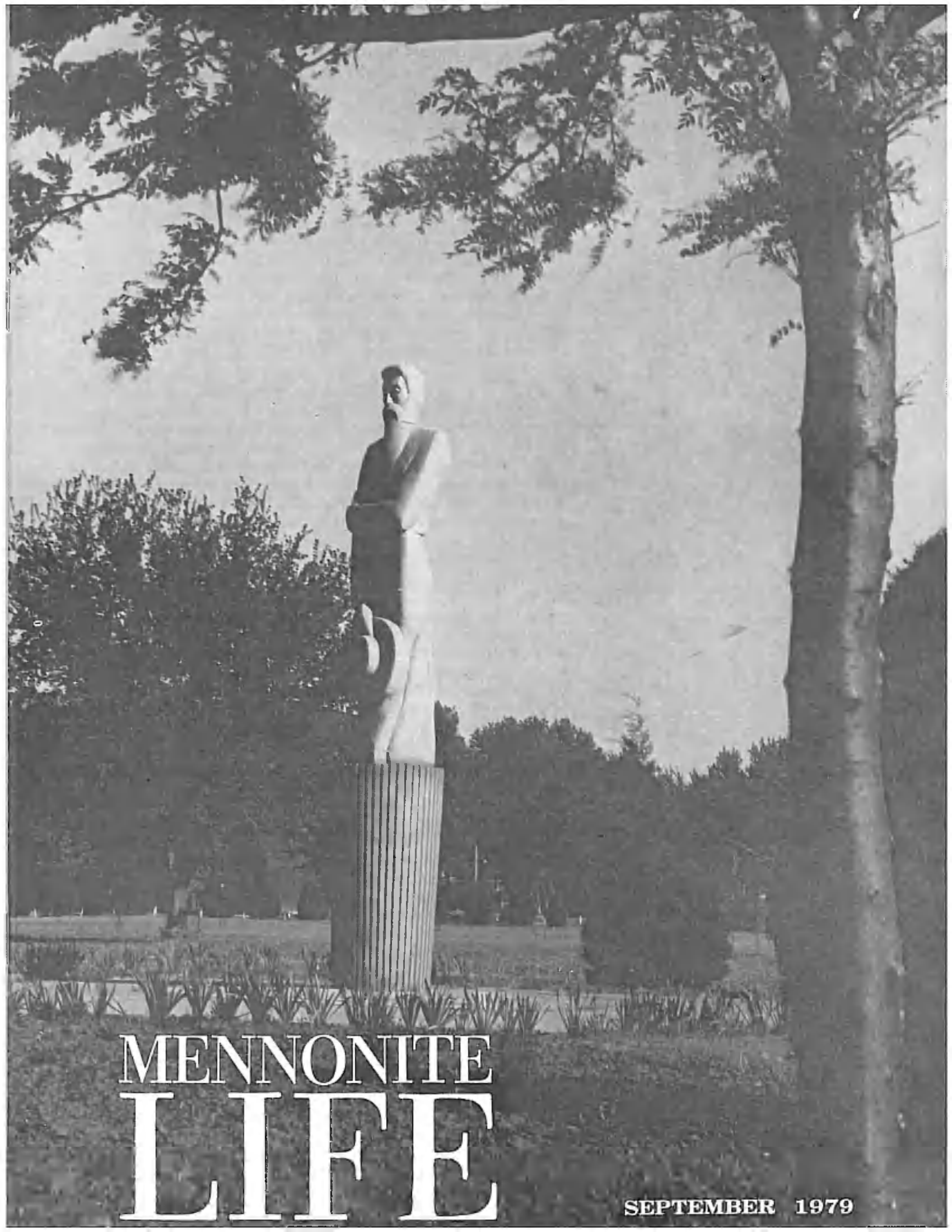

MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1979

In this Issue

The two lead articles in this issue, written by Roger Juhnke and Keith Sprunger, have similarities of subject matter as well as of historiographical method. Both deal with experiences of Kansas Mennonites in the World War II era. Both make extensive use of tape-recorded oral interviews as a tool for research.

Nearly four decades have passed since World War II, and it appears that the interpretation of Mennonite relationships with government and the public is undergoing some revision. The prevailing view has been that Mennonites and America reached a mutually satisfactory agreement regarding a role for conscientious objectors, and that Americans were more accepting of pacifists than in World War I. The heart of the agreement was the Civilian Public Service program, a program which met the government's demand for service in the national interest while it met the Mennonite need for separation from the military enterprise. Subsequent experience, particularly the Vietnam War and the arms race, has called forth a fresh perspective which raises questions about the costs of the wartime compromise for Mennonite witness and identity. See for example the article by Albert N. Keim, "Service or Resistance? The Mennonite Response to Conscription in World War II" in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, April 1978, 141-155.

The fascinating stories told by Juhnke and Sprunger reveal the extent and the limitations of Mennonite public acceptability during the war years. These authors also demonstrate the values to be gained when researchers get beyond the printed records and interview the actual participants in their homes or places of work. The tapes for these interviews have been placed in the Schowalter Oral History Collection at Mennonite Library and Archives.

The tensions and frustrations of American Mennonites during World War II, as fascinating as they may be, are pale and subdued in comparison to the overwhelming tragedy which befell Mennonites in Russia in the twentieth century. Harvey L. Dyck's quest into his own family origins led him to focus upon the years of 1928-1929 when thousands of Mennonites attempted to flee from Russia. Only a fraction were successful in getting out. The tragedy of Harvey Dyck's Uncle Peter was multiplied many times over in the stories of other families.

David Haury's article on the Boston Mennonite congregation reminds us that our migration has been from country to city as well as from one country to another. This city-ward migration is as fraught with peril and promise for Mennonite identity as were the more dramatic migrations between countries. The Boston congregation is one case of an urban group which developed a unique character and witness.

MENNONITE
LIFE

September 1979 Vol. 34 No. 3

Front Cover

1912 photograph of the Mennonite memorial in Athletic Park, Newton KS. From the collection of Zona Wheeler. See article p. 10.

Back Cover

Photo of John Schlonneger. See description p. 31.

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The Perils of Conscientious Objection

An Oral History Study of a 1944 Event

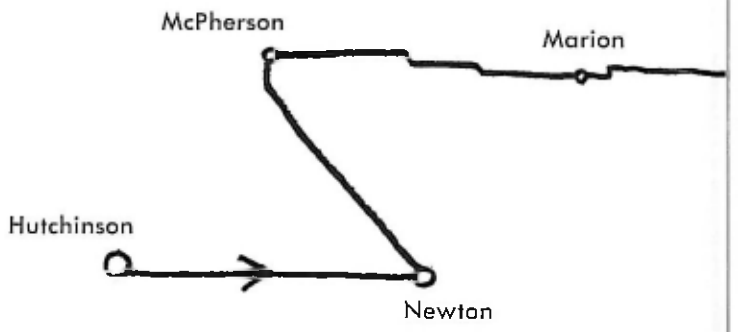
by Roger Juhnke

Roger Juhnke is a Bethel College graduate who earned an MA degree in theology at Oxford University in 1978. He worked with the Schowalter Oral History program and Kauffman Museum at Bethel College in 1978-9. His multi-media presentation on Civilian Public Service will be shown at Bethel College's Fall Festival this October.

Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering.

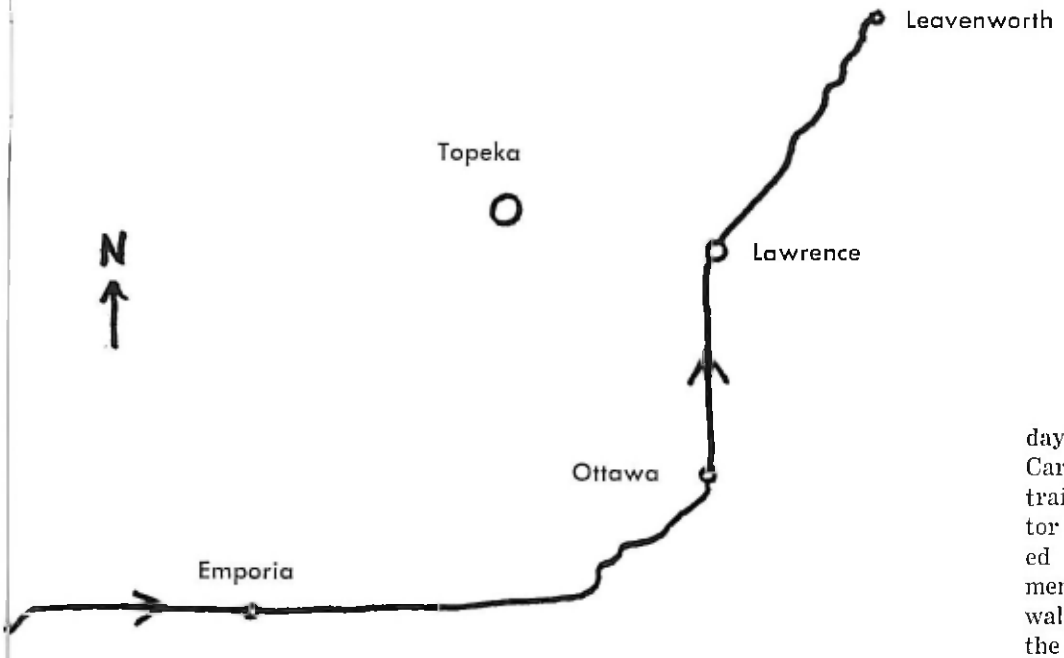
—Dostoevski's Grand Inquisitor

Central Kansas, particularly Harvey, Marion, McPherson, and Reno counties, was certainly not unique or exceptional during World War II for the wide divergence of attitudes and responses to the war among the residents. But the large Mennonite population in that area helped create an unusual mixture of militarism and pacifism not commonly encountered in most other sections of the nation. Indeed, much of the impetus and leadership behind the creation of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program which provided alternative service nationally for conscientious objectors during the war came from the Mennonites in Central Kansas.



Moreover, almost 50 percent of the Mennonite men in Kansas drafted for service chose the CPS alternative with another 18 percent of those men opting for non-combatant military duty. Even for Mennonites and other Peace Church members in other parts of the country these figures are exceptionally high. Thus, the war supporters and the pacifists lived together with full knowledge of each other during the 1940's in Central Kansas, and while the traditional Mennonite pacifist stance was so well known and understood that local draft boards rarely hesitated to give church members the C.O. classification, the non-Mennonite community in general was occasionally less understanding. Various arguments, confrontations, and incidents between Mennonites and non-Mennonites (and even Mennonites and other Mennonites) did occur.

On August 16, 1944, the 8th Army was consolidating its defeat of the German resistance in Empoli, the Air Force had been busy with the saturation bombing of Leipzig



scale: 1 in. = 20 mi.

and Magdeburg, and Patton's army could see Paris as the German 7th Army was breaking up into small groups and fleeing toward the Rhine. At home thousands of C.O.s in Civilian Public Service were just waking up to a new day of conservation work, mental hospital duties, dairy testing, and forest fire smoke jumping.

At 7:00 that morning in Hutchinson twelve young men boarded a bus to travel to Newton. They had been placed under the unofficial supervision of one of their number, James Arthur Young, by an official of the Reno County draft board to report to Fort Leavenworth for their pre-induction physical examinations. Few of the Reno County men knew each other prior to that day and none of the twelve was a conscientious objector.

In Newton the twelve transferred to a specially chartered Santa Fe Trailer bus which took them directly to the McPherson County Courthouse in McPherson. The Santa Fe bus itself warrants attention as it was somewhat unusual, even for its day. More commonly called a Cab Car, it was designed like a semi-trailer truck with independent tractor and trailer. The trailer contained double-deck seating compartments and a single aisle along one wall of each deck. Stairs connected the decks and the whole rig carried two Santa Fe employed drivers—one to drive the tractor while the other sat in the trailer to serve as a conductor. This bus design was to become significant.

The bus stopped in McPherson to pick up 21 more inductees from McPherson County, including six conscientious objectors:

—Forrest Goering (who was to receive cuts and bruises about the head, face, and neck; one broken tooth and two loosened ones; a dislocated arm, and heavy swelling on the neck and back).

—Wilmont Boeckner (to be given cuts and bruises about the head and face).

—Menno Ensz (to receive cuts, bruises and a badly split lip).

—John M. Dyck (one chipped tooth, one loose tooth, cuts, bruises).

—Arlyn Wedel (cuts, bruises, and a broken lip).

—Carroll E. Yoder (cuts and bruises.

A Mrs. Johnson of the McPherson County draft board had placed Arnold Loepp, one of the regular army inductees, in unofficial charge of the 15 McPherson County regulars, and Arlyn Wedel in charge of the C.O.s and their papers. At 10:00 a.m. the bus left McPherson for Fort Leavenworth via Marion, Emporia, and Ottawa.

The interview sources and the official statements taken later all agree that nothing out of the ordinary occurred before the bus got to Marion. The men slept or visited. But for some reason the six C.O.s had ended up sitting together, even though none of them knew each other well. John M. Dyck said, "We kind of segregated ourselves,"[1] while Menno Ensz remembered that in McPherson the Reno County men got off to stretch their legs and the C.O.s were called first to board the bus when it was re-loaded, thus identifying them as C.O.s to everyone and making it natural for them to sit together. Also Wayne Nelson, a McPherson County regular, said later that Mrs. Johnson indirectly identified the C.O.s by explaining that they would not receive meal vouchers for lunch as would the regulars.

Trouble Begins

From Marion to Emporia

Yet as the bus traveled between Marion and Emporia trouble did begin. Here the interviews and statements vary. Arlyn Wedel, a C.O., told me, "Before leaving from the courthouse at Mac [I] knew something wasn't right."[2] All the C.O.s recall sarcastic comments and jokes being made about them. Several men said that some of the C.O.s and regulars knew each other. Menno Ensz claims he knew several of the regulars, almost everyone suggests that Forrest Goering was a buddy to several McPherson men, and Arlyn Wedel must have been known since he had been a standout on the McPherson High basketball team during the previous winter.

The discussion which led to violence seems to have centered around Forrest Goering. Some who knew him claimed that he had no business being a C.O. since he was known to run around with a group of "rowdies" from Galva. Several C.O.s admit, and other sources corroborate, that Goering had a reputation for boldly stating whatever was on his mind, and that he confirmed that reputation in this instance. The charge of "murderers" was levelled against those who served in the military, and when the bus conductor defended the actions of his brother serving in England, Goering said he did not care.[3] Johnny J. Schlatter of McPherson then hit Goering in the face.

Apparently immediately thereafter, Walter Miller, Jr., from Hutchinson, inquired into Goering's attitude toward Miller's brother serving in France and his brother-in-law in the Navy. Goering replied, "I don't know why I should care about [them]."[4] Miller hit him in the right eye and returned to his seat.

The harrassment began in earnest. While Schlatter later claimed that he and the bus driver started it, Donald Blackman and Kenneth Arnold, both of McPherson, were adjudged the ringleaders in the Attorney General's investigation. (One might mention in passing that Arnold was on parole with 10 months left to serve in the County Jail when he boarded the bus.)[5]

John M. Dyck recalls, "It seemed to be like a snowball. It gained momentum.... We were afraid to do anything...."[6] One of the regulars' testimony is interesting. He said, "We talked to them quite a bit and they just definitely said they wouldn't fight for any country; and we asked them about it, and they said there wouldn't be any war if anybody didn't fight, and we asked them how they were going to get this over with if they didn't fight, and they said they hadn't thought about that."[7]

Another frequent question the C.O.s could not answer regarded what they would do when their mothers were raped when the Nazis were allowed to overrun America.

Several of the regulars seemed to know that to be Mennonite probably meant to have German ancestry. This theme was expanded. Since the C.O.s were German, they had no business living in the U.S. or being accorded the rights of American citizenship. Furthermore, their C.O. position belied their allegiance to the Nazis. Confident that they had unmasked the Mennonites, the regulars informed them that after the War they would see to it that the C.O.s had their farms taken from them.

