup>37</sup> we could pick up a rifle or two, or a bayonet.

Later as the White Army advanced into the Ukraine, the Mennonites were able to obtain arms from the White arsenal in Sevastopol.<sup>38</sup>

There has been some debate about whether or not students from the Kommerzschule in Halbstadt participated in the Selbstschutz. George Thielman contends that they did not. His source is an unpublished manuscript written by Benjamin H. Unruh, a clergyman and former teacher at the Kommerzschule in Halbstadt. According to Unruh, the students of the secondary schools in Halbstadt and elsewhere were forbidden by the Administrative Council of the Faculty to take any leading part in the movement.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the key word here is "leading", meaning positions of command. Otherwise this statement makes absolutely no sense because all other sources give a different view. Peter Fast, a student at the Halbstadt Kommerzschule at that time, describes his participation in the Selbstschutz in an unusually well-written account.<sup>40</sup> He writes that drilling began in July, 1918, when the Germans made available instructors, weapons and ammunition. To enable the boys to help with the harvest, exercises were held between 5 and 8 in the morning. Young men between the ages of 19 and 25 were required to take part. (Fast uses the German verb sollen here which translates as "to be obliged or bound to; to have to; must".)

The boys were drilled on foot and on horseback, but the highlight was target practice. Thanks to "true German thoroughness" they spent a great deal of time in perfecting their skills. "We wore our epaulettes, embroidered with a Roman VIII, with pride. The whole thing was a lot of fun and it would probably never come to serious fighting. The Bandits would never dare to attack organized and armed colonists".<sup>41</sup> The catch phrase seems to have been "If you want peace, then prepare yourself for war". The last German troops left the area in November, including Sergeant Mueller under whom they had trained. "A few officers remained, however, and most of these played a leadership role in the the ensuing war."<sup>42</sup> Jacob Thiessen who was also in the Kommerzschule detachment states in his memoirs:

One of the German officers, by the name of Sonntag had stayed behind, and he trained the students of our college in warfare, and made out of the two hundred students quite a formidable military force....."<sup>43</sup>

Thiessen is speaking of the special Kommerzschule infantry unit, the "Shocktroops". About their activities more will be said later.

That the Kommerzschule students participated in the Selbstschutz is also confirmed by Mr. Julius Neustaedter, who attended the school as a youth and is presently living in Saskatoon. In an interview, he described his involvement with the Kommerzschule detachment:

It was exciting....The school had the biggest unit....We volunteered of our own free will....Not all the students joined, probably

less [in number] than [those who] didn't  
 [join]....The teachers had nothing to do with  
 it....No one forced us.<sup>44</sup>

According to Mr. Neustaedter, the boys were aged from sixteen years and wore their school uniforms. The Germans organized and drilled the unit on the Muntaur Wiese [Muntaur meadow]. They used real guns with wooden bullets so as not to waste ammunition. Their "leader" was Sonntag, a German, and there were no Mennonites involved in the drilling. When asked why he participated, Mr. Neustaedter replied that he had no regrets. "At that time it was the thing to do. I would do it again." When asked what his parents thought about his actions he chuckled and replied, "They didn't know. At least I didn't tell them." "Why didn't you tell them?" "They would have said you should be studying." "What did the ministers at school think about all this?" "They didn't talk about it."

Peter Rempel, also confirms Kommerzschule participation in the Selbstschutz:

The major centre of support and activity of the Selbstschutz was Halbstadt. The elder of the church at Halbstadt, Abraham Klassen, had led the struggle at the Lichtenau Conference and the faculty and students of the prestigious [sic]<sup>45</sup> School of Commerce supported the Selbstschutz.

Non-Mennonites were aware of the fact that some students were involved with the Selbstschutz. A. Reinmaris, for example, writes that, "Already on the second day after the "liberation", armed students from the Halbstadt Kommerzschule

were standing at their posts at the railway station". He is scornful of these "mennonitischer Bourgeois-Soehnchen" (little sons of the Mennonite Bourgeoisie).<sup>46</sup>

By the autumn of 1918 the Mennonite colonies presented quite a different picture than they had only a few months before. If a Swiss or Dutch Anabaptist ancestor had arrived in the Molotschna he would scarcely have believed that he was among his brethren. The once quiet pastoral villages bristled with weapons; sober, God-fearing men were frantically digging trenches; boys were being drilled in marching and target practice; armed men rode on the backs of horses that had once drawn carriages to church; and friends and families were divided against each other over the issue of non-resistance. The atmosphere, as the last of the occupation troops withdrew, was one of fear and expectancy.



## FOOTNOTES

1. Articles XII through XV of the armistice, based on the sixth point of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, demanded the evacuation of all Russian/Ukrainian territory. Treadgold, Russia, p. 134. An account of how the Armistice agreement developed out of the Fourteen Points President Wilson had spelled out in his address to the United States Congress in January 1918, is given by Donald Detwiler in Germany: A Short History. (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), pp. 162-176. The text of the Twelve Points is given in C. Jay Smith, Jr., The Russian Struggle for Power, 1914-1917. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 46-48.
2. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 138.
3. Dmytryshyn, "German Occupation", pp. 90-105. According to Dmytryshyn the last of the German units departed from the Ukraine on February 1, 1919. With them, disguised as a German lieutenant, went Hetman Skoropadskii. p. 90.
4. Schroeder, Miracles, p. 44.
5. Ibid, Schroeder writes that, "Some of us were greatly troubled by such practices of the Central Powers. On one occasion, when enroute home to Schoenfeld...I stopped in Alexandrovsk to visit the headquarters of the German-Austrian command...to plead with one of the high-ranking officers to stop the reprisal tactics, pointing out to him that in the end this would only intensify the terrorist activities. I do not know how much good, if any, my counsel accomplished."
6. Ibid.
7. Baerg diary, entry for November 28, 1918. See map of the Molotschna Colony in the appendix for the location of Apanlee.
8. Dyck diary entry for September 25, 1918.
9. Ibid, September 29.
10. "Hier kurz etwas", pp. 2-4; "Der Selbstschutz in der Halbstaedter Wollost, 1918-1919" pp. 2-3; and Peter Fast, "Erinnerungen aus der Zeit des Russischen Buergerkrieges 1918-1920", unpublished manuscript, Windsor, Ont., 1947, pp. 4 and 6. All three accounts can be found in the B. B. Janz papers. A non-Mennonite view

is given by A. Reinmarus in Anti-Menno: Beitrage zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland, (Moskau: Zentral Voelker Verlag, 1930), p. 101. Reinmaris writes, "Without waiting for the outcome of the War, the Russian and Ukrainian peasants, in many cases, took possession of the land of the great Mennonite property owners. These fled to Halbstadt and other towns and developed there an active counterrevolutionary activity." (translated from his German)

11. Schroeder, Miracles, pp. 45-46.
12. "Hier kurz etwas", pp. 1 and 4. In Dyck's words, "The horrible truth was that we stood helpless before unheard of, brutal, Anarchy."
13. Ibid, p. 4.
14. H. Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe", pp. 4-5. Klippenstein, in "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 238, fn. 72, writes that, "The militaristic spirit of Schroeder, who later became a strong supporter of Adolf Hitler in the 1930's, stands out in the leadership cadres of the self defense program of the colonies."
15. Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe", p. 5.
16. H. Goossen, "Einige Erlebnisse unseres Volkes in Sued-Russland in den Jahren des ersten Weltkrieges bis zur ersten Auswanderung", B. B. Janz papers.
17. See map of the Molotschna in Chapter III.
18. Toews, "Origins", p. 21.
19. Lohrenz, Fateful, p. 98.
20. "Hier kurz etwas", p. 5.
21. Ibid.
22. "Ein Selbstschuetzler Erzaehlt", B. B. Janz papers.
23. Dyck diary entry for November 21, 1918. The main topic was self-defense. "As I see it," he wrote, "It is most unfortunate that we did not begin to organize much sooner, because in a few days it may be too late."
24. On August 14-18, 1917, an All-Mennonite Congress met in Ohrloff (Molotschna) to consider the implications of the February Revolution for the Mennonites in Russia. An executive council known as the Mennocentrum was elected

to act on behalf of the Congress between sessions.  
Because of political circumstances it never met again.

25. Thielman, "Mennonite 'Selbstschutz'", p. 57. Thielman quotes Benjamin H. Unruh, a clergyman and authority on Russian Mennonites and a participator in the events, as emphatically stating that the major role in initiating the Selbstschutz was played by the local Mennonite civil authorities.
26. Epp, "Entstehung", pp. 10-11
27. Kroeker, Mennonite Villages, p. 123.
28. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 5.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid, p. 3.
31. "Anfang", and "Der Selbstschutz in der Halbstaedter Wollost".
32. Walter Burow, "Der Selbstschutz", n.d., n.p.  
Burow was an active participant in the Selbstschutz. Adolph Ehrt agrees that the Germans acted as instructors. He adds that, "Demobilized troops formed the core of the Selbstschutz organization. It originated with the withdrawal of the German occupation troops in November, 1918." Ehrt estimates that the strength of the Selbstschutz would have been about 2,000 men. Mennonitentum, p. 114.
33. Although it is impossible to piece together the actual hierarchy of command in the Selbstschutz organization, it is clear that there was German leadership at the highest levels. Non-Mennonite German names appear frequently in first-person accounts, names such as Freiherr (baron) von Staufenberg (who is mentioned by a Kommerzschule student as the "overall leader" and the German District Commander for Halbstadt), Herr Leutnant Leroux, Herr Sergeant Mueller, Sergeant Wagenknecht, and Sergeant Sonntag (sometimes referred to as Sergeant Major). Sonntag's name is mentioned frequently by students as their "leader". He was in the 182nd Saxon Infantry Regiment of the German Army and instrumental in training the Kommerzschule students. After the German retreat he remained behind, it appears, as the leader of the "Shock Troops".
34. Toews, "Volost", p. 494.
35. Schroeder, "Miracles", p. 44.

36. Heinrich Goerz, Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Untergang. (Steinbach, Man.: Echo Verlag, 1950/51), p. 193.
37. Interview with Mr. Rudy Penner for the motion picture "And When They Shall Ask".
38. Epp, "Entstehung", pp. 6-9.
39. Thielman, "Mennonite 'Selbstschutz'", p. 57.
40. Fast, "Errinerungen", pp. 1-30.
41. Ibid, p. 6.
42. Ibid.
43. Diary of Jacob Thiessen entitled, "We are Pilgrims". CMBC files, p. 47.
44. Interview with Mr. Julius Neustaedter in Saskatoon, Sask., on February 8, 1986.
45. Rempel, "Non-resistance", p. 21.
46. Reinmaris, Anti-Menno, p. 103.

## V. SELF DEFENSE IN ACTION

### 1. Military Encounters

After the occupation troops withdrew from the colonies sometime in November, there ensued a few weeks of calm during which the Mennonites, aware that the storm would break at any moment, made frantic preparations for defense. Hoping desperately for relief, not knowing which rumours to believe, they trained and waited and put on a show of strength:

However, it seems we will have no help in protecting ourselves against the looting, plundering bands of terrorists.... In the late afternoon thirty militiamen of our Selbstschutz unit rode to Tokmak. It is wise to keep the Russian populace in the belief that we are all armed to the hilt, and a troop of well-armed men on horseback appearing on the streets of Tokmak is impressive.<sup>1</sup>

At the Kommerzschule the students were being "well trained by our German officer in shooting, bayonetting, the throwing of hand grenades, the quick digging of trenches. All of this we were to make use of in no time at all."<sup>2</sup>

The first village to call for help was the small German Catholic village of Gruenthal which lay just outside the Molotschna Colony to the northeast. We have this description of the encounter:

Machno [sic] had moved his forces from the Old Colony by train, and stopped opposite the village, about three miles away, and parallel to it. His forces spread out from the north and advanced slowly on foot. When we received their [the villagers'] call for help, we got into the wagons, that were available to us free of charge, ten men to a wagon. The villagers meanwhile fled from their homes, and when we arrived at Gruenthal, we found it empty, only two or three families had decided to remain. We were just in time. We spread out and moved to the edge of the forest, [the village was bounded on the north by forest] quickly digging individual holes for ourselves, about three feet deep, piling the dirt up in front of us. We were all armed with rifles revolvers and hand grenades. We waited.

Machno [sic] had to move his forces through a field of corn, that had already been harvested. That means the cobs had been removed, the plants themselves remained, protecting the bandits quite effectively. We could not see them at all, but we could hear them. When they came out of the field of corn, and were about 150 yards away, we opened fire. They dropped to the ground as if poleaxed. Some had been killed, some wounded and all of them had been surprised and badly frightened. The duel lasted about half an hour, but that half hour must have seemed like an eternity to the bandits lying in that flat field unprotected. They jumped up and ran into the cornfield for protection. We fired a few rounds after them and then put down our rifles as commanded by our lieutenant. [Note that they did not give pursuit.]

Their machine guns, and their snipers continued to fire at us from the cornfield, but they were shooting blindly. The forest hid us quite effectively, and our dugouts provided additional protection. Then the cannons opened up fire from the train, but that too, was a waste of good ammunition. We sat and waited.

Shrapnels [sic] shooo-----ood and exploded for another eight hours sporadically and intermittently [sic], but they did not do any damage. The fight was over and we could go back to school, to continue our studies, at least for a while.

The next encounter came only a few days later, on

December 6. This time the bandits attacked Tchernigovka, a Mennonite settlement of about 15,000 inhabitants, situated not far from Gruenthal on the extreme northeastern limits of the Molotschna. J. P. Dyck wrote in his diary:

During the night the alarm was sounded in Halbstadt. Shots rang out, so that they could be heard quite clearly in our village. A group of our Selbstschuetlzer [sic], most of them students at the Kommerzschule (School of Commerce), took the train as far as Waldheim. Another group went on horseback. Near Tschernigowka [sic] they collided with the Machnovtze. A German officer and a man by the name of Martens were killed in action, and several others wounded.<sup>4</sup>

Peter Fast, a student at the Kommerzschule, had the watch at the railway station in Halbstadt on the night of December 5/6. The phone rang at midnight. It was a call for help from Waldheim. "The Machnovschina is planning to attack Sparrau and Hamberg in the morning. Alarm your men."

Sergeant Major Sonntag ordered an extra train from the depot in Tokmak and within the hour they were ready. Fast and a comrade were not allowed to go because they had to keep watch at the depot. "Nothing doing", they said to each other, "We are going along". They quickly hid in one of the wagons, but Sonntag discovered them. "Donnerwetter, what are you doing here. Don't you know that you must stay at your post?". Then he reassured them. "You will soon be allowed to go too." The boys waited impatiently for news of the action. The evening train brought the men back with this story. They had spent the night at Waldheim railway station and with the

dawn, had marched the whole 15 kilometers to Tschernigovka, being joined by Selbstschutz units from other villages along the way. As they approached Tschernigovka, they were greeted by shots. In a heated battle they drove the enemy from the streets. Most of them fled, but some were wounded, and 30-35 killed.<sup>5</sup> The Selbstschutz lost two men, Johann Martens and NCO Henshel, both of whom were buried in Halbstadt with full military honours several days later.<sup>6</sup>

In another memoir, the writer who participated in the encounter but wishes to remain anonymous, claims that Makhno, having caught wind of Selbstschutz advance towards Tschernigovka, had planted a machine gun in the church tower. After only a few rounds, it was silenced by several well-placed shots from below. He claims that Makhno himself escaped capture only because his pursuers ran out of ammunition. "If we had been a little smarter we could have had him".<sup>7</sup>

During the first week of January, the Selbstschutz drove back an assault on the German Catholic village of Blumental which lay along the key route from Makhno's headquarters into the Prischib, Halbstadt, and Gnadenfeld volosts. Both sides suffered casualties.<sup>8</sup>

At this point, having suffered a series of setbacks, Makhno retaliated with a vengeance, laying siege to Blumenfeld and Schoenfeld, two villages situated in the midst of the bandits' territory. Refugees flowed from the stricken villages into the Colony. On the night of January 28, three



hundred mounted Selbstschutz cavalry rode to Blumenfeld to escort over 100 inhabitants through enemy territory to safety under cover of darkness.<sup>9</sup> A major Selbstschutz offensive (900 men with more than 200 wagons) aimed at dislodging Makhno, failed. J. P. Dyck claims that an officer of the Russian White Army bungled the whole careful plan. "Everyone who took part in this well-planned maneuver is most dissatisfied with the "Kadets", as this section of the volunteer Russian White Army dubbed itself."<sup>10</sup>

By this time White officers controlled Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts. A regimental colonel, Malakov, set himself up as chief commandant of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld companies of the Selbstschutz, and a reorganization was initiated by which various villages would be placed in groups under the supervision of a Russian officer. It seems that the White Army, somewhat like the German occupation troops, tried to use the Selbstschutz for its own purposes, even attempting to integrate it with its own forces. Though not successful,<sup>11</sup> it managed to implicate the Selbstschutz in at least two military operations. During one of these operations, the defence of Tschorigowka, which has already been described, it seems that White guardists took up covering positions while the Selbstschutz attacked the village. In the other, White soldiers and Selbstschutz forces overran two Russian villages south of the Gnadenfeld volost. The five captured bandits were taken to the Gnadenfeld cemetery and executed.<sup>12</sup>

That there was collaboration between the Selbstschutz and the White Army during the autumn of 1918 and the early part of 1919 is quite clear. It is difficult, however, to determine both the extent of the cooperation and how it came about. On the one hand, as suggested above, the Whites may have been the instigators. On the other hand, it is also probable that the Whites may have infiltrated the Selbstschutz at the invitation of some of the self-defense leaders. Possibly this was the price the Selbstschutz leaders had to pay for having the Whites provide arms and ammunition.<sup>13</sup> Epp's account of the circumstances leading to Selbstschutz/White cooperation (or collusion or collaboration, whatever one might wish to call it) seems quite reasonable:

Russian officers penetrated into our colonies without our noticing it....These Russian officers attempted to integrate the Selbstschutz with the Volunteer Army (White Army) and almost succeeded....Why did we not resist the infiltration of the White officers? The German Army had left us. The "watch on the Rhein" (Wacht am Rhein) was no longer viable. The limited munitions which they had given us were not sufficient. Now the Russians came (White Army) and the politics of war are take and give. As already mentioned, General Tillo was positioned near or in Melitopol. The railway from Melitopol-Feodorovka-Halbstadt and Waldheim was in our hands. Consequently the Halbstadt Selbstschutz went to the Crimea and brought back a large quantity of arms. At a volost assembly in Gnadenfeld...we were authorized to obtain arms and munitions from the crimea. So we traveled...to Simferopol where we were courteously received by the war leaders in the chief command (White Army). On our right arm we carried the black-white insignia of the Selbstschutz. From the Sevastopol arsenal we received whatever we desired of the German war

materials which the Germans had left behind during the disarmament. We took five train carloads of arms, munitions, four machine guns, field telephones, hand grenades, steel helmets, spades, picks, etc. An all we had 1,125 hand weapons.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the Mennonite colonists may have learned a lesson from the period of German occupation because at this point they (the Selbstschutz leaders) became apprehensive about the consequences of being identified with the White forces. At a special meeting of the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld Selbstschutz committees, to which Colonel Malakov was invited, the matter of disengagement and separation of the Selbstschutz from the Russian officers was discussed. "A sharp exchange ensued, but in the end the good man [Malakov] believed us."<sup>15</sup> A resolution was drafted to clearly spell out the Mennonite position:

We Mennonites of Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts united armed and organized as a Selbstschutz during times of stress when we were molested, subjected to burnings, robbed, raped and murdered by the various roaming bands. This Selbstschutz is no military organization capable of aggression or war, but designed to protect our lives and possessions against robber bands. We Mennonites are no revolutionary party and we do not wish to exercise military power. If a permanent government emerged in Russia, especially in the Ukraine, we solemnly declare that, irregardless of its political persuasion, we will lay<sup>16</sup> down all our arms and submit to this government.

