

# MENNONITE LIFE

SEPTEMBER 1985



## In this Issue

Historians have just begun to explore the story of Mennonite mission activities among native Americans. John D. Thiesen provides a new chapter in this story through his examination of the career of Rodolphe Petter, one of the most significant early missionaries of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Of particular interest is Thiesen's analysis of Petter's European background and its influence on his mission work among the Cheyenne. This article is a revised version of a seminar paper written at Wichita State University.

In recent years Mennonites have increasingly found common cause with others who protest against war taxes, the arms race, and nuclear weapons. However, nonresistant Mennonites have traditionally distanced themselves from other pacifists and have not studied the broader context of society's attitudes toward war and peace. Wynn Goering makes an important contribution to this topic through his analysis of the political thought of the founders of the new American republic at the end of the eighteenth century. Pacifism, a theme not often associated with civil religion in twentieth century America, was extolled as a civic virtue two centuries ago. Goering received his PhD from the University of Chicago Department of English in 1984. His dissertation, "Pacifism And Heroism in American Fiction, 1770-1860," won the prestigious Galler Prize.

William O. Dyck's mother, Maria Friesen Dyck, told her son many stories about her grandparents, Johann and Maria Klassen Friesen. William collected and wrote down many of these stories, and Thomas B. Mierau has compiled them into an interesting account of this pioneer Mennonite family's experiences in Henderson, Nebraska. Mierau has included not only anecdotes about blizzards and other hazards of the prairie but also insights into political and pedagogical ideas.

Lawrence Klippenstein, archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg, is currently serving with Mennonite Central Committee at Keston College near London, England. Keston College focuses on the study of religious communities in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and Klippenstein has used this opportunity to study the status of conscientious objectors to military service in the USSR and German Democratic Republic. For Mennonites whose ancestors emigrated from Russia to North America during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Klippenstein's account is a fascinating epilogue to a saga now well over a century old. Of course, for Mennonites who left Russia more recently or who still have relatives in Russia, the discussion of persecution and restrictions will strike a deeper and more personal note.

# MENNONITE LIFE

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Mennonite Mission Church  
Lame Deer, Montana

## Back Cover

Northern Cheyenne Policemen, 1898—used during  
Ghost Dance era to suppress religious activities

Rodolphe and Bertha Petter on trip to Europe

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# Rodolphe Petter and General Conference Missions

by John D. Thiesen

A definitive history of General Conference Mennonite missions to the native Americans of North America has yet to be written, although the subject has been investigated as a part of the general history of home and foreign missions.<sup>1</sup> Individual missionaries have received somewhat more attention, especially H. R. Voth, but for many of them, critical biographies have not been written.

The most significant figure in GC missions among the Cheyennes is Rodolphe Petter. Petter has been the subject of several published articles (including his own autobiography) and unpublished papers.<sup>2</sup> Most of these have failed to appreciate his uniqueness and importance in GC missions. Petter was a non-Mennonite, an outsider to both Mennonites and Cheyennes, who came to see himself as God's chosen man to put God's Word into the Cheyenne language.

Rodolphe Petter was born on February 19, 1865, in the village of Vevey in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Petter described his childhood and youth in Switzerland in an autobiographical sketch, originally written for his children and grandchildren in 1919.<sup>3</sup> Petter's memories are strongly colored by his years as a missionary. He seems to have had an unhappy and perhaps even abused childhood. Petter's father, a coppersmith in the wine industry, died when Rodolphe was fairly young and played no role in Rodolphe's memories beyond a mere mention. After his father's death, Rodolphe, his mother, one brother, and three sisters lived with his maternal grandparents. Later Rodolphe and his brother Auguste were separated from the rest of the family and lived with a long succession of uncles, aunts, grandparents, and other

relatives from both sides of the family. Petter tells a number of stories about the rather harsh treatment he and his brother received from some of the male relatives.

Although the family belonged to the Reformed state church, Rodolphe seems to have grown up largely in an atmosphere of religious indifference. Petter recalled that his maternal grandmother made him go to church and his memoir contains numerous simple stories of God answering childish prayers, but beyond this, the church seems to have been of little importance

until his adolescence. However, he does tell of two childhood incidents that foreshadowed his later career.

Two experiences during my stay at the home of Grandmother Dubuis stand out in my memory and I know that even then, all unbeknown to myself, God was singling me out for my special lifework. Brother Auguste and I were sleeping together. One night he woke me up and said in excited words, 'Rodolphe, I had a vivid dream. I saw you in a large camp of Indians in America and you were preaching to them.' Another night we were sound asleep when suddenly the tocsin sounded from the tower of the nearby church. I awoke with a start and said to Auguste, 'Oh, brother, I know l'Eternal is calling me. I henceforth dedicate my life to His service.'<sup>4</sup> (It must be remembered that Petter told of his childhood from the perspective



*Rodolphe Petter*

of almost thirty years as a missionary.)

A very significant factor in Petter's interpretation of his religious background is his statement that his mother was "of Huguenot and Waldensian descent," thus giving himself a heritage of dissenting Protestantism.<sup>5</sup> The claim to a Waldensian connection is particularly important. The Waldensians, originally located along the Swiss-Italian border near Petter's birthplace, were founded in the late twelfth century by Peter Waldo, a dissenter from the Roman Catholic church. The Waldensians had many doctrinal similarities with later Protestantism. During the nineteenth century, some students of the Reformation, particularly the German historian Ludwig Keller, proposed a direct connection and even some movement of members from the Waldensians to the sixteenth century Anabaptists.<sup>6</sup> This theory was thoroughly discredited by later historians, but in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many Mennonites were aware of it and believed it, as did Rodolphe Petter. The Waldensian interest became a recurring minor theme in Petter's life.

At age fifteen, Petter reported, his religious development began in earnest as he attended confirmation classes in the Reformed church.

One day while talking to us he [Pastor Gagnebin] wondered whether any in our class would even enter the ministry. In my heart a voice said, 'You will,' but I said nothing, and then chided myself for having such a thought. I asked myself how could I hope to attain to the high calling of the ministry. Even should I have the needed intelligence, surely I did not have the means.<sup>7</sup>

At about the same time, Petter left his relatives to work as a household servant and hired hand for various wealthy employers, many of whom were active in the church and sympathetic to the Pietist and evangelical renewal movements going on in the Swiss churches. At one point he worked in Lausanne for a medical doctor, Recordon, and his wife, who often invited preachers and theological students from the local university into their home. One of these visitors was a blind evangelist, Eugene Peter, for whom the Recordons seconded Petter to work as a guide and secretary.

Through these contacts, and particularly Peter, Rodolphe met numerous leaders of the revival and missions movements in Switzerland and Germany, many of them wealthy or from the nobility. This began to influence Petter's plans for the future. "I felt

more and more the call to mission work."<sup>8</sup> In this he was encouraged by Peter and the Recordons. After investigating various schools and universities Petter chose the Basel Missionsschule, a Pietist institution oriented specifically towards training missionaries for foreign service, because it offered some financial aid to students without means.

Petter went to Basel in August 1883. His native language was French, although he had learned some Italian and German during his working years. The Basel school was taught in German. This and Petter's limited previous schooling required him to take some remedial courses before entering on the regular course of study, which apparently constituted a standard classical university education, including mathematics, science, and languages, in addition to theological courses. Petter remained at the Basel Missionsschule for seven years.