At that point a few regulars began taking the C.Os out of their compartment one by one up to the front of the bus trying to get them to change their minds and renounce their C.O. position.

One can only reflect that for the C.O.s such a renunciation would have been to deny their upbringing, to reject beliefs they had had instilled in them by their parents and the church, and to place themselves in a highly embarrassing position with the other C.O.s as well as their community upon returning home. Even if at age 18 they had not all thoroughly thought through their beliefs and committed themselves intellectually to pacifism, the requested renunciation was unthinkable. Surely the pragmatist would have suggested a false renunciation for the duration of the trip, but these six refused to be convinced.

Abuse Intensifies

The order of events then becomes somewhat confused, but it is clear that between Florence and Emporia the verbal abuse intensified to the point that many admitted frequently calling the Mennonites "sissies", "damn fools", "sons of bitches", "C.O.s", and "cocksuckers."[8] The C.O.s were slapped, beaten and kicked repeatedly. Finally, a razor was produced from one regular's overnight bag. Three of the C.O.s were members of the Church of God in Christ Mennonites, a Mennonite branch which has the tradition of growing beards. And although Wilmont Boeckner says, "I didn't have much beard at that time,"[9] the regulars began dry shaving the C.O.s with no regard to nicks or cuts. Even the clean shaven C.Os received this treatment. Menno Ensz makes the relieving admission that even though his soft

red beard was lopped off, the regulars took care not to break his eyeglasses.

When James Arthur Young, the unofficial overseer of the Reno County group, heard upstairs that the C.O.s were being cut up downstairs, he worked his way through the men standing in the aisle and stood in the doorway of the C.O.s compartment. Forrest Goering remembers that Young told the regulars, "This is what we are fighting for, for freedom of religion."[10] But, as Young later testified, there was nothing he could do to stop the threats and he was eventually overpowered. The C.O.s recall that it was mainly while Young blocked the door that the C.O.s prayed and again tried to explain their position by quoting the Bible and telling about the Mennonites. It did not work.

Throughout the trip the conductor, who was later fired by Santa Fe for his actions, not only stood by but encouraged the regulars. At the Emporia stop he helped the regulars to keep an eye on the C.O.s who were allowed to leave the bus. It was probably there that one of the C.O.s tried to flee through the back of a store but returned crying to continue the trip. It was certainly in Emporia that a pair of ordinary scissors was purchased. When the bus pulled out, the haircuts began. Using the "hack-in-hew" method of hairdressing, several of the regulars took turns cutting the C.O.s' hair. Again, no precautions against cuts were taken.

The verbal abuse and beatings continued until the C.O.s were ordered to take off their pants. They were beaten with belts and told to commit homosexual acts. [This "cock-sucking" affair receives as much attention in the official statements taken later as any element in the case.][11] But the men did not perform the sexual acts and were not forced to do so. Cigarettes were brought out and the regulars tried to force the C.O.s to smoke, since traditionally Mennonites abstain from tobacco. Three C.O.s admit to "puffing" on cigarettes to avoid further mistreatment. Arlyn Wedel explains, "There was no use trying to fight. We could have fought maybe one at a time, but we were outnumbered."[12]

Forrest Goering claimed that at one point one of the regulars threatened to stab him with the scissors.[13]

Lunch in Ottawa

The beatings continued until the bus stopped for lunch in Ottawa. A waitress in the restaurant noticed one of the boys "had a bruise on the side of his face and was crying ... a lot of his hair had been cut off." [14] An Army veteran eating there saw what was going on and offered to buy some beer for the regulars to liven up the party, but they declined the offer; which brings us to one fact clearly established by all sources—no alcohol was consumed by anyone during the entire trip.

Shortly after leaving the restaurant, the bus stopped for gas. A Kansas Highway Patrol was parked at the station and James Arthur Young explained to him what was happening, hoping he would help. The patrolman turned, looked into the bus, and left.

Incident in Lawrence

When the bus made a brief stop at the bus station in Lawrence, Wedel was dragged out of the bus in front of a crowd waiting for other buses while the regulars yelled, "Look at the conscientious objector who won't fight for his country."[15]

Arrive at Fort Leavenworth

The verbal arguments continued but the physical violence was minimal after that. Forrest Goering recalls that as the bus neared Fort Leavenworth, "I told them guys, 'You're in for it'."[16] But when they got off at the Fort and were taken to barracks for the night, none of the C.O.s said anything about the events of the trip, while several sources claim the regulars were heard bragging about their actions to some soldiers. Several people asked the C.O.s about their haircuts, bleeding faces, and welts, but apparently none of them said much. One C.O. suggests that they thought they would not receive any help from the army while another claimed later that his injuries were not serious enough for him to make any objection.

The C.O.s were put in separate barracks from the regulars, seemingly the usual routine, and reported for their physicals the next day. It was then that the army doctors saw their bruises and cuts. Quickly the story was brought to the attention of Major G. B. Nemic, Commanding Officer of the Induction Station. After the physicals, which four of the six C.O.s flunked, Nemic and Lt. F. E. Muhmel, Fort Intelligence and Investigating Officer, questioned the C.O.s and then took separate statements from the six. The 27 regulars were brought together and the C.O.s were asked to point out the men responsible for the incident. At first the C.O.s said they would rather not; the incident was over and they preferred just to be sent hime. But Nemic insisted and the C.O.s complied. "After all," Wilmont Boeckner, a C.O., explains, "this land has law and order and that was against the regulations, against law and order."[17]

Return through Topeka

Sorting out the matter at Fort Leavenworth took several hours and the C.O.s had their hair evened out by a Fort Leavenworth barber that evening, so the men missed their bus home. But after spending an extra night in the barracks they began the return trip. The official statement sent to the State Attorney General's office by Lt. Muhmel explained that the C.O.s and the regulars were sent home on separate buses, but in fact the two groups met each other in Topeka where the bus schedules mandated their return to McPherson on the same bus. The C.O.s were wearing hats over their short hair and cut scalps and a few of the regulars began kidding them about it. But the joking was cut short by a group of regulars who reminded the kidders that they were in trouble already and did not need more. The ride back to McPherson was peaceful and many of the regulars introduced themselves to the C.O.s and talked with them. Most of the regulars eventually

apologized for their actions and even offered to give the C.O.s money for their next haircuts.

When the men arrived in McPherson, the County Sheriff was waiting for them. The State Attorney General, A. B. Mitchell, had been informed by the military about the incident and had instructed the McPherson and Reno County Attorneys to take statements from all the men immediately upon their return, since he anticipated charges being filed against the regulars. Moreover, the Associated Press had released an article on the affair which appeared in newspapers all over Kansas and at least as far away as St. Louis. Forrest Goering recalls, "When we got home everyone seemed to know about [what had happened]."[18]

The events of the next several days are rather complicated. Basically, the C.O.s refused to bring charges of any kind and returned home. Statements were taken from all 33 men by their respective county attorneys. A series of correspondence between A. B. Mitchell's office and Fort Leavenworth, and Mitchell and McPherson County Attorney E. W. Jernberg and his Reno County counterpart, H. H. Dunn, brought the authorities to the conclusions that, "We all regret an occurrence of this kind," that, "the major portion of these assaults probably took place in Lyon County immediately after the bus left Emporia," that "Everett Steerman [Lyon County Attorney, should prepare] a complaint . . . against the offenders," that warrants should be issued for the arrest of the eight regulars, and that these eight men should be charged by the State with assault and battery.[19]

Newspaper coverage

Newspapers around the State continued to give the story and the investigation front page coverage, especially the Hutchinson News-Herald and the Emporia Gazette. On August 24 the Emporia Gazette carried a statement by Lyon County Attorney Steerman: ". . . on August 16 the defendants individually and by counselling, aiding and abetting one another, did unlawfully and willfully strike, beat and bruise [the six named C.O.s] contrary to law and against the peace and dignity of the State of Kansas." Steerman went on to reveal that his office was investigating the roles played by the bus driver and conductor, and that he was considering charging the other passengers on the bus "with counselling, aiding and abetting the eight men charged."

Civil court trial

It must be remembered that all these men had been reporting for pre-induction physicals and had not yet been inducted, hence their trial was a civil matter rather than a military affair. Warrants were issued for five McPherson County men (Blackman, Arnold, Schlatter, Waddle, and Anderson) and three from Reno County (Jones, Stiggins, and Spaniol). The men were allowed to report voluntarily to the Lyon County court of Justice of the Peace W. T. Crawford for the August 25 trial. The C.O.s were also invited to bring testimony but none of them came. Two of the men charged did not appear; one had already reported for military service and was not available, and another, visiting relatives in Cherryvale, Kansas, had not received notice of the trial. Both were tried at a later date.[20]

The charges carried a possible $500 fine or one year imprisonment. When the men arrived, Steerman talked with them informally and conferred with Attorney General Mitchell during the discussion. The men told him that the C.O. question is a big one around McPherson and that while many farms have practically been cleared of youths not opposed to bearing arms, some C.O. families have two or three young men left at home. (The court reporter said that the C.O. question is not an issue among people in Emporia.)[21]

Ultimately the men pleaded guilty and were fined $10.00, plus $1.25 court costs. After the trial the men shook hands with Steerman and thanked him for giving them a "square deal." They thought Judge Crawford was "swell" for not piling up the court costs.

Although none of the men had brought his own lawyer, Schlatter had come prepared for the worst. He carried five $100 bills with him. One of the other men, however, must have anticipated either acquittal or jail as he had only 55c. The others paid his fine and a Lyon County Commissioner listening at the trial bought him lunch.

The affair was ended. Six of the eight men fined ended up in in the Army. Concerning the other two, McPherson County Attornew Jernberg wrote to Attorney General Mitchell, "I have been informed that Arnold and Blackman, the two boys who seem to be the ringleaders in this affair from this county, have been turned down by the Army and are classified 4F. In all probability this classification is due to the fact that they were the instigators in this affair. However, I have no proof for this; it is just my opinion."[22]

And what of the C.O.s? Three of them ended up in CPS while the other three stayed at home on the farm. They all let their hair grow out.

Interpreting the event

The event lends itself to a variety of interpretations. It could be seen as an example of the dangerous and sacrificial path the pacifists trod in wartime America. It is indeed remarkable not only that the C.O.s refused to dent their convictions in the face of torture, but that they also refused to bring charges. County Attorney Jernberg explained, ". . . the C.O.s hold no ill will against anyone, and they themselves do not contemplate any proceedings."[23]

In their statements two of the C.O.s said that they did not care what happened to them, but that they hoped this sort of thing would not happen to future groups of C.O.s reporting to Fort Leavenworth. But two major factors, I believe, must be remembered.

First, regardless of the jokes and verbal provocation by the regulars, Forrest Goering's responses can be regarded as the sparks igniting the fire. Perhaps his inflammatory words can be seen as an example of how at least some C.O.s were not

fully aware or committed to the wider demands of the pacifist position. The traditional peace position in the Mennonite Church, then and now, involves more than simply refusing to carry a gun.

Second is the fact that these were 33 *young* men, all but a few of them 18 years old, most of them farm boys, many of them untravelled and rarely confronted with beliefs radically different from their own. The small $10 fine perhaps indicates the judge's cognizance of the spontaneous and highly untypical nature of the violence. It is true that one of the ringleaders was a convicted criminal, but for the most part the regulars could be classed, not only by their mothers, but by the community, as "good boys" dutifully responding to their nation's call.

The C.O.s themselves, in retrospect, agreed that the young age and immaturity of everyone was the key factor behind the whole affair. I quote the interview with Menno Ensz:

> "It was a little like, you know, boys. It was all 18 year olds.... Just like a bunch of kids if they got started. It was kind of like a mob. If there had been an older person there to make order,... things wouldn't have gone like they had."[21]

Carroll Yoder, another C.O., expresses feelings typical for the six C.O.s today.

> "...Looking back at it now... I don't think the incident itself hurt us any.... Even locally, not many people heard about [the incident] or found out about it.... I was 18 years old and thought this was what I had to do.... [Today] I wouldn't have been on that bus. At that time... when those papers got there [saying] we had to be there ... [we thought] if anything went wrong at all we'd automatically end up in the army or something, you know, if we fouled this thing up. But now if I'd have been there when we stopped to eat... I'd have been long gone. I'd have gotten up to Leavenworth riding my thumb or something else.... We didn't have to go on that bus, but we didn't know it."[25]

Thus the combination of youth, wartime prejudices, opposing beliefs, and mob logic ended up compromising the peace and dignity of the State of Kansas, not to mention the well-being of six farmboys. The re-creation of events and attitudes indicates that the regulars almost certainly did not think they would get into any real trouble for "roughing up" some "C.O.s". The mood of the times was on their side. Even the C.O.s were surprised when Major Nemic came to their defense.

Mrs. Adeline Fisher's letter to the editor of the Hutchinson News-Herald represents the side of public opinion which the regulars probably assumed would exonerate them. Of the incident she writes:

> "I feel that [the regulars] were fully justified in what they did. How anyone could uphold a C.O. in such a case is beyond my understanding of anyone who believes in America or what we are fighting for.... [C.O.s] greedily take all this country has to offer them and when our country needs them they simply say, 'We don't believe in fighting,' that's all.... Well I wonder if they wouldn't do a little fighting if someone tried to take their farms or liberties away from them.... I'm sure our fighting men will be proud of our country when they hear that selectees are being taken into custody by authorities for upholding servicemen overseas."[26]

Today the significance of this event lies in its testimony to the value of Oral History research. The reconstruction of details, attitudes, feelings, and, in this case, knowledge of the event itself occurred because we are trying to preserve the human element of World War II. The newspaper articles and attorney's statements might one day have been stumbled upon by some student, but the anecdotes, the details which make analysis possible, and the retrospective statements—in other words, the *Life* of the story—are the product of the oral historian's method. Not only can we tell the story of an unusual bus ride, but we have gained another glimpse into the real lives of Kansas neighbors at war 35 years ago.