This declaration was signed by all members of the committee. Malakov reluctantly accepted the committee's position and presented it to his fellow officers in the region. That a few Mennonites had

the foresight to take this action was to prove very fortunate for the colonists before long.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Dyck diary entry for December 3, 1918.
2. Thiessen, "Pilgrims", p. 47.
3. Ibid, pp. 46-47.
4. Dyck diary entry for December 20.
5. Fast, "Errinerungen", p. 7.
6. Ibid. Another source claims that about 40 bandits were killed and that the two Mennonite casualties were Kommerzschule students, "the Martins brothers". Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe", p. 5. See also Dyck diary entries for December 20 and 24.
7. "Beifuegung zur Frage Selbstschutz", manuscript in the files of the CMBC Archives. Toews, confirms this: "They routed Makhno and his bandits and, the story goes, that Makhno barely escaped with his life". Recorded from a lecture, "Pacifism and the Mennonites", October 25, 1980, tape 3 in the files of the CMBC Archives.
8. Dyck diary entry for January 8, 1919.
9. Ibid, February 1.
10. Ibid.
11. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 9. Toews is of the same opinion: "The Selbstschutz, at the instigation of the White Army, engaged in two military operations which plunged it from the protector of public safety to an aggressive military unit." Toews, tape 3.
12. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 7.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid, p. 12. Epp and another Mennonite, Schroeder, were asked to record the minutes.
16. Ibid, pp. 13-14. Epp has reproduced the resolution as best he can from memory. Toews describes the document as picturing the Selbstschutz as an "a-political, nonmilitary group...[that] existed solely for

self-defense and was to be dissolved once civil order had been established". Toews, "Origins", p. 19. He also discusses the document in the lecture on tape 3.

## V. SELF DEFENSE IN ACTION

### 2. Defeat of the Selbstschutz

From late November, 1918, to the end of February of the following year, the Selbstschutz managed to keep Makhno's forces at bay. The front had stabilized in the region of the German villages of Blumenthal, Tiefenbrunn and Waldorf not far from Halbstadt just to the north of the Molotschna Colony.<sup>1</sup> Klippenstein speculates that the reason for Makhno's failure to quickly overrun the area may have been that he was devoting considerable energy at this time to organizing his "government". Another reason may have been that his forces were divided against the armies of the Ukrainian Directory on the one hand and the advancing Bolsheviks on the other.<sup>2</sup> But in early February the situation changed dramatically. On January 26 Makhno agreed to unite forces with the Bolsheviks.<sup>3</sup> and a week later the Selbstschutz was defeated. Jacob Thiessen has left us this description of the last battle at Blumenthal:

The villagers held out against the bandit forces for two full days, answering Mahcno's [sic] big gun fire with rifle fire only. We [the Selbstschutz] arrived just in time: a small, well trained nucleus of 200 students and a larger force of recruits from all villages, numbering about 400 men.

The first day we worked hard from morning, till night hauling dirt, straw and manure to build a protective wall all around the small village. The intermittent shooting did not bother us too much. Machno was unsure of himself; he did not know how many men had come to the support of Blumenthal, neither did he know what arms we carried or possessed. When the wall was finished we were quite confident that we could keep a very large force of bandits at bay without too much trouble. Machno's ragged band by now numbered some 3,000 men, but they were afraid to advance across a large flat piece of prairie in front of us. They would have no protection whatsoever. To test our strength they made several half-hearted attacks, led by their machine gun carrier forces but these carriages gave little protection to his men on foot, and the machine guns were used during the advance. Before the machine gun carriers could turn around, we killed the horses that pulled them, thus pulling the sting of the attackers before they could become dangerous. The attack ended in a complete rout. Machno lost many men, judging from the dotted appearance of the prairie before us. We felt comfortable and quite unconcerned.

The second morning we were rudely awakened by the heavy bass voices of big cannons. The very first shot that landed, sent a whole house flying in all directions, leaving a crater big enough to house fifty men. Shot after shot was fired at us from cannons eight miles away and we could not answer that fire.

Our small cannons (two of them) were disabled within an hour and our machine guns were useless at long range.

The wall, such excellent protection against rifle and machine gun fire, was completely useless against big cannon fire. When the enemy forces began to advance, we saw with consternation, that we were now dealing with an army of about 10,000 men and all dressed in the uniforms of the Red Army of the North.

Their fire was fierce, and we lost more men in that first hour, than we had lost in the entire campaign against Machno. Now we had to fight with our backs against the wall. There were no commands, there was no talk, just heavy breathing and incessant loading and firing, and when we could see the shining brass buttons on the Red soldiers' overcoats, our machine guns went into action. The big guns were still, but



the small arms fire increased in ferocity, occasionally accented by the boom of exploding hand grenades. For about fifteen minutes it was nip and tuck, and then the enemy retreated, but started shelling us again from a distance.

We knew that we were finished, it was only a question of time, and manner of the final defeat. When night came the enemy forces advanced as far as they could, surrounded us, and prepared for the night. The end would come with dawn. The final doom was only a few hours away. We prayed fervently to God for help but knew that the attack would be sudden, short and fierce. We did not have many bayonets and in a hand to hand attack we did not have a prayer of a chance. There had to be another way besides fighting. We decided to take our chances and break out during the night.

Our cavalry of twenty five horses lined up behind the wall of straw, dirt and manure on the west, the retreating side. All were armed heavily with hand grenades. The rest of us lined up behind them on wagons, with the machine-gun carriages flanking us. At the given signal we all fired our guns at the enemy lines and the twenty five horsemen galloped westward through the broken enemy line, throwing hand grenades right and left. Pandemonium broke loose on the enemy side. The Reds fled into the darkness, as if driven by evil spirits. This they had not anticipated, nor were they in any way prepared for it. The breach was made and we hurried through it as fast as we could, shooting with our rifles to the right and to the left. Was our shooting effective? Did we hit anything? Hardly. The blind firing in the darkness added to the pandemonium that already seemed to reign among the enemy forces. We wanted to escape [sic] and that we did quite successfully.

Several of our young men were wounded in that night attack, but not by the fire of the enemy. Some of our grenades dropped too close and the small, flying grenade spinters found their mark on our own men.

They reached Tiefenbrunn safely, unloaded their supplies, stabled their horses, and had just begun to make preparations for defence when their pursuers caught up with them. The Reds surrounded the village, placed their heavy

guns in strategic positions ready for an all-out attack. Tiefenbrunn lay in a depression and the Reds, having the advantage of height, would be able to pick them off like "clay pigeons":

There was no time to waste. What were we to do? Then one of the inhabitants [of Tiefenbrunn] came up and offered to guide us to safety. The brick factory of Tiefenbrunn needed a large quantity of blue loam for making bricks, so they had started to mine it right in the village. They had dug a deep tunnel, which led westward and had its exit in a coulee 150 yards from the village. The small box wagons, pulled by two horses, would go in one way, fill up with loam and come out at the other end. Quickly and quietly all the ammunition was distributed among all men, and our food was packed on the horses and then we goose-stepped [?] into the brick factory tunnel, the villagers following us. They did not want to stay behind and be slaughtered. Quietly, like ghosts in the night we moved on, fear sealing our lips. We reached Waldorf and Koorkoolack in the early morning, and were now well protected against an attack by the Red Infantry. The two villages are surrounded by sandpits, and on one side, the villagers had built a high brick wall to protect them from flooding. Tall, old trees grew everywhere and we knew that here we could hold out a little longer. It was here, that our white army officers, which had attached themselves to our forces for protection, perpetrated one of the most heinous crimes.<sup>5</sup>

The crime of which Thiessen writes was this. The Reds, after shelling Tiefenbrunn and setting fire to it, had entered the village and discovered that it was vacant. Moving on to Waldorf and Koorkoolak, they were greeted by Selbstschutz fire. Apparently puzzled by the mysterious events, they dispatched four peace negotiators. The four White Army officers who "were given the privilege of receiving the negotiators while we were fortifying our lines,

led these four men into a barn, apparently away from interfering noise, shot them and buried them in a manure pile."<sup>6</sup> Several months later, when the Selbstschutz leader stood before a military tribunal of the Reds, accused of having killed four peace negotiators, it was learned that they had been sent to offer Selbstschutz soldiers free passage to their homes in return for complete cessation of hostilities and the surrender of all arms and ammunition. It seems that the Reds, after surveying the village through binoculars, realized that they would lose many men trying to storm such a natural fortress. When their negotiators did not return, they attacked the villages, and the Selbstschutz, outnumbered and outgunned, crumbled. Thiessen and a companion escaped on foot. Others boarded the train that had halted in Waldorf for several days, and went back to Tockmak and Halbstadt. Most of the Selbstschutz participants managed to escape to the Crimea.<sup>7</sup> When the Red Army reached Halbstadt:

...they combed the city for members of our military unit and put them into jail. They accused us of having killed two thousand men in the fight around Blumenthal, Tiefenbrunn, and Waldorf. I am sure they exaggerated.

They also accused us of having murdered the White Flag negotiators at Waldorf, but when they heard our explanation, and when they found our statements verified by what they found in Waldorf, they relented and set all our men free, promising that none of us would be prosecuted for having been members of the protective military unit.

They did not keep their promises. Many of the members of our student regiment were killed one way or another. Of the ninety-five students of my class, only twenty-five were alive when I

left Russia in<sup>8</sup> 1923, and none of them died a natural death.

With the Reds back in control, the Mennonites were placed in the precarious position of having to justify their actions. A Mennonite delegation sought to explain to the Red military leaders that they had had no intention of fighting the Red army, that they had intended only to defend themselves against the Makhnovtse. A delegation from Halbstadt, led by B. H. Unruh, went to Gross Tokmak to present to Commissar Molarenko, the declaration signed only a few months earlier by the Selbstschutz leaders.<sup>9</sup> The Commissar promised immunity to the Mennonites but ordered the self-defense units disbanded and disarmed within three days. Riders carried the message from village to village. Many of those still at the front came home and laid down their weapons. Villagers loaded their weapons on wagons and brought them to the volost centers. There the colonists were received with neither respect nor tolerance. They were seen as counter-revolutionaries, and collaborators with the enemy, first the Germans and then the Whites. The attitude of the Red Army officers had hardened. General Dybenko's outburst when faced with Mennonite pleas for mercy and forgiveness seems to typify the reaction of the Red officials:

You cursed betrayers of your fathers' faith.  
For 400 years you did not bear arms, but now  
[you do so] on behalf of your Kaiser  
Wilhelm....[However] I will not destroy you, but  
my soldiers may plunder the village for three  
days; any members of the self-defense units  
which are found, will be executed.<sup>10</sup>

A harsh military tribunal at Melitopol called to account those believed to have opposed the Bolsheviks in any way. According to Klippenstein, more than 100 persons were executed each week during this period of Red occupation. Among them were Mennonites who had taken an active part in the military defense of the colonies, including the secretary of Mennozentrum, Peter Wiens.<sup>11</sup>

At the time of its collapse a large segment of the Halbstadt Selbstschutz, the cavalry and "mounted infantry" was in the vicinity of Blumental. Its commanders, Homeyer and Sonntag,<sup>12</sup> dissolved the front and granted the Selbstschutz participants their freedom, urging each man to save himself as best he could. Some sources claim that a large segment of this group which escaped into the Crimea organized there a fighting contingent known as the Jaegerbattalion. When the Red Army invaded the Crimea this battalion joined with it. When Denikin later invaded the Crimea and dispersed the Red Army, the Jaegerbattalion apparently joined the Whites.<sup>13</sup> Another segment of the Halbstadt Selbstschutz fled in the direction of Berdyansk, from where some fled into the Crimea while others returned home.<sup>14</sup>

The Selbstschutz, in spite of its weaknesses, managed to prevent Makhno's bandits from gaining control of the colonies during the three months which followed the withdrawal of the German Occupation forces. That it was able to "prevent Makhno and his bandits from making the Molotschna their

playground"<sup>15</sup> is surprising from a military point of view. Hans von Homeyer, an experienced White Army officer who was instrumental in helping the defeated Selbstschutz troops to escape, described the Mennonite soldiers as brave and courageous. He was, however, dumbfounded at the amateur character of the Selbstschutz. Its operational maps apparently revealed a complete lack of strategy. It focused on military objectives of no tactical value while leaving towns like Halbstadt and Prischib completely exposed. His description of the Selbstschutz front is quite humorous:

We stopped at the extreme left wing of the colonists' front....No sign of emplacements ....The individual field guns were deployed in open country, entirely unprotected. No sign of the least effort at camouflage....No sign of any human being....After riding further I presently heard snoring....'Hey you! Where is the front infantry line?'  
 'Infantry? Doesn't exist with us. Front line? Yes, we are it!  
 'Ridiculous,' I scolded, 'there is no such thing.'  
 'Yes, at night twenty men (of the Prischib unit) come. But in the morning they leave because we have no quarters.'<sup>16</sup>

Although some Mennonites have taken offence at Homeyer's remarks,<sup>17</sup> claiming that he was criticizing the Selbstschutz, it would seem rather that he felt admiration for what they had been able to accomplish as nonprofessional soldiers. Even Makhno is purported to have said, "Give me a hundred men like these and in two weeks I will be in Moscow."<sup>18</sup> Even so, when faced with the full force of the 42nd division of the Red Army moving relentlessly toward the Molotschna, they crumbled.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See map of the Selbstschutz front, p. 150a.
2. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p.246.
3. According to Arshinov, Makhno got supplies and munitions for placing his forces under the Bolshevik High Command, while retaining autonomous control of his own forces. Arshinov, Makhnovist Movement, p. 84. See also Palij, Anarchism, p. 148.
4. Thiessen, "Pilgrims", pp. 50-52.
5. Ibid, pp. 52-53.
6. Ibid, p. 54. Gerhard Lohrenz describes the incident in an interview taped in Winnipeg, on January 3, 1986.
7. During this battle the Mennonites realized that they were fighting, not only Makhno, but also the Red Army. Thiessen gives a vivid account of the moment of realization, "Suddenly, silhouetted against the skyline stood the upright figure of an armed Red Soldier. Most of us froze in our positions, doing nothing..." "To what regiment do you belong?" the Red soldier shouted. "Give the password!" "To hell with your password!" shouted Bill [one of the Mennonites] and fired at the standing figure. The soldier dropped and then the whole slope came to life." p. 55. See also Dyck diary entry for March 3, 1919. "It is believed that we are no longer fighting merely bandits, but that an orderly army, under solid leadership at that, is approaching. Waging war against a political party, Communism in this case, is futile, and that has never been our intention. That would be lunacy. After all, we formed the Selbstschutz only to defend ourselves against the assaults of robbers, who roam a peaceful land by day and night to plunder and kill.
8. Thiessen, "Pilgrims", p. 58.
9. Epp, "Entstehung", pp. 13-14.
10. Ibid. Also Goossen, "Unsere grosse Vaterlandsliebe", p.7.
11. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p.249. Dyck, in his diary, relates how some Mennonites reacted in this stressful time, "The village signed a document to verify that Fritz Seedorf did not compel Boldt nor anyone else

to join the Selbstschutz as Boldt claims. Not all the villagers are willing to vouch for Hans Boldt, who is being held. He prattles on and on when he's afraid, and says things that aren't true....Today on Joh. Boldt's slander a search for revolvers was made. My house was also searched. These are difficult times!" Entries for March 26 and 27.

12. It seems that a few days before the collapse of the Selbstschutz, the Mennonites invited Hans von Homeyer, a German officer, to Halbstadt to replace the White officers in command. Members of the Mennozentrum negotiated with White authorities in Halbstadt and Melitopol for the transfer of Selbstschutz leadership to Homeyer. A special delegation, including B. H. Unruh, was dispatched to the Crimea to inform him of his appointment as commander-in-chief. Hans von Homeyer, Die brennende Halbinsel. Ein Ringen um Heimat und Ehre. (Berlin-Schoeneberg, 1938.) pp. 64-84. In this historical novel Homeyer portrays the recollections of his service in South Russia.
13. Homeyer's obituary, on file in the CMBC Archives, states that, "In February 1919 Homeyer returned from the Crimea [to the Ukraine] and took over the Mennonite Selbstschutz, out of which he [later] put together the 4,000-man Jaegerbrigade. [My translation from the German] John Toews, however, states that the 4,000 German colonists in the Jaegerbrigade (Sharpshooters' Brigade), "included" Mennonite Selbstschuetzler. "Origins", p. 88.
14. Thiessen "Pilgrims", p. 58.
15. Lohrenz interview, January 3, 1986.
16. Homeyer, Die brennende Halbinsel, pp. 82-84.
17. Lohrenz, in the above mentioned interview, states that Homeyer had criticized the Selbstschutz for poor organization.
18. Interview with Mr. David Dick who grew up on a Mennonite estate, Apanlee, on the northern fringe of the Molotschna. Interview taped in Winnipeg on February 5, 1986.



## V. SELF DEFENSE IN ACTION

### 3. Makhno Retaliates

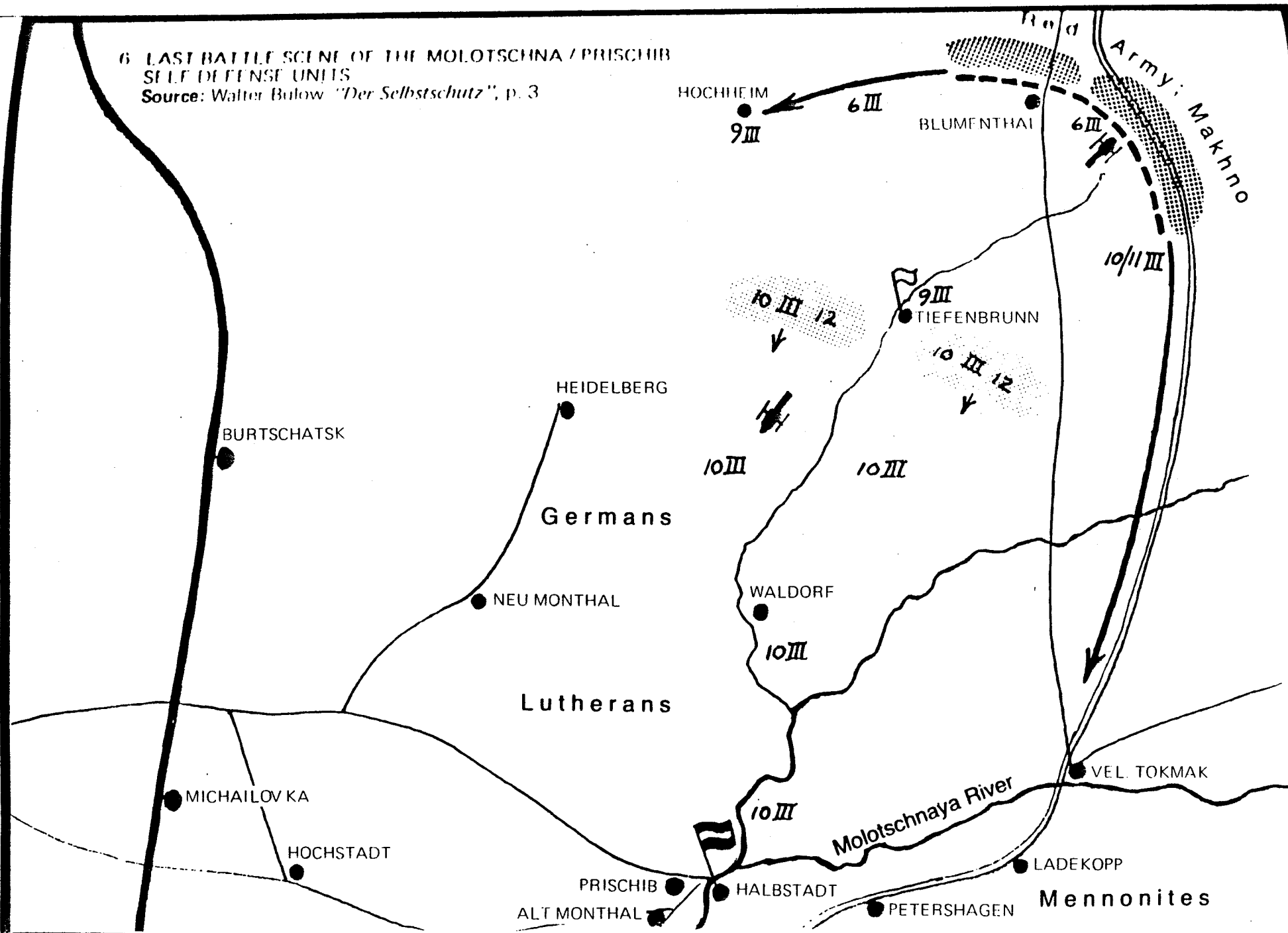
With the Soviet occupation, the Mennonite colonies were once again thrown into a period of lawlessness. Accounts from diaries reveal the growing hopelessness:

The government is powerless, nor does it want law and order. The least they could do is supply our local guard with rifles, if they wish to put a stop to the thievery that is taking place....More robber raids have occurred. Four thieves attacked our neighbours....A larger number forced Preacher P. Bergmann outside in his undergarments and extracted 1,000 rubels [sic] from him ....there must have been at least twelve mounted men in the gang, besides a number on a horse-drawn vehicle....Father's watch, underclothing and other items were stolen ....Wichert lost all but one horse and two foals. Later, of course, bread will be required of this same farmer.