Toward the end of his course of study, Petter fulfilled his compulsory term of Swiss military service, being placed in the medical corps. One of his patients was a cavalry man, Samuel Gerber, injured on maneuvers. Petter, writing forty years later, recalled that what attracted his attention to Gerber and led to the two becoming friends was that Gerber was a Mennonite. This is one of the most striking events in Petter's life, that he first came in contact with Mennonites, a traditionally pacifist group, while serving with a Mennonite in the Swiss military. Yet Petter passed over this aspect of the encounter without comment in his memoir. He reported that he had read about Mennonites and noted the similarities with his putative Waldensian ancestors and also recalled that he had already begun to have doubts, resulting from his Biblical studies, concerning the Reformed practice of infant baptism.

After both men had finished their terms of duty, Petter visited Gerber in his home. "Immediately I was drawn to Samuel's sister Marie."<sup>9</sup> Petter continued to visit the Gerbers and through them became acquainted with the very small Swiss Mennonite community. He also learned about Mennonites in North America. Several members of the Gerber family had emigrated to the United States, and in 1890 the Gerbers hosted an American Mennonite visitor, John A. Sprunger.

Sprunger was born in Switzerland,

but his family migrated to Berne, Indiana, in 1854. Sprunger was active in the Mennonite community in Berne and was a successful businessman until he experienced a nervous breakdown after the death of his two children. At this time he and his wife felt God was calling them into Christian service. They spent a year in Europe in 1889-1890, conducting evangelistic meetings among the Swiss Mennonites and visiting service institutions run by various denominations. In addition, the Swiss Mennonites ordained him as a minister. It was during this trip that Petter met Sprunger.

Petter was nearing the completion of his studies at the Basel Missionsschule and was looking for a mission field. He later remembered having some difficulty with the idea of working under the Basel Mission Board which supported the school, because of his doubts about infant baptism. He discussed his baptism concerns with Sprunger, and Sprunger urged him to consider coming to the United States to work in the General Conference mission in Indian Territory.

Petter quickly agreed to the idea and informed the Basel board, which he said let him go only with reluctance. The Swiss Mennonite churches appointed Petter as their missionary candidate for America and paid his school debt to the Basel Missionsschule. Petter was rebaptized by the Swiss Mennonites and married Marie Gerber on May 14, 1890. The couple spent two months visiting Swiss and French Mennonite churches speaking on missions and in July, 1890, left for the United States.



*Rodolphe and Marie Gerber Petter*

The Petters' first impressions of America disappointed them. They spent the first two months after their arrival itinerating among Mennonite congregations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois to promote mission work. Their diary records their feeling that "the Americans are a superficial people in all respects."<sup>10</sup> Their impressions of American Mennonites they summed up with, "too many formalities . . . not enough spirit."<sup>11</sup>

After these weeks of itinerating, Rodolphe Petter attended the triennial General Conference in Marion, South Dakota, to present himself formally to the Foreign Mission Board. There his friendship with John A. Sprunger almost ended his missionary career before it began. Sprunger was already a controversial figure among American Mennonites and was to become more so in later years. He had become dissatisfied with his home church in Berne, possibly having come under some Wesleyan holiness influences. In the 1890s he began building a Christian service empire that grew to include orphanages, hospitals, city missions, and even independent churches which drew some membership from other Mennonite churches, particularly in Berne. These small churches eventually became part of the small denomination now known as the Missionary Church.<sup>12</sup>

At the 1890 conference Sprunger acted as the representative of the Swiss Mennonite churches that had sent Petter to America. Petter later recalled,

I felt that for some reason I was not fully trusted. Reverend Carl van der Smissen came to me and told me in confidence not to hold with John Sprunger, the man who had induced me to come to America, because he was not liked, etc., etc. As the conference went on I noticed that Sprunger was persona non grata, and as he was the only one I knew and I was with him most of the time, I, too, became a suspicious object. One person (the late Reverend [Dietrich] Gaedder) came to me and in our talk he said, 'Ja, in diesen Tagen es sind viele die ihren Meister oder Herrn entlaufen!' [Yes, these days there are many who have run away from their master!] That stung me for I had left Basel in good standing. This 'hurt' grew as I became publicly discussed at the special mission deliberations. Two mission candidates had applied to the Board, one of them was myself, a stranger and unknown, yea, a half-suspected quantity! They did not know what to make of me so Reverend C. Krehbiel, then president of the Mission Board, suggested that I be asked to stand in front of all and give an account of myself. I went forward with alacrity and among other things told them that I had come because I had been called, and not to beg to be accepted as a missionary. Had I known all this I would never had come to America but would have stayed with the Basler Mission which now at any time would receive me with open arms and etc., etc. I must have spoken with some heat for the result was a

change of feeling. I was immediately surrounded by many who assured me of their sympathy. Yea, I was immediately accepted as missionary for the Indians.<sup>13</sup>

Petter came to the conference perceived as an outsider and saw himself as an outsider, also. These feelings of alienation never completely disappeared, even after Petter became a well-known Mennonite missionary.

The conference decided to send the Petters to Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, to study English for a year. They seem to have had little trouble with learning the language and enjoyed the classes they attended but were dissatisfied with their lack of contact with Mennonites. There were a few rare visits by representatives of the mission board but little else. The Petters' religious associations in Oberlin were almost entirely with non-Mennonites.

One Mennonite whom they did meet in Oberlin was John Horsch. Horsch, like the Petters a recent immigrant from Europe and later an associate of John A. Sprunger, tried to help them become better acquainted with American Mennonites and even seems to have asked them to give up on the General Conference and enter some type of service with other Mennonites. (This reference in the Petters' diary is unclear since there were no other American Mennonite mission boards in existence at the time.)<sup>14</sup> Rodolphe Petter's impression of Horsch was negative.

Received some Mennonite books from Horsch (among them, his, which I absolutely do not like.) In spite of his division [sic] he is without charity and lacks conciseness, order, precision, subjective and objective judgement. In short, it is an unsuccessful try of a young man who ought not to try to write history.<sup>15</sup>

As the school term neared its end in the summer of 1891, the Petters had had no contact with the mission board for weeks and had not been told specifically where they were to be located and what their duties would be. They still felt ill at ease in "ugly America, with its Americans of steel."<sup>16</sup> In August the mission board brought them to Kansas, still without a definite placement, and immediately took them on a quick, six day tour of the mission field in Indian Territory. After this trip, the board made a decision to locate the Petters in Cantonment, among the Cheyennes. After several weeks of visiting Kansas Mennonite churches, Rodolphe Petter was ordained at the Halstead Mennonite church on September 20, 1891. The couple left for Indian Territory on September 23 and arrived at Canton-

ment, a few miles north of present-day Canton, Oklahoma, on September 30, finally "at home."<sup>17</sup>

At the time the Petters arrived in Cantonment, the mission consisted of two schools for Cheyenne and Arapaho children. There were few visible results from ten years of mission work among the Arapahos and Cheyennes, for the obvious reasons that the Mennonites had worked primarily with young children and that what limited adult contact they had had was conducted only through interpreters.

The Petters were to work primarily among the Cheyennes, a people who had undergone two major cultural changes in the previous two centuries, from a sedentary, agricultural life to a mobile, buffalo-hunting life on the plains to subjugation and confinement on reservations by whites. The Petters began working among a group of people whose way of life had been destroyed and who had become dependent upon their white enemies for survival.

Upon his arrival in Cantonment, Rodolphe Petter immediately plunged into the task of learning the Cheyenne language, as the first Mennonite missionary assigned primarily to reaching the adult Cheyenne population. On October 6, 1891, just seven days after coming to Cantonment, he recorded in his diary that he had already learned some Cheyenne words. Three days later he mentions a Cheyenne named Whiteshield as a possible language informant. A statement a few days later gives some insight into Petter's activities and methods.