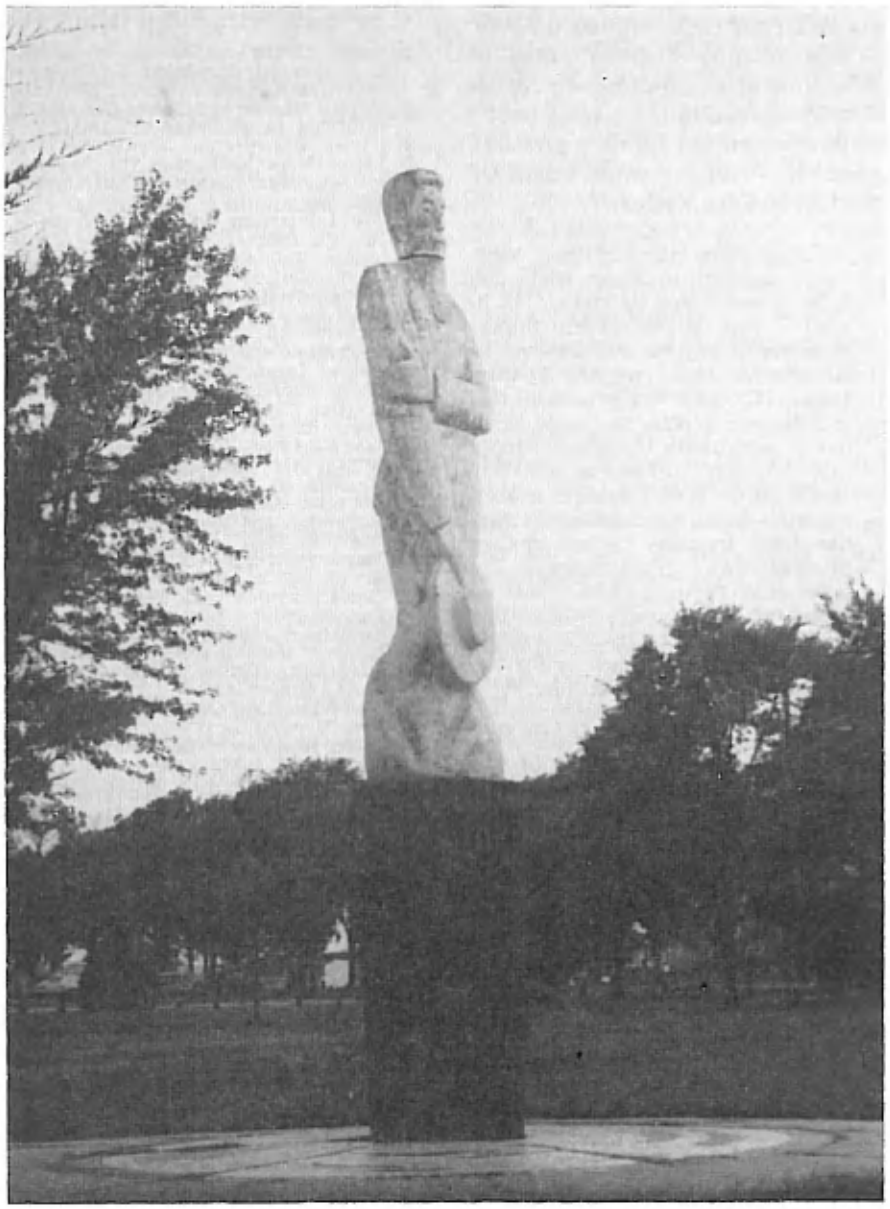
NOTES

—Taped interviews quoted are holdings of the Showalter Oral History Collection, Bethel College, North Newton, KS.
—Official Statements and correspondence quoted are holdings of the State Archives, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

1. Taped interview with John M. Dyck, Jan. 23, 1975.
2. Taped interview with Arlyn Wedel, Jan. 5, 1975.
3. From official statements of several men taken by Intelligence Officer at Fort Leavenworth (Aug. 17, 1944) and by McPherson and Reno Co. County Attorneys (Aug. 21 and 22), 1944).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Letter from McPherson Co. Attorney to Kansas State Attorney General, Aug. 22, 1944.
6. Taped interview with John M. Dyck, Jan. 23, 1975.
7. Homer Young's official statement to Reno County Attorney, Aug. 21, 1944.
8. From official statements of several men taken by Intelligence Officer at Fort Leavenworth (Aug. 17, 1944) and by McPherson and Reno Co. County Attorneys (Aug. 21 and 22, 1944).
9. Taped interview with Wilmont Boeckner, Jan. 28, 1975.
10. Taped interview with Forrest Goering, Jan. 30, 1975.
11. Official statements were taken from all the men on the bus at Fort Leavenworth on Aug. 17, 1944, and again in McPherson and Reno counties on Aug. 21 and 22, 1944.
12. Taped interview with Arlyn Wedel, Jan. 5, 1975.
13. Taped interview with Forrest Goering, Jan. 30, 1975.
14. Hutchinson News-Herald, Aug. 18, 1944
15. Kenneth Arnold's official statement to Intelligence Officer at Fort Leavenworth, Aug. 17, 1944.
16. Taped interview with Forrest Goering, Jan. 30, 1975.
17. Taped interview with Wilmont Boeckner, Jan. 28, 1975.
18. Taped interview with Forrest Goering, Jan. 30, 1975.
19. From official correspondence from the Kansas State Attorney General's office, Aug. 18, 21, 22, 30, 1944.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Emporia Gazette, Aug. 24, 1944.
22. Letter from McPherson Co. Attorney to Kansas State Attorney General, Aug. 22, 1944.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Taped interview with Menno Ensz, Feb. 6, 1975.
25. Taped interview with Carroll E. Yoder, Jan. 19, 1975.
26. Hutchinson News-Herald, Aug. 27, 1944.

The Most Monumental Mennonite

by Keith Sprunger



Max Nixon, the sculptor, worked for a full year on the statue, January 1941 to early 1942. The style of the statue was the social realism prevailing at that time. Robert Regier, Bethel College art professor, notes its "authentic reflection of a dominant visual style of the time." Photo by James Juhnke.

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The tallest, sturdiest Mennonite in Kansas stands seventeen feet tall in Athletic Park at Newton. He is the Mennonite settler statue of Kansas limestone, erected in 1942 in an all-community campaign.[1] Mennonites world-wide have hesitated to indulge in self-glorification in monumental stone or "graven images." Apparently, stone markers in the style of grave stones have been considered the most appropriate kind of Mennonite monument to heroes or events of the past. The Newton statue, which portrays the angular, bodily shape of a Mennonite farmer, is one of the few, perhaps the only, anthropomorphic Mennonite monument in America. The unique artistic value of the monumental Mennonite is one noteworthy feature. A second notable feature of the statue is its timing, 1942, in the midst of World War II. Not many monuments have been dedicated to Mennonites in wartime America.

The Mennonite statue was not a Mennonite initiated project. It was the joint product of a local Newton community drive and a WPA art project. Newton has not been renowned as a center of art, but a fortuitous combination of events in 1940 (the local Jaycees in search of a project and funds available from the WPA) put Newton into the art business. Before this time, the peo-

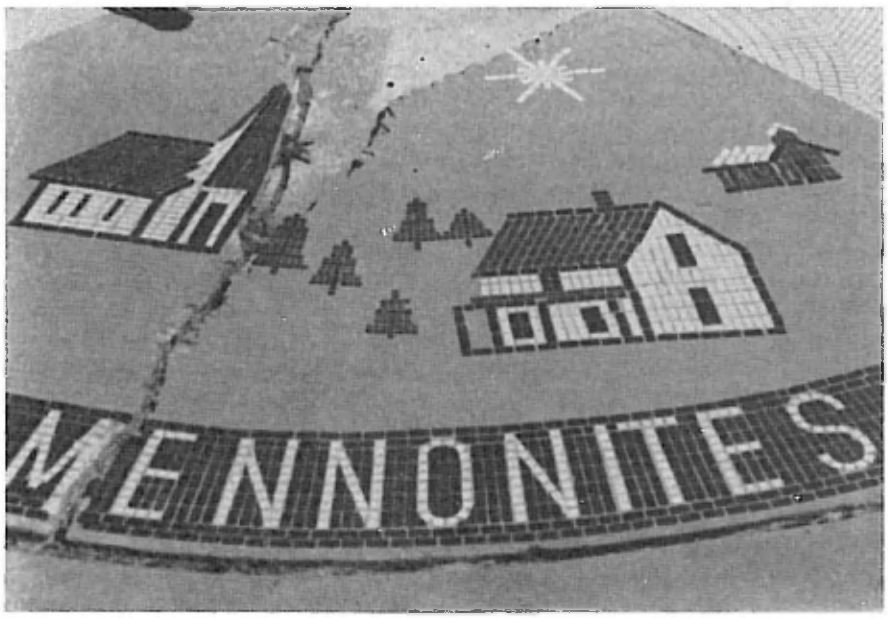
ple of Newton had not concerned themselves much with public art. The extent of the city's public art was an old canon with thirty-six canon balls on display in Military Park and several public buildings embellished with Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian columns. Also, perhaps, should be mentioned the cemetery with its assortment of funereal stone doves, granite Bibles, and other tokens of the heavenly hereafter.

Neither could Kansas Mennonites claim to have a strong tradition of pictorial or sculptural art. Although Mennonites loved music, painting and sculpting were not highly esteemed. The *Bethel College Bulletin* of March 1, 1945 carried an editorial by the college president on "Good Music," pronouncing that beautiful art, although perhaps inspiring to a degree, could never compare with good music. "What painting can compare to the song of a thrush?"[2] This brought forth a rebuttal from Randy Penner, serving at the C.P.S. camp at Denison, Iowa. He responded sharply to the editorial and generally bemoaned the low level of contemporary Mennonite art. Since Rembrandt's time it was all downhill. "But where, pray tell me, are our Mennonite artists of today? Oh yes, there are a few of recognizable rank who are of Mennonite origin, but they had to go outside Mennonite circles to gain recognition. I say it is pathetic." Penner continued: "Yes, I feel what we as Mennonites definitely need is a reawakening to the true values of the arts. If you will enter the average Mennonite home you will see what I mean. We are content to live in cracker-box houses with no feeling for architecture. We clutter up the walls with corny calenders and cheap dime store prints which possess little if any genuine aesthetic appeal."[3]

Clearly, when Newton commissioned an ambitious work of public art at a cost of several thousand dollars, it was an out-of-the-ordinary occurrence. The Junior Chamber of Commerce, known as the Jaycees, was the sponsoring organization. The motivation, even in retrospect, is a little hazy. Taking on an artistic project was almost accidental. The Jaycees were a project-oriented organization, always on the lookout for a project of community betterment. At the same time that the statue project was underway, the Jaycees were sponsoring a bond election (1942) for bringing an airport to Newton, which would be "vital to our present war effort." On another occasion the Jaycees placed a locomotive, "Old 1880," on permanent exhibit in Military Park. "The Jaycees have sponsored about anything you can think to mention," recalls Irvin E. Toews.[4]

The Junior Chamber's commemoration of the Mennonite was largely the businessman's appreciation of their economic contribution, not an appreciation of Mennonite religious or cultural beliefs. Still, the Mennonite heritage was not a completely overlooked factor among some of the Jaycees. Several of the leading members were young Mennonite businessmen who cherished the honest, industrious qualities of their Mennonite upbringing. They saw the opportunity, amidst the more general Jaycee project enthusiasm, to "bring a little prestige and a little recognition to Mennonites who most of the time were looked upon as sort of second rate citizens."[5] Three of the leading Jaycee activists of 1940 were Mennonites: John C. Suderman, Irvin E. (Dutch) Toevs, and Paul L. Kliewer. All three grew up in Mennonite families and attended Bethel College. Kliewer was the son of Dr. J. W. Kliewer, president of Bethel College. In a recent interview, the three reminisced: "We are all originally Mennonites, so we were kind of aiming at the thing from the historical angle."[6] As the Jaycees planned their project, they discovered that federal funds were available through the WPA for art works. The New Deal program and the project-minded Junior Chamber found each other in 1940.

The New Deal had been in the art enterprise since 1933. In that year the Public Works of Art Program (PWAP) began with the stated purpose of producing murals and portraits for public buildings. In its short lifetime of four months, the PWAP employed 3749 artists and produced 15,663 artworks.[7] In 1934 the PWAP was transferred to the Public Buildings Branch of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. In 1935 this program was renamed the Treasury Relief Art Project and began receiving funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It ended, along with most other relief programs, during World War II. The largest art program under the WPA was the Federal Art Project (FAP). The FAP had two kinds of art projects. In a "federal" proj-



A portion of the mosaic around the base of the Mennonite monument. Note the cracks and deterioration.

ect an artist would work for a fixed salary, usually $23.50 a week. A "non-federal" project required a sponsor who payed a portion of the cost of some specific work. The Newton project fell into the latter category. Many of America's leading artists found employment in the WPA art program, among them Ben Shahn, Grant Wood, Jackson Pollock, John Steuart Curry, and Thomas Hart Benton.[8] Newton's statue is one of about one hundred surviving Kansas WPA art projects. Many others have perished or been lost. The only other existent WPA art work in Harvey County is the Halstead post office mural done by Birger Sandzen.[9]

Drive launched

On July 23 of 1940 the Newton Junior Chamber launched its drive. The president for 1940 was Conrad P. Hinitt. Because of Kansas' agricultural wheat tradition, and preeminently Harvey County's, the Jaycees announced that they would sponsor an artistic monument in honor of the wheat pioneers. The 1940 harvest in Kansas provided 100,945,000 bushels, of which Harvey County produced 3,219,000, the highest per-acre yield in the state. In letters and press releases sent out by Hinitt, the "Wheat Memorial" was to be threefold: (1) to Bernhard Warkentin, Mennonite miller who imported the "golden" hard winter wheat, (2) the Santa Fe Railroad, for transporting the wheat and the settlers, and (3) "the Mennonite people who came to this country and toiled to turn a seeming prairie into the richest wheat land in America." Many Jaycees were active in the project. To set the work in motion, Hinitt appointed a Jaycee Wheat Memorial Commission composed of Kenneth Haury, John C. Suderman, Jack Lander, and Bill Hacket. Irvin E. Toevs, a past president, worked hard on the project, as did Harold Rea, Bob Hogan, and Paul L. Kliewer, who was president in 1942 when the project reached its completion. "It looks like the biggest thing ever undertaken in Newton," announced Hinitt.[10]

The first steps in the statue project were to solicit funds and, as soon as money accumulated, to find a sculptor. The Jaycees requested contributions of wheat, from one to five hundred bushels, which would finance the cost of the materials and installation. The salary of the sculptor was paid by the WPA. Hinitt and his co-workers criss-crossed the state in promoting the cause, and fund-raising letters went out world wide. They aimed for a fund of $2,500 (wheat was 56 cents a bushel in 1940). In a September trip to Kansas City, which included a luncheon with Carl B. Warkentin, Hinitt spoke on station WDAF: "We are trying to finance the project in a way that fits the occasion. We are asking for contributions not only of money, but of wheat. We feel that people who have benefitted for years from the growing of wheat and the processing of the wheat will be willing to make that kind of contribution.[11]

The original Jaycee timetable called for the kick-off of the drive in July, raising the money in August, sculpting the monument in September, and the grand dedication in October of 1940.[12] This timetable proved to be totally unrealistic, especially in regard to sculpting, which in itself took over one year; and, consequently, the dedication was delayed for over two years.

The response for donated bushels of wheat was generous, and that aspect of the drive went on schedule. "Wheat immediately began to roll in by the bushel and five and fifty bushel lots. Mills, elevators, grain dealers, farmers, businessmen all over the wheatbelt caught the vision and contributed wheat." Senator Edgar Bennett and Linn T. Woods, state representative, each gave twenty-five bushels. Governor Payne Ratner donated five bushels. Dr. J. L. Cadle, Newton mayor, gave five bushels. A traveling salesman for Henny-Packard, calling on customers in Newton, donated a bushel. Gifts came from Paul Lawrence, president of the state Junior chamber, the Bethel Clinic, the Newton Police Department, the Salina Jaycees, the Chicago Jaycees, from many local farmers, from the states of California, Minnesota, Oregon, New Jersey, Florida, and overseas from Cuba and the Phillipines. All donors were promised that their names would be inscribed on a scroll and sealed in the cornerstone of the monument. By the end of September $1,500 had been raised.[13]

Sculptor sought

While the wheat came rolling in, the Junior Chamber sought out a sculptor "to design and chisel the monument." The monument sponsors envisioned something truly grand—nothing "common or mediocre." The Newton newspaper pronounced that the statue should be "imposing and known nation-wide." Harvey County, center of wheat, deserved a splendid monument. "It is to be imposing and ornate, and built to stand for ages." Hinitt promised: "This monument will stand for ages we hope."[14] How big and ornate should the monument be? The Jaycees had begun their campaign without any definite plan in mind, except to achieve something noteworthy. No sketches or designs existed. They would buy as much monument as the money would provide. On September 6, the Jaycees announced that they awaited more accumulation of donations, "so that some definite ideas as to size and nature of the monument to be built can be worked out."[15] More local excitement was generated by location of the proposed statue than by its emerging design. In addition to the Athletic Park location, which prevailed, proponents boosted locations at Halstead, the Koppes farm in North Newton (the old David L. Payne homestead), and the Santa Fe station.[16]

Max Nixon, the Artist

Verna Wear, WPA art supervisor for Kansas, was advisor to the project. Wear said, "The idea of sponsoring such a monument originated with the Newton Junior Chamber of Commerce. Their plan for financing the cost of materials and installation is worthy of notice these days when we are trying to give art its natural place in the community."[17] Although Newton was a little short of meeting its $2,500 goal, the WPA agreed to pay for the remainder needed for materials and to bear all labor costs. Verna Wear arranged for Newton to have Max Nixon, a

young artist from Topeka. Nixon was the only candidate. Contracts were signed in January of 1941, after a trip by Wear and Nixon to Newton.[18]