The young Mennonite men were required by the Bolsheviks to register for military service. Homes were searched for machine-guns and those who had manned them. All "superfluous" flour and wheat was hauled away. All horses and wagons had to be taken to Halbstadt to be registered. The Bolsheviks demanded "contributions" of money from each village. Ladekopp, for example, was ordered to pay 50,000 rubles. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that, "Many men have joined the Reds for fear of their neighbours,

6 LAST BATTLE SCENE OF THE MOLOTSCHNA / PRISCHIB  
SELF DEFENSE UNITS

Source: Walter Bulow "Der Selbstschutz", p. 3



and to save their own hides and possessions".<sup>2</sup> But the worst was yet to come.

By mid-June the White armies had pushed into the Ukraine as far as the northern villages of the Molotschna.<sup>3</sup> The colonies, again caught in the middle between Whites and Reds, were used by both as a source of food, horses, wagons, and manpower. The Mennonites, unable to comprehend, and trying only to survive, were like reeds in the wind, bending first one way and then another as the direction of the wind changed. Diaries and letters illustrate the confusion and disorder:

Early this morning the Red military began a hasty retreat. Hundreds of vehicles hurried toward Halbstadt. Our villagers, too, had to provide transportation. The soldiers even seized wagons without authorization and drove off....Horses and even some cows have been fetched from the herds in the pasture....We hear the roar of cannons....There were as many as three wagonloads [of soldiers] in our yard at a time, while we supplied meals to the soldiers. My wife served supper to eight men yesterday, and today provided meals for eighteen men.... This afternoon four riders took ten horses without so much as giving us a receipt. Some people have only two horses left. Everything will be ruined if this continues....We again received orders to bake bread. All Ladekopp and Petershagen men between the ages of 16 and 38 are being drilled on the meadow....The front is said to be at Steinfeld and Steinbach. Southeastern part of the Molotschna Colony, Gnadenfeld has fallen into enemy hands, in this case White Army. I wonder whether it's true? ....Today we are asked to report how many mouths our family has to feed, how many cows we own, etc....Hundreds of wagonloads of armed and unarmed Red guardsmen today hurried toward Halbstadt without delay. Our horses were again taken....The roar of cannons was very near today ....Judging by all the military, the cavalry and the accompanying baggage train we see, the

Bolsheviks must be a dreadfully powerful force!<sup>4</sup>

Then on June 26:

This morning several more armed Reds passed through the village. Then suddenly the first Freiwilige (White Army) appeared with the characteristic red shoulder straps on their uniforms. Soon the entire street was filled with wagons, people and Droschken (carriages) with machine guns, the latter manned primarily by Mennonites. Now we also have Mennonite gunners!

Any hopes the weary colonists may have had for relief soon vanished. The demands made on them by the Whites were scarcely distinguishable from those the Reds had made on them. Barely able by now to subsist themselves, they were required to feed and quarter soldiers, supply horses and anything else the army required. Dyck's diary again reveals the sense of hopelessness:

The Staesz sisters have suffered not so much from the retreating Reds as from the in-coming Whites. These have stolen everything they could lay their hands on, even the stable boy's boots. In the Kommerzschnule the so-called "educated" officers ransacked the physics science room. They could play with all sorts of equipment which they were not allowed to touch as students in their own schools.... Few people have any great confidence in the Freiwilligen. The officers drink heavily; horses are taken or traded at anyone's whim. There has been precious little order or discipline thus far.... We pray to God that this war between brothers may end soon.... Everywhere we hear the same laments: too few horses, no grease or fuel, no spare parts, no naphtha or petroleum for the motors.

And from Dietrich Neufeld:

Most people here have become so submissive that they will surrender their last pair of boots without a murmur of resistance and walk

barefoot. What's much more painful for the farmers is to see their wheat being carted off and their last flour being fed to horses stolen from other farmers.<sup>7</sup>

Of those Mennonites who had been active in the Selbstschutz and had not been hunted down by the Reds, many joined the White Army. It is clear that some of these men volunteered but others may have been drafted. According to Klippenstein:

Students were immediately drafted, although a general mobilization scheduled to begin about a week later, did not materialize immediately. In fact, some modifications could be secured by the protests of potential draftees who refused to join the Whites, even though they had been involved in the active defense of the colonies only months before. It was not their intention to become a part of the civil war, they maintained, even though they had been prepared with a free conscience to provide armed protection for their families and their own homes. Local White recruiting officers not infrequently ignored appeals for non-combatant services consideration and proceeded with regular mobilization. "Your men,"<sup>8</sup> they said to the parents, "fight well indeed."

J. P. Dyck corroborates this in his diary, "Today (Sept 3) those born in 1884 and 1885 were drafted."<sup>9</sup> It is clear that, voluntarily or otherwise, a sizable number of Mennonites did serve with the White Army. Some were politically naive, some went for adventure, some sought a temporary refuge, and others had yet another reason. As Gerhard Lohrenz phrases it, "Individuals who had been in the self-defense units, or being sons of wealthy farmers who feared reprisals, found safety in the White Army at least for a time".<sup>10</sup>

During the confusion of this period Makhno's forces again began to grow in size and strength. His attacks became bolder and more violent:

The worst treatment is reserved for families whose sons are serving in the so-called Volunteer Army of General Denikin. They are dealt with harshly. Last night a neighborhood farmstead was burned down because the son is serving with the Volunteers....Several other places have been burned down. During the night the factory owner's handsome mansion was set on fire....

There are rumours that Makhno's forces are growing like an avalanche. The number now given is 100,000 men. Of course, these disorganized Anarchists don't know themselves what their numbers are. That there are many thousands of them we can see for ourselves as they keep pouring through here on their way to the Dnieper bridge. For three days and nights we have not dared to take off our clothes and have had very little rest. No wonder that we are nearly dead with fatigue; but as soon as a dog barks we jump up and listen for approaching footsteps....

The forced entries are bad enough by day, but at night they are even more terrifying. We had no oil for the lamps, so they groped their way through the rooms swearing and making a fearful racket. They struck matches and dropped them all over - into the bedding, cupboards, and on the floor....

Yesterday Greta had to cook all day for our uninvited guests....They won't be denied. As soon as there are three or four of them in the house they demand a meal....They are as voracious as locusts. One woman has fifty men billeted in her house and has to feed them all....<sup>11</sup>

Rumours of impending withdrawal of the White Army began early in October. At a Thanksgiving festival, J. P. Dyck heard disturbing news:

Alexandrowsk is rumoured to be in the hands of the Reds. They [neighbours] told me that the Reds are already <sup>12</sup> in Klein Tokmak and could be here by tomorrow.

And two days later:

The Freiwilligen were still here, but were busy confiscating all conveyances which were suitable for their escape. In the afternoon, cannons were becoming audible. A short uncanny silence followed. Then the Reds arrived, like an army of advancing grasshoppers.<sup>13</sup>

Dyck goes on to describe how the advancing Red soldiers looted property, raped women and girls, and burned houses and barns.

The collapse of Denikin's summer initiative was followed by the longest and most catastrophic period of destruction the Mennonites experienced during the Civil War. The activities of the Selbstschutz and perhaps even more, the occupation policies of the White armies, had helped to heighten peasant hatred and whip up passions for revenge. By September 21 the Makhnovtsy had reached Khortitza and a few days later, the Molotschna.<sup>14</sup> The addition of many new peasant recruits raised the size of Makhno's army to about 25,000 during this period.<sup>15</sup> Mass killings, even the annihilation of entire villages, became the order of the day. Those areas in which the Selbstschutz was most successful seem to have been special targets for revenge. John Toews writes:

The era of mass killing now began. The worst excesses occurred in Eichenfeld (Nikolaipol) and Muensterberg (Zagradovka), though less extensive bloodbaths took place in Blumenort and Altonau (Molochnaya). Death became commonplace. The mutilations perpetrated by the bandits were particularly gruesome and mindless. It was violence for the sake of violence. Rape, single and multiple, became routine.<sup>16</sup> Farm and household inventory all but vanished.

In the Jazykovo settlement, which lay along the northern fringe of the Old Colony, the self-defence had put up particularly successful resistance to earlier bandit attacks. The Nikolaipol volost had apparently been described by the Soviets as a "fortress". One of the villages there, Eichenfeld, had fought off a bandit attack during the summer of 1919.<sup>17</sup> It also had the distinction of being the home of a Selbstschutz leader, Peter von Kampen, who had led an attack which destroyed the new workers' council in Nikolaipol.<sup>18</sup> On October 26, bandits rampaged through the Nikolaipol volost, pillaging, burning, shooting and butchering the inhabitants. The toll was 109 dead, 80 of them from Eichenfeld. When it was all over, the villages of Gerhardstal, Eichenfeld, Neuhorst and Neuendorf had vanished; Reinfeld, Petersdorf and Paulheim had only a few walls left standing.<sup>19</sup> A resident who had managed to escape recalls the sight which greeted him when he returned, "There was no one to be seen in our village. A deathly silence reigned."<sup>20</sup> The next day, with the help of survivors from a neighbouring village, the dead were buried in a mass grave.

In the Molotschna Colony in the village of Blumenort, the rash act of a few disbanded Selbstschutz members brought bloody retribution. John Toews tells it this way:

A number of Makhno bandits utilized the village of Orloff as their headquarters to carry on a regional reign of terror. Apparently at the suggestion of another village mayor some Selbstschutz partisans, in the hope of curbing the excesses of the bandits, quietly took up strategic positions nearby in Blumenort during



the evening of November 9. That same evening Makhno's regional commander from Halbstadt together with five men arrived at the village [Blumenort]. Three of the men spent the night at the home of Jacob Neufeld while the commander and two others rode to nearby Orloff. In the middle of the night the members of the Makhno contingent in Orloff arrived at the Neufeld farm. Apparently the commander and four men had returned to Blumenort and tried to arrest a villager, Jacob Epp. Aroused by cries for help, the partisans went into action. The commander escaped, but four of his men lost their lives. The anarchists, holding the villagers responsible for the action, now took revenge. By next morning a number of villagers were imprisoned in the cellar of a local store. When additional members of Makhno's Orloff contingent arrived at noon the bloodbath began. After the carnage the mutilated bodies of the hostages were virtually unrecognizable. Any village men encountered by the anarchists were dispatched with sabers and gunfire....About twelve farms were totally or partially destroyed by fire....On November 14, 1919, some twenty Blumenort men were buried in a mass grave.<sup>21</sup>

Many vivid accounts have been written describing the Blumenort tragedy. In "A Public Acknowledgement in honour of God", Harry Dyck writes how he, dressed as an old woman, and his wife fled through the woods as they saw Blumenort go up in flames. Behind them they could hear the terrified cries of the burning animals and people. Some had been covered with gasoline and then ignited.<sup>22</sup> B. B. Janz gives a different version of the reasons for the massacre. He writes that the tragedy was the result of a Mennonite "conspiracy". He claims that the members of the (by then) disbanded Selbstschutz, led by a German officer by the name of Gloeckler, had been invited to Blumenort to make the raid by Jacob Epp and someone from Ohrloff. Janz asks "Who did

that?" [the atrocities at Blumenort] "To be sure, those fiends, the Mackhnovtse....But why did they do it? What was the cause?" And he lays the blame squarely on the Mennonites. "Wir haben gesuendigt." (We have trespassed/sinned.)<sup>23</sup>

The climax of this string of tragedies came a few weeks later in Zagradowka, a daughter settlement of Chortitza. Between November 24 and December 1, six villages were laid waste and 214 lives were lost. Hardest hit was Muensterberg whose dead included 36 children and 18 women. According to Dietrich Neufeld only one of thirty farms was not burned to the ground and its buildings were dragged away board by board by Russian neighbors. Neufeld believes that local Russian villagers joined with the Makhnovtse in the Muensterberg raid because of hatred engendered by the Mennonite resistance there to land distribution.<sup>24</sup>

By early November the White Army, now led by General Wrangel,<sup>25</sup> once again controlled the territory on which the Mennonite Colonies were situated.<sup>26</sup> It was not long before the Whites began to mobilize the Mennonites. They scarcely had time to integrate them into their ranks, however, before the Red forces counterattacked in early December. By year's end the Whites were forced to withdraw from Alexandrovsk, and many Mennonites went with them as they retreated to the Crimea.<sup>27</sup> The severe setbacks of the winter did not crush the Whites entirely, however.<sup>28</sup> Late in May, Wrangel launched a major offensive northward from the Crimea. Within

weeks he had once again reached the Molotschna where he established a wavering front. During this invasion, some communities changed hands more than twenty times.<sup>29</sup> But as the White forces gradually gained the upper hand, the Mennonites once again began to hope that tide might turn in their favour. On June 15, 1920, after the White Command issued a decree officially terminating the land liquidation laws, some Mennonites returned to their estates and some of the young men volunteered for service in the White Army. Others were mobilized as teamsters or, when drafted, chose to serve in the medical corps. A German regiment, made up of both Mennonites and non-Mennonite Germans, was formed in Wrangel's Army. Most of this regiment was later captured by the Reds.<sup>30</sup>

But the Ukraine by this time was like the terminally ill patient who rallies briefly before death. The end came in October. Wrangel, after a battle on October 14, was forced to retreat. By the first of November the last of his forces left the Ukraine and all organized opposition to the Soviet regime in the Ukraine was overcome.<sup>31</sup> Peasant resistance to the Soviet takeover continued sporadically until the summer of 1921. Makhno, wounded repeatedly, still directed his men and managed to elude the Reds until he was able to slip out of the country in August, 1921. From there he fled to Paris where he died alone and alcoholic in 1934.<sup>32</sup>

The Soviet success in the Ukraine proved, however, to be a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>33</sup> The whole of the Ukraine was

virtually denuded of livestock, agricultural equipment, grain, household goods, and anything else that could be transported from the homes and farms.<sup>34</sup> War, malnutrition, and disease, especially the terrible legacy of typhus and syphilis left by Makhno's bands, had devastated the population.<sup>35</sup> By the end of 1920 the question of physical survival had become, acute. Mennonite leaders began to realize that their only hope of survival as a people lay in emigration. The Russian chapter of Mennonite history was closing and the next chapter would open in the New World.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Dyck diary entries for April 14-17, and June 9.
2. Ibid, April 1-8, and May 26-30.
3. Ibid, June 10-13.
4. Ibid, June 6-25.
5. Ibid, June 26.
6. Ibid, June 30.
7. Dietrich Neufeld, A Russian Dance of Death. (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press, 1977), p. 24.
8. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 249.
9. Dyck diary entry for September 3, 1919.
10. Epp, "Entstehung", p. 4.
11. Neufeld, Dance of Death, pp. 24-25. The factory owner was Andreas Wallmann Jr., of the firm of Lepp and Wallmann, the largest of the Mennonite farm implement factories in Russia. Neufeld's estimate of the strength of Makhno's force (100,000) seems exaggerated. Although Epp agrees with this figure, (Exodus, p. 35,) other estimates range from 10,000 (Peters, Nestor Makhno, p. 61 and Schroeder Miracles, p. 109), to 25,000 (Palij, Anarchism, p. 186). Some of the confusion may result from the fact that Makhno's troops were augmented by hordes of local peasants and hangers-on eager for booty.
12. Dyck diary entry for October 7, 1919.
13. Ibid, October 9.
14. Ibid, October 5 and 7. See also Fast, "Errinerungen", p.40.
15. Palij, Anarchism, p. 186.
16. Toews, Volost, p. 494.
17. "Einer der dabei war", B. B. Janz papers. See also Schroeder, Miracles, p. 116 and Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 253.
18. Ibid, p. 115 and Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 254.

19. Ibid.
20. Fast, "Errinerungen".
21. Toews, "Volost", pp. 495-496.
22. "Einer der dabei war", B. B. Janz papers.
23. "Wir haben gesuendigt", letter from B. B. Janz to Abram Bergmann, Steinbach, dated Sept 25, 1960. Janz lived in Tiege at the time.
24. Dietrich Neufeld, Mennonitentum in der Ukraine. Schicksalsgeschichte Sagradowkas (Emden, 1922), p 19. See also Gerhard Lohrenz, Sagradowka. Die Geschichte einer Mennonitischen Ansiedlung im Sueden Russlands (Rosthern, Saskatchewan, 1947), p. 90.
25. Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, Vol. 11, pp. 279-281.
26. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", p. 258.
27. Baerg diary entry for December 22, 1919.
28. Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, Vol.11, p. 318.
29. Goerz "Ansiedllung", p. 196-197, pp. 196-197. See Dyck diary entries for July 16 through August 11, 1920.
30. Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism", pp. 262-263.
31. Chamberlin, Russian Revolution, pp. 297-317.
32. Peters, Anarchism, pp. 96-97.
33. A victory gained at too great a cost, alluding to the the exclamation of Pyrrhus after the battle of Asculum in Apulia, "One more such victory and we are lost."
34. Toews, Lost Fatherland, p. 39 gives statistics on losses.
35. Epp, Exodus. According to Epp, the hospital in Chortitza at one time registered one hundred VD patients. During the winter of 1920 1,500 died of typhus in the Old Colony alone. pp. 36-37. Although for obvious reasons exact statistics were not kept, figures from various sources estimate that about 10 to 12 per cent of the population died of typhus. See Schroeder, Miracles, pp. 137-138 and Toews, Documents, p.47. Kroeker writes of his personal battle with typhus at the age of fourteen in Mennonite Villages, pp. 2216-218.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This study has set out to determine why a people historically committed to pacifism, abandoned their principles and resorted to the use of force. First of all, it has attempted to show how the Mennonites dealt with threats to their pacifism for the three and a half centuries before they faced the ultimate test of their non-resistant position during the Russian Civil War. The early Anabaptists in sixteenth-century Switzerland were prepared to suffer and die for their beliefs. Even when the refusal to recant meant certain and horrible death, they did not waver. The strength of their faith can only be likened to that of the Christians in Roman times. For the Swiss Anabaptists there was only one alternative to martyrdom and that was flight. Here began the pattern that has continued throughout Anabaptist history right up to the present day. Flight in response to persecution has been the way in which many Mennonites have defined their non-resistance.