These weeks have been spent visiting our Cheyenne, who have always received us well. Whiteshield gave us some lessons for 50¢ an hour, but he is becoming haughty that we are thinking of sending him away.<sup>18</sup>

(Harvey Whiteshield was an educated Cheyenne, probably having gone to Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, with financial help from a "Presbyterian lady." The first church building at Cantonment was later built on his land, and he became one of the main "native helpers" in the Mennonite mission in Oklahoma.<sup>19</sup>)

After a month in Cantonment, Petter reported that he was beginning to be able to understand the Cheyennes speaking their own language.<sup>20</sup> The Petters lived in the Mennonite school building and spent full time going out into the Cheyenne encampments around the reservation to learn the language.

After the school burned in 1893 they lived in a tent-cabin for nine months in the Cheyenne camps.<sup>21</sup>

In a short article like this it is not possible to examine Petter's missionary life in detail, but he seems to have been generally well-received by the Cheyennes. Those who had been educated in the white-run schools or who were in some other way already accommodating white ways, such as Whiteshield, usually viewed him favorably. However, his increasing ability to speak and understand the language apparently provided for him a more favorable hearing than might have been expected among even the traditionalist Cheyennes.

There was, of course, opposition. Petter felt that some Cheyenne leaders were disturbed by his language study and thought his Cheyenne informants had been told to keep the more complicated aspects of the language secret, only telling him everyday expressions.<sup>22</sup>

One vocal opponent was Thundernose, who agitated against the building of a church at Cantonment and even threatened once to shoot Petter. On the other hand, Thundernose had a close relationship to the mission.

He was Whiteshield's uncle, and his nephew spoke oft to him about the Savior and God's Word, but the old Cheyenne could not decide himself for Christ. He came often to me for 'talks,' gave me many old Cheyenne terms and told a good deal about the history of his tribe.<sup>23</sup> This is only one incident among many that points to the previously unexamined importance of family relationships involved in the Cheyenne acceptance or rejection of Mennonite missions.

In 1894, after having been among the Cheyennes for only three years, Petter was planning his first Cheyenne publication, a simple reading book. The mission board seems to have been unenthusiastic about the idea at first, asking him what the book was to contain and leaving the planning up to him. The reading book was published in 1895, the first in a long series of Cheyenne publications including song books, Bible portions, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (translated by Harvey Whiteshield under Petter's supervision), Cheyenne grammars, and his massive English-Cheyenne dictionary. Many of these Petter published and printed himself after other possible publishers, such as the mission board and the Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology, turned him down.

In 1910, after the Petters had been on the mission field for almost nineteen years, Marie Gerber Petter died, probably of tuberculosis. The couple had two children, Olga, born in 1893, and Valdo, born in 1895. Valdo Petter was named after Peter Waldo, the twelfth-century founder of the Waldensians, again illustrating the bond his father felt with these purported ancestors of the Mennonites.<sup>24</sup>

On November 28, 1911, Rodolphe Petter married Bertha Kinsinger, another Mennonite missionary in Oklahoma. She was born December 21, 1872, near Trenton, Ohio, the fourth of five children. In an autobiography written about 1956, she recalled that as a child she loved books and music and was able to get a high school education, rare for a girl at that time, through individual instruction from the local



Above. Marie, Olga, Valdo, and Rodolphe Petter.  
Below. Bertha Kinsinger and Rodolphe Petter (wedding photograph)



teacher. In September 1890, after attending the state normal school, Bertha began teaching grade school near her home town. A second cousin, Sam Kinsinger, was attending the Lutheran Wittenberg College and Seminary (now Wittenberg University) in Springfield, Ohio, and urged her to go to college. Sam Kinsinger later went to India under a Lutheran mission agency.

At Wittenberg, Bertha reported, her "spiritual life deepened." She heard many missionaries and other Christian leaders speak at the college and took the Student Volunteer Pledge, committing herself to becoming a foreign missionary. She graduated from Wittenberg in 1896 and claimed to be the first Mennonite woman to receive a college degree. In September of that year the General Conference mission board called her to teach school at Cantonment after she had turned down a Lutheran offer to send her to India. The school had about seventy-five Cheyenne and Arapaho children in attendance. Bertha taught the "primary grade" for two years and the "upper grade" for the next two years. She recalls that one day the "Swiss missionaries" visited her classroom and a few weeks later the mission board appointed her as their secretary. She took dictation from Petter and one of her first tasks was to put in alphabetical order the thousands of Cheyenne words and phrases he had collected in notebooks, creating the first Cheyenne vocabulary. Petter had her memorizing Cheyenne words and gave her tests over the material. Soon she was involved in the regular visits to Cheyenne camps and preaching tours.<sup>25</sup>

Bertha Kinsinger Petter continued her role as secretary to Rodolphe Petter after their marriage and became the spokesman and defender of her husband. It is often hard to separate her views from his in the sources, since much of the information about the Petters after 1911 came from her hand. Certainly she shaped her husband's image for the outside world.

The Cheyenne language spread beyond just the Petters, especially with the help of Bertha Petter. Other Mennonite missionaries were learning Cheyenne, sometimes by correspondence with Rodolphe Petter, although Bertha complained increasingly over the years that younger missionaries were not diligent enough in language learning. Non-Mennonite missionaries were also interested, but Ber-

tha was protective. A new missionary among the Cheyennes at Watonga, Oklahoma, denomination unknown, wrote requesting some Cheyenne books. She replied,

The question comes to me, shall we as Mennonites just give without just recompense, the result of 22 years most strenuous research and study Mr. Petter has put on the Cheyenne language, to other Missions who are numerically and financially much richer and stronger than we? I rather believe they would be ready and willing to give a liberal recompense when the value of this work is fully and clearly presented to them.

She also told him that it would be of no use to have Cheyenne Bible portions unless he was willing to spend a large amount of time thoroughly learning Cheyenne.<sup>26</sup>

In general, the response of most Cheyennes to mission efforts was polite indifference. Many Cheyennes attended Mennonite religious services occasionally, and many of the children attended the Mennonite schools or encountered Mennonite religion teachers in the government schools after the Mennonite schools closed around 1900. There were often missionary reports of deathbed conversions, to the extent that a dying Cheyenne would tell the missionary that, yes, he wanted to go to heaven and be with Jesus when he died. However, very few Cheyennes accepted the missionaries' message with real enthusiasm. In 1913 Rodolphe Petter reported that the total number of those who had "accepted the Gospel" at Cantonment was 102. "In the case of some the light is but small, with others it flickers as if it might die out."<sup>27</sup>

In 1898 Rodolphe Petter was invited to speak in the Northern District churches in the northern plains states. In his memoirs, he recalls that the Oklahoma Cheyennes wanted him to visit their relatives in Montana and South Dakota. On this trip, Petter found only a few left in South Dakota who still spoke Cheyenne, but his presence on the Cheyenne reservation in Montana caused quite a stir.

The news that a white man who spoke Cheyenne had come, spread swiftly among the Indians of the reservation. They came from all corners to see and hear me. At first they asked different things of me, just to make me talk Cheyenne and see whether really their language would come out of my mouth. Hearing me, a look of fear mingled with astonishment appeared first on their faces, then they would laugh with delight, saying "Why sure he speaks Cheyenne." Many wanted to hear of their tribesmen and relatives in the far southland.<sup>28</sup>

Petter made two more trips to Montana, in 1901 and 1903, making preparations for a new Mennonite mis-

sion field there. He negotiated with the government agent in Lame Deer about acquiring land for mission buildings and received encouragement from the agent for the idea of starting a new mission.