Max Nixon, twenty-three years old in 1940, was a 1939 B.F.A. graduate of the University of Kansas; earlier he had attended El Dorado Junior College. Nixon grew up on a farm at Haverhill in Butler County. The Butler County area regarded Nixon as a prodigious young artist: "Max Nixon Makes Good in Art."[19] After university graduation, he became an instructor at the Community Art Center in Topeka, which was a WPA project. His specialties were painting and watercolors. At the Kansas Free Fair Art Exhibit in Topeka he won the sweepstakes with water color landscapes in both 1940 and 1941. The judge praised his work as "a significant, telling document of our times." Another of his talents was home decorating. *Homes and Gardens* magazine in 1941 had an article by Dorothy McKenzie, illustrated by Nixon, about how he had decorated her apartment "with various interesting and clever touches."[20]

Versatile though he was, Nixon was no sculptor. He had never done professional sculpting. He "was having fun but not making much money at his art," thus his interest in the Newton project. The self-confident Nixon told his friends later, "The fact that it was his first attempt at sculpture bothered him little." The *Topeka Capital* lauded Nixon as one of Topeka's most promising artistic spirits: "Max Nixon is something everyone secretly longs to be, a free and untrammeled individual, who works for the joy of creating, and lives his life as he desires."[21]

With the commission from Newton in hand, Nixon moved into the stone-cutting studio of the Sargent Cut Stone Company on Adams Street in Topeka. An assistant worked with him. Although the monument sponsors designated three aspects of the memorial (Warkentin, the Santa Fe Railroad, and Mennonite settlers), Nixon chose to design the statue so that it would honor the anonymous Mennonites, almost to the total exclusion of the celebrated Warkentin and the railroad. He sculpted an austere Mennonite farmer, eleven feet tall, perched on a six-foot pedestal. Carved from native Kansas Silverdale limestone, which was "soft and workable," Nixon's "stylized" man was of "heroic size with long flowing beard, wearing the garb of the Mennonite sect and standing in a field of wheat."[22]

The message that Nixon sought to portray in stone was "a reverence for these people (the Mennonites) for their tribulations of the past and their bringing of the wheat to Kansas. I wanted to give them the idea that I really appreciated that." The Santa Fe Railroad, Nixon felt, was only incidental to the story. Had the wheat come to another state, some other railroad would have transported it. But the Mennonites? "They were the initiators of the wheat." In a recent interview, Nixon declared that there was no one particular social philosophy explicit in the design. Implicitly, however, the monument carries the message of empathy with laboring people rather than corporate wealth. He had never known any Mennonites personally, and he had no contact with them during his work on the statue. He strongly identified with the toil of the farmer, having himself grown up on a farm. "We grew some wheat on our farm. I had great reverence for the kind of effort a farmer has to make. I had a more than average interest in the work of the farmer and what he has to go through." The style of the statue, Nixon says, "was the kind of style prevailing at the time . . . yes, social realism. Artists like Grant Wood, John Steuart Curry, Thomas Hart Benton—we all admired them the most."[23]

The statue and base were to be positioned on the ground in a mosaic about twenty feet in diameter, which spelled out the Mennonite wheat story. The first segment showed a Russian Byzantine-style church with onion dome, representing the Russian heritage of the Kansas Mennonites; the second segment showed ships sailing the ocean bringing the people and wheat to America; segment three showed a railroad, presumably the Santa Fe, delivering the settlers to Kansas; and the last segment of the circular mosaic contained a Mennonite house, church, and school, depicting the development of the wheat belt. Encircling the mosaic were the words: "Commemorating Entry Into Kansas From Russia Of Turkey Red Hard Wheat By Mennonites, 1874."

Nixon worked for a full year on the statue, January 1941 to early 1942, and then was drafted into the U.S. Army. The Newton Mennonite pioneer was his only large-scale sculpture. Following the war, he settled in Wichita and worked for McCormick-Armstrong Lithograph Company. His post-war art interests were pottery, silversmithing, and weaving. In 1950 he moved west and accepted an appointment to Mills College, Oakland, California, as instructor in silversmithing and advertising art. However, he remained only one year at Mills. He moved to Hawaii, and thereafter he studied at Bradley University and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute at Utica, New York. In 1958 he became professor of applied design (metalcraft, jewelry, weaving) at the University of Oregon, Eugene, where he continues to teach.[24]

Nixon's sculpture was carved in sections and had to be transported and re-assembled in Newton for the dedication. Even without the pedestal, the statue weighed over three tons. "Max didn't worry about the weight—it was Newton's job to move and install the statue."[25] John C. Suderman and a group of fellow Jaycees took a pickup truck to Topeka and hauled the pieces, bedded in straw, back to Newton. The Jaycees were powerfully impressed that the limesone blocks "were very heavy."[26]

United States at War

The two-year delay in completing the statue, from 1940 to 1942, greatly changed the situation in Kansas. By 1942 the United States was at war, and the anomaly of dedicating a public monument to Mennonites, many of whom were conscientious objectors, was evident to all. World War II, like earlier wars, was a difficult time for Mennonites. If

the traditional nonresistant doctrine was maintained, the Mennonites would have to withdraw from the majority commitment to "total war." The great strides in Newton towards Mennonite assimilation and respectability—symbolized by the Jaycees statue—were jeopardized. "The Mennonites of Newton were engaged, as they are now, in practically every activity. We are running for office. We are office holders. We have business up town. We engage in legal litigation, if we have to, like the rest of them," noted Menno Schrag, editor of the *Mennonite Weekly Review* during World War II. "Then the war hit and the Mennonite says: 'I am non-conformed to the world. I am different.' The impact of that in Newton was, 'My you've had a very wholesale conversion suddenly'."[27]

Prior to the war, Kansans were primarily isolationists and America Firsters. The *Evening Kansan-Republican* in September 1939, after the outbreak of war in Europe, editorialized: "There is no wisdom in allowing our prejudices or enthusiasm to carry us into another European war when such an event could be averted by calm thinking and conservative action. We gained nothing in the last war in the way of making the world safe for anything, but we lost much."[28] Nevertheless, once the bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, Newton became as patriotic and win-the-war minded as any town in the country.

Mennonites at Newton did not experience general harrassment during World War II. Relations between Mennonites and the majority community were tolerably good, not "acutely antagonistic as during World War I."[29] Even so, several unpleasant experiences fell on Mennonite businesses and institutions. In the Main Street area, two Mennonite businesses early in the war had yellow paint thrown on them (the Rich Mercantile Company and the *Mennonite Weekly Review* office), and Bethel College in North Newton suffered a few cases of vandalism. Under cover of night, in 1942 a dummy was hanged from the flagpole and patriotic vandals splattered yellow paint on curbs and the steps of the Administration Building. The precipitating cause of the Bethel College vandalism was an editorial comment in the *Bethel Collegian* (March 27, 1942) in which a student raised the issue, "To register or not to register? That is the question." Although the vast majority of World War II Mennonites, including Bethel College administration and faculty, encouraged registration for C.O. service, the very hint of "non-registration" and draft resistance provoked a storm in the spring of 1942. When the editorial became known in downtown Newton, "the lid was off," said President E. G. Kaufman. "We heard of it every day downtown," recalls Menno Schrag.[30] The local newspaper in outrage declared that the editorial had been "branded as seditious in nature by many who have read it." One local Mennonite minister joined the critics by warning that "religious conscientious objection to bearing arms is one thing, but advocacy of violation of law in a seditious manner is something else."[31] The Chamber of Commerce in 1942 withdrew sponsorship of its annual Bethel Booster Banquet.[32] Under this tremendous pressure, the Bethel College faculty disowned the editorial and removed the student writer from the staff of the *Collegian*. The April 3 issue of the *Evening Kansan-Republican* carried the story of the college's disavowal of the student editorial—"It does not express the position of the school."[33] Thereafter, the "sedition crisis" of 1942 subsided. Dedicating the Mennonite monument six months later in September had a touch of irony in it.

The Wheat Harvest
Harvey County Picnic

The statue dedication took place September 10, 1942. The general occasion was the Wheat Harvest Harvey County Picnic, of which the dedication was the featured event. The picnic was a family and community-wide celebration with games, contests, carnival, band music, and ice cream. Prizes were awarded for such notables as the fattest man and woman, largest family in attendance, and the oldest married couple. Two glamorous "wheat queens" (Hazel Phillips and Betty Dester, "Wheathearts of America") graced the occasion. Cora M. Nicodemus, a local schoolteacher, contributed a poem, "Kansas Gold." First came Coronado "with pomp and music and marching feet." Then "from the steppes of Russia and Turkestan . . . came a band, a quiet, God-fearing group of men."

"We've gold for the givers who plant and grow."
And acres of wheatfields billow and blow
In the Kansas wind because some came
With a gift in their hand instead of fame."[34]

Life magazine sent Gordon Coster, "crack photographer," to cover the story. Newtonians prided themselves on having an epic story worthy of more than local attention. With this in mind, the Junior Chamber requested *Life* to send a reporter. Coster "took especial pains with his shots of the mosaic and figure of the monument," and he also made excursions into the countryside for local color pictures, particularly in search of a "real farmer of the pioneer type that wears whiskers." He found Lucas Koehn of Halstead. However, *Life* never carried the promised story on Newton.[35]

Amidst the festivities was an eighteen foot draped mound—the long awaited statue. The dedication began at 8:00 p.m. and was presided over by Jaycee president Paul Kliewer. Many local and state dignitaries were presented (the Wheatheart queens, state Jaycee officials, Santa Fe officials, the acting Newton mayor). Tom Collins of Kansas City gave the dedication oration. Collins was famous state-wide as a sparkling wit (among his bons mots: "It is better to have halitosis than not to have any breath at all."[36] Although Mennonites attended in large numbers, some in quaint costumes of the 1870s, Mennonites were not invited to be on the program.[37] The mood of the dedication was historical, rather than religious or patriotic. "At that time it's hard to say anything too patriotic about the Mennonites," recalled Kliewer.[38] The Jaycee publicity and Collin's

speech stressed the economic heritage of industrious pioneers (who incidentally were Mennonites). Concepts like "foresight," "thrift," and "pioneer spirit" were the motifs of the day. These qualities, it was stated, transformed Kansas into the nation's breadbasket. The pioneer qualities "overcome difficulties, withstand hardships and win success."[39]

The Unveiling

Then came the unveiling. With the words still ringing, the cover was swept away, leaving Nixon's masterpiece in full view. The gaunt, stiff Mennonite stared out across the park, The crowd uttered a "gasp." There was "quite a shock when they took off the covering."[40] The modernistic, stylized form, popular among WPA artists, was not the kind of art ordinarily applauded in Newton.

The *Evening Kansan-Republican* on the day following the dedication gave a report about the statue, "regarding the artistry of which there may be a division of opinion."[41] Some of the donors of wheat no doubt felt their money not well spent. "It could have been better," they said. Mennonites thought the statue hardly did them justice.[42] Art connoisseurs, mostly out of town people, praised the statue. Verna Wear of the Kansas WPA administration declared that the statue was just right for Newton: "The memorial is monolithic in feeling and in its simplicity and strength honors those characteristics that enabled the conquerors of the prairies to weave the giant wheat basket of the world." A reporter from *The Topeka Capital*, who had been at Nixon's workshop, called the statue "wonderful and magnificent."[43] Nixon himself modestly referred to it as "just beginner's luck."[44]

In nearby Wichita, a WPA art project (murals for the post office) in 1936 had been absolutely refused by the post office department and community because of their suspected socialist content.[45] At Newton the statue was allowed to stand, but the appreciation of it was not high. All sorts of derogatory nicknames attached themselves to the stone Mennonite: "Frankenstein," the "Mennonite Jesus," the "Amishman."[46] Some claimed to see a distinct resemblance between the statue and this or that local Mennonite. As time went on, for most people the Mennonite monument merged into the landscape.

"This memorial will, or ought to be, standing here generations in the future," promised the editor of the *Evening Kansan-Republican* in 1940. In the thirty-seven years since the statue was dedicated, it has received little maintenance except for an occasional coat of paint. Today the mosaic is deteriorated with many pieces missing and more dissappearing every year. In 1973 Professor Harley J. Stucky began a personal campaign to have the statue restored, and the Junior Chamber tentatively agreed to supervise the rejuvenation. However, no repairs have been made, and the deterioration continues. Harley Stucky praises the monument as a "great piece of art."[47] The historical and artistic uniqueness of the Mennonite statue and the current lively interest in WPA art are strong reasons for preserving and restoring this monumental Mennonite. In other communities, local citizens have been amazed to discover that their taken-for-granted WPA art works are not worthless but in fact highly valuable, some having "risen in value from a few hundred dollars to more than $100,000."[48] Robert W. Regier, professor of art at Bethel College, comments: "The Mennonite settler statue is a good representation of the realism to which many artists of the time were committed—particularly those known as regionalist painters. It suggests a sense of the heroic, and embodies qualities of strength, optimism, pride, and the durability of the human spirit." According to Regier, "The settler statue has worn its thirty-seven years very well, particularly if we are aware of its authentic reflection of a dominant visual style of the time. I fear that much art done by, for, or about Mennonites since that time will not stand a forty-year test of time nearly as well. The settler deserves some affection and care."[49]

When the monument proposal was first made in 1940, the *Kansas City Star* editorialized that the project had "fundamental merit." Innumerable monuments have been erected to military and political people "who did not do one tithe as much for their country as did Bernhard Warkentin and his Mennonites through the introduction of hard winter wheat from Russia into this country." Concluded the *Star*: "The Mennonite memorial is fitting and deserves support. In a larger way, however, Warkentin and his people have already built their own memorial. A battlefield like Gettysburg, with its cannon, its marble monuments and its equestrian figures in bronze is a noble sight. But the miles on miles of Kansas wheat fields at harvest time, as a commemoration beat any battlefield we ever saw."[50] The words of 1940 are as true now as then. The Mennonite statue, stalwart amidst parking lots, football field, and picnic tables, continues to tell a story.

NOTES

[1]The research for this topic was done by the Diggers, a student history seminar at Bethel College, in 1979. Members of the Diggers were: John D. Thiesen, William Ewy, Susan Schlerling, Mark L. Unruh, Joseph W. Harder, Mark W. Unruh, David Harder, Janice Edlger, and Randy Neufeld. For a fuller account, see the complete Digger paper, "Newton's Monumental Mennonite," 53 pp. (M. L. A., Bethel College). We acknowledge archival materials from the *Newton Kansan* and the Kansas State Historical Society, and photographs from Zona Wheeler.

[2]*The Bethel College Bulletin*, 32 (Mar. 1 1945), 1.

[3]Ibid., (April 15, 1945), 2.

[4]*Evening Kansan-Republican* (Aug. 1, 1942); Irvin Toevs interview, Mar. 28, 1979 (Bethel College Oral History Collection. All subsequent interviews are also in the Bethel collection).

[5]Harley J. Stucky interview, April 10, 1979.

[6]Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview, Mar. 28, 1979.

[7]Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 5-18.

[8]Ibid., pp. 37-39, 76-77.

[9]For New Deal, WPA art in Kansas, see *New Deal Art in Kansas*, exhibition catalogue of the Wichita Art Museum (April-May, 1978); also Joanna K. Wiebe, series on Kansas New Deal art, *Wichita Eagle*, May 21-25, 1972.

[10]C. P. Hinitt, "Memorial to Wheat," *The Kansas Knight*, 18 (Sept. 1940), 13-14; *Evening Kansan-Republican* (July 23; Aug. 19, 1940); *Topeka Capital* (Aug. 3, 1940); Dedication brochure (1942). Some early accounts of the project added C. B. Schmidt, railroad agent, to the Santa Fe Commemoration; in later developments his name disappeared.

[11]*Kansas City Times* (Aug. 6; Sept. 5, 1940).