Persecution, however, has a way of catching up to those who run away from it, and so it was in the Netherlands. Many of those Anabaptists who had escaped with their lives from Switzerland became martyrs to their cause in the low countries. And, as before, many sought refuge elsewhere,

this time in North America, England, northern Germany, Prussia, and Poland. Others began to realize that there might be a way of staying where they were and fighting for their beliefs without resorting to violence. They discovered that through petitions it was sometimes possible to gain concessions from the authorities. In the Netherlands their appeals to William of Orange were successful not only because he was sympathetic to their cause, but also because the Mennonites had proven that they were peaceful and productive citizens who had much to offer.

In Prussia the Mennonites found themselves in a situation that was entirely new to them. They were settlers with special skills who had been invited by the authorities to immigrate, and so they were in a favoured position. They did not experience the kind of religious persecution they had suffered in Switzerland and the Netherlands. Their two-hundred-year sojourn in Prussia produced neither martyrs nor fugitives. They were, however, faced with a different kind of threat to their pacifism, that of conscription into military service. It was in Prussia that Mennonite non-resistance became a matter of privilege. Because they were useful to their Prussian landlords, they were able to obtain charters granting them exemption from military service. During the reign of Frederick the Great, however, these special charters no longer sufficed. As the pressure to mobilize mounted, Mennonite pacifism entered a new phase. For the first time in their history they purchased religious



tolerance. A special annual tax, to be used for the support of military schools, bought them exemption from conscription. And here the Mennonites entered the grey area of compromise. Questions arose which are still being debated today and which are as relevant now as they were in the eighteenth century. Is non-resistance compromised when the right to exercise it is bought with money that is then used for military purposes? Does a group that accepts the benefits and protection of the state not have obligations towards it? Unresolved, these questions lay buried in the Mennonite subconscious until a century later when they demanded answers.

The emigration of the Mennonites from Prussia to the Ukraine was, once again, a flight response. This time, however, the reasons behind the flight were more complicated than they had been in the past. Certainly there was a direct threat to their pacifism through conscription. But the matter of property ownership was an extremely important factor, and this problem was inextricably linked to the question of the military exemption. By forbidding the sale of land to Mennonites who refused to give up their non-resistant stand the young men were essentially driven from the farms and forced to seek work in cities. Thus it would only be a matter of time before they would be assimilated and conscripted. Those who were prepared to recant, which in this case meant giving up their non-resistant status, were allowed to buy all the land they wanted. In Switzerland the choice had been either recant or

be martyred. In Prussia the choice was recant or give up property ownership and the chance for prosperity. Thus, for the first time the issue of Mennonite pacifism became clouded by materialism. The camel was beginning to have difficulty getting through the eye of the needle.<sup>1</sup>

During the next century in the Ukraine the camel grew much fatter and, rather than trying to go through the eye of the needle, many Mennonites attempted to get around it in various ways. When the question of military service surfaced again, some Mennonites, as they had done for centuries, escaped the issue by leaving the country. Others once again sought to retain their privileged status by petitioning the government. But the time was at hand when they would have to face the issue squarely. Russia's involvement in the Crimean and Russo-Japanese Wars forced Mennonites to think seriously about the relationship of pacifism and obligations to the Homeland. At meetings and conferences they debated the problem and arrived at a compromise which satisfied most of the colonists. This solution to pacifism, which might be termed the "Good Samaritan" approach,<sup>2</sup> was a responsible and humanitarian alternative to bearing arms. Through the "binding of wounds", either as volunteers at the front or by receiving the injured in their homes, Mennonites made a very real contribution to the war effort. Financial contributions to the Red Cross and to the government were further proof of their allegiance to Mother Russia.

Although a few of their young men lost their lives while

serving with the medical service, the Mennonites were as yet relatively untouched by the War. But something was beginning to happen to their thinking. The young men were encountering the "real" Russia for the first time. They saw first hand the plight of the ordinary Russian people and when they returned home at the end of the war, they were no longer the sheltered sons of prosperous farmers. Some of them, if not actually radicalized, had at least turned a "healthy shade of pink".<sup>3</sup> Their thinking was bound to have an influence on the group when decisions were made on arming for defense.

Then war and anarchy came to the Ukraine and the colonies were thrown into chaos. Mennonite non-resistance had previously been possible because it existed within the protection of the state. Now that privilege was removed. The system of rotating nightwatchmen that had become necessary during the 1905 Revolution to protect the villagers from robbery and harassment, no longer sufficed. The issue of protecting their property became a matter of real concern. But when even such a limited attempt at self-defense as the nightwatch had been hotly debated, it is small wonder that the colonists could not agree on organizing on a larger scale. Those who stood firm in their belief in non-resistance argued that "vengeance brings forth yet more vengeance".<sup>4</sup> Their view is typified by J. P. Dyck, whose father refused to compromise his beliefs. When German officers knocked on his door, offering him weapons, he said, "Thank you but I have a deep belief in "Wehrlosigkeit"

[literally, defencelessness].

The officers replied, "If those in the neighbourhood know you are armed they will stay away."

"But if, nevertheless, the people come, and I know there is a gun in the corner, I am after all only a 'Mensch'. I would go to my gun and shoot. I don't want any guns."<sup>5</sup>

Dyck's father and mother were both shot by bandits in 1918. Even so, Dyck believes to this day that his father made the right decision. When asked about his beliefs he said that he blames or judges no one but has held firmly to his own belief in non-resistance. "I am so glad today that I put no one into eternity."<sup>6</sup> The proponents of self-defense, on the other hand, argued that, since law and order had broken down, it was necessary to organize for defense if they were to survive. Although protection of their property was certainly an important factor for many Mennonites in making their decision, it was ultimately fear for the fate of loved ones that was the deciding factor.

The importance of the Lichtenau Conference as a turning point in the Mennonite attitude toward self-defense, cannot be over-emphasized. At that conference, the religious segment of the community, the church if you will, lost its right to discipline. By its failure to act, it could no longer take action against those who used weapons. The Mennonites were unable to take a united stand when faced with reconciling the ideal with the reality. The Taufeferkrankheit had once again prevented them from reaching an agreement.

Inevitably, and pressure was an important factor here, the Selbstschutz moved over the fine dividing-line between defense and offense. A comment made by Gerhard Lohrenz is worth mentioning here:

It [the gun] does something to you. You know the gun in hand makes you, especially if there is a group of you---somehow different. When we moved into the city and I was standing like where it happened on an open truck with twenty men and we were now, as it were, the conquerors of the city---I had a little bit that feeling of Napoleon. You know this is what it gives you. You are more demanding, a little bolder. 'No one is going to fool around with me'. This is how it works on the men. Not everyone, but this is the tendency.

We can conclude then, that the Selbstschutz was inevitable given the conditions that existed in the Ukraine and the nature of Mennonitism. The situation of the colonists in the Ukraine was different from the previous Mennonite experience. Isolation and prosperity had contributed to a weakening of the Mennonite faith. When faced with the ultimate reality of war and terror, each individual had to come to terms personally with his faith. Each had to decide if he was willing to suffer, and perhaps die, for his beliefs. The final question we are left with is, "Can one reconcile the ideal with the reality?"

## FOOTNOTES

1. Urry, "Through the Eye", p. 7.
2. Toews lecture, tape 3.
3. Dyck interview, February 4, 1986.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Lohrenz interview, January 3, 1986.

## APPENDICES

### I. THE SCHLEITHEIM CONFESSION OF FAITH

In the translation which follows, the German text of the 1533 edition (1908 reprint by Köhler) was followed. The translation is free in places, particularly in the citation of Bible verses where the King James version of 1611 is followed unless the German deviated therefrom too sharply.

#### BROTHERLY UNION OF A NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF GOD CONCERNING SEVEN ARTICLES

May joy, peace and mercy from our Father through the atonement of the blood of Christ Jesus, together with the gifts of the Spirit—Who is sent from the Father to all believers for their strength and comfort and for their perseverance in all tribulation until the end, Amen—be to all those who love God, who are the children of light, and who are scattered everywhere as it has been ordained of God our Father, where they are with one mind assembled together in one God and Father of us all: Grace and peace of heart be with you all, Amen.

Beloved brethren and sisters<sup>21</sup> in the Lord: First and supremely we are always concerned for your consolation and the assurance of your conscience (which was previously misled) so that you may not always remain foreigners to us and by right almost completely excluded, but that you may turn again to the true implanted members of Christ, who have been armed through patience and knowledge of themselves, and have therefore again been united with us in the strength of a godly Christian spirit and zeal for God.

It is also apparent with what cunning the devil has turned us aside, so that he might destroy and bring to an end the work of God which in mercy and grace has been partly begun in us. But Christ, the true Shepherd of our souls, Who has begun this in us, will certainly direct the same and teach [us] to His honor and our salvation, Amen.

Dear brethren and sisters, we who have been assembled in the Lord at Schleithem on the Border, make known in points and articles to all who love God that as concerns us we are of one mind to abide in the Lord as God's obedient children, [His] sons and daughters, we who have been and shall be separated from the world in everything, [and] completely at peace. To God alone be praise and glory without the contradiction of any brethren. In this we have perceived the oneness of the Spirit of our Father and of our common Christ with us. For the Lord is the Lord of peace and not of quarreling, as Paul points out. That you may understand in what articles this has been formulated you should observe and note [the following].

A very great offense has been introduced by certain false brethren among us, so that some have turned aside from the faith, in the way they intend to practice and observe the freedom of the Spirit and of Christ. But

such have missed the truth and to their condemnation are given over to the lasciviousness and self-indulgence of the flesh. They think faith and love may do and permit everything, and nothing will harm them nor condemn them, since they are believers.<sup>22</sup>

Observe, you who are God's members in Christ Jesus, that faith in the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ does not take such form. It does not produce and result in such things as these false brethren and sisters do and teach. Guard yourselves and be warned of such people, for they do not serve our Father, but their father, the devil.

But you are not that way. For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. You understand me<sup>23</sup> well and [know] the brethren whom we mean. Separate yourselves from them for they are perverted. Petition the Lord that they may have the knowledge which leads to repentance, and [pray] for us that we may have constancy to persevere in the way which we have espoused, for the honor of God and of Christ, His Son, Amen.

The articles which we discussed and on which we were of one mind are these 1. Baptism; 2. The Ban [Excommunication]; 3. Breaking of Bread; 4. Separation from the Abomination; 5. Pastors in the Church; 6. The Sword; and 7. The Oath.

First. Observe concerning baptism; Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly<sup>24</sup> that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and testimony of the apostles. Mt. 28, Mk. 16, Acts 2, 8, 16, 19. This we wish to hold simply, yet firmly and with assurance.

Second. We are agreed as follows on the ban<sup>25</sup>: The ban shall be employed with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to walk in His commandments, and with all those who are baptized into the one body of Christ and who are called brethren or sisters, and yet who slip sometimes and fall into error and sin, being inadvertently overtaken.<sup>26</sup> The same shall be admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ. Mt. 18. But this shall be done according to the regulation of the Spirit (Mt. 5) before the breaking of bread, so that we may break and eat one bread, with one mind and in one love, and may drink of one cup.

Third. In the breaking of bread we are of one mind and are agreed [as follows]: All those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ. For as Paul points out we cannot at the same time be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils; we cannot at the same time drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil. That is, all those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness have no part in the light. Therefore all who follow the devil and the world have no part with those who are called unto God out of the world. All who lie in evil have no part in the good.

Therefore it is and must be [thus]: Whoever has not been called by one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one Spirit, to one body, with all the children of God's church, cannot be made [into] one bread with them, as indeed must be done if one is truly to break bread according to the command of Christ.

Fourth. We are agreed [as follows] on separation: A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations. This is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do His will, are a great abomination before God, it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things. For truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who [have come] out of the world; God's temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other.



To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters.

He further admonishes us to withdraw from Babylon and the earthly Egypt that we may not be partakers of the pain and suffering which the Lord will bring upon them.

From all this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all popish and antipopish works and church services, meetings and church attendance,<sup>27</sup> drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments [made in] unbelief<sup>28</sup> and other things of that kind, which are highly regarded by the world and yet are carried on in flat contradiction to the command of God, in accordance with all the unrighteousness which is in the world. From all these things we shall be separated and have no part with them for they are nothing but an abomination, and they are the cause of our being hated before our Christ Jesus, Who has set us free from the slavery of the flesh and fitted us for the service of God through the Spirit Whom He has given us.

Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force—such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one's enemies—by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil.

Fifth. We are agreed as follows on pastors in the church of God: The pastor in the church of God shall, as Paul has prescribed, be one who out-and-out has a good report of those who are outside the faith. This office shall be to read, to admonish and teach, to warn, to discipline, to ban in the church, to lead out in prayer for the advancement of all the brethren and sisters, to lift up the bread when it is to be broken, and in all things to see to the care of the body of Christ, in order that it may be built up and developed, and the mouth of the slanderer be stopped.

This one moreover shall be supported of the church which has chosen him, wherein he may be in need, so that he who serves the Gospel may live of the Gospel as the Lord has ordained. But if a pastor should do something requiring discipline, he shall not be dealt with except [on the testimony of] two or three witnesses. And when they sin they shall be disciplined before all in order that the others may fear.

But should it happen that through the cross this pastor should be banished or led to the Lord [through martyrdom] another shall be ordained in his place in the same hour so that God's little flock and people may not be destroyed.

Sixth. We are agreed as follows concerning the sword: The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ.<sup>29</sup> It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the Law the sword was ordained for the punishment of the wicked and for their death, and the same [sword] is [now] ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates.

In the perfection of Christ,<sup>30</sup> however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death,<sup>31</sup>—simply the warning and the command to sin no more.

Now it will be asked by many who do not recognize [this as] the will of Christ for us, whether a Christian may or should employ the sword against the wicked for the defense and protection of the good, or for the sake of love.

Our reply is unanimously as follows: Christ teaches and commands us to learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart and so shall we find rest to our souls. Also Christ says to the heathenish woman who was taken in adultery, not that one should stone her according to the law of His Father (and yet He says, As the Father has commanded me, thus I do), but in mercy and forgiveness and warning, to sin no more. Such [an attitude] we also ought to take completely according to the rule of the ban.

Secondly, it will be asked concerning the sword, whether a Christian shall pass sentence in worldly dispute and strife such as unbelievers have

with one another. This is our united answer: Christ did not wish to decide or pass judgment between brother and brother in the case of the inheritance, but refused to do so. Therefore we should do likewise.

Thirdly, it will be asked concerning the sword, Shall one be a magistrate if one should be chosen as such? The answer is as follows: They wished to make Christ king, but He fled and did not view it as the arrangement of His Father. Thus shall we do as He did, and follow Him, and so shall we not walk in darkness. For He Himself says, He who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Also, He Himself forbids the [employment of] the force of the sword saying, The worldly princes lord it over them, etc., but not so shall it be with you. Further, Paul says, Whom God did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, etc. Also Peter says, Christ has suffered (not ruled) and left us an example, that ye should follow His steps.

Finally it will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as a magistrate because of these points: The government magistracy is according to the flesh,<sup>32</sup> but the Christians' is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christians' are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christians' citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christians' weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armor of God with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. In brief, as is the mind of Christ toward us, so shall the mind of the members of the body of Christ be through Him in all things, that there may be no schism in the body through which it would be destroyed. For every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed. Now since Christ is as it is written of Him, His members must also be the same, that His body may remain complete and united to its own advancement and upbuilding.

Seventh. We are agreed as follows concerning the oath: The oath is a confirmation among those who are quarreling or making promises. In the Law it is commanded to be performed in God's Name, but only in truth, not falsely. Christ, who teaches the perfection of the Law, prohibits all swearing to His [followers], whether true or false,—neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by our head,—and that for the reason which He shortly thereafter gives, For you are not able to make one hair white or black. So you see it is for this reason that all swearing is forbidden: we cannot fulfill that which we promise when we swear, for we cannot change [even] the very least thing on us.

Now there are some who do not give credence to the simple command of God, but object with this question: Well now, did not God swear to Abraham by Himself (since He was God) when He promised him that He would be with him and that He would be his God if he would keep His commandments,—why then should I not also swear when I promise to someone? Answer: Hear what the Scripture says: God, since He wished more abundantly to show unto the heirs the immutability of His counsel, inserted an oath, that by two immutable things (in which it is impossible for God to lie) we might have a strong consolation. Observe the meaning of this Scripture: What God forbids you to do, He has power to do, for everything is possible for Him. God swore an oath to Abraham, says the Scripture, so that He might show that His counsel is immutable. That is, no one can withstand nor thwart His will; therefore He can keep His oath. But we can do nothing, as is said above by Christ, to keep or perform [our oaths]: therefore we shall not swear at all [*nichts schwören*].

Then others further say as follows: It is not forbidden of God to swear in the New Testament, when it is actually commanded in the Old, but it is forbidden only to swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem and our head. Answer: Hear the Scripture, He who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by Him who sitteth thereon. Observe: it is forbidden to swear by heaven, which is only the throne of God: how much more is it forbidden [to swear] by God Himself! Ye fools and blind, which is greater, the throne or Him that sitteth thereon?

Further some say, Because evil is now [in the world,<sup>33</sup> and] because man needs God for [the establishment of] the truth, so did the apostles Peter and Paul also swear. Answer: Peter and Paul only testify of that which God promised to Abraham with the oath. They themselves promise nothing, as the example indicates clearly. Testifying and swearing are two different things. For when a person swears he is in the first place promising future things, as Christ was promised to Abraham Whom we a long time afterwards received. But when a person bears testimony he is testifying about the present, whether it is good or evil, as Simeon spoke to Mary about Christ and testified, Behold this (child) is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against.

Christ also taught us along the same line when He said, Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. He says, Your speech or word shall be yea and nay. (However) when one does not wish to understand, he remains closed to the meaning.<sup>34</sup> Christ is simply Yea and Nay, and all those who seek Him simply will understand His Word. Amen.

Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord: These are the articles of certain brethren who had heretofore been in error and who had failed to agree in the true understanding, so that many weaker consciences were perplexed, causing the Name of God to be greatly slandered. Therefore there has been a great need for us to become of one mind in the Lord, which has come to pass. To God be praise and glory!

Now since you have so well understood the will of God which has been made known by us, it will be necessary for you to achieve perseveringly, without interruption, the known will of God. For you know well what the servant who sinned knowingly heard as his recompense.

Everything which you have unwittingly done and confessed as evil doing is forgiven you through the believing prayer which is offered by us in our meeting for all our shortcomings and guilt. [This state is yours] through the gracious forgiveness of God and through the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Keep watch on all who do not walk according to the simplicity of the divine truth which is stated in this letter from [the decisions of] our meeting, so that everyone among us will be governed by the rule of the ban and henceforth the entry of false brethren and sisters among us may be prevented.

Eliminate from you that which is evil and the Lord will be your God and you will be His sons and daughters.

Dear brethren, keep in mind what Paul admonishes Timothy when he says, The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works. Think on this and exercise yourselves therein and the God of peace will be with you.

May the Name of God be hallowed eternally and highly praised, Amen. May the Lord give you His peace, Amen.

The Acts of Schleithem on the Border [Canton Schaffhausen, Switzerland], on Matthias' [Day],<sup>35</sup> Anno MDXXVII.

Note: The words in brackets are inserted by the translator to clarify the text. The words in parentheses are a part of the original text. [J.C.W.]

## Appendix II

# II. The Dordrecht Confession

Adopted by a Dutch Mennonite Conference April 21, 1632

Mennonites are not a creedal church. No human system of doctrine stands between them and the Word of God. It is to the Scriptures that they are bound. Yet it must also be stated that Mennonites actually hold to rather well defined doctrinal views. Many confessions of faith were produced beginning with the Schleithem articles of 1527. The best of these confessions, although they all resemble each other rather closely, is undoubtedly the one adopted at Dordrecht, Holland, in 1632.