After Petter's first visit, the mission board had decided to begin the new work because of the already existing work among the southern Cheyennes and with the Cheyenne language and the fear that some other denomination might start work in Montana if the Mennonites did not take the field. In 1904 G. A. Linscheid, a missionary for three years among the southern Cheyennes, went to Busby, Montana, to begin the new work. A church building was erected in Busby, near the new government boarding school, and after about ten years, the mission was holding services in all the villages on the reservation.<sup>29</sup>

In late 1916 the Petters moved to Lame Deer, Montana. "The main cause of this transfer was the hayfever which plagued me in Oklahoma."<sup>30</sup> The work of translation and preaching continued much as in Cantonment.

Outside the Mennonite community, the most well-known event in Petter's life, besides his work with the Cheyenne language, is a major controversy in which he was involved shortly after moving to Lame Deer. In late 1918, Petter preached a series of sermons entitled the "Kingdom of Satan,"<sup>31</sup> in which he strongly condemned participation in the traditional Cheyenne religious ceremonies. As reported by Bertha Petter some months later, one Cheyenne couple felt "convicted" by these sermons and came to Petter to privately confess what they felt to be their sins. On New Year's Day 1919 the same man and another came to Petter to have him put their charges in written form for presentation to the government Indian agent, John A. Buntin.<sup>32</sup> It was a serious matter to make such accusations at the time, since it was government policy to vigorously suppress traditional rituals.

The result was several months of high tension on the reservation but no change in the status quo of official government and church disapproval of the traditional ceremonies that continued to be done in secret. Exercising her marvelous capacity for hyperbole, Bertha Petter summed up the events of 1919 in a report to the mission board.

With wild devilish plotting, our heathen Indians seek to live their own life, unhindered by Govern-



ment or church regulations, and without proper officers of the law, and the promised jail as yet a mere promise, it is easy to see in what kind of atmosphere we must live and work . . . We are glad to have the friction, because it gives evidence of a new order of things.<sup>33</sup>

The traditionalists eventually achieved their freedom with the coming of self-government and other reforms of government Indian policy under the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations of the early 1930s.

The Cheyenne mission in Montana grew somewhat faster and became stronger than in Oklahoma. In 1919 Rodolphe Petter reported that the Cheyenne church in Lame Deer comprised 5½% of the local population and the Cheyenne mission churches around the reservation made up 3% of the northern Cheyenne tribe. He boasted that this was proportionally much better than Mennonite missions in China or India.<sup>34</sup> The mission churches were not without difficulties, however. Petter wrote in 1936,

At the last place [Lame Deer] we found a congregation of forty-two Cheyenne Christians. Since then nearly 200 more were added, but in the course of years many died and the present number of true, faithful Christians is not as large as that of the weak and indifferent ones. Others have fallen away from Christ, some from fear of the pagans, some others joining the peyot [sic] cult, the rest of them led away by Romish propaganda.<sup>35</sup>

Except for the occasional controversy, Rodolphe Petter's mission work continued essentially unchanged until his death. In a 1926 report to the mission board he described working twelve to fourteen hours per day on translation, while Bertha did much of the other mission work.<sup>36</sup> Rodolphe Petter died January 6, 1947, and all the factions on the reservation came together to eulogize him at his funeral.<sup>37</sup> Bertha Kinsinger Petter lived until 1967, tenaciously defending her husband's memory.

I understand the Fonda church [in Oklahoma] is a Linscheid memorial, and yet Linscheid served in Oklahoma but a few years. Dr. Petter spent 25 years in Oklahoma. Why no memorial to him? I could have wept bitter tears on my visit to find his home, built for him and his family and which should have remained a *shrine* to his memory used as a mere ranch house.<sup>38</sup>

Several conclusions emerge from a critical examination of the life of Rodolphe Petter and also, a number of questions about the accepted interpretation of Mennonite missions history. First of all, Petter was an outsider. His life has a certain theme of alienation throughout. He came to the Mennonites from a French, Reformed background; his family was only nominally religious. Petter's difficult childhood should make



*Above. Rodolphe Petter with Anna Wolfname and Ernest King.  
Below. Marie and Olga Petter visiting a Cheyenne family in 1899.*

him a prime candidate for any Mennonite psychohistorian. Petter's long-term interest in the Waldensians fits in here in that it seems to have been an attempt at finding a historical or genealogical foundation for his conversion to Mennonitism. The interest in this group extended to contacts with contemporary Waldensians in Europe in the 1930s.<sup>39</sup>

Marie Gerber and Bertha Kinsinger seem also to have been somewhat on the fringe of the Mennonite community. Marie Gerber came from the Swiss Mennonites and would have grown up with different cultural and even doctrinal traditions from most of the Mennonites she met in America. Bertha Kinsinger was encouraged into her mis-

sionary career by her relative, Sam Kinsinger, who became a Lutheran missionary in India, and Bertha received her education and inspiration at a Lutheran school that had broad contacts with the Protestant missionary movement.

Other Mennonites sensed the foreignness of Petter. Bertha Kinsinger referred to Rodolphe and Marie Petter as the "Swiss missionaries."<sup>40</sup> Petter's connection with John A. Sprunger also identified him with a group on the edge of the Mennonite community.

Petter was, of course, an outsider most of all among the Cheyennes. He learned their language and knew many facts about Cheyenne culture, but lacked a synthetic understanding of it:

The enemy of God and his kingdom grows not old in his destruction work among men. He has led and ruled the Cheyenne people in the night of mind and heart. He brought to them raw paganism, false gods, superstition, dream religion, false hopes, will-o-the-wisps, and the narcotic peyot [sic] cult. That is what the father of lies and murders brought to the poor Indian people.<sup>41</sup>

It has been suggested that many Mennonite missionaries to the native Americans had a fascination with Indian culture for its own sake.<sup>42</sup> H. R. Voth's work with Hopi anthropology is cited as a particular example of this. Rodolphe Petter has been referred to as a "called linguist."<sup>43</sup> He was most definitely not a linguist, with the term's implication of an intrinsic, scientific interest in language, but a Christian missionary. Petter's interest in Cheyenne culture was purely utilitarian. His knowledge of the culture was a vehicle for the destruction of that culture. The same was probably true for most other Mennonite missionaries who evidenced an interest in native culture, with the exception of Voth. Petter thought of the Cheyennes as children, usually referring to them as "our" Cheyennes or even as "our heathen Cheyennes," needing to be led out of pagan darkness.

As an outsider Petter brought with him innovation. Ethnic traditions and family relationships have been emphasized as an important theme in General Conference missions history.<sup>44</sup> Petter brought a new ethnic strain to the Mennonites, both in his own person and in others that the Petters attracted from non-Mennonite backgrounds to the Cheyenne mission.<sup>45</sup> The Mennonite family was probably not as closed as has often been thought.

Petter also brought new styles of or approaches to Christianity. His religious roots were deep in European Pietism, and he had numerous non-Mennonite contacts and supporters. His comments about the "deadness" of American Mennonite churches point to his differing expectations of spirituality. It must be said that other young Mennonites, especially missionaries, were bringing these new religious currents into the traditional community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. John A. Sprunger is a good example.

One obvious question is whether Petter brought Reformed theology to the Mennonites. Petter's theology has not yet been studied in any detail, nor the theology of other GC missionaries. Did Petter's experience of the state-church make him more willing to support the

government Indian agent in Montana in 1919? This series of incidents is unique in GC missions history for missionaries identifying completely with government in coercively imposing policy upon a local population. Petter's career as a translator raises the possibility that he derived from his Reformed background a concept of the "Word of God" as efficacious in and of itself.<sup>46</sup> These questions remain unanswered.