[12]*Topeka Capital* (Aug. 3, 1940); *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 18 (July 31, 1940), 1.

[13]*Evening Kansan-Republican* (July 25,

27, 31, 1940, and frequent accounts during Aug; Sept. 25, 1940); Dedication brochure; *Kansas Knight* (Sept. 1940), p. 14; *Topeka Capital* (Aug. 3, 1940).

14*Evening Kansan Republican* (July 25; Aug. 8, 1940).

15Ibid., (Sept. 6, 1940).

16Ibid., (Aug. 2; Sept. 9, 1940). David L. Payne served in the state legislature in 1871 and was instrumental in organizing Harvey County.

17"Kansas Erects a Monument to King Wheat," *Art Digest* (Oct. 1, 1942).

18Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview, Mar. 28, 1979; *Evening Kansan-Republican* (Jan. 21, 1941).

19*Augusta Gazette* (Sept. 18, 1940); reprinted from *El Dorado Times*.

20Ibid.; *Topeka Capital* (Sept. 21, 1941). For Nixon's role in the Community Art Center, see Center newsletter and Center brochure (Kansas State Historical Society, K 750 Un3, envelope). The brochure announced work in progress: "A stone sculpture and tile mosaic piece (now in progress) at the Newton City Park."

21*Topeka Capital* (Sept. 21, 1941), "Now We Find That We've a Sculptor in Our Midst" (based on interview with Nixon), *The Alibi* (McCormick-Armstrong magazine, May, 1946), 2.

22*Topeka Capital* (Sept. 21, 1941).

23Max Nixon interview, July 23, 1979.

24*Wichita Eagle* (Sept. 15, 1950). See Univ. of Oregon catalogue; Nixon interview.

25"We've a Sculptor in Our Midst," p. 2.

26Kliewer, Toevs, Sunderman interview.

27Menno Schrag interview, Mar. 6, 1979.

28*Evening Kansan-Republican* (Sept. 20, 1939).

29H. A. Fast interview, Oct. 31, 1973. Also on Newton and Bethel College during World War II see an earlier Digger project, "A Study of Bethel College during World War II" (1974), especially chap. 7, "Somewhat Cool but Sometimes Boiling: World War II's Effect on Bethel/Newton Relationships."

30Donald Schrag, "On the Serious Side: A Study of the Templin Incident and a College under Pressure" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1971), pp. 5-6.

31*Evening Kansan-Republican* (April 3, 1942), "Student Article Creates Furor."

32Peter J. Wedel, *The Story of Bethel College* (North Newton: Bethel College, 1954), p. 471.

33*Evening Kansan-Republican* (April 3, 1942).

34Dedication brochure; Cora M. Nicodemus interview, April 3, 1979.

35*Evening Kansan-Republican* (Sept. 11, 1942). Coster disagreed with local Jaycees about some of his arrangements, which may have been a factor in killing the story; see Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview.

36Quoted by Hiniti, "Memorial to Wheat," p. 13.

37William O. Dick interview, Aug. 30, 1972; Menno Schrag interview.

38Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview.

39*Evening Kansan-Republican* (Sept. 2; Sept. 11, 1942); Dedication brochure.

40Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview.

41*Evening Kansan-Republican* (Sept. 11, 1942).

42Cora M. Nicodemus interview; Menno Schrag interview.

43"Kansas Erects a Monument to King Wheat," *Art Digest; Topeka Capital* (Sept. 21, 1941).

44"We've a Sculptor in Our Midst," p. 2.

45*New Deal Art in Kansas*, pp. 11-12. The murals by artist Felix Jones now are hung at the Wichita airport.

46Kliewer, Toevs, Suderman interview; Menno Schrag interview.

47Harley Stucky interview.

48"WPA Art: Rescue of a U.S. Treasure," *U.S. News and World Report* (June 21, 1971), pp. 75-78.

49Robert W. Regier interview, July 30, 1979.

50*Kansas City Star* (Oct. 13, 1940).

Despair and Hope in

A Pillow, A Willow Trunk and a St

by Harvey L. Dyck

Moscow

tiff-Backed Photograph

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I. A Pillow, A Willow Trunk and a Stiff-Backed Photograph

Reports of the boat people from Vietnam drowning on their perilous escape voyages at sea, or being stopped from landing on reaching shore, jogged a poignant childhood memory. An old feather pillow, a broken-down Russian willow trunk dumped in a corner of our barn and a stiff-backed photograph of a man who resembled my father except for his deep-set and very intense eyes. The man with the frightened look on the picture, my mother told me, was my Uncle Peter. The pillow was his. By train, in the willow trunk, years before, it had arrived in Winkler, Manitoba, where my father taught school.

"But doesn't he need his pillow anymore?" I asked.

"He's probably dead," she replied, "although no one really knows."

Then, while I stared, intrigued at the photograph, my mother told me the story. My uncle, and thousands of other Mennonites in Russia, had tried to flee from an evil ruler, a man called Stalin, who didn't want them to be Christians any longer. He wanted to jail and even to kill some. They had flocked to the capital city of Moscow, hoping that Canada, where many of their relatives lived, would give them a new home. But Canada had refused. Most of the Mennonites at Moscow had then been shipped off to frozen Siberia as slave workers.

"Did none escape?" I asked.

"Yes, some did, the lucky ones. They finally were able to find a new home for themselves in a jungle place called Paraguay. A few even managed to get to Canada. Your Uncle Peter apparently just missed being one of them. His belongings got onto the train on which

Hungry Mennonites in Russia. From Mennonite Library and Archives photograph collection.

the fortunate few left, but somehow he didn't."

Years later, my interest in this dramatic story revived when I married the daughter of one of the "lucky ones." Now my parents-in-law were able to fill me in on much of the personal detail of the tragedy. Trips to the archives, where I pored over German, Canadian and Soviet records, gave the story texture and form. After Stalin's death the story regained a personal side when my family learned that Uncle Peter had starved to death. At the present time, the word GULAG has come to define Stalin's pitiless camp system and studies of the period are able to provide the context for the various domestic and international currents and cross-currents which swept my Uncle Peter away, some fifty years ago this fall.

II. The Flight to Moscow

In October 1929, Canadian officials first learned of startling developments in the Soviet Union which threatened to affect their interests and those of the German government. Thousands of German-speaking peasants in the USSR (many of them Mennonites) were leaving their villages in panic and fleeing to Moscow in the hope of emigrating to Canada. Before the end of 1929, this seemingly trivial, though dramatic, event of Soviet domestic life led to a chance interplay between the USSR's titantic social revolution and Germany's and Canada's deepening economic crises. In Germany news of the refugees combined with growing social instability to fan anti-Soviet sentiment and weaken Weimar Germany's long-standing partnership with the USSR. In Canada appeals to admit the refugees prompted a major debate about immigration policy, which helped close Canada's borders to most prospective immigrants until after 1945. Thus, briefly, the internal problems of three very different societies came to intersect in the lives of disoriented Mennonites huddled together in dachas in Moscow's northern suburbs. The gamble which they had taken led to deliverance for some of them, but for most it ended harshly in exile, starvation or death. Finally, because the tragic story unfolding in Moscow was fully reported in the international press its major repercussion was to focus world-wide attention on the staggering human costs of Stalin's agrarian revolution.

Leaving the countryside

Mennonite refugees again began to leave the Soviet countryside in the winter of 1928-29. Under pressure of the early moderate phase of Stalin's collectivization drive—a massive, forcible, grain-gathering campaign—a handful of anxious Mennonite families in Siberia quietly sold their household and agricultural assets and slipped illegally across the border into China and Persia. A larger number, some seventy families by July, boarded trains for Moscow in an effort to emigrate legally. But their future became seriously overcast when Soviet authorities rejected their application and they ran out of money. When the German ambassador in Moscow, ironically a man by the name of Herbert von Dirksen, who himself had Prussian-Mennonite ancestors, also refused to intercede on their behalf, B. H. Unruh, a leading emigre member of the Mennonite intelligentsia in Germany, wrote in despair: "I cannot understand how mature men can act in this way, leaving their nests with families in times such as these when one knows precisely that Moscow will not issue any passports." Nevertheless, in mid-summer, high Soviet functionaries made a surprise ruling: the seventy families would be permitted to leave, but further petitions would be rejected for the duration of the first five-year plan.

A More Repressive Phase

The departure of the seventy families in late August coincided with the start of a more repressive phase of Stalin's agrarian revolution. The goal was to drive *Kulak* elements out of the villages altogether. The remaining middle and poor peasants were then to be herded into collective farms through measures that would make individual farming prohibitive. The collectivizers pinned their hopes on their ability to split peasant settlements along class lines. When resistance mounted, they had no alternative but to resort to force. As a result, an atmosphere of panic spread through peasant Russia in the summer and fall of 1929.

The hard edge of political repression fell most heavily upon communities, such as the Mennonite, with a high proportion of legally designated *Kulaks* and a high degree of social and religious cohesion. In 1929-30, the 120,000 Russian Mennonites, who lived in closed settlements in the steppe areas of the Black Sea, Trans-Volgan and Siberian plains endured the full range of the collectivizers' techniques. For example, in 1929, a small Mennonite village of thirty households in the Siberian Colony of Slavgorod, produced 1,500 *poods* of grain and was assessed a delivery quota of double that amount. Four other villages in the same area harvested 25,000 *poods* and were required to deliver 34,000. In order to meet such confiscatory demands Mennonites would deliver grain purchased on the open market with money earned from the sale of their furniture, cattle, and implements. When these funds ran out as well, fines were imposed many times their value. As a final step to the abyss, the remaining possessions of peasant households would be sold at forced auction and family heads deported for having "malevolently refused" to fulfill state demands.

Throughout Russia, some peasants responded to such crushing burdens by bribing or murdering officials, hiding grain, slaughtering their cattle, or by resorting to arson, suicide, or internal migration. Most of the Mennonites, however, were conditioned by their historical experience to seek freedom in flight and emigration. They interpreted collectivization partly in traditional terms as a recurrence of the disabilities and persecution which had driven their Anabaptist forebears to migrate first from the Netherlands to the Vistula estuary and then to Russia, and they responded in the traditional way. They were further encouraged in this direction by be-

ing able to count on the support of thousands of their co-religionists who had settled in Canada several years earlier and worked through a well-oiled international Mennonite refugee organization. Small wonder, then, that the news of the success of the seventy families should trigger a panicky mass flight.

Exodus to Moscow

The exodus to Moscow spread rapidly from the ethnic German Slavgorod region of Siberia to all Mennonite colonies in the USSR including the areas of Omsk, Novosibirsk, Pavlodar, Orenburg, Ufa, Samara, the northern Caucusus, the Crimea, and the Black Sea steppes. The mass movement had neither organization nor leadership. A family would hear of the chance of escape from relatives already in Moscow, sell what it could at private auction, and entrain for the capital. The first such auction in an area would have an electric effect and would soon be followed by many others. By mid-October neighbouring colonies of Lutheran and Catholic Germans, including those of the populous Autonomous Volga German Republic, were rapidly being drawn into the movement. The *dachas* of Moscow, it was clear, were acting as a powerful magnet on many of Russia's one and a quarter million ethnic Germans. Since the movement was part of the ferment accompanying collectivization, Soviet authorities had no choice but to put a stop to it. This they did by prohibiting auctions, refusing rail tickets to colonists, halting Moscow-bound trains after they had passed through German areas and seizing their refugee passengers, and by posting armed guards at village exits. After mid-November only a few plucky stragglers managed to flee at night across open fields into non-German areas, board trains headed away from Moscow, and then, in round-about ways, join their relatives in Moscow.

Eighteen Thousand Refugees

Most of the approximately eighteen thousand refugees who ultimately reached Moscow intended to go to Canada. They assumed that Canadian conditions favouring immigration had not changed since the mid-1920's, when more than 20,000 Russian Mennonites had emigrated there. First, therefore, they appealed directly to the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR and of the USSR. Then, a group sent a lengthy petition to six organs of the Soviet government which concluded with the melodramatic threat that if they were refused emigration they would go to Red Square in a body and perish. On the advice of a sympathetic party official, they also staged a mass demonstration of women and children in the reception room of President Kalinin's office, but with indifferent results. Letters for help, suggested by Tolstoyans in Moscow, were directed to Lenin's widow Krupskaia, and to Maxim Gorky. As a last resort, interviews were obtained with Smidovich, chairman of the Committee of National Minorities, and Yenukidze, a high government official. But the results, as one refugee later recalled, were uniformly dismal: "Repeatedly they urged us, 'Go home, return to your villages.' 'But we have no homes, they have taken everything,' we would reply. They would then promise to return our property. [But knowing that life in Russia had become impossible for us], we would plead, 'We want nothing back. We want only to leave, even if we have to walk to the border.' "

Conditions in Germany

During October and early November, Soviet authorities hesitated to use force against the "counter-revolutionary" refugees in Moscow for two main reasons: the unexpectedly keen interest which the German government was taking in their fate and the wide reporting of the saga of their flight to Moscow by the foreign press. On October 11, Otto Auhagen, Germany's agricultural attache in Moscow and a respected and widely read authority on Soviet agriculture, visited the despairing refugees—some twenty-five hundred at the time—in the company of two German and three American journalists. Deeply moved by what he saw, he called on his government to intervene in the situation diplomatically. On that same day, B. H. Unruh presented an equally energetic plea to the German Foreign Ministry. Both gave details of the catastrophic developments in Moscow and similar assurances that once the refugees reached Germany they would be able to move immediately to Canada on the strength of firm agreements existing between the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Many of the refugees were reportedly already in possession of pre-paid tickets from relatives in Canada.

The German Foreign Ministry responded briskly to these appeals by dispatching the head of its Russian desk, a certain Consul Dienstmann, to Moscow. On October 19 his unofficial negotiations with Boris Stein, head of the mid-European division of the Foreign Commissariat, led to an extraordinary concession: all refugees then in Moscow or in transit to the capital would be allowed to leave. This accommodating response, taken against the strenuous opposition of influential persons within the government, Stein explained, stemmed from his government's need to maintain cordial relations with the German government at a time when the Soviet Union would otherwise face isolation in Europe.

"I was overwhelmed by the news," one of the refugees later wrote. "I hired a taxi and driving slowly through the *dacha* villages inhabited by our people shouted, 'We can go! Get ready!' Soon all knew that the long dreamt-of-day had finally arrived." In *dacha* villages stretching northwards thirty miles along the Moscow-Yaroslav rail line, refugees, officials of the State Political Police (GPU), and staff of the German embassy worked feverishly to complete transportation arrangements. Hurriedly, they organized the refugees into eleven groups, the first of which left at night by special train for Leningrad on October 27. Since GPU officials insisted that the Mennonite encampments be liquidated before the anniversary celebrations of the October revolution, others were scheduled to follow soon. But on October 30 word

was received that Canada was reluctant to accept any new immigrants and was, at most, prepared to admit a few during the following spring. Because the German government was unwilling to assume sole responsibility for the settlement and care of the refugees, Soviet authorities responded by shunting a second train of refugees which had just left Moscow onto a siding. All further transports were stopped.

Canadian Reluctance

The Canadian obstacle presented Soviet officials with difficult choices. The arrival of additional thousands of refugees was agitating the German villages and adding to the severe disorganization of peasant Russia. In the first days of November spokesmen of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs pressed the German Foreign Ministry to receive the refugees immediately or bear the odium for their deportation. "There were only these two possibilities," Stein warned: "The Soviet government has no interest in what happens to the emigrants later. It was only concerned that the encampments of these unemployed and half-starved individuals in the environs of Moscow be dissolved. The trains are fired and ready to leave. If they do not journey to the west they will be routed to the east."