In the days of Menno Simons, 1496-1561, the Mennonites of the Netherlands were one brotherhood. But beginning in 1567 a number of schisms occurred. Bishop Dirck Philips, 1504-68, the great co-worker of Menno, affiliated himself with the Flemish Mennonites, while Bishop Peter Janz Twisck, 1565-1636, who was married to Menno's granddaughter, adhered to the Frisians. Hendrik Roosevelt, a Flemish bishop, and others, labored unsuccessfully for union.

About 1630 another series of efforts were made to unite various Mennonite groups. The "Olive Branch" confession of 1627 (printed on pages 27-33 of the 1938 *Martyrs' Mirror*) was an effort to provide a basis for union between the Friesian and Flemish churches. The Jan Cents' Confession of 1630 (pages 33-38, *Martyrs' Mirror*) was subscribed to by fourteen Friesian and High German ministers.

The Dordrecht Confession of 1632 was written in the first draft by Adrian Cornelis, bishop of the Flemish Mennonite Church in Dordrecht. About the middle of April 1632 a number of Mennonite ministers assembled in Dordrecht in spite of the protest of the Reformed clergy against "this extraordinary gathering of Anabaptists from all provinces." The conference was successful in forming a union, a united brotherhood. At the close of the sessions the ministers extended to each other the right hand of fellowship, greeted each other with the holy kiss, and observed the Lord's Supper together. Of the fifty-one Flemish and Frisian ministers who signed this confession of faith, two were of Crefeld, Germany and two represented "the upper country" (central or south Germany).

The Alsatian Mennonites adopted the Dordrecht Confession in 1660, when thirteen ministers and deacons subscribed to it. The Palatine and German Mennonite Churches also subsequently adopted it. However, the Swiss Mennonite churches never subscribed to it. In 1725 the Pennsylvania Mennonites, mostly Swiss, of what are now the Franconia and Lancaster Conferences, adopted the Dordrecht Confession, undoubtedly through the influence of the Dutch Mennonites of Germantown, near Philadelphia. Sixteen ministers signed a statement of adoption. A number of the more conservative Mennonite bodies of America, including the *Mennonite Church*, now recognize the Dordrecht Confession as the official summary of their doctrinal beliefs. Historically this confession of faith was used as a basis of instruction to classes of young people who were being prepared for baptism and church membership. At the present time in the *Mennonite Church* the chief significance of the Dordrecht Confession is undoubtedly its value as a symbol of the Mennonite heritage of faith and way of life.

The text of the Dordrecht Confession printed below is basically that which is now in circulation in the Mennonite Church in America. It is apparently a translation of a German translation of the Dutch original. In Van Braght's *Bloedigh Tooneel* of 1660 the Dordrecht Confession is printed in the unpaginated introduction. The names of the signers given below were taken from the 1660 edition. For an English translation made directly from the original Dutch, see the 1938 edition of the *Martyr's Mirror*, pages 38-44. The *Martyr's Mirror* text of the Dordrecht Confession was used to correct the text which is in common circulation among American Mennonites. The corrections were merely a matter of wording, not a change in sense.

The Alsatian Mennonite statement which follows the Dordrecht Confession was corrected from the *Christliche Glaubens-Bekentnos* . . . , Amsterdam, 1664, pages 35, 36.

# THE DOCTRINES OF THE MENNONITES

## Article I

### OF GOD AND THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS

Whereas it is declared, that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6), and that "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," therefore we confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart, together with all the pious, according to the Holy Scriptures, that there is one eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, and none more and none other, before whom no God existed, neither will exist after Him. For from Him, through Him, and in Him are all things. To Him be blessing, praise, and honor, for ever and ever. Gen. 17:1; Deut. 6:4; Isaiah 46:9; I John 5:7.

In this one God, who "worketh all in all," we believe. Him we confess as the creator of all things, visible and invisible; who in six days created and prepared "heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein." And we further believe, that this God still governs and preserves the same, together with all His works, through His wisdom, His might, and the "word of His power." Gen. 5:1, 2; Acts 14:15; I Cor. 12:6; Heb. 1:3.

When He had finished His works and, according to His good pleasure, had ordained and prepared each of them, so that they were right and good according to their nature, being and quality, He created the first man, Adam, the father of all of us, gave him a body formed "of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," so that he "became a living soul," created by God "in His own image and likeness," in "righteousness and true holiness" unto eternal life. He also gave him a place above all other creatures and endowed him with many high and excellent gifts, put him into the garden of Eden, and gave him a commandment and an interdiction. Thereupon He took a rib from the said Adam, made a woman out of it, brought her to him, and gave her to him as a helpmate and housewife. Consequently He has caused, that from this first man, Adam, all men who "dwell on the face of the earth," have been begotten and have descended. Gen. 1:27; 2:7, 15-17, 22; 5:1; Acts 17:26.

## Article II

### OF THE FALL OF MAN

We believe and confess, that, according to the purport of the Holy Scriptures, our first parents, Adam and Eve, did not long remain in the happy state in which they were created; but did, after being seduced by the deceit and subtilty of the serpent, and envy of the devil, violate the high command of God, and became disobedient to their Creator; through which disobedience "sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" so that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," and thereby incurred the wrath of God and condemnation. For which reason our first parents were, by God, driven out of Paradise, to cultivate the earth, to maintain themselves thereon in sorrow, and to "eat their bread in the sweat of their face," until they "returned to the ground, from which they were taken." And that they did, therefore, through this one sin, so far apostatize, depart, and estrange themselves from God, that they could neither help themselves, nor be helped by any of their descendants, nor by angels, nor by any other creature in heaven or on earth, nor be redeemed, or reconciled to God; but would have had to be lost forever, had not God, who pitied His creatures, in mercy, interposed in their behalf and made provision for their restoration. Gen. 3:6, 23; Rom. 5:12-19; Ps. 47:8, 9; Rev. 5:3; John 3:16.

## Article III

### OF THE RESTORATION OF MAN THROUGH THE PROMISE OF THE COMING OF CHRIST

Regarding the restoration of our first parents and their descendants, we believe and confess: That God, notwithstanding their fall, transgression and sin, and although they had no power to help themselves, He was nevertheless not willing that they should

be cast off entirely, or be eternally lost; but again called them unto Him, comforted them, and showed them that there were yet means with Him for their reconciliation; namely, the immaculate Lamb, the Son of God; who "was fore-ordained" to this purpose "before the foundation of the world," and who was promised to them and all their descendants, while they (our first parents) were yet in paradise, for their comfort, redemption, and salvation; yea, who was given to them thenceforward, through faith, as their own; after which all the pious patriarchs, to whom this promise was often renewed, longed and searched, beholding it through faith at a distance, and expecting its fulfillment—expecting that He (the Son of God), would, at His coming, again redeem and deliver the fallen race of man from their sins, their guilt, and unrighteousness. John 1:29; 11:27; I Pet. 1:18, 19; Gen. 3:15; I John 2:1, 2; 3:8; Gal. 4:4, 5.

#### *Article IV*

#### OF THE ADVENT OF CHRIST INTO THIS WORLD, AND THE REASON OF HIS COMING

We believe and confess further: That "when the fulness of the time was come," after which all the pious patriarchs so ardently longed, and which they so anxiously awaited—the previously promised Messiah, Redeemer, and Saviour, proceeded from God, being sent by Him, and according to the prediction of the prophets and the testimony of the evangelists, came into the world, yea, into the flesh—, so that the Word itself thus became flesh and man; and that He was conceived by the Virgin Mary (who was espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house of David), and that she bare Him as her first-born son at Bethlehem, "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger." John 4:25; 16:28; I Tim. 3:16; Matt. 1:21; John 1:14; Luke 2:7.

Further we believe and confess, that this is the same One, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" who has "neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Of whom it is testified, that He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." That this is also He—and none other—who was chosen, promised, and sent; who came into the world; and who is God's only, first, and proper Son; who was before John the Baptist, before Abraham, before the world; yea, who was David's Lord, and who was God of the "whole earth," "the first-born of every creature"; who was sent into the world, and Himself delivered up the body prepared for Him, as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour;" yea, for the comfort, redemption, and salvation of all—of the human race. Micah 5:2; Heb. 7:3; Rev. 1:8; John 3:16; Rom. 8:32; Col. 1:15; Heb. 10:5.

But how, or in what manner, this worthy body was prepared, or how the Word became flesh, and He Himself man, we content ourselves with the declaration which the worthy evangelists have given and left in their description thereof; according to which we confess with all the saints, that He is the Son of the living God, in whom exist all our hope, comfort, redemption, and salvation, and which we are to seek in no one else. Luke 1:31-35; John 20:31.

Further, we believe and confess by authority of scripture, that when He had ended His course, and "finished" the work for which He was sent into the world, He was, by the providence of God, delivered into the hands of the unrighteous; suffered under the judge, Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, was buried, rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty of God on high; from whence He will come again to judge the living and dead. Luke 23:1, 52, 53; 24:5, 6, 51.

Thus we believe the Son of God died—"tasted death for every man," shed His precious blood, and thereby bruised the head of the serpent, destroyed the works of the devil, "blotted out the hand-writing," and purchased redemption for the whole human race; and thus He became the source of eternal salvation to all who from the time of Adam to the end of the world, shall have believed in Him, and obeyed Him. Gen. 3:15; I John 3:8; Col. 2:14; Rom. 5:18.

*Article V*

## OF THE LAW OF CHRIST, WHICH IS THE HOLY GOSPEL, OR THE NEW TESTAMENT

We also believe and confess, that Christ, before His ascension, established and instituted His New Testament and left it to His followers, to be and remain an everlasting testament, which He confirmed and sealed with His own precious blood; and which He has so highly commended to them, that neither men or angels may change it, neither take therefrom nor add thereto. Jer. 31:31; Heb. 9:15-17; Matt. 26:28; Gal. 1:8; I Tim. 6:3-5; Rev. 22:18, 19; Matt. 5:18; Luke 21:33.

And that He has caused this Testament (in which the whole counsel and will of His heavenly Father, so far as these are necessary to the salvation of man, are comprehended), to be proclaimed, in His name, through His beloved apostles, messengers, and servants (whom He chose and sent into all the world for this purpose)—to all nations, people and tongues; these apostles preaching repentance and remission of sins; and that He, in said Testament, caused it to be declared, that all men without distinction, if they are obedient, through faith, follow, fulfill and live according to the precepts of the same, are His children and rightful heirs; having thus excluded none from the precious inheritance of eternal salvation, except the unbelieving and disobedient, the headstrong and unconverted; who despise such salvation; and thus by their own actions incur guilt by refusing the same, and "judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life." Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46, 47; Rom. 8:17; Acts 13:46.

*Article VI*

## OF REPENTANCE AND AMENDMENT OF LIFE

We believe and confess, that, as the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," and consequently inclined to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, that, therefore, the first doctrine of the precious New Testament of the Son of God is, Repentance and amendment of life. Gen. 8:21; Mark 1:15.

Therefore those who have ears to hear, and hearts to understand, must "bring forth fruits meet for repentance," amend their lives, believe the Gospel, "depart from evil and do good," desist from wrong and cease from sinning, "put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man," which after God is created in "righteousness and true holiness." For neither *Baptism, Supper, nor church-fellowship*, nor any other external ceremony, can, without faith, the new birth, and a change or renewal of life, help, or qualify us, that we may please God, or receive any consolation or promise of salvation from Him. Luke 3:8; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9, 10.

But on the contrary, we must go to God "with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith," and believe in Jesus Christ, as the Scriptures speak and testify of Him. Through which faith we obtain the pardon of our sins, become sanctified, justified, and children of God; yea, partakers of His mind, nature and image, as we are born again of God through His incorruptible seed from above. Heb. 10:21, 22; John 7:38; II Pet. 1:4.

*Article VII*

## OF HOLY BAPTISM

Regarding baptism, we confess that all penitent believers, who through faith, the new birth and renewal of the Holy Ghost, have become united with God, and whose names are recorded in heaven, must, on such Scriptural confession of their faith, and renewal of life, according to the command and doctrine of Christ, and the example and custom of the apostles, be baptized with water in the ever adorable name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to the burying of their sins, and thus to become incorporated into the communion of the saints; whereupon they must learn to observe all things whatsoever the Son of God taught, left on record, and commanded His followers to do. Matt. 3:15; 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 8:12, 38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:33; Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12.

*Article VIII*

## OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

We believe in and confess a visible Church of God, consisting of those, who, as before remarked, have truly repented, and rightly believed; who are rightly baptized, united with God in heaven, and incorporated into the communion of the saints on earth. I Cor. 12:13.

And these, we confess, are a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation," who have the testimony that they are the "bride" of Christ; yea, that they are children and heirs of eternal life—a "habitation of God through the Spirit," built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which "Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone"—the foundation on which His church is built. John 3:29; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:19-21; Tit. 3:7; I Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:9.

This church of the living God, which He has purchased and redeemed through His own precious blood, and with which He will be—according to His own promise—for her comfort and protection, "always, even unto the end of the world;" yea, will dwell and walk with her, and preserve her, that no "winds" nor "floods," yea, not even the "gates of hell shall prevail against her"—may be known by her evangelical faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation; also by her pure walk and practice, and her observance of the true ordinances of Christ, which He has strictly enjoined on His followers. Matt. 7:25; 16:18; 28:20; II Cor. 6:16.

*Article IX*OF THE ELECTION, AND OFFICES OF TEACHERS, DEACONS, AND DEACONESSSES,  
IN THE CHURCH

Regarding the offices, and election of persons to the same, in the church, we believe and confess: That, as the church cannot exist and prosper, nor continue in its structure, without offices and regulations, that therefore the Lord Jesus has Himself (as a father in his house), appointed and prescribed His offices and ordinances, and has given commandments concerning the same, as to how each one should walk therein, give heed to His own work and calling, and do it as it becomes Him to do. Eph. 4:11, 12.

For He Himself, as the faithful and great Shepherd, and Bishop of our souls, was sent into the world, not to wound, to break, or destroy the souls of men, but to heal them; to seek that which is lost, and to pull down the hedges and partition wall, so as to make out of many one; thus collecting out of Jews and heathen, yea, out of all nations, a church in His name; for which (so that no one might go astray or be lost) He laid down His own life, and thus procured for them salvation, made them free and redeemed them, to which blessing no one could help them, or be of service in obtaining it. I Pet. 2:25; Matt. 18:11; Eph. 2:13, 14; John 10:9, 11, 15.

And that He, besides this, left His church before His departure, provided with faithful ministers, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, whom He had chosen by prayer and supplication through the Holy Spirit, so that they might govern the church, feed His flock, watch over, maintain, and care for the same: yea, do all things as He left them an example, taught them, and commanded them to do; and likewise to teach the church to observe all things whatsoever He commanded them. Eph. 4:11, 12; Luke 6:12, 13; 10:1; Matt. 28:20.

Also that the apostles were afterwards, as faithful followers of Christ and leaders of the church, diligent in these matters, namely, in choosing through prayer and supplication to God, brethren who were to provide all the churches in the cities and circuits, with bishops, pastors, and leaders, and to ordain to these offices such men as took "heed unto themselves and unto the doctrine," and also unto the flock; who were sound in the faith, pious in their life and conversation, and who had—as well within the church as "without"—a good reputation and a good report; so that they might be a light and example in all godliness and good works; might worthily administer the Lord's ordinances—baptism and supper—and that they (the brethren sent by the



apostles) might also, at all places, where such were to be had, appoint faithful men as elders, who were able to teach others, confirm them in the name of the Lord "with the laying on of hands," and who (the elders) were to take care of all things of which the church stood in need; so that they, as faithful servants, might well "occupy" their Lord's money, gain thereby, and thus "save themselves and those who hear them." I Tim. 3:1; 4:14-16; Acts 1:23, 24; Tit. 1:5; Luke 19:13.

That they should also take good care (particularly each one of the charge over which he had the oversight), that all the circuits should be well provided with deacons, who should have the care and oversight of the poor, and who were to receive gifts and alms, and again faithfully to distribute them among the poor saints who were in need, and this is in all honesty, as is becoming. Acts 6:3-6.

Also that honorable old widows should be chosen as deaconesses, who, besides the deacons are to visit, comfort, and take care of the poor, the weak, afflicted, and the needy, as also to visit, comfort, and take care of widows and orphans; and further to assist in taking care of any matters in the church that properly come within their sphere, according to their ability. I Tim. 5:9, 10; Rom. 16:1, 2.

And as it further regards the deacons, that they (particularly if they are fit persons, and chosen and ordained thereto by the church), may also in aid and relief of the bishops, exhort the church (being, as already remarked, chosen thereto), and thus assist in word and doctrine; so that each one may serve the other from love, with the gift which he has received from the Lord; so that through the common service and assistance of each member, according to his ability, the body of Christ may be edified, and the Lord's vineyard and church be preserved in its growth and structure. II Tim. 2:2.

#### *Article X*

##### OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

We also believe in and observe the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper, as the Lord Jesus instituted the same (with bread and wine) before His sufferings, and also observed and ate it with the apostles, and also commanded it to be observed to His remembrance, as also the apostles subsequently taught and observed the same in the church, and commanded it to be observed by believers in commemoration of the death and sufferings of the Lord—the breaking of His worthy body and the shedding of His precious blood—for the whole human race. So is the observance of this sacrament also to remind us of the benefit of the said death and sufferings of Christ, namely, the redemption and eternal salvation which He purchased thereby, and the great love thus shown to sinful man; whereby we are earnestly exhorted also to love one another—to love our neighbor—to forgive and absolve him—even as Christ has done unto us—and also to endeavor to maintain and keep alive the union and communion which we have with God, and amongst one another; which is thus shown and represented to us by the aforesaid breaking of bread. Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19, 20; Acts 2:42, 46; I Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26.

#### *Article XI*

##### OF THE WASHING OF THE SAINTS' FEET

We also confess a washing of the feet of the saints, as the Lord Jesus did not only institute and command the same, but did also Himself wash the feet of the apostles, although He was their Lord and Master; thereby giving an example that they also should wash one another's feet, and thus do to one another as He did to them; which they also afterwards taught believers to observe, and all this is a sign of true humiliation; but yet more particularly as a sign to remind us of the true washing—the washing and purification of the soul in the blood of Christ. John 13:4-17; I Tim. 5:9, 10.

#### *Article XII*

##### OF MATRIMONY

We also confess that there is in the church of God an "honorable" state of matrimony between two believers of the different sexes, as God first instituted the same in

paradise between Adam and Eve, and as the Lord Jesus reformed it by removing all abuses which had crept into it, and restoring it to its first order. Gen. 1:27; 2:18, 21-24.

In this manner the Apostle Paul also taught and permitted matrimony in the church, leaving it to each one's own choice to enter into matrimony with any person who would unite with him in such state, provided that it was done "in the Lord," according to the primitive order; the words "in the Lord," to be understood, according to our opinion, that just as the patriarchs had to marry amongst their own kindred or generation, so there is also no other liberty allowed to believers under the New Testament dispensation, than to marry among the "chosen generation," or the spiritual kindred of Christ; that is, to such—and none others—as are already, previous to their marriage, united to the church in heart and soul, have received the same baptism, belong to the same church, are of the same faith and doctrine, and lead the same course of life, with themselves. I Cor. 7:39; 9:5; Gen. 24:4; 28:6, 7; Num. 36:6-9.

Such are then, as already remarked, united by God and the church according to the primitive order, and this is then called, "Marrying in the Lord." I Cor. 7:39.