Rodolphe Petter also brought leadership to GC missions. After his arrival in Indian Territory, Petter was quickly accepted as senior among the missionaries on the field. Judging from their correspondence, Petter's education and personality, and also his status as an outsider, seem to have intimidated even the mission board. Petter can probably be credited with reshaping GC missions strongly in the direction of preaching and away from the varied activities of the first decade, not only for Indian missions but for all GC foreign missions. Petter's leadership style changed over the years, however. After he married Bertha Kinsinger in 1911, he withdrew more and more into his translating work. In later decades he became the facade behind which Bertha Petter could exercise leadership that would have been unacceptable coming directly from a woman. Bertha Kinsinger Petter, probably the most important woman in General Conference history before 1950, has yet to receive the historical investigation she deserves.

The central fact of Rodolphe Petter's life was the Cheyenne language. He was an outsider among the Mennonites, and even the Cheyennes were for him secondary to their language. He was God's chosen man to make available "God's Word" in the Cheyenne language. Despite his seemingly spectacular success in this calling, his achievements had a limited lifespan. Events quickly passed him by, even within his own lifetime, as more and more Cheyennes learned English and fewer missionaries learned Cheyenne.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Lois Barrett, *The Vision and the Reality: The Story of Home Missions in the General Conference Mennonite Church* (Newton KS: Faith and Life Press, 1983), pp. 15-74; James C. Juhnke, *A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Overseas Missions* (Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1979), pp. 1-14; James C. Juhnke, "General Conference Mennonite Missions to the American Indians in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54 (April 1980): 117-134.

<sup>2</sup> Rodolphe Petter, "How I Became a Missionary," *Mennonite Life* 10 (January 1955): 4-13; Rodolphe Petter, *Reminiscences of Past Years in Mission Service*, n.p., [1936]; Margaret Dietzel, "Rodolphe Petter: A

'Called' Linguist" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1971); Margaret Dietzel Hillegas, "Rodolphe Petter: A 'Called' Linguist," *Mennonite Life* 37 (June 1982): 4-7.

<sup>3</sup> Petter, "How I Became a Missionary."

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Sprunger, "Anna Brons and Ludwig Keller: Partners for Historical Renewal" (Social Science Seminar paper, Bethel College, 1984); Amalie Keller, "Ludwig Keller—Scholar with a Mission," *Mennonite Life* 8 (October 1953): 159-160, 192.

<sup>7</sup> Petter, "How I Became a Missionary," p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Rodolphe and Marie Petter diary, March 19, 1890-December 31, 1891, translated by Mariam Schmidt, September 14, 1890, entry, p. 20, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, KS (hereafter MLA).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, October 29, 1890, entry, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> On John A. Sprunger see Naomi Lehman, *Pilgrimage of a Congregation: First Mennonite Church, Berne, Indiana* (Berne, IN: First Mennonite Church, 1982), pp. 339-346.

<sup>13</sup> Diary fragment, undated, folder 4, Rodolphe Petter Collection, MLA-MS-31, MLA. Petter clearly interpreted Gaeddert's remark as directed at him, but it seems more likely that Gaeddert was criticizing Sprunger. This typewritten fragment is not an original, contemporary record, but shows clearly the heavy editing hand of Bertha Kinsinger Petter, especially in the use of "etc., etc."

<sup>14</sup> Diary, February 24, 1891, entry, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, June 2, 1891, entry, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, August 6, 1891, August 12, 1891, entries, p. 43; September 20, 1891, September 23, 1891, September 24, 1891, September 30, 1891, entries, p. 45.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, October 6, 1891, October 9, 1891, October 12-30, 1891, entries, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Mrs. G. A. Linscheid, "Historical Sketch of the General Conference Mennonite Mission Enterprise in Oklahoma 1880-1930" (unpublished manuscript available at MLA, 1930), pp. 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> Diary, November 7, 1891, entry, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Linscheid, "Historical Sketch," p. 24.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Petter, *Reminiscences*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> Linscheid, "Historical Sketch," p. 49; Petter, *Reminiscences*, p. 12; obituary of Valdo Petter, *Bundesbote-Kalender* 1936, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> Bertha Kinsinger Petter, "Life Story of Mrs. Rodolphe Petter," Petter Collection, folder 2; Bertha Kinsinger Petter, "Life Sketch of Mrs. Rodolphe Petter," Petter Collection, folder 2; Mission Board to Bertha Kinsinger, 2 August 1900, Petter Collection, folder 20; Linscheid, "Historical Sketch," p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> Bertha K. Petter to George L. Gibbs, 11 March 1914, Petter Collection, folder 23.

<sup>27</sup> Linscheid, "Historical Sketch," p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> Petter, *Reminiscences*, pp. 36-40.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43; Barrett, *Vision and Reality*, pp. 31-33.

<sup>30</sup> Petter, *Reminiscences*, p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> Peter J. Powell, *Sweet Medicine: The Continuing Role of the Sacred Arrows, the Sun Dance, and the Sacred Buffalo Hat in Northern Cheyenne History* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 342. A typescript sermon series in Cheyenne with this title does exist in the Petter Collection at MLA.

<sup>32</sup> Bertha K. Petter to "readers of the Mennonite," 13 March 1919, Petter Collection, folder 27.

<sup>33</sup> Bertha K. Petter to Mission Board, 1 August 1919, Petter Collection, folder 27.

<sup>34</sup> Rodolphe Petter to Mission Board, 8 January 1919, Petter Collection, folder 27.

<sup>35</sup> Petter, *Reminiscences*, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup> Rodolphe Petter to Mission Board, 8 January 1926, Petter Collection, folder 105.

<sup>37</sup> Obituary of Rodolphe Petter, Petter Collection, folder 160.

<sup>38</sup> Biography of Mascota dated February 7, 1952, Petter Collection, folder 105.

<sup>39</sup> Bertha Kinsinger Petter, *A Visit with the Waldensians in Italy* (n.p., [ca. 1940]). A copy is in the MLA.

<sup>40</sup> "Life Sketch of Mrs. Rodolphe Petter," Petter Collection, folder 2.

<sup>41</sup> Petter, *Reminiscences*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> Juhnke, *People of Mission*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>43</sup> Dietzel, "Rodolphe Petter: A 'Called' Linguist."

<sup>44</sup> Barrett, *Vision and Reality*, pp. 267-273.

<sup>45</sup> A notable example is Agnes Williams, whom the Petters invited from Moody Bible Institute to work in the Cheyenne mission in Oklahoma and who remained a Mennonite the rest of her life.

<sup>46</sup> This idea must be credited to a suggestion from James C. Juhnke.

# “Lovers of Peace and Order”

by Wynn Goering

*In the years following the Treaty of Paris, the official end of America's War of Independence in 1783, pacifism emerged as a prime civic virtue. It was not, in general, the absolute pacifism of the Quakers and the Mennonites, but the kind that recognized that the greatest threat to liberty was neither tyranny nor anarchy, but war itself. And in those years, while the sectarians withdrew from public life, the founders of the new republic took up the struggle to realize their peaceable kingdom.*

## I

In 1787 Dr. Benjamin Rush, a Philadelphia physician and man of letters, contributed a salutatory article to *The American Museum, or Repository of Ancient and Modern Fugitive Pieces, Prose and Poetical*, the first major literary magazine of the republic. In now famous words, Rush sounded the clarion of America's destiny in his "Address to the people of the united states." The late war, he asserted, was merely "the first act of the great drama" of the real Revolution; it yet remained "to establish and perfect our new forms of government; and to prepare the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens." This perfection would be accomplished, Rush suggested, by the education and participation of all the significant elements of American society. His concluding paragraph was both an exhortation and a formula for American progress:

PATRIOTS of 1774, 1775, 1776—HEROES of 1778, 1779, 1780! come forward! your country demands your services! Philosophers and friends to mankind, come forward! your country demands your studies and speculations! Lovers of peace and order, who declined taking part in the late war, come forward! your country forgives your timidity, and demands your influence and advice!<sup>1</sup>

Rush's inclusion of a pacifist element in American "principles, morals, and manners" marked a new era in the national rhetoric. The years of war with England and the domestic instability of the Confederation gave the country a receptiveness to peace that had not existed during the times that had tried men's souls a decade earlier. The time had come for an enlightened humanity to do away with war; America, finally free of the corruption of the old world, could now be the vessel to usher in the new era.