Against a background of this chilling threat, the German government tried to frame a policy that took account of conflicting domestic and foreign policy demands. These included soaring unemployment at home, a pinched budget, a wavering diplomatic partnership with Moscow, and a fickle press and public opinion—extending the full spectrum from Social Democrats to National Socialists—which insisted, in a shrill campaign, that the Mennonites be rescued. Uncertainty over the scope of the movement complicated matters. Perhaps, as one German minister suggested, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Germans were already in transit in central Russia. Could Germany alone, he asked, assume the burden of settling the refugees at a time of catastrophic financial crisis? While this debate raged within the German government, the German Foreign Ministry tried to buy time and mobilize foreign aid. In Moscow it pleaded for a postponement of the threatened deportations. In Canada it bombarded officials with appeals for the admission of the refugees as immigrants.

Representations in Ottawa came at a time of great flux in Canada's immigration policy, a fact unknown to the refugees, their co-religionists in Canada and Europe and the German and Soviet governments. They all assumed that the earlier conditions favouring immigration still existed. Unlike the pre-1914 "permissive" Canadian approach of settling the west by admitting all comers, the post-1914 "selective" policy forbade entry to all persons except those in specified categories. The policy included the listing of countries of origin as "preferred, non-preferred, and excluded," and was designed to favour immigrants from Britain and northwestern Europe. East European countries were listed as "non-preferred." Yet the desire to attract easily assimilable immigrants from the north Atlantic region, whose population surplus was an urban proletariat, conflicted with the need for agriculturalists. After 1922 this contradictory policy of settling the west while closing off the east European reservoir of agricultural workers was slowly modified with rising prosperity and pressure from transportation interests. In 1925 the relaxation culminated in an agreement between the Department of Immigration and Colonization and the rail companies which freed them of restrictions if the prospective immigrants were genuine farmers.

In the mid 1920s, the Russian Mennonites benefitted directly from the development. Between 1923 and 1927, the heydays of the moderate New Economic Policy in the Soviet Union and of economic buoyancy in Canada, some twenty thousand Mennonites were able to leave their homeland by legal, though labyrinthine, means, and enter the prairie provinces as settlers. But after 1927, the stiffening of Soviet barriers to legal exit coincided with the revival in Canada of opposition to the entry of large numbers of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. In 1928 and 1929, officials of western labor and the provincial government began to charge that the railways were bringing in poor immigrants who were unable to buy farms and gorged the urban labor market. Increasingly, a large part of the prairie press and many platform speakers accused the Immigration Department of flooding the west unassimilable "foreigners" at the expense of desirable British stock. Finally, following difficulties in marketing a bumper grain crop in 1928, even farmer groups in western Canada raised strenuous objections to mass immigration.

Although unemployment in the spring and summer of 1929 was not yet a critical problem the further venting of nativist, trade union, and farmer sentiment prompted the Minister Of Immigration, Robert Forke, to confer on the matter with the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The upshot was a federal commitment in August 1929 that in future they would be consulted continuously about their immigration wishes.

This was the picture in late October when news reached Ottawa of the mass movement of Mennonites to Moscow and of their wish to come to Canada. The CPR, which, as in previous movements, had already been asked to handle transportation, sounded out the federal government about its attitude; the German Consul in Montreal promised that the refugees would be given German identity papers and brought to Germany if they could then be moved directly to Canada; and the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization offered to accept and care for all Mennonites brought in. The first response of the Ministry of Immigration was nonetheless unpromising. It refused to recognize an obligation to the refugees and would offer hope only to persons with funds or a job. This information, cabled to Berlin and from there to Moscow, halted the refugee trains on October 30.

David Toews Intercedes

In the weeks thereafter Canada's

policy evolved largely in the public arena. The setting was provided by the press which carried daily reports of developments in Moscow and Berlin and of debates between interest groups and levels of government in Canada. For Prime Minister Mackenzie King the incident was an unwelcome intrusion on his efforts to solidify the Liberals electoral chances in the prairie provinces. It was there, while on a pre-election speaking tour, that he first heard of the matter. A cable from the Immigration Ministry was followed soon thereafter, in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, by a conversation with David Toews, head of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, who pleaded that the refugees be admitted on humanitarian grounds. The Prime Minister's response was equivocal. It was implicit in his electoral strategy and the direction of recent developments in immigration policy. As a longtime friend of the Mennonites he expressed sympathy for the refugees' luckless plight and instructed his Minister of Immigration to do what he could for them. But he also realized that before any were brought to Canada he would have to gain the consent of the provinces.

Following this conversation between King and Toews, officials of the Department—seconded by the railroads, Mennonite spokesmen, and the German Consul—tried to overcome rising prairie opposition to a rescue operation. The first canvassing of the three prairie governments took place on November 7, and had a typically fruitless outcome. In a long telegram to the premiers, Gordon Forke outlined the deteriorating picture at Moscow and the promised support of the railways, the Mennonites and the German government: "We will not expect Province or Municipalities to assume any responsibility and will endeavour to arrange movement so as not to aggravate employment situation." The first reply, two days later, from the recently elected Conservative Premier of Saskatchewan, J. T. M. Anderson, was nonetheless a qualified "no." He wired that he would consider admitting only close relatives of Saskatchewan Mennonites who undertook in writing that the newcomers would not become public charges for two years. As for the others, "this was a most inopportune time to admit destitute immigrants," particularly when Ottawa disclaimed responsibility for relief support. Manitoba and Alberta likewise listed crop failures, high unemployment, and heavy financial burdens for relief and works programmes as barring a major refugee influx.

To try to soften this unyielding stand the Mennonite organizations, German government, and the department offered iron-clad guarantees that the refugees would not burden the provinces, but without success. David Toews, for example, was coolly received on a tour of the provincial capitals during which he promised that the Mennonite community of Canada would care for its own. Repeated warnings of imminent deportations received from the German Foreign Ministry were forwarded to the provinces. One dated November 19, struck an emotional note, but without effect: "These thousands of people are in such great distress that we are not in a position to save them from certain ruin without help from abroad. Again we appeal to the sympathies of your government and ask you to support us in this action." On November 20, following news of the beginning of the feared mass roundup of the refugees by the GU, Acting Deputy Minister F. C. Blair again begged the provinces to reconsider their decisions and offered them a further inducement for so doing. In the presence of Consul Kempff and an agitated David Toews he telegraphed that the German government was prepared to provide Mennonite organizations in Canada with funds to care for any refugees who might later become public charges. It would also agree that such persons be deported to Germany. But since the provincial replies were this time even more discouraging than their predecessors, Forke had no alternative but to announce on November 26, that the question of bringing the Mennonite refugees to Canada would be shelved until the spring of 1930.

The provincial premiers' adamant stand was nurtured by a medley of provincial group sentiments. In the first weeks of November these had solidified against the refugees in a widespread public discussion that was touched off by the regular newspapers' reporting of the exchanges of messages between Regina and Ottawa. Premier Anderson, among others, found that his icy response to Ottawa's appeals was politically popular. Many messages of support flooded his office from Conservative party associations, municipal and town councils, veterans' organizations, and farmers' associations. Invariably they cited recent crop failures and mounting unemployment as grounds for barring immigrations. But not infrequently they also reflected older and deeper concerns that the "Britishness" and integrity of prairie society was being jeopardized by the inflow of immigrants from Eastern Europe.

This convergence of rational economic fears and irrational ethnocentric anxieties—in addition to touching the fate of the refugees—had an important sequel: it also suggested the need for basic changes in Canadian immigration policy. The question, "Who makes policy?" had been clouded by the refugee entanglement and had become a contentious issue in the 1930 federal election. This King finally decided to defuse by appointing his ineffectual Minister of Immigration to the Senate and then announcing that henceforth initiatives in immigration matters would come only from the provinces. This shift in policy accurately reflected public opinion about the economic crisis.

Canada or Germany?

The contrast between the Canadian response to the Moscow flight and the German response could not have been greater. While Canadian public opinion effectively foiled Ottawa's plans a volcanic pro-refugee campaign in Germany demanded that the Berlin government not abandon them to a Siberian fate. The episode aroused such attention after Canada's refusal to open its frontiers had placed the lives of refugees in jeopardy. Throughout

the month of November stories about the Mennonites at Moscow occupied a prominent place on the front page of every German paper daily. The German Communist party organ, *Rote Fahne*, on November 9, commented bitterly that the entire German bourgeois press had become totally preoccupied with the fate of "Russian *Kulaks* of German origin," demanding that the German government save them, whatever the cost. These demands, it bears noting, were supported by a nation-wide fund appeal, sponsored by almost all German charitable organizations and suggestively captioned *Brüder in Not*. The appeal was enthusiastically acclaimed by the aged President Hindenburg. He described contributions to the fund by government offices and private organizations as a "duty of honour," and personally contributed 200,000 marks to it from a special fund. Also, the German postal service was authorized to accept money for the refugees, the private banks volunteered to do the same, and the state rail lines were empowered to carry gifts of clothing and food for the refugees without charge.

Bourgeois and Social Democratic Germany's extraordinary preoccupation with the fate of the refugees stemmed from humanitarian concerns and from a weakening political and social order which perceived Bolshevism as the paramount threat to stability. The German parties and press were thus inclined to picture the refugees' flight as the logical end of a political system favoured by German communism. Non-communist Germans saw the misery of the refugees as the direct product of the tyranny on which Soviet-type systems rested. Vicariously they felt the wounds of the Soviet class struggle. Therefore, while insular Canadians tended to see the refugees as "foreigners" who threatened their jobs and identities, an increasingly nationalistic German press depicted them as *Landsleute* at the door resisting communism: "The fate of every German is the concern of every other German."

German Cabinet responds

Against this psychological background, several German cabinet meetings in early November explored the issue, should Germany bring out the refugees even if Canada would later accept none of them? The first on November 9, heard a spirited brief from Foreign Minister Curtius, which answered "yes." Curtius recommended that three million marks be appropriated for aid to the colonists. There were two grounds, he said: "Germany's public opinion is very interested and would not understand if peasants of German origin who had decided to leave the Soviet Union because of the strain of unbearable physical and mental distress, were to be left in the lurch and exposed to certain death." Moreover, if Germany dallied the Soviet would "saddle us with the blame for the fate of these people in the eyes of all of Europe." (A third reason, mentioned in a Foreign Ministry memorandum later, was that an abandonment of *deutschstämmige Landsleute* in such dire straits would seriously undermine Germany's minority policy in central Europe.) But the cabinet, burdened by problems arising from a pinched budget, temporized. Finance Minister Hilferding argued that Germany simply could not assume the possibly limitless obligations which support of the refugees might involve. "Eighty thousand people of German origin are in transit in Central Russia," he concluded. A decision was therefore deferred until the leaders of the government coalition and the Budgetary Committee of the Reichstag could be consulted.

When the Chancellor finally met with his coalition leaders on November 14, mounting pro-refugee public and party pressures pointed clearly in one direction. As B. H. Unruh recorded, all papers except the communist were insisting that the government act at once. President Hindenburg had also intervened in the discussions with the statement that the "German public will not understand why these people should be abandoned to certain starvation when we admitted to Germany after the war many thousands of aliens, many of very undesirable quality." The party chieftains therefore agreed, subject to the approval of the Reichstag's Budgetary Committee (which was not scheduled to meet for at least a week), that six million marks would be provided for the transportation and care of the thirteen thousand refugees "then in Moscow." But when Litvinov again warned the following day that deportations were imminent, a second cabinet meeting was called for November 18, It, in fact, voted the expenditure of governmental funds independently of the action of the Budgetary Committee. But tragically this action came one day too late for most of the refugees, for on the previous evening the deportations had begun.

During the preceding three weeks hundreds of Mennonites had already been arrested. In overheated cells, under threat of banishment to the dreaded Arctic prison island of Solevetsky or of execution, a number had signed statements "volunteering" to return to their villages, and been freed. Now such "suasion" gave way to force and within a week some two-thirds of the assembled refugees had been forcibly removed from their *dacha* retreats, loaded on to freight cars, and returned to their villages or dispatched into a northern exile. The narrative of this deportation runs true to form and can hardly seem strange to our generation. There was the whirr of approaching trucks, the glare of spotlights, the tramp of boots on frozen ground, and a knock on the door. Fathers were often arrested first. They were hoisted onto waiting freight cars and then forcibly joined by their families. Many families, however, were separated. There were instances of resistance; there were some dead. The freight cars into which the refugees were herded bore markings "settlers in transit." There is a mood of the deepest despair among the deported," the German agricultural attache in Moscow wired his government on November 23. "They feel that nothing awaits them other than arrest, exile, starvation or execution."

International press correspondents in Moscow reported the deportations in great detail and with emotion, and amid a storm of public

protest the German government intervened. It called on the Soviet government to halt the arrests and offered to issue a thousand entry visas for the refugees at once. When the roundup nevertheless continued Foreign Minister Curtius entered a sharper caveat. Terming the deportations an "unfriendly act," he warned: "If the Russian government is seriously interested in maintaining normal relations which are free of the polemics of a hostile press, then emigration may not be refused. The German government is no longer in a position to control the press." In response, Soviet Foreign Commissariat officials persuasively argued that Germany's unconsionable delay in making up its mind had left the Interior Commissariat with no choice but to dissolve the camps of destitute peasants who represented a threat to the health of the capital. Yet they also recognized that the refugee crisis had combined explosively with Germany's malaise to the point of threatening the German-Soviet diplomatic partnership with dissolution. To forestall such an outcome Maxim Litvinov, at that time Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs, asked the Council of People's Commissars to reverse its earlier decision to deport all of the refugees. Finally, on November 25, it did, announcing that the remaining refugees, who by then numbered only 5,600, might leave for Germany. This time there was no delay in arranging transportation and within two weeks the last of nine crowded trains brought them to refugee camps in Germany. In the camps an outbreak of measles killed a large number of children. But finally, during the following months, the majority of refugees left for new settlements and a pioneering life in Paraguay and Brazil. The remainder, some 1,200, quietly, with little publicity, joined close relatives in Canada.

III. The Stiff-Backed Photograph With the Haunting Eyes.

Recently my wife's uncle, who had been among those deported to the interior of the Soviet Union late in 1929, reached Germany as an *Umsiedler*. Over coffee in our home in Toronto, Uncle Gerhard related in detail his experience of the "Moscow days" and of the almost fifty years more he had managed to survive by wit and by stealth. He was now seventy-five years old, alert and healthy. Yet I sensed in the tone of our conversation an unconscious need of his to apologize for living, for having survived for so long, when many others, including my Uncle Peter, had died. Uncle Gerhard talked bitterly of the wreckage to which so many peoples' lives had been reduced and of the might-have-beens of his own. The memory of 1929 still was raw. He mentioned the infant Heinrich, a brother my wife would never know, who, a casualty of that measles outbreak, lies buried in the cemetery of that German refugee camp.

As I glanced across the table at my wife and children, survivors in a way to the "Moscow days," I could not help but ponder the fact that transcendence was easier for us—we had been touched, but not broken, by the Moscow trauma. The episode had made us sensitive to the continuing refugee saga of this century. We could understand something of the chance events, tenacious forces and fierce hatreds which fed it. That knowledge implied responsibility, moreover.

Perhaps this very recognition may stand as a small fiftieth anniversary memorial to the victims of 1929, among them my Uncle Peter. The old willow trunk in which he once, full of trembling hope, packed his belongings, has long since disappeared in a move or a clean-up. His pillow, indistinguishable from others, lies somewhere in the house. What remains is only the stiff-backed photograph with his haunting eyes.

Mennonite refugees at railway station.

The Mennonite Congregation of Boston

by David Haury

David Haury became an active member of the Boston Mennonite congregation while engaged in graduate study for a PhD in history at Harvard University. Since completing his degree, David has begun research for a history of the Western District of the General Conference Mennonite Church. He has also written a short biography of Bernhard Warkentin.