### *Article XIII*

#### OF THE OFFICE OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We also believe and confess, that God has instituted civil government, for the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the pious; and also further, for the purpose of governing the world, countries and cities; and also to preserve its subjects in good order and under good regulations. Wherefore we are not permitted to despise, revile, or resist the same, but are to acknowledge it as a minister of God and be subject and obedient to it, in all things that do not militate against the law, will, and commandments of God; yea, "to be ready to every good work;" also faithfully to pay it custom, tax, and tribute; thus giving it what is its due; as Jesus Christ taught, did Himself, and commanded His followers to do. That we are also to pray to the Lord earnestly for the government and its welfare, and in behalf of our country, so that we may live under its protection, maintain ourselves, and "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." And further, that the Lord would recompense them (our rulers), here and in eternity, for all the benefits, liberties, and favors which we enjoy under their laudable administration. Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1, 2; I Pet. 2:17; Matt. 17:27; 22:20, 21; I Tim. 2:1, 2.

### *Article XIV*

#### OF DEFENSE BY FORCE

Regarding revenge, whereby we resist our enemies with the sword, we believe and confess that the Lord Jesus has forbidden His disciples and followers all revenge and resistance, and has thereby commanded them not to "return evil for evil, nor railing for railing;" but to "put up the sword into the sheath," or, as the prophet foretold, "beat them into ploughshares." Matt. 5:39, 44; Rom. 12:14; I Pet. 3:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3.

From this we see, that, according to the example, life, and doctrine of Christ, we are not to do wrong, or cause offense or vexation to anyone; but to seek the welfare and salvation of all men; also, if necessity should require it, to flee, for the Lord's sake, from one city or country to another, and suffer the "spoiling of our goods," rather than give occasion of offense to anyone; and if we are struck in our "right cheek, rather to turn the other also," than revenge ourselves, or return the blow. Matt. 5:39; 10:23; Rom. 12:19.

And that we are, besides this, also to pray for our enemies, comfort and feed them, when they are hungry or thirsty, and thus by well-doing convince them and overcome the evil with good. Rom. 12:20, 21.

Finally, that we are to do good in all respects, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," and according to the law of Christ, do nothing to others that we would not wish them to do unto us. II Cor. 4:2; Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31.

# THE DOCTRINES OF THE MENNONITES

## Article XV

### OF THE SWEARING OF OATHS

Regarding the swearing of oaths, we believe and confess that the Lord Jesus has dissuaded His followers from and forbidden them the same; that is, that He commanded them to "swear not at all;" but that their "Yea" should be "yea," and their "Nay, nay." From which we understand that all oaths, high and low, are forbidden; and that instead of them we are to confirm all our promises and covenants, declarations and testimonies of all matters, merely with "Yea that is yea," and "Nay that is nay;" and that we are to perform and fulfill at all times, and in all things, to every one, every promise and obligation to which we thus affirm, as faithfully as if we had confirmed it by the most solemn oath. And if we thus do, we have the confidence that no one—not even government itself—will have just cause to require more of us. Matt. 5:34-37; Jas. 5:12; II Cor. 1:17.

## Article XVI

### OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL BAN OR EXCOMMUNICATION FROM THE CHURCH

We also believe in and acknowledge the ban, or excommunication, a separation or spiritual correction by the church, for the amendment, and not for the destruction, of offenders; so that what is pure may be separated from that which is impure. That is, if a person, after having been enlightened, and received the knowledge of the truth, and has been received into the communion of the saints, does willfully, or out of presumption, sin against God, or commit some other "sin unto death," thereby falling into such unfruitful works of darkness, that he becomes separated from God, and is debarred from His kingdom—that such an one—when his works are become manifest, and sufficiently known to the church—cannot remain in the "congregation of the righteous;" but must, as an offensive member and open sinner, be excluded from the church, "rebuked before all," and "purged out as a leaven," and thus remain until his amendment, as an example and warning to others, and also that the church may be kept pure from such "spots" and "blemishes;" so that not for the want of this, the name of the Lord be blasphemed, the church dishonored, and a stumblingblock thrown in the way of those "without," and finally, that the offender may not be condemned with the world, but that he may again be convinced of the error of his ways, and brought to repentance and amendment of life. Isa. 59:2; I Cor. 5:5, 6, 12; I Tim. 5:20; II Cor. 13:10.

Regarding the brotherly admonition, as also the instruction of the erring, we are to "give all diligence" to watch over them, and exhort them in all meekness to the amendment of their ways (Jas. 5:19, 20); and in case any should remain obstinate and unconverted, to reprove them as the case may require. In short, the church must "put away from among herself him that is wicked," whether it be in doctrine or life.

## Article XVII

### OF THE SHUNNING OF THOSE WHO ARE EXPELLED

As regards the withdrawing from, or the shunning of, those who are expelled, we believe and confess, that if any one, whether it be through a wicked life or perverse doctrine—is so far fallen as to be separated from God, and consequently rebuked by, and expelled from, the church, he must also, according to the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, be shunned and avoided by all the members of the church (particularly by those to whom his misdeeds are known), whether it be in eating or drinking, or other such like social matters. In short, that we are to have nothing to do with him; so that we may not become defiled by intercourse with him, and partakers of his sins; but that he may be made ashamed, be affected in his mind, convinced in his conscience, and thereby induced to amend his ways. I Cor. 5:9-11; Rom. 16:17; II Thess. 3:14; Tit. 3:10, 11.

That nevertheless, as well in shunning as in reproving such offender, such moderation and Christian discretion be used, that such shunning and reproof may not be conducive to his ruin, but be serviceable to his amendment. For should he be in need,

## THE DORDRECHT CONFESSION

hungry, thirsty, naked, sick or visited by some other affliction, we are in duty bound, according to the doctrine and practice of Christ and His apostles, to render him aid and assistance, as necessity may require; otherwise the shunning of him might be rather conducive to his ruin than to his amendment. I Thess. 5:14.

Therefore we must not treat such offenders as enemies, but exhort them as brethren, in order thereby to bring them to a knowledge of their sins and to repentance; so that they may again become reconciled to God and the church, and be received and admitted into the same—thus exercising love towards them, as is becoming. II Thess. 3:15.

*Article XVIII*

## OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND THE LAST JUDGMENT

Regarding the resurrection of the dead, we confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart, that according to the Scriptures all men who shall have died or "fallen asleep," will, through the incomprehensible power of God, at the day of judgment, be "raised up" and made alive; and that these, together with all those who then remain alive, and who shall be "changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," shall "appear before the judgment seat of Christ," where the good shall be separated from the evil, and where "every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"; and that the good or pious shall then further, as the blessed of their Father, be received by Christ into eternal life, where they shall receive that joy which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man." Yea, where they shall reign and triumph with Christ for ever and ever. Matt. 22:30-32; 25:31; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:25, 26; John 5:28, 29; I Cor. 15:51, 52; I Thess. 4:13.

And that, on the contrary, the wicked or impious, shall, as the accursed of God, be cast into "outer darkness;" yea, into eternal, hellish torments; "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" and where—according to Holy Scripture—they can expect no comfort nor redemption throughout eternity. Isa. 66:24; Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:46; Rev. 14:10, 11.

May the Lord through His grace make us all fit and worthy, that no such calamity may befall any of us; but that we may be diligent, and so take heed to ourselves, that we may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Amen.

\* \* \*

Now these are, as before mentioned, the chief articles of our general Christian Faith, which we everywhere teach in our congregations and families, and according to which we profess to live; and which, according to our convictions, contain the only true Christian Faith, which the apostles in their time believed and taught; yea, which they testified to by their lives and confirmed by their deaths; in which we will also, according to our weakness, gladly abide, live, and die, that at last, together with the apostles and all the pious we may obtain the salvation of our souls through the grace of God.

Thus were the foregoing articles of faith adopted and concluded by our united churches in the city of Dordrecht, in Holland, on the 21st day of April, in the year of our Lord 1632, and signed by the following ministers and teachers:

**DORDRECHT**

Isaac de Koning, and in behalf of our  
minister, Jan Jacobs

Hans Cobrysz

Iacuis Terwen

Claes Dircksz

Mels Gysbertsz

Adriaen Cornelissz

**MIDDELBURGH**

Bastiaen Willemsen

Ian Winckelmans

**VLISSINGEN**

Oillaert Willeborts

Iacob Pennen

Lieven Marynesz

**AMSTERDAM**

Tobias Govertsz

Pieter Iantz Moyer

Abraham Dircksz

David ter Haer

Pieter Iantz van Singel

HAERLEM

Ian Doom  
Pieter Gryspeer  
Dirck Woutersz Kolenkamp  
Pieter Ioosten

BOMMEL

Willem Iansz van Exselt  
Gisbert Spiering

ROTTERDAM

Balten Centen Schoenmaker  
M. Michielsz  
Israel van Halmael  
Hendrick Dircksz Apeldoren  
Andries Lucken, de jonge [Jr.]

FROM THE UPPER PART OF THE COUNTRY

Peeter van Borsel  
Antony Hansz

KREVELT dito

Harman op den Graff  
Weylm Kreynen

ZEELANDT

Cornelis de Moir  
Isaac Claessz

SCHIEDAM

Cornelis Bom  
Lambrecht Paeldinck

LEYDEN

Mr. C. de Kroninck  
Ian Weyns

BLOCKZIEL

Claes Claessen  
Pieter Peters

ZIERICZEE

Anthonis Cornelissz  
Pieter Iansz Timmerman

UTRECHT

Herman Segers  
Ian Hendricksen Hooghvelt  
Daniel Horens  
Abraham Spronck  
Willem van Broeckhuysen

GORCUM

Iacob van der Heyde Sebrechts  
Ian Iansz V. K.

AERNHEM

Cornelis Iansz  
Dirck Rendersen

Besides this confession being adopted by so many churches, and signed by their ministers, all the churches in Alsace, in the Palatinate, and in Germany afterwards adopted it unanimously. Wherefore it was translated from the Holland into the languages of these countries—into French and German—for the use of the churches there, and for others, of which this may serve as a notice.

The following attestation was signed by the brethren in Alsace, who examined this confession and adopted it as their own:

We, the undersigned, ministers of the word of God, and elders of the church in Alsace, hereby declare and make known, that being assembled this 4th of February in the year of our Lord 1660, at Ohnenheim in the principality of Rappoltstein, on account of the Confession of Faith, which was adopted at the Peace Convention of the *Taufsgesinten* which are called the Flemish, in the city of Dort, on the 21st day of April in the year 1632, and which was printed at Rotterdam by Franciscus von Hochstraten, Anno 1658; and having examined the same, and found it in agreement with our judgment, we have entirely adopted it as our own. Which we, in testimony of the truth, and a firm faith, have signed with our own hands, as follows:

*Ministers of the Word*

Hans Müller of Magenheym  
Hans Ringer of Heydelsheym  
Jacob Schneuli of Baldenheym  
Henrich Schneider of Isenheim  
Rudolph Egli of Kunenheim  
Adolph Schmidt of Markkirch

*Deacons*

Jacob Schmidt of Markkirch  
Bertram Habigh of Markkirch  
Ulrich Husser of Ohnenheym  
Jacob Gachnauwer of Ohnenheim  
Hans Rudi Bumen of Jepsenheim  
Jacob Schneider of Dürsantzenheym  
Henrich Frick of Kunenheim

POSTSCRIPT TO THE FOREGOING EIGHTEEN ARTICLES

From an authentic circular letter of the year 1557, from the Highland to the Netherland churches, it appears that from the Eyfelt to Moravia there were 50 churches, of which some consisted of from 500 to 600 brethren. And that there were about that time, at a conference at Strasburg, about 50 preachers and elders present, who discoursed about matters concerning the welfare of the churches.

These leaders of the nonresistant Christians endeavored earnestly to propagate the truth; so that like a "grain of mustard seed," of small beginning it grew against all bloody persecution, to the height in which it is to be seen in so many large churches in Germany, Prussia, the Principality of Cleves, &c., and particularly in the United Netherlands.

But finally, alas! there arose disunion amongst them about matters of faith, which so deeply grieved the peaceably disposed amongst them, that they not only thought about means to heal the schism, and restore union, but did also take the matter in hand, and concluded at Cologne, in the year 1591, a laudable peace between the Highland and Netherland churches. Still the schism was not fully healed. Consequently in the years 1628 and 1630, it was deemed necessary at a certain conference, by some lovers of peace to appoint another conference, in order to see whether they could come to an understanding, and the schism be fully healed. Consequently, in order to attain their object in the most effectual manner, there assembled at Dort, from many of the churches in Holland, on the 21st of April, 1632, fifty-one ministers of the word of God, appointed for said purpose; who deemed it advisable that a scriptural confession of faith should be drawn up, to which all parties should adhere, and on which this peace convention and the intended union should be founded and built. Which was then accordingly drawn up, publicly adopted, confirmed, signed, the so much wished for peace obtained, and the light again put on the candlestick, to the honor of the nonresistant Christianity.

### III. PLAN FOR THE COLONIZATION OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW RUSSIA

In spite of this intensive colonizing activity, we possess only one contemporary document which can give us an idea of the extent to which the theoretical postulates of the decrees were actually carried out. It should be kept in mind that the 117 colonies mentioned above were scattered through various provinces, e. g., Chernihiv, Saratov, St. Petersburg, Voronezh, Livonia, and that they had a private character, i. e., they did not affect the structure of the provinces. This one document is the "Plan for the Colonization of the Province of New Russia," (*Plan o poselenii v Novorossiiskoi gubernii*) which was confirmed by the Senate on April 2, 1764. This document reflects contemporary views on the colonization and shows how theoretical considerations were carried out in practice. Its interest and importance is in its attempt to encompass all aspects of the region's life and to subordinate this life, as it were, to the needs of the colonization, beginning with the allotment of land and ending with the problems of education. The value of this document to the scholar is greater when one realizes that this is a unique piece of evidence having no parallel in contemporary literature.<sup>69</sup> Nor should it be forgotten that this "Plan" was not only a colonization project, but also a set of laws, which remained in effect in the New Russia province up to the eighties of the eighteenth century. It is striking that the authors of the "Plan" envisaged the region as a wilderness with neither population, laws nor customs; a virgin territory to be settled and, therefore, offering to the lawmaker an opportunity to outline new laws and plan a new life.

Although the "Plan" has been published several times, it is interesting that it has not attracted the proper attention of either Russian or Ukrainian historians. The document is divided into eight chapters: "On Prerogatives," "On the Allotment of Land and the Principles Governing Its Use," "On Recruiting," "On Revenues," "On Forests," "On Commerce, Merchants, Factories, and Mills," "On Boundaries," and "On Schools."

The first point of the first chapter was that every inhabitant of the province, whatever his place of origin and whenever his time of arrival, possessed all the rights of the "native Russian subject"; the second, that each military settler would be allotted a certain amount of land as an hereditary possession in perpetuity; the third, that no settler or "burgess" would be held to perform military service against his will, and no one would be forbidden to trade salt or brandy, and, pending a new decree, it was permissible to import food and wares from abroad and to export them from Russia with-

out payment of custom duty. The rights granted to the inhabitants of the New Russia province by this point were greater than those of the native Russian subjects and comparable to those formerly enjoyed by the colonists of Nova Serbiya. The fourth point of the first chapter made unrestricted enrollment into Hussar and Lancer regiments free for any nationality. All recruits would receive a bonus of thirty rubles. The fifth point was concerned with Russian subjects, who, or the parents of whom, had returned from abroad prior to the term set in the decrees, and with Zaporozhians enrolled in Hussar or Lancer regiments. All these persons would receive a bonus of twelve rubles; as may be seen, there was an inequity between the rights of the Russian subjects and the foreigners to the subsidy. The sixth point promised a payment of six rubles to settlers, foreign or native. In point seven a "travel and provision" allowance of three rubles was granted to recruiting agents for each foreign settler capable of performing military service; for any other foreign settler, this allowance would be two rubles only; for a Russian subject or a Pole, whether intending to serve in the army or to settle in the region, the allowance would amount to one and a half rubles. Point eight stated that colonists granted land in the province would have to people it by recruiting settlers from abroad at their own expense. Finally, in point nine, all servicemen were released from military duty for one year in order to be able to attend to their households; therefore they would get no pay, only a subsidy "for necessities (of establishment)."

This chapter contains several interesting features. The government invited not only foreigners, but also Russian subjects who had fled abroad, although it valued their service lower, granting them a smaller subsidy "for the necessities" and paying the agents less for recruiting them. Moreover—and this is a feature which distinguishes the organization of New Russia from Nova Serbiya—the government was also interested in peopling non-military settlements, although the "price" for civilians was lower than for military colonists. The first chapter was a kind of preface and the ideas laid down in it were developed in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter, "On the Allotment of Land and the Principles Governing Its Use," was the most important of all. Here is the summary of its points:

1. The New Russia colony would be subdivided into seventy counties (*okrugi*), fifty-two of which were destined for servicemen; two, for townspeople; sixteen, for the rest of the population, such as Old Believers, foreigners, and immigrants from abroad unwilling to found separate settlements. In all, an area of 1,421,000 *desyatiny* (a *desyatina* equals 2.7 acres), 19,000 for each county was set aside for the colony. The length of the duty-free period depended on the quality of the soil and extended from six to sixteen years, subject to



confirmation by the commander in chief. Every county consisted of shares, which in turn consisted of twenty-four plots; thus, the county would have 700 plots. In thirty-two counties the area of plot would be twenty-six *desyatiny*, while in the remaining thirty-eight counties, which have no forests, it would be thirty *desyatiny*. Every plot was to remain indivisible and of the same size; this would enable its holder to perform military service and pay taxes. This was the pivotal point of the "Plan." It set a norm for future ownership of land and remained in force not only during the existence of the New Russia province, but also during a later period, especially with respect to the area of a peasant's homestead. The insistence on the unchanging size of every plot is most interesting. By this measure, the authors of the "Plan" intended to secure the complete fulfillment of military and fiscal duties by the population. At the same time it provided for the welfare of the owner, who was free from the menace of the plot's being divided among several heirs. Such an arrangement, common in the military feudal system, was a novelty for the Russian Empire.

The same principle, with one slight change, was introduced into the law of March 19, 1764 concerning the allotment of land to foreigners. This change consisted in speaking not of the settler's rights of possession, but of his use of the plot which belonged to the community. Yet, in both cases the plot was to be indivisible and to be passed on to one of the settler's sons, chosen by the father.<sup>70</sup>

2. Servicemen were responsible to company commanders, who shall refer to the regiment in military and to the New Russia Provincial Chancery in civilian matters.

3. The whole territory was to be divided into three parts: (a) the holdings of state settlers, paying a land, not a poll, tax; (b) the holdings of landowners, taxable; (c) the holdings of military colonists, non-taxable. The principle of land tax was also introduced into the law of March 19, 1764, establishing taxes in areas held by foreigners.

4. Whoever agrees to bring immigrants from abroad at his own expense will be given as much land as he wants, under the following conditions: (a) The land will be given to him in unconditional ownership, if there is at least one peasant homestead in every plot (i.e., in an area of twenty-six or thirty *desyatiny*). If the land is not settled within three years and no adequate reason can be given for failure to do so, the land will be apportioned to another. (b) After the expiration of the duty-free period the owner was bound to pay for the land, but half as much as state settlers, in view of the fact that he has brought immigrants at his own expense. (c) No one shall be (permanently) given more than forty-eight plots. Should some person settle a larger area, the excess would be sold.

5. No one would be allowed to buy more than forty-eight plots. Should someone inherit or otherwise come into possession of an area exceeding forty-eight plots, he shall sell the excess. If there is no buyer the treasury would make a reasonable estimate and take over the land and the peasants settled upon it. If the treasury finds no buyer, the peasants will be enrolled among state settlers.