The impulse toward these sentiments was common enough; Americans were tired of war. Yet the feelings were intensified by an international optimism over America's destiny in world history and politics. Dr. Richard Price, a bold advocate of America's cause in England, published his *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and The Means of making it a Benefit to the World* in 1785. In words addressed to the American public, Price declared "that the last universal empire upon earth shall be the empire of reason and virtue, under which the gospel of peace (better understood), shall have free course and be glorified." In his view, America's independence signaled the approach of this universal empire; the country's mission was to be one of peace for the world. "It is a conviction I cannot resist, that the independence of the English colonies in America is one of the steps ordained by Providence to introduce these times."<sup>2</sup>

Price's thought contains aspects of millennial theology, but millennialism did not, by itself, anticipate a universal peace founded on reason and virtue. Insofar as there was an intellectual heritage for this aspect of manifest destiny, it lay in the works of the 17th

and 18th-century French philosophes. The Abbe de Saint-Pierre, Fenelon and Montesquieu condemned war as a tool of princes, challenged the idea that war was a political necessity, and suggested (in different forms) a proto-typical League of Nations to place a check on the ambitions of monarchs. Later writers like Diderot, Condillac, Rousseau, Condorcet, Voltaire and Raynal placed more emphasis on the education of the populace to expose the meaninglessness of war. The latter two, in particular, took a special interest in the American republic, and often expressed the hope that the policies of the enlightenment could find a home there.

Among American writers of the latter 18th century, the French influence is most noticeable in the works of Thomas Paine and Joel Barlow. The philosophes had suggested the integral link between princes and wars; in the view of the Americans this meant that to eliminate the latter, one need only abolish the former. In his lengthy reply to Edmund Burke, *The Rights of Man*, Paine argues that republics are not plunged into war "because the nature of their government does not admit of an interest distinct from that of the nation." Thus, he concludes, Europe would do well to follow the American example. "Monarchical sovereignty, the enemy of mankind, and the source of misery, is abolished . . . . Were this the case throughout Europe, the cause of wars would be taken away."<sup>3</sup>

Joel Barlow, in *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe* (1792), elaborates on the inevitability of war in a monarchical society and peace in a republic. Prefacing his chapter on "The Military System" with a quote from Voltaire's *Histoire de Charlemagne*—"Il importoit au maintien de l'autorite du roi,

d'entretenir la guerre"—Barlow identifies the two circumstances under which a nation will commence an offensive war: "either the people at large must be thoroughly convinced that they shall be personally rewarded not only with conquest, but with a vast share of wealth from the conquered nation, or else they must be duped into the war by those who hold the reigns [sic] of government." The first of these motives, says Barlow, has never been operative among "civilized nations," and the second could never happen in a republic where the people themselves hold the reins of government. Barlow is explicit about his conclusion: we may argue, he says, "the total extinction of wars, as a necessary consequence of establishing governments on the representative wisdom of the people."<sup>4</sup>

Paine and Barlow were both living in France at the time they composed these works; they were in personal contact with many of the men whose ideas they espoused. American writing of the period, however, owes less to identifiable influences than to a broad diffusion of anti-war sentiment. A contributor to *The Massachusetts Magazine* (1794), in "Thoughts on War," declared that the "paths of military honour are cut through the bowels of humanity;" for that reason, "Philosopher, Politician, or Patriot, every American must devoutly wish for the sweets of reconciliation." In *The General Magazine and Impartial Review* (Baltimore, 1798), an article entitled "Reflections on War" acknowledged that while war sometimes produces benefits, it "is always attended with the most miserable consequences; and what serves to enrich a few individuals, may reduce many to misery and want." War led not only to economic, but also to moral distress, according to Timothy Dwight: "The injury, done by war, to the morals of a country, is inferior to none of the evils, which it suffers. A century is insufficient to repair the moral waste of a short war."<sup>5</sup>

Even as cautious a man as General Washington himself partook of the sentiments of the period. When asked whether it was true that he had once said he enjoyed no sound so much as the whistling of bullets, the elder Washington is said to have replied, "If I said so, it was when I was young." Yet even before he accepted the presidency, Washington wrote in a per-

sonal letter:

As the rage of conquest, which in the times of barbarity, stimulated Nations to blood, has in a great degree ceased; as the objects which formerly gave birth to Wars are daily diminishing; and as mankind are becoming more enlightened and humanized, I cannot but flatter myself with the pleasing prospect that more liberal policies and more pacific systems will take place amongst them.

And in a rare moment of jocularity, Washington wrote the following to the Marquis de Chastellux in 1788:

While you have been making love, under the banner of Hymen, the great Personages in the North have been making war, under the inspiration, or rather under the infatuation of Mars. Now, for my part, I humbly conceive, you have had much the best and wisest of the bargain. For certainly it is more consonant to all the principles of reason and religion (natural and revealed) to replenish the earth with inhabitants, rather than to depopulate it by killing those already in existence, besides it is time for the age of Knight-Erantry and mad-heroism to be at an end.<sup>6</sup>

Clearly the abolition of war seemed, to most Americans, to be an idea whose time had come. But the impulse of the historic moment was strongly reinforced by local necessity. Writing to Washington in 1790, John Adams gave his opinion that "the present government has not strength to command, nor enough of the general confidence of the nation to draw, the men or money necessary" for a war; and further, that "it would be impossible for the President of the United States to collect militia or march troops sufficient to resist" another invasion. Alexander Hamilton, in 1793, thought the nation needed to "avoid war for ten or twelve years more" before it had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the Revolution to withstand any assault. Dwight had declaimed against the "moral waste" of war; an anonymous contributor to *The American Monthly Review* in 1795 asserted that the financial waste was just as extensive: "none can be carried on without extraordinary expence, to be defrayed by loans, the interest on which cannot be paid without new taxes; thus the national debt must be increased, and the burdens of the poor, already nearly intolerable, made completely so, to the ruin of the country."<sup>7</sup>

The nation's inability to prosecute a war was matched by a disinclination on the part of its citizens to do so. Thomas Jefferson assured James Monroe in 1793 "that through all America there

has been but a single sentiment on the subject of peace and war, which was in favor of the former." Writing in the same year, Hamilton confidently asserted that a decade of rebuilding would render war "no more than a common calamity" in America; but Jefferson saw no more enthusiasm for violent conflict in 1803 than he had ten years earlier. "Twenty years of peace, and the prosperity so visibly flowing from it, have but strengthened our attachment to it, and the blessings it brings, and we do not despair of being always a peaceable nation."<sup>8</sup>