"And this is my prayer, that your love may grow ever richer and richer in the knowledge and insight of every kind, and may thus bring you the gift of true discrimination." (Philippians 1:9) This passage introduces the Constitution of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston. The congregation, organized in 1962, illuminates a part of the Mennonite involvement in and response to a changing world, a world where the traditional agricultural and separated life-style of Mennonites has received many challenges. In particular, the urban and academic environment of Boston has attracted a unique population of Mennonites who have struggled not only to discover and preserve the relevance of their heritage in this setting but also to develop institutions and patterns fostering individual and corporate growth in Christian living and witness. These tasks have not evoked clear or simple solutions, and the Mennonite Congregation of Boston continually but healthily seeks to define and enact its goals and mission both within the congregation and with relation to the larger community of Mennonites, Boston, and the world.

Origin

The history of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston begins in the fall of 1959, when John Ruth and Leland Bachman invited Mennonites in the area to an informal evening of fellowship. J. Lawrence Burkholder, who was visiting Boston, spoke to the group. The turnout of nearly twenty people surprised many of those attending, and a number of Mennonites began to explore avenues for periodic fellowship. A group including J. Richard Burkholder, Merlin Swartz, Jon Clemens, and Owen Gingerich met at the home of John Ruth on October 16, 1960, and discussed the presidential campaign and the possibility of regular gatherings of Mennonites.[1]

During the spring of 1961 several Mennonite and Church of the Brethren students and professors met twice a month for worship and discussion. J. Lawrence Burkholder's arrival as a faculty member at Harvard Divinity School provided additional impetus for the establishment of a fellowship. Under his leadership the group began to explore the nature of their association: they experimented with early Sunday morning and Sunday evening meetings, with gatherings in homes or in university facilities, and with various combinations of informal discussion and formal worship. Many of the Mennonites were involved in various churches, and, in particular, in Harvard's Memorial Church. Summer proved the decisive season during the organization of the Boston Mennonites; while students were gone in the summer, Memorial Church did not hold morning services. Thus the Mennonites began Sunday morning worship services and Sunday schools. These meetings continued on a bi-weekly basis during the fall of 1961. Nine families and several single persons attended regularly, and the group held its first communion service at Thanksgiving.

It is significant that these early meetings were largely spontaneous. No mission board or conference was attempting to plant a "Mennonite Student Fellowship" in Boston, and the decision to organize as a congregation without prior approval was venturesome.[2] The small size and rapid formation of the group in Boston, coupled with its location far from the Mennonite centers, served to separate the congregation from traditional patterns of Mennonite development in the city. Moreover, the unique composition of the group also shaped its concerns and growth.

What does it mean to be a church? This issue was frequently raised during the early 1960's. The Mennonites in Boston had gathered largely because of a common herit-

The Boston congregation gathers for fall retreat in 1972. At this retreat a letter was drafted supporting George McGovern's presidential campaign.

age and previous acquaintances, but they soon concluded that more than "a static commemoration of ethnic ties" was necessary to become a church. Consequently, it was with some anxiety that the Mennonite Congregation of Boston formally covenanted together and celebrated communion on Good Friday, April 20, 1962.[3] Yet with great joy they proclaimed themselves to be a congregation, seeking unity among the Mennonites and Christians, dedicating their belongings to Christ, working for peace, and witnessing through their work and daily lives.

What was the specific mission of the congregation? Was their primary concern the professionals with whom most members worked at various universities? Or should the church focus on a geographic area, perhaps locating itself in the inner city (Roxbury)? Furthermore, what should be the nature of the congregation's meetings? The group responded that to meet "simply for self-preservation as Mennonites is meaningless." They must provide a distinctive and significant witness: it was pointless to duplicate what other churches were doing.[4] Thus the Mennonite Congregation of Boston expanded its program throughout 1962. They staffed three Sunday school classes; meetings were scheduled every Sunday evening; J. Richard Burkholder became the group's first paid pastor; and they rented a room at the First Congregational Church of Cambridge for services. Twenty-five adults and fifteen children worshipped and studied together.

This pattern persisted through the 1962-63 school year, and the group commemorated its foundation with a Good Friday communion meal. Evaluation of the congregation's development accompanied this first anniversary. The group had followed a natural pattern of organization and expansion common to many new churches. Nevertheless, this development had proved unsatisfactory. J. Richard Burkholder was leaving Boston. The congregation decided not to replace him. Moreover, they agreed to meet only every two weeks, return to meeting in homes, and avoid commitments to any community outreach activities.[5] The combination of weekly meetings and a location outside people's homes had drastically reduced attendance. A congregation composed largely of students and professors could not assume all of the usual task of a church. Efforts to make meetings attractive to visitors and non-Mennonites had made them unsuitable for the congregation. It had not remained "meaningless to meet as Mennonites simply for self-preservation." After returning to the original format, the meetings of the group were characterized by great joy and enthusiasm. Some members for the first time were able to raise issues and speak freely as Mennonites. The excitement of worshipping and singing together as Mennonites had a special and unique meaning.

Institutions

The Mennonite Congregation of Boston soon provided a source of inspiration, renewal, and reinforcement for its members; other congregations did not nourish the Mennonites in the often hectic and complex urban setting. Although the corporate life of the congregation did not coincide with that of a traditional Mennonite community, it still formed the foundation of many individuals' efforts toward discipleship. A number of institutions and special practices facilitated the congregation's fellowship.

A committee of J. Lawrence Burkholder, Bob Jungas, and Owen Gingerich (the first officers elected in 1961) drew up a Constitution, which the group adopted in June, 1965. Since many of those attending the congregation were students living in Boston for a limited time, a dual membership in Boston without transfer of church letter was allowed. Dual membership permits student participation in decision-making and leadership. The Constitution also provides for executive and pastoral leadership. An Executive Council assists the pastor in planning activities. The positions of pastor and of chairperson of the Executive Council have rotated on an almost annual basis since 1969, and the Constitution limits service on the Council to two consecutive years. Erwin Hiebert became the congregation's first lay pastor in 1972; J. Lawrence Burkholder, Gordon Kaufman, and Marvin Dirks, had rotated in the pastoral role previous to 1972.[6] Although the lack of continuity in leadership resulting from these arrangements has been a

weakness, the opportunities for lay (and female) leadership have been major advantages for the group. It is evident that more traditional forms of Mennonite leadership would not be appropriate, and further experiments with leadership patterns continue within the congregation.

Many members particularly appreciate the semi-annual communion suppers of the congregation; these evenings of fellowship, a simple meal, and communion are very meaningful worship experiences. Another important event in the life of the church is the annual fall retreat. These outings, begun in 1964, provide opportunities for new members to become acquainted with the group, reflection on goals, planning of the year's activities, and enjoyment of New England's foilage. Several other gatherings also allow for informal fellowship. For many years the entire group has feasted at Gordon and Dorothy Kaufman's home on Thanksgiving. Singing carols and exchanging cookies have highlighted a popular Christmas celebration. The end of the school year and departure of friends is marked by the annual Memorial Day picnic. "Surprise" baby and wedding showers materialize when the opportunity permits. Of a more formal nature are congregational musical renditions, which Elfrieda Hiebert has directed at many Christmas and Easter services. Perhaps the most recent institution of the congregation is *The Menno Flyer*, a brief paper, begun in 1976, containing a paragraph about each member's current involvements and interests. These reports help to unite a group which is very active and often loses touch with what various members are doing.

The Mennonite Congregation of Boston belongs to both the (Old) Mennonite Conference and the General Conference. This option was realized in 1966 after much discussion and negotiation. At the time it was seen as breaking new ground and a very radical step. Recently several such congregations have appeared, and the M.C. recognition of G.C. ordinations in Boston was a significant step. Dual conference affiliation reflects both the composition of membership in the Mennonite Congregation of Boston and the desire of the congregation for Mennonite unity. The existence of a considerable number of Mennonite Brethren and Church of the Brethren members has caused the congregation occasionally to ask if two affiliations were enough. However, district conference affiliation means little in practical terms other than a few financial contributions. Individual members have served on conference committees and boards and have retained their ties with conference-related colleges. In spite of geographical separation, involvements with other Mennonites are extremely important to the Boston Mennonites and are apparent in any discussion of the congregation's concerns and mission.

Concerns and Mission

What issues have interested the Mennonites in Boston? One valuable function of the congregation is to allow members to present their own work or experience to the group both for the enlightenment of the congregation and for their own encouragement. Members have shared their personal expertise on a variety of topics: Lala Dey—Religious Experience in India; Merlin Swartz—The Middle East Crisis; Ted and Gayle Koontz—MCC Peace Section; Karen and Ed Diller—MCC in Jamaica; Norm and Joy Blair—Vietnam; David Denlinger—East Africa; Weldon Pries—Architecture in Church Life; Marvin Dirks—Japanese Concentration Camp; and Tom and Becky Meyers and Anne Koehn—American Indians. Moreover, many discussions have focused on Anabaptist and Mennonite scholarship. In early 1972 four meetings concentrated on Gordon Kaufman's *Systematic Theology*. Menno Simon's *Foundations of Christian Doctrine* received equal time in the fall of 1972. Seven gatherings were devoted to John H. Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus* in 1975. A group composed of nearly three-fourths graduate students and professors naturally has a strong emphasis on intellectual issues.

In addition, the congregation has planned programs on a broad range of topics of special concern to Mennonites. The Vietnam War stimulated a serious evaluation of the Mennonite stance on peace, and a series of discussions considered "Mennonite Responses to the Present Social, Cultural and Political Upheavals" in 1970. Several meetings in early 1979 have raised the issue of war taxes. Some issues have been more immediately and directly relevant in Boston than in traditional Mennonite communities: women's liberation, abortion, civil rights, and medical ethics are a few examples. The Boston Mennonites often have programs relating to urban problems.

The outreach of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston may be divided roughly into four areas: financial contributions to Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite conference projects, personal involvements in Boston, letters presenting the congregation's views to public officials or other Mennonites, and support for its own members. Major financial donations have gone to MCC projects: Biafra (1968-69), East Pakistan (1971), Vietnam Christmas (1973), West Africa Famine and Sub Sahara Relief (1974), and North Vietnam Relief (1975). Moreover, instead of strictly following the per capita guidelines of church agencies, the congregation has appropriated contributions according to its special interests in education and urban projects. Often major divisions surfaced over budget issues. Many personal donations go directly to MCC or Bethel, Bluffton, Tabor, Eastern Mennonite and Goshen Colleges.

Personal involvements (especially of time) have proven much more difficult for this busy congregation. Numerous individuals (and occasionally a few small groups) have participated in various urban projects. The encouragement, counseling, and other forms of moral and intellectual support given by the congregation to its members' personal witness have been the group's most significant contribution to the Boston community.

The Boston Mennonites have consistently viewed warning and ad-

vising the church and nation as a primary mission. A series of letters and telegrams to the leaders of the Mennonite Church and United States have expressed the congregation's interpretation of Anabaptism to the larger community. They have called upon the Mennonites to "be aware of the Christian-ethical implications in the political acts of our nation," and because they found Goldwater's stance on civil rights and nuclear weapons opposed to basic Mennonite values, they called upon Mennonites to vote for Johnson in 1964.[7] The congregation expressed its concern about developments in Vietnam to the nation's leaders in 1965, and two years later proposed that the two General Conferences (M.C. and G.C.) should have special sessions to outline the proper response of the church to military escalation in Vietnam.[8] They asked the church to condemn the war, counsel non-Mennonites to refuse military service, discourage payment of war taxes, and provide relief to North Vietnam. The congregation's most ambitious effort to present its views on Vietnam occurred in 1972, when they announced their support of George McGovern's presidential candidacy in 800 letters to sister Mennonite Churches.[9]

Finally, in many ways the most valuable mission of the congregation has been to its own members. On the one hand, numerous students have found sustenance in the congregation as the permanent members have provided them with a church home away from home. This continued association with Mennonites has been significant for many students. On the other hand, the student members themselves have provided a continual vitality and stimulus to the congregation as it has explored its goals and witness. Some members have received valuable financial support from the congregation. Tim Hatch, a Peace Corps volunteer, has received money to aid him in his work. A special loan fund provides short term emergency aid to any member in need. In 1968-69, the congregation gave $1000 to Kishichi Watanabe, a Japanese graduate student who had been attending group. These funds enabled him to complete his studies in the United States.

Challenges

The Mennonite Congregation of Boston is remarkable for its pluralism and cosmopolitanism. Yet it is evident that the congregation cannot be all things to all persons. How much diversity can the group incorporate? Should the congregation attempt to seek the maximum integration of Mennonites in the area, or at what point and on what basis must differentiation begin? Perhaps the dominant characteristic of the Mennonite Congregation has been a struggle to define and redefine its own goals and structure. Has the congregation at times become simply a debating society for theological students, a social club, or a token attachment to the Mennonite heritage? Some individuals express criticism that insufficient effort is made to draw in new members. Long-term members occasionally drift away, and the congregation has many 'fringe' members.[10] Often Mennonites with a conservative background or those less intellectually oriented are dissatisfied and choose not to participate in the congregation. A few individuals have concluded that the Mennonite Congregation of Boston has not been a "church" for them. They cite low commitment, inability to worship together, and lack of variety as limitations precluding a real church life. A major concern recently has been to improve the congregation's ability to worship together.

What does it mean to be a church? Must a small, urban church be a covenanted, disciplined, charismatic community? The Mennonite Congregation of Boston is still seeking answers to these questions after nearly twenty years. Does the congregation have too much or too little freedom of discussion, emphasis on worship, commitment and fellowship, intellectualism, and so forth? Divergent opinions are now expressed on each of these concerns. The Mennonite Congregation of Boston will continue to grapple with questions relating to its urban environment and unique membership. Meanwhile, many successful institutional relationships have evolved. The group actively witnesses to Boston and other Mennonites, and its thirty to forty members reap the benefits of a caring, stimulating community.

FOOTNOTES

[1]This article abridges a history of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston prepared earlier this year. The major source of information was the congregation's official archives, which contain many letters, programs of meetings, and copies of mailing lists. In addition, the author distributed sixty questionnaires to current and former participants in the congregation, and the twenty-five returned questionnaires provided insights into attitudes within the congregation.

[2]For example, see discussion of other student fellowships in S. F. Pannabecker, *Faith in Ferment* (Newton, 1968), pp. 272-3.

Two short papers provide information on the early history of the Boston Mennonites: J. Richard Burkholder, "What's Happening in Boston," *The Mennonite Church in the City*, 25th Issue, 15 October 1962, and Robert L. Jungas, "Scholars at Boston Create Christian Church Fellowship," unpublished paper, January, 1964.

[3]There was some division over the nature of organization and eagerness with which this goal was pursued. Several members feared disciplined church life and legalism and decided to leave the group. Yet nineteen individuals from various congregations and branches of Mennonites became charter members in Boston.

[4]Burkholder, "What's Happening in Boston."

[5]Jungas, "Scholars at Boston Create Christian Church Fellowship."

[6]The pastors of the congregation have been: J. Richard Burkholder, 1963; J. Lawrence Burkholder, 1963-65; Gordon Kaufman, 1965-66; J. Lawrence Burkholder, 1967, 1968; Marvin Dirks, 1969, 1970; Gordon Kaufman, 1971; Erwin Hiebert, 1972; Hilda Swartz and Gordon Kaufman, 1973; Calvin Nafziger, 1974; Marvin Dirks, 1975; Dennis MacDonald, 1976; Frieda Dirks, 1977; and Gayle Gerber Koontz, 1978, 1979. Definition of the pastor's role has been a problem for the congregation.

[7]*Gospel Herald*, 3 November 1964.

[8]Telegrams were sent to President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and six U.S. Senators in early 1965. The congregation wrote Stanley Bohn and Paul Peachey of the Conferences' Peace and Social Concern Committees on April 27, 1967.

[9]This letter also appeared in the *Mennonite Weekly Review*, 26 October 1972. The overwhelmingly negative response to this overture somewhat discouraged the Bostonians—letters either declared that Mennonites should be apolitical or that McGovern was unChristian and Communist. A few Republicans in the congregation were quite unhappy with this action.

[10]Leland Harder wrote in his dissertation: "The more urban a Mennonite congregation, the more likely it is to recruit members from the non-Mennonite world." "The Quest for Equilibrium in an Established Sect," Northwestern University, 1962. The Boston Congregation is the opposite of this norm.