6. Possession of land shall be limited to people serving in the Nova Serbiya corps or residing within the boundaries of the province. If a landowner accepts a position at another place and is forced to leave, he shall sell the land to local inhabitants. If the land is not sold within two years, it shall be taken over by the treasury at a reasonable price. This point regulates the character and size of the landowners' possessions.

The problem was approached from two different angles. On the one hand, the "Plan" was primarily concerned with the interests of the local population. It does not even contain any restrictions of a class character with respect to the purchase of land, which could be acquired by anyone financially capable of bringing in immigrants. On the other hand, the "Plan" puts a limit to the size of each landlord's estate. It can not exceed 1,440 *desyatiny* in districts where the household unit is thirty *desyatiny*, or 1,248 *desyatiny*, where this unit is twenty-six

*desyatiny*. This was a novelty when compared with the usual practice of land allotment prevailing in other parts of the Russian Empire. The limit set by the author of the "Plan" may be explained only by his desire to bring about as quick a colonization of the region as possible, since peopling of very large areas was scarcely to be expected. It is also noteworthy that the landlord's residence is required to be in the province. This was an entirely new stipulation, which had at its root the desire to create a permanent group of landowners and to strengthen Russian influence in the region.

Points five and six concern the conditions of military service. Point five said that every military plot shall provide one soldier. If, after his death, no other member of the family is fit for military service, the plot is transferred to the category of "settlers' plots." To fill the gap, one of the settlers shall voluntarily join the ranks. If there are no adults among the deceased soldier's heirs, who might be enrolled as settlers, the children of such a soldier shall be sent to an orphanage and his land given to another settler or a member of a large family desirous of starting a life of his own. The buildings shall be sold and the money given to the heirs when they come of age. The commander in chief shall see to it that the contingent of soldiers be always kept in full and that the plots remain of prescribed size. It is stipulated in point six that soldiers are exempt from the land tax; this exemption shall apply to their widows and children for a term of ten years. After the expiration of that term the land will pass to the heir, in part or in full, according to the latter's rank; if, however, the heir will not perform military service, it shall be considered as landowners' land for taxation purposes.

The same principle shall apply to taxes levied from "excess" land. For example, a colonel's son, who is only an ensign, is entitled to a smaller area than his father; he therefore will pay taxes for the remaining area of the estate as if he was a landowner.

In point one of the third chapter. "On Recruiting," every person performing military service is granted the right to retire on account of illness, or to provide as his substitute either his son or some other able-bodied member of his household. Point two specifies that a soldier and an able-bodied settler may exchange their plots. In this case, the ex-soldier will pay all taxes due from the settler's plot. In point three not only the commander in chief but also each family is exhorted to see that the service is performed inpeccably and that in case of a soldier's desertion he be immediately replaced by a relative. If a soldier has few relatives, several families should unite, so as to provide at least two working men per household in a Lancer regiment and at least three in a Hussar regiment. The above points regulate the military service and the possession of land by soldiers. The connection established between the family and military service is especially interesting, namely, the family is held responsible for the performance of its member. Also of interest is the idea of increasing the size of the family by adding outsiders to it and creating a steady reserve of working men in every household. Here a replica of the institution of *familiyaty*, introduced in Nova Serbiya, is seen. What is striking is the abundance of all sorts of guaranties by the "Plan" to secure satisfactory performance of military service. The conclusion automatically arises that without these guaranties service would not be adequately performed.

Point six is concerned with the problem of recruitment. Whoever brings a certain number of immigrants from abroad will be given a commission. If he is fit for service, he shall be assigned to a regiment. If he is not, he shall only have the commission, be given the ranks' land and paid the "recruitment sum." A major's rank is bestowed for recruiting 300 people; a captain's for 100 people; a lieutenant's, for 80 people; an ensign's, for 60 people. If the immigrants are not soldiers, but settlers, their number must be twice as high for the recruiter to be entitled to a corresponding commission. In comparison with the practices prevailing in Nova Serbiya, where a captain's rank was given for 100 immigrants, a lieutenant's, for 75, and an ensign's, for 50 immigrants, the requirements of the "Plan" were much higher. It may be explained partly by a desire to keep unreliable elements from entering the officers corps. As shall be seen later, this point was substantially modified.

The fourth chapter, "On Revenues," was concerned with the maintenance of the province's regiments from revenues of the region after the expiration of the duty-free period. These revenues consisted of: (1) a land tax levied on state and landowner's peasants; (2) an inn tax; (3) the sale of cattle at fairs; (4) the exporting cattle abroad; (5) the export of salt and fish from the Crimea and the Sich to Poland; (6) the import of brandy from Poland; (7) turnover-tax levied on merchants; (8) taxes levied on artisans, according to their craft; (9) revenues from mills. All these sums, with the exception of the land tax, were to be collected immediately and were destined for the construction of schools, hospitals, orphanages, shops, etc.

The subject of the fifth chapter was the forests. Point one prohibits anyone from building houses of wood; they were to be either mud-huts (*mazanki*) or made of brick, or, in exceptional cases, useless dry wood covered with clay. The roofs shall be either of tile or covered with earth. Plots shall be surrounded by earthen enclosures. Point two prohibits the building of distilleries (an exception is made for those who will plant and care for trees). Point three states that whoever plants and encloses a wood becomes its owner, and four, that whoever finds deposits of peat, building stone, or clay shall be given the land containing them provided he takes it upon himself to sell these products at reasonable prices. The local administration went even a step further to protect the forests. Chertkov forbade the making of bast-shoes in order to preserve the trees and imposed a fine of five kopecks for every tree stripped or felled.<sup>71</sup>

Chapter six deals with commerce and factories. Here is the summary of its points: (1) Commerce with Turkey and the Crimea should be increased. (2) All foreigners and Russian subjects coming from Poland and other localities shall be eligible as merchants and members of guilds in the St. Elizabeth fortress, Orel, Arkhangel's'k, Novomyrhorod, Kryukiv, and Myshuryn. (3) Merchants from Russia enrolled in the merchants' list of the New Russia province shall pay the same amount of taxes they had paid in the places of their former residence. (4) Any person has the right to establish factories and breeding farms. Prospective founders will be granted sites for their enterprises. It is most desirable that factories be established which satisfy the needs of the military, such as biscuit factories, tanneries, textile mills, or military cap factories; also horse and sheep breeding farms shall be given priority. The treasury will issue loans at an interest rate of six per cent *per annum* to founders of these enterprises. (5) Whoever will establish a silk factory or a vineyard or any other enterprise rare in Russia, shall be entitled to custom-free export of his products both abroad and to Russia for a period of ten years. (6) Foreign craftsmen shall be given loans "for providing necessary things" at no interest.

The contents of this chapter are interesting in that the development of industries is subordinated to military needs. The privileges extended to business men are also interesting. Point five had been adopted from the manifesto of July 22, 1763, which established privileges for foreigners, but the borrowings of the "Plan" stop there. It is important to note that it does not say a word on the manufacturers' rights to buy serfs for their factories. Since the chief concern of the "Plan's" authors was to increase the population of the region, serfdom is not mentioned in the document even once; it would have had a detrimental effect on the region's colonization.

While the seventh chapter does not contain anything of interest in regard to the colonization of the region, the eighth chapter, "On Schools," is of great interest. Here are its points: (1) All children must learn reading, writing, arithmetic and religion in school; if they wish, they may ask for instruction in foreign languages and other disciplines. Orphans and poor children shall be maintained at state expense; those able to pay shall cover the cost of their maintenance, but education in general shall be free. (2) Special schools shall be established for the education of girls; this will contribute to the softening of "severe and rude customs by (forming) virtuous women." From her childhood on, a woman should be taught "household and any other becoming work." (3) Asylums shall be established at state expense for orphans, cripples, and foundlings, so that "in the whole colony there may be no beggar, vagrant, or neglected innocent infant."

In its contents and terminology, this chapter is reminiscent of Catherine II's *Nakaz*, and, in its rhetorical character, it greatly differs from other chapters of the "Plan." Matter-of-fact statements are less numerous here and the overall tone is lyrical. This lyricism, however, contains some noteworthy features, e.g., the postulate of general and free education for boys and girls alike. Of course, all this remained on paper, but it is interesting to note that the problem was posed in 1764, although in the form of an utopian wish.

Such is the content of this extremely interesting document, which reflects the conditions of the period in which the New Russia province was taking form. In some of its parts, this document is closely related to other acts of the period, but its importance is far greater, since it more fully encompasses different aspects of the region's life. The "Plan," in comparison with the decree regulating the organization of Nova Serbiya, reflects the changed attitude towards the landlords' property. The decree strictly limited the landholding right for foreigners; the "Plan" granted this right to anyone who would come to live in the province. At the same time, it permitted commoners to come into the possession of landlords' estates, provided they would bring with them a sufficient number of immigrants.

Source: N. D. Polons'ka-Vasylenko, The Settlement of the Southern Ukraine (1750-1775), (New York: The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S., Inc., 1955, pp. 202-211.

## RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES GRANTED THE MENNONITES

In general the rights and privileges granted the Mennonites, on the basis of the Twenty-Point Petition submitted by Höppner and Bartsch, followed those offered to all foreign colonists in the manifesto of July 22, 1763, and in regard to land allotments to be made to each family, form of ownership and inheritance, etc., as laid down in the Land Law of March 19, 1764. I shall discuss the provisions regarding the land grants and related matters in some detail later in this story. Here, before commenting on each of the twenty requests submitted by the deputies, and Potemkin's response to them, I should point out that this Mennonite procedure of requesting special considerations was not necessarily unique with them, but was a practice resorted to by some other would-be colonists, as well as by numerous agents, who, especially during the reign of Alexander I, often swamped Russian diplomatic representatives abroad, or various agencies at home, with offers to recruit farmers, viticulturists, breeders of fine-fleeced sheep, etc.

Proceeding now to a brief examination and commentary of what in official Russian were labelled as "Proshel'nyia stat'i mennonistov" ("Petitioning Articles of the Mennonists"), and Potemkin's responses to them, I shall generally group them around main topics, instead of examining them always in the order of their appearance in the petition:

- I. Freedom of Religion and free exercise thereof: Articles 1, 7 and 8. The requests here pertained to the guarantee of complete freedom of religious belief and practice; the rendering of the act of allegiance through the usual Mennonite practice of simple affirmation; and the permanent exemption of the emigrants to Russia, but also of their descendants, from military service. These requests were granted unconditionally.

- II. Site of settlement near the Dnieper tributary called Koniskiia Vody and along the Dnieper, opposite the town of Berislav: Article 2.

- a. Request was made for allocation of a large tract of land, sufficient to allow each family to receive a grant of sixty-five dessiatines of arable land, exclusive of any waste land. The tract selected was located to the right of the main road from the Dnieper across the Perekop neck leading to the Crimea.

This was granted.

- b. The Tavan Island, and several other small islands, lying opposite Berislav should be allocated to them, in order to give them sufficient haylands for their livestock. According to the deputies' information, none of these islands had been assigned to anyone else.

Because of the construction of a bridge across the Dnieper at this place, and because of certain other government works in progress there, only a certain portion of the Tavan Island would be assigned to them.

- c. Exclusive fishery rights in the waters situated within the land grant given to the Mennonites.

Granted, but within existing legal provisions.

- d. Since the Berislav tract had little if any wooded areas, the request was made that certain islands in the Dnieper nearby the chosen site of settlement, and which islands were heavily covered with shrubs and trees, be set aside for the exclusive use of the Mennonites; specifically that about half of the 1,500 dessiatines of woodland on Kairo Island be reserved for Mennonite use.

Only a small portion of the area in question would be allocated to them.

III. A ten-year exemption from the payment of taxes. Article 3.  
Granted.

IV. Upon expiration of this exemption period, each family would pay a tax of fifteen kopeks per desiatina, which assessment was to remain unaltered for all time to come. Similarly, the Mennonite settlements were to be forever freed from quartering of troops, from furnishing of transport and from rendering of labor on government projects.

The stipulated tax payment granted after the expiration of the exemption period. Exemption would also be given for the quartering of troops, furnishing of transport and rendering of government road work. However, troops could be quartered in their settlements while passing through them. Also the Mennonites had to maintain all roads and bridges within the lands assigned to them.

V. Right of Mennonites to engage in other enterprises than agriculture. Article 5.

Not all Mennonites in the Vistula region and in Danzig were engaged in farming. Therefore, Höppner and Bartsch requested that any Mennonite be given the right to establish factories and shops throughout the area under Potemkin's domain, i.e., anywhere in New Russia and the Crimea, as well as to engage in commerce, be members of trade associations and craft guilds. With this would come the right to freely dispose of their manufactures and other articles in cities, towns and villages without the payment of special duties of any kind.

This was granted, but was to be subject to existing city and other urban area regulations.

VI. Loans to be granted to those in need of such for a variety of purposes. Article 6.

In accordance with a provision in the Manifesto of July 1763, which offered long-term loans to foreigners for various purposes, the Mennonite delegates asked that a loan of 500 rubles be extended to all those families who needed help to set up housekeeping; the loan was to be repaid, without charge of interest, over a period of three years. The loan was to be extended in the following manner: 100 rubles upon the colonist's arrival in Riga, and the remainder in the succeeding four months in 100 ruble installments.

The request was granted.

VII. Supply of building timber for houses and several flour mills, together with several milling stones. Article 9.

Upon the arrival of the colonists from Danzig in Riga, the government was to make preparations for delivery of a sufficient number of oak boards for each family, so that upon their arrival at Berislav the lumber would be at the place of the intended settlement.

Potemkin agreed that one hundred and twenty planks, each twelve feet in length, would be supplied to every family. The necessary lumber and mill stones for two mills would also be supplied at government cost.

VIII. That the government advance to each family a transportation and food allowance for the duration of the journey from the border to Berislav, the amounts to be twenty-five kopeks per person. Articles 10 and 11.

Potemkin agreed that free transportation would be provided for those who had none of their own, and that provisioning advance would be made at twenty-five kopeks for each person over fifteen years of age, and twelve kopeks for those below that age.

IX. Because Russia stood to profit greatly from the Mennonite colonies not only from their agricultural pursuits, but also from manufac-

turers and different kinds of artisans and tradesmen and their enterprises, and would thus within a relatively short time recoup its expenditures made on behalf of these colonists, it was hoped that the government therefore would not compel the colonists to repay the transport and food monies, nor the cost of the building lumber furnished them. Article 12.

Potemkin pointed out that this would depend upon a decision of the czarina herself.

It might be added here that this was done during the reign of Alexander I.

- X. That pending construction of their own dwellings, the government should clean and make available to the colonists nearby vacant quarantine buildings, and for those not finding accommodation in the barracks, several tents and a few houses in Berislav be available to them. Article 13.

The answer was that this would be done, with the understanding, however, that the barracks, tents and houses made available to them would be returned to the government.

- XI. That to all Mennonites, from the date of their arrival at Berislav and until the first harvest, a subvention of ten kopeks per person per day would be advanced to all Mennonites, to be repayable in three years after the expiration of the ten-year exemption from the payment of taxes. Article 14.

It was agreed to.

- XII. That notice be sent immediately to Berislav that no further wood be cut, nor any cattle be pastured, so that the colonists upon arrival at the place of settlement would have fuel and feed for their livestock at their disposal. Article 15.

It would be ordered.

- XIII. Since in the years to come more and more Mennonites might wish to migrate to Russia, it was requested that such emigrants be assured of permission to settle in the Crimea, on unoccupied lands near Feodosia, Bakhchisarai, and other places, and on the same conditions as herewith presented; furthermore, that they not be required to furnish a mutual guarantee of repayment of any government expenses incident to such a migration, but that those Mennonites would arrange such a pledge among themselves. Article 16.

Potemkin agreed that deputies sent by such would-be colonists would be assured of such treatment.

- XIV. Because of the intimate and trustful relationship which had been established between Trappe and the Mennonites, and all the things he had done for them enroute to Russia, while travelling in Russia, and so on, the deputies begged that Trappe be allowed to accompany them to Danzig, not only because he had persuaded the Mennonites to dispatch the two deputies to Russia and possessed an intimate knowledge of their situation in Danzig and the surrounding area, but also because he was best suited and qualified to help them overcome any obstacles which might conceivably be

raised against a projected large Mennonite exodus to Russia. Article 17.

Furthermore, since the Mennonites had such trust in Trappe, it was requested that he be appointed as Director and Curator of the Mennonist colonies. Article 19.

Consent was given to both these requests.



XV. That upon the arrival of the colonists at Berislav, a surveyor, knowing the German language, be sent there to survey the entire area set aside for the settlement of the Mennonites, but also survey and assign to each colonist his own allotment of land. Article 18.

This would be done.

XVI. Finally, upon the arrival of the colonists at Berislav, the government should issue strictest orders for the protection of the colonists and their belongings against injury, insult, harm and theft. Article 20.

Orders to this effect would be issued.

It will be seen that Höppner and Bartsch had taken care of the needs and every possible contingency that might arise in the foreseeable future. Their "Petition" was not that of desperate supplicants for a haven or refuge and short-range assistance or selfish favors, but the carefully weighed and prepared statement of intent to emigrate to New Russia. It was a statement of the deputies of a people who were fully conscious of the worth of those whom they represented, be that in agriculture, dairying, manufacturing, commerce, and various trades, and fully cognizant of what a valuable asset these people would eventually be to a country which offered them a new home with far-reaching forms of assistance and the grant of numerous concessions.

Source: David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: A Sketch of its Founding and Endurance, 1789-1919.", MQR XLVII (October 1973), pp. 282-286.

## V. The Charter of Privileges Given to the Mennonites of Russia by Paul I.

We, Paul I., by the Grace of God Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Condescending to the petition of the Mennonists settled in the New Russian government, whose excellent industry and morality may, according to the testimony of the authorities, be held up as a model to the other foreigners settled there and thereby deserve special consideration, now therefore with this Imperial Charter We most graciously wish not only to confirm all their rights and advantages specified in the preliminary agreement concluded with them, but in order to stimulate their industry and concern in agriculture even more, to grant them also other advantages, as follows:

1. We confirm the liberty to practise their religion according to their tenets and customs as promised them and their descendants and most graciously permit them, when occasion demands it, to render the oath in courts according to their custom, consisting in a simple affirmation of the truth.

2. We confirm them in their incontestable and perpetually-inheritable possession of the sixty-five desiatins of arable land assigned to each family, with the proviso, however, that under no condition may even the smallest portion of it be ceded to outsiders, sold, or any deeds be made in regard to it without the permission of the authorities set over them.

3. To all Mennonists now residing in Russia and to all those who may come to Russia in the future, We most graciously grant permission to erect factories in villages and towns and to establish such trades as may be necessary for them; also to trade, enter guilds and trade corporations, and to sell their products without hindrance, according to the applicable laws of the land.

4. By right of ownership We permit the Mennonists to enjoy all the fruits of their land and fishing, to brew beer and vinegar, to distill corn-brandy, not only for their own consumption, but also for retail sale on their land.

5. On the land belonging to the Mennonists We forbid outsiders to build boarding houses and taverns and leaseholders to sell wine and to operate saloons without their permission.

6. We assure them with Our Imperial word that none of the Mennonists, now settled and those which may settle in the future, nor their children and descendants will ever be taken and entered into military service without their own desire to do so.

7. We exempt all their villages and houses from all sorts of quartering, except when the troops march through, in which case they will observe the rules of quartering. We also discharge them from all crown labors, with the condition, however, that they properly maintain the bridges, ferries and roads on their lands and also participate in the general maintenance of the mails.

8. We most graciously grant to all Mennonists and their descendants complete liberty and authority to dispose of their personal property according to each one's free will, with the exception of the land assigned to them by the crown. Should anyone, after having paid all his debts, wish to leave Russia with all his possessions, he then must pay three years' taxes in advance for the property he has acquired in Russia, as declared upon conscience by him and by the village authorities. The property of a deceased whose relatives and heirs live abroad, which property according to Mennonist custom must be divided among those persons, is to be disposed of in a similar manner. The villages are given the liberty to appoint guardians according to their custom over the property of minors or orphans.