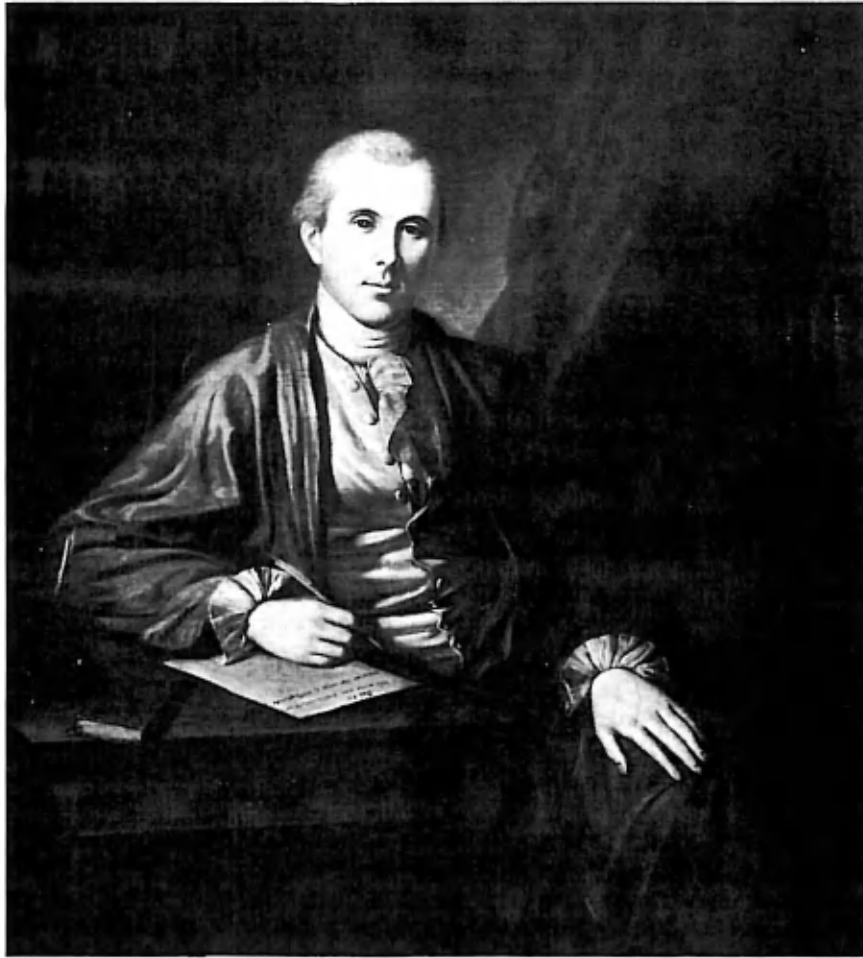
## II

Despair was foreign to Jefferson, but he was no stranger to the undercurrent of anxiety in the early republic. The sentiments of Americans toward war and peace resulted not only from the bright promise of a republican millennium, but also from dark fears of American failure. While it was generally accepted that the United States were exempt, for the time being, from any serious threat of foreign invasion, it was just as widely assumed that the states were highly vulnerable to clashes with each other, and discord within their own populations.

Although Richard Price was convinced that America was part of God's plan to inaugurate the gospel of peace, he nevertheless felt that the Almighty's project had some serious weaknesses:

Particular notice has likewise been taken of the danger from INTERNAL WARS.—Again and again, I would urge the necessity of pursuing every measure and using every precaution which can guard against this danger. It will be shocking to see in the new world a repetition of all the evils which have hitherto laid waste the old world.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, despite the assertiveness with which some American writers proclaimed the joint dissolution of the monarchy and its wars, few really believed that peace was inevitable—or even likely—in a republic. Previous republics, in John Adams' words, words, "were all alike ill constituted; all alike miserable; and all ended in similar disgrace and despotism." Moreover, from a theoretical standpoint, it was commonly thought that warlike republics were stronger than peaceful ones. In the words of Algernon Sidney (a favorite of American Whigs): "the best judges of these matters have always given the preference to those constitutions that principally intend war . . . and think it better to aim



Benjamin Rush (Painting by Charles Willson Peale in Henry Francis DuPont Winterthur Museum).

at conquest, than simply to stand upon their own defence."<sup>10</sup> There was no historical precedent for a successful polity of peace in a republican society; and the intensity of the American debate over the means of preserving peace, both before and after the revolution, shows how little Americans took their pacific destiny for granted.

Independence generated a broad spectrum of proposals for peace, both political and social. The period's unique blend of conservative and radical philosophies is reflected in the nation's great seal, adopted in 1782. One side portrays an eagle, clasping a sheaf of arrows in one talon and an olive branch in the other—a symbol and theory of peace through strength at least as old as the Pax Romana. The obverse side, however, emphasizes the progressive element in American thought with the Latin phrase, "Novus ordo seclorum"—a new order of the ages—

and the date of MDCCLXXVI, when the new order of the ages began.<sup>11</sup>

Peace through strength was a favorite maxim of many colonial statesman—the *Olive Branch Petition* suggests as much<sup>12</sup>—and George Washington presented the concept to the new republic in his resignation from the command of the Continental Army. It was his conviction, he wrote, "that in less time and with much less expence than has been incurred, the War might have been brought to the same happy conclusion, if the resources of the Continent could have been properly drawn forth." He urged the creation of "a proper Peace Establishment for the United States," by which he meant a federal militia.<sup>13</sup> The idea would become one of the most controversial of his administration. Old World institutions, progressives argued, were manifestly ill-adapted to the people and promise of the New World; the new

order of the ages demanded a new peace-keeping polity.

State and federal regulation of the militia was the issue which focused the discussion of the means of peace. At the local level this involved regular militia exercises. An anonymous contributor to *The American Museum* in 1788 took Pennsylvania's militia exercises to task in observations on "the mischievous effects of militia laws." His primary objection is that they "cherish the spirit of war, which is always unfriendly to the arts of peace." Admitting the popular dictum "that the only way to prevent war, is to be always prepared for it," he nonetheless questions whether "militia exercises answer this purpose?" America's distance from Europe will always provide "notice enough of the approach of war" to prepare for it. The argument for a regular militia (or standing army), he concluded, was based on a faulty premise:

It is the error of our politicians to apply European maxims in war and government, to the united states. We are a new nation. Our origin—local circumstances—principles and manners have no parallel in the history of mankind. Let us first discover who—and what—and where we are, and we shall soon be able to discover how to govern ourselves.<sup>14</sup>

Militia regulation was also part of the agenda of the first federal Congress. The bill which gave the federal government the power to levy its own army met with stiff opposition. William Maclay, a Republican senator from Pennsylvania, noted in his journal on 15 April 1790: "The bill for regulating the military establishment was called up. . . . I have opposed this bill hitherto as often as it has been before the House as the foundation, the corner-stone of a standing army." The classical objection to a standing army was that it was unfavorable to liberty, but Maclay and other Americans worried more that the institution would encourage war itself. The next day he lamented, "The man must be blind who does not see a most unwarrantable management respecting our military affairs. The Constitution certainly never contemplated a standing army in time of peace."<sup>15</sup>

In Maclay's mind, a standing army went hand in hand with another of Washington's abominations—the War Office. The President's appointment of Henry Knox as a permanent Secretary of War was one of the least popular decisions of his first term. The idea,



suggested one magazine, was European and therefore juvenile:

Monarchy men and aristocrats have ever supposed a war-office as necessary an appendage to a well regulated government, as a band-box is thought to be (among the female world) to the furniture of a travelling lady. But having grown up to the age and discretion of men, it is time, brethren, that we put away childish things.<sup>16</sup>

Maclay, too, commented sardonically on the person and position of the new Secretary:

In now came General Knox with a bundle of communications. I thought the act was a mad one, when a Secretary of War was appointed in time of peace. I can not blame him. The man wants to labor in his vocation.<sup>17</sup>

The most outspoken opponent of the Secretary of War and all he stood for was the Philadelphia physician, Benjamin Rush. He countered the proposed war office with his own suggestion for "promoting and preserving perpetual peace in our country," that being "A Plan of a Peace-Office for the United States." Rush's support for his own idea is perhaps tongue-in-cheek, but there is no mistaking the invective he reserves for the war office. The timing of his essay, he suggests, is felicitous:

It is to be hoped that no objection will be made to the establishment of such an office, while we are engaged in a war with the Indians, for as the War-Office of the United States was established in the time of peace, it is equally reasonable that a Peace-Office should be established in the time of war. [Maclay had fumed that if Knox was granted an army, "he will soon have a war on hand. . . . he will have a war in less than six months with the Southern Indians."<sup>18</sup>]

Rush suggested that the responsibility of the Peace-Office should be to promote Christianity, "for it belongs to this religion exclusively to teach us . . . that the Supreme Being alone possesses a power to take away human life." Finally, Rush wished it to be clear that the functions of the Peace-Office would be directly opposed to those of the War-Office. In a bitter blast at the kind of language Washington used for his proposed "Peace Establishment," Rush recommended that we call a spade a spade:

In order more deeply to affect the minds of the citizens of the United States with the blessings of peace, by contrasting them with the evils of war, let the following inscriptions be painted upon the sign, which is placed over the door of the War Office.