J. Lawrence Burkholder, the founder and for many years leader of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston, prepared an insightful paper on the urban church, "How Can Christian Community be Established in the City," 10 April 1963. This paper raises many penetrating questions regarding the structure and mission of the Boston Congregation.

John W. DeGruchy, *The Church Struggle In South Africa,* William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979, 237 pages, $7.95

If you heard John DeGruchy give the Menno Simons Lectures in 1977 at Bethel College on "The Church Struggle in South Africa," the chances are very good that you have been awaiting the expanded treatment of this timely and complicated topic that this volume offers. You will not be disappointed. The warmth, the scholarly homework, the Christian compassion and fairness that characterized the lectures are equally visible in this volume, enhanced by a stimulating foreword by Alan Paton.

DeGruchy offers, at one level, a perceptive and sensitive account of the moral and political dilemmas facing South African Christians. As a native South African and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town, he understands the mosaic of the South African religious and political scene in a way that few writers can match. This skill and perception permits the reader to gain fresh insights into the genesis and historical developments that are so central to understanding the present conflict.

But the book communicates at a more universal level as well. The church struggle in that one area of our world is only a highly visible microcosm of the moral and political ambiguities and dilemmas facing Christian communities around the world. The study is equally illuminating of the implications for the church world wide as it seeks to discover what faithfulness to Christ means in social and political, as well as theological, terms.

The final chapter on "the Kingdom of God in South Africa" is a penetrating analysis of the need for the church to break the vicious circle of cumulative violence that is part of the system; indeed, is part of "original sin." The answer is neither a superficial ecumenism nor a cheap pacifism that becomes "a way of escape from the struggle for justice and human rights." Flashes of insight illuminate the chapter. His comments on the connection between British religious nonconformity, liberalism, and secularism are especially insightful. When the liberal tradition is severed from its roots in the Judaeo-Christian prophetic understanding of man and the world, it degenerates too readily into individualistic secularism. Rather, the ethical disturbance that really "turns the world upside down" is justification by grace alone.

DeGruchy concludes with a plea for a rediscovery of the church's unity in Christ for "all the peoples of the land," based on a reconciliation that goes to the root of the problem. Amidst the unraveling of society and Christian values, DeGruchy does not lose hope in the future, "a future which is God's gift of *shalom.*" If anything, the author will be faulted for the qualified hope he reflects in a situation that has both the cast and the setting for a modern-day tragedy of enormous proportions.

But the capacity to hope, to call on a "God of hopers" is captured well by Alan Paton in a newspaper column at the height of black protests in 1977:

> I say to my fellow South Africans: if you have no hope, you should get out as soon as possible. If you have unbounded hope you should go and see a psychiatrist. If you can't give up hope, if you insist on hoping against hope, then persist with all the things you have been doing to make this a better country.

Harold J. Schultz
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Donald D. Kaufman, *The Tax Dilemma: Praying for Peace, Paying for War.* Focal Pamphlet 30. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978. 104 pp.

Larry Kehler. *The Rule of the Lamb.* (A Study Guide on Civil Responsibility) Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press. 1978. 68 pp.

The General Conference Mennonite Church has had the issue of payment of taxes which go for military purposes, popularly designated as "War Taxes," raised to a major

issue. The question has had some prominence since the Vietnam War period. It has new intensity because of a request from Cornelia Lehn, an employee of the General Conference Mennonite Church, not to withhold her income tax so that she might refuse to pay that portion which goes for military purposes.

Until Cornelia Lehn pressed the General Conference to take a stand, the issue was largely an individual matter. Suddenly the church as a body had to do more than pass statements or offer moral support. It had to decide on an action with serious implications for the church's relationship to the government.

Two study books appeared in 1978 to speak to the issues before the church. The first and larger was not written specifically for the General Conference. *The Tax Dilemma* tries to speak to a wider audience. It draws materials from a variety of backgrounds. While having most of its illustrations from the Historic Peace Churches, especially Quakers, it also has reports from Catholic, secular, and unidentified sources.

The author carries forward the argument in favor of non-payment of war taxes which was presented in an earlier more extensive book, *What Belongs to Caesar?* (Herald Press, 1969) The author treats various issues in short sections and with frequent vignettes of persons who are war tax resisters. He utilizes pithy and catchy phrases to punch home his concerns, such as, "Death and Taxes Join Hands," "New Occasions Teach New Duties," "Getting Away with Murder," "Too Much to Caesar, Too Little to God?" and "Killing Via the Tax Method."

The book includes an Introduction by John K. Stoner, Executive Secretary of the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section (U.S.), and ten appendices. Stoner says, "Appendix D is itself worth the price of the book for the unusual brain waves it creates. But there is much more." That is a fairly good assessment.

Perhaps the brevity of the book is one of its shortcomings. At times it seems choppy and abrupt in transition. While I know most of the persons whose actions or positions are cited and could fill in details, it seemed that the reports were sometimes so sketchy that readers unfamiliar with the persons would wish for more details.

The practice of using rhetorical questions is a dangerous procedure. If the assumed answers are not obvious to the reader, it may lead to an opposite conclusion from what the author anticipates. And the author usually does not explain why he thinks the answers obviously lead to the conclusion he draws.

At times one wondered if some of the persons cited would find themselves comfortable in a context that implies support of war tax resistance. Maybe Jägerstätter (p. 67f) would be a war tax resister today. Is Levi Keidel (p. 57f) endorsing the refusal of income tax payment? Did Martin Buber defy the "earthly power" (p. 73) by refusing to pay taxes used for the military?

The other book, *The Rule of the Lamb*, was prepared on assignment by the General Conference. When the issue raised initially by Cornelia Lehn was brought to the General Conference triennial session in 1977, the delegates were not ready to decide the issue. Instead it was decided to hold a mid-triennium session with time and a process of preparation.

In June, 1978, a consultation was held at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana, as a major step in preparation for the mid-triennium session. From the papers delivered at that consultation and an earlier conference in Kitchener, Ontario, November, 1975, Larry Kehler prepared a series of eight lessons.

Kehler does a masterful job of selecting the key issues and taking the essence of the papers. He tries to be fair to the various positions and to leave the question open. Nevertheless, some bias in favor of war tax resistance seems to show through, though the specific question of not withholding by the General Conference is not answered.

Kehler begins by discussing the process of decision making in the church. He then surveys the Old and New Testaments. After looking at the meaning of discipleship and civil responsibility, the next lesson looks closely at the tax texts. He then comes to the current situation. The final chapter looks to the specific issue before the General Conference.

Kehler, somewhat as Kaufman, poses questions periodically. But they are not rhetorical questions. They are serious questions on which it is apparent that persons will have differing presupppositions and judgments of values.

With over a billion dollars a day being invested worldwide in war or preparation for war, and the United States the largest contributor to military expenditures, the issue should be an urgent and important one for all persons. Christians seeking to be disciples of Jesus and stewards of God's creation should want to seek the responsible position on payment of taxes for war and the military. The two booklets provide help in raising and examining the issues.

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Mary Lou Cummings, ed., *Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women.* Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1978, pp. 204.

To complete the "full circle" of the Mennonite story in the past century, we must rediscover the Mennonite women. Herta Funk, of the General Conference Commission on Education, found that women collectively have less than four pages in *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* and that very little information is published anywhere on individual Mennonite women. Thus in 1974-75 she launched a biography contest. *Full Circle* presents half of the thirty resulting entries plus a few later additions, skillfully developed and edited by Mary Lou Cummings.

Although the collection includes a few older and younger women, the majority belong to the generation of sturdy pioneers born between 1880

and 1910. Five, including Dr. Ella Bauman and Dr. Florence Coop-rider, went overseas in the early years of the Mennonite missionary movement. At home Ann Allebach and Catherine Niswander were in the first generation of city mission workers. Allebach was the first American Mennonite woman ordained (1911). Vinora Weaver Salzman, later a preacher along with her husband, went overseas in 1920 among the first Mennonite relief workers.

In reading these stories, one also sees the main currents of Mennonite experience through the eyes of the wives and mothers. Anna Willms was a figure of integrity and reconciliation, as the Kleine Gemeinde and Mennonite Brethren brought revival and division to her family in Russia. There are also immigrants of the 1850's and 1920's, a widow trying to farm in the Dust Bowl years, and two women who have been staunch workers for peace and human rights since World War I. The reader gains repeated impressions of strong spirits, a determination to be educated, the zeal in prayer, whether for strength to cope with hardships or for guidance to serve God in new ways.

Full Circle is a pioneering book which should inspire a broader, more systematic coverage of Mennonite women. Its two biographies of Asian women remind us that there are other Mennonites besides North Americans and their ancestors. Two-thirds of the *Full Circle* stories are from the General Conference tradition. However, late in 1979 we will be able to read more biographies of Mennonite Brethren women in *Women Among the Brethren*, edited by Katie Funk Wiebe. An article by Sharon Klingelsmith, to be published in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, studies the recent history of women in the (Old) Mennonite Church. Gladys Goering is presently writing a history of the women's missionary organization in the General Conference church.

Full Circle and *Women Among the Brethren* serve the important function of providing inspiration and role models for the next generation of women. Klingelsmith and Goering will take us deeper into the church context in which Mennonite women worked. As research continues, it should be possible also to compare our history with that of women in other denominations, drawing on work such as Rosemary Radford Ruether's forthcoming book on women in nineteenth-century Protestantism. It is a pleasure to welcome *Full Circle* as opening a significant new field of Mennonite historical research.

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J. C. Wenger. Faithfully, Geo. R.—The Life and Thought of George R. Brunk I (1871-1938). Harrisonburg, Va.; Sword and Trumpet, 1978. 222 pp.

J. C. Wenger's biography of George R. Brunk presents a wealth of information wrapped in a charming art form. Just as they don't make orators like Everett Dirksen, George R. Brunk or J. E. Hartzler any more, so they don't make biographers like J. C. Wenger any more. This is a vintage Victorian biography.

The author paints the portrait of Geo. R. with brush strokes of affection—"beloved husband," one who gives "noble assistance," preaches "powerful sermons," writes "thoughtfully and judiciously," views the poor with "tender sympathy," gives a "brilliant series of expositions," a family man "of tender attachment." You sense the drama of the forces of light pitted against the forces of darkness. Geo. R.'s opponents write "defensive replies," were "suspicious leaders," were "not vigorous defenders of conservative theology."

This is not one of those contemporary detached, psycho-analytical biographies. This is a biography designed primarily to edify. In an age which has so few heroes, here is a biographer who has the temerity to sing glad praises for a hero of the faith. Admitted are some mistakes, but these acknowledged blemishes only add authenticity to the heroic stature. The charm of bygone days is found in the text laced with the loving memorabilia of an 1890's scrapbook.

George R. Brunk emerges as a larger-than-life figure. Note one of the last paragraphs of the book:

> For George R. Brunk was destined to be used of God in a mighty way to prevent the Mennonite Church from following the militaristic weaknesses of Fundamentalists, the disparagement of the Sermon on the Mount by Scofield Dispensationalists, and the weakening of the supernaturalistic foundations of Christian life and experience by some Mennonite educators.

George R. Brunk was born in Illinois in 1871 and as an infant moved with his family to Kansas. There are pioneer hardship stories with "distant graves unmarked on the prairie." Suddenly George R. Brunk explodes on the Kansas landscape conservatively clothed, resolutely orthodox, and a bishop at 26. He returned to Virginia and found a wife. He and his family moved to Virgina in 1909 for this reason:

> ...our coming east was to press my campaign against the corrupting influences of Goshen College—the west at that time being well established in conservatism... I soon found plenty to do in conference and in the congregations to check and counteract the rising tide of "Goshenism"—and suffer opposition as a result to be expected....

Goshen was then just six years old. One senses there are psychological undercurrents in this commanding, driven man which elude analysis or are not probed in this biography.

Here is the image of a commanding calvaryman, riding out of the West, confident that the Kansas flank was secure for conservative Mennonitism, and now realy to do battle for the faith on the eastern flank. In keeping with the image of a western drama, one sees the "good guys"—Geo. R., Daniel Kauffman, R. J. Heatwole—and the "other guys"—N. E. Byers, J. E. Hartzler, and those who lurk in the shadows only as initials.

The biography yields a great many insights into that period of

storm and stress from 1890 to 1930: the early resistance to evangelistic meetings ("protracted meetings" as they were called); the internal-external tensions of those first decades at Goshen, Hesston, and Eastern Mennonite School; the launching of *The Sword and th eTrumpet;* the debates over who was sound and orthodox; the struggle to restate and enforce explicit forms of nonconformity; and more. The biography does not illuminte the role of the wife—so frequently neglected in the stories of church leaders. In the forty years of Brunk's ministry, enormous changes were taking place in the world around. One sees in Geo. R. the confident warrior in constant struggle against what he perceived to be "the drift of the church."

J. C. Wenger incorporates generous portions of Geo. R.'s writings—from childhood poems to doctrinal statements to many letters and even to cartoons from *The Sword and the Trumpet.* It, thus, becomes a sourcebook for answers to questions readers may wish to pose. Among the most intriguing items in the book is the story of Geo. R.'s courtroom defense in 1931 of a youth who refused to salute the flag. Another is his advocacy of an evangelistic outreach to Negroes. The George Brunk-Daniel Kauffman correspondence is a fascinating case study in vigorous, candid, but brotherly disputation. A disquieting dialogue is the "deathbed" exchange of letters between Geo. R. and J. E. Hartzler.

The great drift against which Geo. R. did battle does not come into clear focus for those born several generations later. There is something fuzzy or unreal about those figures against whom Brunk contended: those who preferred to wear the little black bow tie, those shadowy Mennonite educators who were "weakening the foundations" of the faith, those who sought to retain a three-sermon limitation on evangelistic meetings, or those who spoke up for the infant Goshen. We do sense that feelings were intense and that issues were black and white with little room for shades of gray. One cannot avoid wondering whether all biblical truth was on one side.

A dozen fundamental questions invite discussion in this story of this monumental figure. One trusts that the Brunk papers will be available for further study. Only one question we ask. Did George R. Brunk symbolize a breakthrough to a new style in Mennonite leadership? Did the nineteenth century Mennonite model of *Demut* (humility and meekness) give way to a new style of aggressiveness, confidence, self-assurance, assertiveness, doctrinal clarity and certitude? Perhaps George R. Brunk and Noah Byers were each in their own way models of a new Mennonite style—emancipated from the restraints of *Demut* and exemplars of Boorstin's American Go Getter Man.

Formulated a different way, does not George R. Brunk and kindred leaders of that day introduce, or at least model, a new understanding of what it meant to become a Christian? There appears to have been a shift from a stance of reserved quietude and reticence in verbalizing about ones Christian experience to an expectation that the converted person would declare with boldness how he or she had been saved by God's grace and had experienced the new birth.

J. C. Wenger asks those who might be inclined to criticize George R. Brunk from the safe distance of forty years to pause: "It is . . . unfair to attack a leader for a dated emphasis." He notes what John L. Stauffer once said in a meeting: "You do not know what Brother Brunk would say were he living today." All this raises the question of whom we should judge and whom we dare not judge. How shall we tell with honesty and affection the story of our fathers and mothers—lifting up the fallen, putting down the mighty, restoring to memory heroes forgotten, and healing the memories? Many more biographies must be written. John C. Wenger in this charming period piece has set us thinking about how to tell the stories of great men and women of the church.

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Back cover photograph: John Schlonneger (1809-1905) was one of seven children who migrated to Pennsylvania from Switzerland along the French border in the 1820s. The family moved with horse and wagon to Butler County, Ohio. John Schlonneger and his wife had ten children, three dying in infancy and a daughter dying at eleven. In time he acquired six large farms. He was a life long member of the Trenton Mennonite Church. He claimed the distinction of shaking hands with the Marquisde Lafayette on his triumphal 15-month tour of the United States in 1824-25.