9. We confirm the ten years exemption from taxes, granted them previously, extending this privilege also to those who in the future may wish to settle in the New Russian government. In view of the fact, however, that an inspection found them in meagre circumstances because of several years of crop-failures and decease of animals and because of their crowded condition in the Khortitsa region, it is proposed to transfer several families to other lands. Therefore, in consideration of their poverty and want We most graciously extend the former ten year period of exemption for another five years to those who remain in the previous places, and for another ten years to those who will be transferred. After the expiration of this period they shall pay for each of their sixty-five desiatins fifteen kopeks per year, but be exempted from the payment of all other taxes. The loan extended to them, however, must be repaid in equal parts, in ten years by those who remain, and within twenty years by those who are moved.

10. In conclusion of this Our Imperial Charter concerning the rights and advantages of the Mennonists, granted to them most graciously. We order all our military and civil authorities and government offices not only to leave these Mennonists and their descendants in unmolested enjoyment of their houses, lands, and other possessions, not to hinder them in the enjoyment of the privileges granted them, but also to show them in all cases every assistance and protection.

Source: David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Colonies in New Russia: A Study of Their Settlement and Economic Development from 1789-1914," unpublished PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1933, pp. 325-326. Translated from PSZ XXVI, No.19546, pp. 286-287.

## VI.

## MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS IN RUSSIA

A. Mother Settlements						
Name	Province	Founded	Villages	Acreage	Population	
1. Chortitza	Ekaterinoslav	1789 ff.	19	1789: 89,100 1917: 405,000	1819: 2,888 1941: 13,965	
2. Molotschna	Taurida	1804 ff.	60	1835: 324,000	1835: 6,000 1926: 17,347	
3. Trakt	Samara	1853 ff.	10	1897: 44,134	1897: 1,176	
4. Alexandertal	Samara	1859 ff.	8	1870: 26,500 1917: 53,500	1913: 1,144	
B. Daughter Settlements						
Name	Province	Mother Settlement	Founded	Villages	Acreage	Population
1. Bergthal	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1836-52	5	30,000	1874: 3,000
2. Jewish Settlement (Judenplan)	Kherson	Chortitza	1847	6	5-6 families per village	
3. Chernoglaz	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1860	1	2,700	130
4. Crimea	Taurida	Molotschna	1862 ff.	c25 & estates	1929: 108,000	1926: 4,817
5. Kuban	Kuban	Chortitza and Molotschna	1862	2	17,550	1904: 2,000
6. Fürstenland	Taurida	Chortitza	1864-70	7	19,000	1874: 1,100
7. Borozenko	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1865-66	6	18,000	1910: 600
8. Friedensfeld (Miropol)	Ekaterinoslav	Molotschna	1867	1	5,400	
9. Brazol (Schönfeld)	Ekaterinoslav	Molotschna	1868	4 & estates	1868: 14,000 1910: 187,000	1917: 2,000
10. Neu-Schönwiese (Dmitrovka)	Ekaterinoslav	Schönwiese-Chortitza	1868	1	3,788	
11. Tempelhof	Stavropol	Molotschna	1868	2		
12. Yazykovo (Nikolaifeld)	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1869	6	23,315	1930: 2,200
13. Nepluyevka	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1870	2	10,800	1910: 550
14. Andreasfeld	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1870	3	10,620	
15. Baratov	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1872	2 (4)	1872: 9,800	1905: 2,569
16. Zagradovka	Kherson	Molotschna	1871	16	57,445	1922: 5,429
17. Shlachtin	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1874	2	10,800	1910: 1,000
18. Neu-Rosengart	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1878	2	1,800	1910: 250
19. Wiesenfeld	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1880	1	23,306	
20. Aulie-Ata	Turkestan	Molotschna	1882	6	21,600	1910: 1,000
21. Ak-Mechet	Central Asia Khiva	Trakt	1884	1	13	25 families
22. Memrik	Central Asia Ekaterinoslav	Molotschna	1885	10	32,400	1,367
23. Alexandropol	Ekaterinoslav	Molotschna	1888	1	?	15 families
24. Samoylovka	Kharkov	Molotschna	1888	2	?	1905: 239
25. Milorodovka	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1889	2	5,670	1910: 200
26. Ignatyev	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1889-90	7	38,132	1910: 1,400
27. Naumenko	Kharkov	Chortitza	1890	4 (3)	14,350	1905: 700
28. Neu-Samara (Pleshanovsk)	Samara	Molotschna	1890	14	1922: 91,000	1922: 3,670
29. Borissovo	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	1892	2	13,770	1910: 400
30. Davlekanovo	Ufa	Molotschna	1894	19 & estates	1926: 30,000	1926: 1,831
31. Orenburg (Deyevka)	Orenburg	Samara Chortitza	1894	14	63,660	1910: 1,400
32. Suvorovka	Stavropol (Caucasus)	Zagradovka	1894	2	10,800	80 families
33. Orenburg (Molotschna)	Orenburg	Molotschna	1898	8	29,700	1910: 1,000

Name	Province	Mother Settlement	Founded	Villages	Acreage	Population
34. Olgino	Stavropol (Caucasus)	Mixed	1895	2 (4)	12,150	80 families
35. Bezenchuk	Samara	Alexandertal	1898	3?	5,400	75
36. Omsk	Akmolinsk & Tobolsk	Mixed	1899	29 & estates	108,000	
37. Don (Millerovo)	Don Region	Molotschna	1900-3	*	10,800	
38. Terek	Terek (Caucasus)	Molotschna	1901	15	66,960	1905: 1,655
39. Rovnopol (Ebenfeld)	Samara	Molotschna	1903	1	8,250	
40. Trubetskoye	Kherson	Molotschna	1904	2	118,800 (?)	400
41. Pavlodar	Semipalatinsk	Mixed	1906	14	37,800	
42. Sadovaya	Voronezh	Chortitza	1909	1?	16,052	
43. Slavgorod (Barnaul)	Tomsk	Mixed	1908	58	135,000	1925: 1,373
44. Zentral	Voronezh	Chortitza	1909	1	7,358	
45. Arkadak	Saratov	Chortitza	1910	7	25,500	1925: 1,500
46. Bugulma	Samara	Alexandertal	1910	1	2,700	
47. Kistyendey	Saratov	?	1910?	1		
48. Minusinsk	Yeniseysk	Ignatyev	1913	2 (4)	10,800?	1918: 32 families
49. Amur	Eastern Siberia	Mixed	1927	20		1927: 1,300
50. Kuzmitsky (Alexandrovka)	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	?	1	1910: 4,860	1910: 200
51. Eugenfeld	Ekaterinoslav	Chortitza	?	1		
52. Alexeyfeld	Kherson	Molotschna	?	1		

Source: Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol.3, pp. 386-387.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary Sources1. Unpublished Manuscripts

Burow, Walter. "Der Selbstschutz", n.d., n.p., 1-11.

Dick, B. J. "Hier kurz etwas ueber den Selbstschutz",  
Coaldale, Alta., 1978, 1-8.

Fast, Peter. "Erinnerungen aus der Zeit des Russischen  
Buergerkrieges 1918-1920", Windsor, Ont., 1947, 1-30.

Thiessen, Jacob. "We are Pilgrims", Aberdeen, Sask., n.d.

2. Personal Papers

G. G. Dueck papers, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada.

Peter J. Dyck papers, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada. Diary 1914-1924.

Jacob Epp Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada.

Benjamin B. Janz papers, Centre for MB Studies, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada.

Jacob Rempel papers, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada.

Peter Toews papers, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,  
Manitoba, Canada.

3. Published Documents

Lohrenz, Gerhard, ed. Heritage Remembered. A Pictorial  
Survey of Mennonites in Prussia and Russia.  
Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1974.

- Quiring, Walter and Helen Bartel, eds. In the Fullness of Time. 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia. Kitchener, Ont.: by Aaron Klassen, 1974.
- Rempel, John D. and Tiessen, Paul, editors. Forever Summer Forever Sunday. St. Jacobs, Ontario: Sand Hills Books, Inc., 1981.
- Toews, John B., ed. The Mennonites in Russia from 1917-1930: Selected Documents. Winnipeg, Man.: Christian Press, 1975.
- Wenger, John C., ed. The Complete Writings of Menno Simons. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1956.

### 3. Published Memoirs and Autobiographies

- Dyck, John P. ed. Troubles and Triumphs. Springstein, Man.: Privately published, 1981.
- Dyck, Anna Reimer. Anna. From the Caucasus to Canada. Hillsboro, Kans.: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House 1979. Trans and edited by Peter J. Klassen.
- Lohrenz, Gerhard. Storm Tossed. The Personal Story of a Canadian Mennonite from Russia. Winnipeg, Man.: by the author, 1976.
- Peters, Gerald, ed. Diary of Anna Baerg 1916-1924. Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1985.
- Rempel, Hans and George K. Epp. Waffen der Wehrlosen. Ersatzdienst der Mennoniten in der UdSSr. Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1980.
- Schroeder, George P. Miracles of Grace and Judgment. Lodi, Calif.: by the author, 1974.
- Wiens, Johann. Eine Hilfe in den grossen Noeten. Winnipeg, Man.: Rundschau Publishing House, 1925.

## II. Reference Works Consulted

- Bender, H.S., C. Henry Smith, Cornelius Krahn, and Melvin Gingerich, eds. The Mennonite Encyclopedia. Hillsboro, Kans.: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, and Newton, Kans.: Mennonite Publication Office, and Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955-1959. Vols. I-IV.

### III. Secondary Sources

#### 1. Unpublished Academic Papers

- Klippenstein, Lawrence, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations: 1789-1936", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984.
- Rempel, David G, "The Mennonite Colonies in New Russia: A Study of Their Settlement and Economic Development from 1789 to 1914", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1933.
- Rempel, Peter H., "Nonresistance without Privilege. The Dilemma of the Russian Mennonites 1917-1927," unpublished paper, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ont., 1976.
- Urry, James, "The Closed and the Open: Social and Religious Change Amongst the Mennonites in Russia, 1789-1889", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Keble College, Oxford England, 1978.

#### 2. Books

- Arshinov, Peter. History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921. Detroit: Black & Red, 1974.
- Bender, Harold S. The Anabaptists and Religious Liberty in the 16th Century. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Brock, Peter. Pacifism in Europe to 1914. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- Bunyan, James T. and H. H. Fisher, eds. The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918. Documents and Materials. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1934.
- Chamberlin, William Henry. The Russian Revolution 1917-1921. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973, Vols. I-II.
- Detweiler, Donald S. Germany: A Short History. London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.
- Ehrt, Adolf. Das Mennonitentum in Russland von Seiner Einwanderung bis zur Gegenwart. Berlin and Leipzig: Verlag Julius Beltz, 1932.



- Epp, Frank H. Mennonite Exodus. Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1962.
- . . . Mennonites in Canada 1789-1920. The History of a Separate People. Toronto: Macmillan, 1974.
- . . . Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940. A People's Struggle for Survival. Toronto: Macmillan, 1982.
- Estep, William. The Anabaptist Story. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975.
- Fedyshyn, Oleh. S. Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1918. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971
- Footman, David. Civil War in Russia. London: Faber and Faber, 1961.
- Foth, Maria. Beyond the Border: Maria's Miraculous Pilgrimage. Burlington, Ont.: B.R. Welch, 1981.
- Francis, E.K. In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba. Altona, Man.: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1955.
- Friesen, Peter M. The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910). Winnipeg, Man.: Christian Press, 1978.
- Giesinger, Adam. From Catherine to Krushchev. The Story of Russia's Germans. Winnipeg, Man.: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1974.
- Goerz, Heinrich. Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung. Entstehung, Entwicklung und Untergang. Steinbach, Man.: Echo Verlag, 1950/51.
- Hamm, Oscar H. Errinerungen aus Ignatjewo. Saskatoon, Sask.: Mrs. Ruth F. Hamm, 1984.
- Harder, Hans. No Strangers in Exile. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Hyperion Press Ltd., 1979.
- Hershberger, Guy Franklin. War, Peace, and Nonresistance. Pennsylvania: The Herald Press, 1946.
- Homeyer, Heinz von. Die brennende Halbinsel. Ein Ringen um Heimat und Ehre. Berlin-Schoenberg: Landmann Verlag, 1938.
- Hosteteler, John A. Hutterite Society. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

- Ipatow, A. N. Wer sind die Mennoniten? Alma, Alta.: Verlag Kazakhstan, 1977.
- Kauffman, John E., ed. Anabaptis Letters from 1635 to 1645. Gordonville, Pa.: Print Shop, 1973. Trans. by the editor from the Aussbund, published by Baer's Sons, Lancaster, Pa., 1868.
- Keller, P. Conrad. The German Colonies in South Russia 1804-1904. n.p., n.d. Trans. by A. Becker. Vols. I-II. Originally published in German in Odessa, 1914.
- Kochan, Lionel. Russia in Revolution. London: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1970.
- Krahn, Cornelius. Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. From the Steppes to the Prairies. Newton, Kans.: Mennonite Publication Office, 1949.
- Kroeker, N. J. The First Mennonite Villages in Russia. 1789-1943. Vancouver, B.C.: by the author, 1981.
- Loewen, Harry, ed. Mennonite Images. Historical, Cultural and Literary Essays Dealing with Mennonite Issues. Winnipeg, Man.: Hyperion Press, 1980.
- Lohnrenz, Gerhard. Sagradowka. Die Geschichte einer mennonitischen Ansiedlung im Sueden Russlands. Rosthern, Sask.: Echo Verlag, 1947.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Fateful Years 1913-1923. Winnipeg, Man.: by the author, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Fire Over Zagradovka. Winnipeg, Man.:
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Lost Generation and Other Stories. Winnipeg, Man.: by the author, 1981.
- Neufeld, Dietrich. A Russian Dance of Death. Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine. Winnipeg, Man.: Hyperion Press, 1977. Trans. and edited by A. Reimer.
- Oldenbourg, Zoe. Catherine the Great. New York: Random House, Inc., 1965. Trans. from the French by Anne Carter.
- Palij, Michael. The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno 1918-1921.

- An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1976.
- Peters, Victor. Nestor Makhno. The Life of an Anarchist. Winnipeg, Man.: Echo Verlag, 1976.
- Polans'ka-Vasylenko, N. D. The Settlement of the Southern Ukraine (1750-1775). New York: The Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U. S., Inc., 1955.
- Reinmarus (Penner), A. Anti-Menno: Beitræge zur Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland. Moskau: Zentral Voelker Verlag, 1930.
- Smith, C. Henry. Smith's Story of the Mennonites. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981.
- Smith, C. Jay, Jr. The Russian Struggle for Power. 1914-1917. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.
- Smithson, R. J. The Anabaptists: Their Contribution to Our Protestant Heritage. London: James Clarke & Co., Limited, nd.
- Stayer, James M. Anabaptists and the Sword. Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1872.
- Tiessen, Henry B. The Molotschna Colony. Kitchener, Ont.: by the author, 1979.
- Toews, Gerhard. Die Heimat in Truemmern. Steinbach, Man.: Warte-Verlag, 1936.
- Toews, John B. Czars, Soviets and Mennonites. Newton, Kans.: and Life Press, 1982.
- . Lost Fatherland. The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1967.
- Treadgold, Donald, W. Twentieth Century Russia. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981.
- Van Braght, J. Martyrs' Mirror. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1950. English translation, 1964.
- Wiebe, Katie Funk. Good Times With Old Times. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1979.
- Wynar, Lubomyr R., ed. Habsburgs and Zaporozhian Cossacks: The Diary of Erich Lassota von Steblau, 1594.

Littleton, Colorado: Ukrainian Academic Press,  
1875. Trans. by Orest Subtelny.

### 3. Articles

Avrich, Paul, "Russian Anarchists and the Civil War", Russian Review XXVII (1968), 296-306.

Bender, H.S., "The Pacifism of the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists", Mennonite Quarterly Review XXX (January, 1956), 5-18.

Bueckert, Johann P., "A Chapter from Alternative Service in Russia", Mennonite Quarterly Review XXII (April, 1948), 132-134.

Correll, Ernst, "Mennonite Immigration into Manitoba, Sources and Documents, 1872-1873", Mennonite Quarterly Review XI (July 1937), 196-227 (October, 1937), 267-284.

Dick, Bernhard J., "Something About the Selbstschutz of the Mennonites in South Russia" (July, 1918-March, 1919), trans. and ed. by Harry Lowen and Al Reimer, Journal of Mennonite Studies, Vol 4, 1986, 135-142.

Dmytryshyn, Basil, "German Occupation of the Ukraine, 1918. Some New Evidence?" Slavic and East European Studies X (Autumn/Winter, 1965-66i), 79-92.

Dyck, Harvey, "Russian Mennonitism and the Challenge of Russian Nationalism", Mennonite Quarterly Review LVI (October, 1983), 307-341.

Eudin, Xenia Joukoff, "The German Occupation of the Ukraine in 1918. A Documentary Account", Russian Review I (November, 1941), 90-105.

Footman, David, "Nestor Makhno and the Russian Civil War", History Today, VI (1956), 811-820.

- Francis, E. K., "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia. 1789-1914. Sociological Interpretation", Mennonite Quarterly Review XXV (July, 1951), 173-182.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba: A Study of Their Origins", Agricultural History, XXII (1948).
- Janz, B. B. and Phillip Cornies, "A Russian Mennonite Document of 1922", Mennonite Quarterly Review XXVIII (April, 1954), 143-147.
- Kuhn, Walter, "Cultural Achievements of the Chortitsa Mennonites", Mennonite Life (July, 1977), 35-38.
- Lohrenz, Gerhard, "The Beginning of Alternative Service during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905", Mennonite Life XXVI (July, 1971), 114-117.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Nonresistance Tested", Mennonite Life XVII (April 1962), 66-68.
- Meyer, Henry Cord, "Germans in the Ukraine, 1918. Excerpts from Unpublished Letters", Slavic and East European Review IX (April, 1950), 105-115.
- Rempel, David G., "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia", Mennonite Quarterly Review XLVII (October, 1973), pp. 279, and XLVIII (January, 1974), pp. 5-55.
- Sudermann, Jacob, "The Origin of Mennonite State Service in Russia 1870-1880", Mennonite Quarterly Review XVII (January, 1943), 23-46.
- Thielman, George G., "The Mennonite 'Selbstschutz' in the Ukraine during the Revolution", The New Review X (March, 1970), 50-60.
- Toews, John B., "Cultural and Intellectual Aspects of the Mennonite Experience in Russia", Mennonite Quarterly Review LXII (April, 1979), 137-159.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Halbstadt Volost, 1918-1922: A Case Study of the Mennonite Encounter with Early Bolshevism", Mennonite Quarterly Review XLVIII (October, 1974), 489-514.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed., "The Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine. An Eyewitness Account", Mennonite Life XXVI (July, 1971), 138-142.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Mennonites in the Early Soviet Period", Mennonite Life (July, 1969), 101-108.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Non-resistance Re-examined. Why did Mennonites Leave Russia in 1874?" Mennonite Life XXIX (March/June, 1974), 8-13.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Origins and Activities of the Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine (1918-1919)", Mennonite Quarterly Review XLVI (January, 1972), 5-40.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Russian Mennonites and the Military Question (1921-1927)", Mennonite Quarterly Review XLIII (April 1969), 153-68.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Social Structure of the Russian Mennonites" Mennonite Life (July, 1971), 133-137.

Urry, James, "Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth and the Mennonite Experience in Russia", Journal of Mennonite Studies Vol. 3, 1985.

Wenger, John C., "The Schleithem Confession of Faith", Mennonite Quarterly Review XIX (October, 1945).