1. An office for butchering the human species.

2. A Widow and Orphan making office.
3. A broken bone making office.
4. A Wooden leg making office.
5. An office for creating public and private vices.
6. An office for creating a public debt.
7. An office for creating speculators, stock Jobbers, and Bankrupts.
8. An office for creating famine.
9. An office for creating pestilential diseases.
10. An office for creating poverty, and the destruction of liberty, and national happiness.

The inscriptions were to be crowned, "in red characters to represent human blood," with the words, "NATIONAL GLORY."<sup>19</sup>

### III

Education, as Rush's remarks imply, was the key to peace. In Timothy Dwight's words, "whenever mankind shall cease to make war, this most desirable event will arise from the general opposition, made to war, by the common voice. Hence the peculiar importance of diffusing this opposition, as widely as possible."<sup>20</sup> Whatever their differences in policy or philosophy, all parties believed that the American citizenry needed to be taught the benefits of peace and the evils of war; and among those charged with effecting this moral revolution, none took their task more seriously than America's literati.

From the fledgling attempts at poetry and fiction, to the highly cultivated forms of public oratory, the inculcation of peace became a vital element in republican literary purpose. This required a completely new kind of literature. American authors mistrusted their epic predecessors, feeling that their works embodied the moral corruption of a primitive age. Homer, wrote Charles Brockden Brown, "was a man of a barbarous age, and a rude nation. Superstition was vigorous; science was unknown; war and depredation made up the business and delight of mankind."<sup>21</sup> Joel Barlow, in the introduction to his poem, *The Columbiad*, went even further:

I think every person who will give himself the trouble to form an opinion on the manner in which actions, called heroic, have been recorded, must find it faulty; and must lament, as one of the misfortunes of society, that writers of these two classes [poets and historians] almost universally, from Homer down to Gibbon, have led astray the moral sense of man.<sup>22</sup>

Thus American writers felt the need to redefine "heroic actions;" and

nowhere is the new heroism of American literature more evident than in the eulogistic works which followed the death of George Washington at the end of the century. Washington's unexpected passing on 14 December 1799 brought forth hundreds of written and spoken tributes. Oratory, from the lectern and the pulpit, was America's most highly developed literary form. At its worst, of course, it was fulsome, but at its best it was very good, and the death of Washington brought out productions of both qualities. A sampling of eulogies can be found in the period's leading literary magazine, *The Monthly Magazine and American Review* (1799-1800), edited by Charles Brockden Brown. Brown reviewed over thirty memorials—poems, sermons and orations—in the first months of 1800, noting that they "reflect little light upon the character of him who is the subject of them," but do indicate the eulogists' "mode of estimating moral duty and intellectual excellence."<sup>23</sup>

First in the chronology of Washington's achievements was his military career. Many writers noted his bravery as a colonel under Braddock in 1755; a few identified feats in the War of Independence. One, William Linn, told the anecdote of Washington's rejection of his youthful enthusiasm for arms. But the military incident most commonly praised in these works was not a battle at all, but the avoidance of one. Washington's disbanding of the army after the war was consistently singled out as the greatest achievement of his military career. In the words of Samuel Bayard:

Never did zeal for the warfare of his country, and the honour of his army, blaze forth with greater splendour, even in the actions of a Washington, than on this occasion. . . . [H]e conjured them to disband in peace, and to expect from the justice and gratitude of their country, what they were instigated to exert by violence. His influence was triumphant. He succeeded in preserving the honor of his army and his country from an unnatural civil war.

Bayard's language (and that of other writers) suggests a kind of supernatural element to Washington's accomplishment. Brown, for his part, thought this paragraph "not only just but elegant."<sup>24</sup>

Following the war came Washington's retirement at Mount Vernon. Often he was compared to Cincinnatus, the Roman general who turned from his legions to his plough once the

fighting had ended. "Singular phenomenon! Washington becomes a private citizen! He exchanges supreme command for the tranquillity of domestic life!" exclaimed John Mason.<sup>25</sup> But the retirement was brief; Washington the statesman—not the warrior—was called to his country's highest office. William Beers cried:

Citizens! it was not the military chief, the champion of his country's battles, who was summoned to this high station. It was the citizen, the sage, who, by long converse with nature and with man, by long habits of observation and research, and by long practice in command, was happily calculated "to rule the wilderness of freeborn minds," to temper the raging passions, and to hold in equipoise the nice balance of public and party interest.<sup>26</sup>

Fisher Ames was even more explicit about the relative importance of Washington's military career:

However his military fame may excite the wonder of mankind, it is chiefly by his civil magistracy that his example will instruct them. Great generals have arisen in all ages of the world, and, perhaps, most in those of despotism and darkness. . . . But such a chief-magistrate as Washington, appears like the pole star in a clear sky, to direct the skilful statesman.<sup>27</sup>

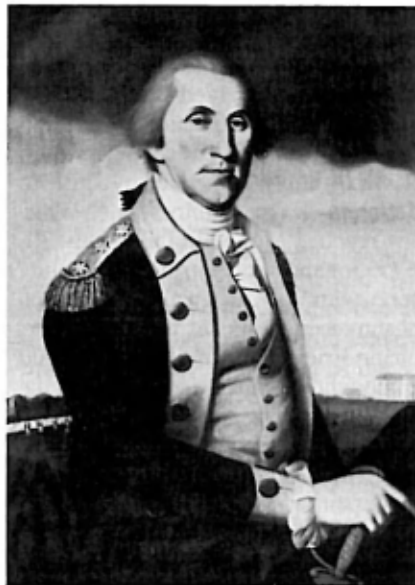
And the hallmark of Washington's administration was, of course, peace. Richard Henry Lee, whose funeral oration contained the most famous lines ever written on Washington—"First in war—first in peace—and first in the hearts of his countrymen"—left no doubt as to the greatest achievement of Washington's term:

Maintaining his pacific system at the expense of no duty, America, faithful to herself, and unstained in her honor, continued to enjoy the delights of peace, while afflicted Europe mourns in every quarter under the accumulated miseries of unexampled war.<sup>28</sup>

Such were the virtues of General Washington as seen by his countrymen at the end of the century. In these celebrations of the past, however, there was an implicit uneasiness, an unspoken fear of what was to come. Washington could balance public and party interests; but the increasing party strife of the late 1790s suggested that his successors, Adams and Jefferson, could not. So far, America had maintained his pacific system; but without his presence, "his influence as the vital spirit of our union," how long could that last?<sup>29</sup> Washington was the pole star; what would happen, now that the pole star had forever set? Even Thomas Jefferson, the most optimistic intellectual in

America, admitted in early 1800, "I have never seen so awful a moment as the present."<sup>30</sup>

There is something eerily familiar about the anxieties of this first generation of American citizens. We hear the echo of their despair today, in an America strangely untouched by two centuries of history. But the founders' legacy is not only the despair, but also the hope for the republic and its mission. In Benjamin Rush's words, the nation still needs the influence and advice of its lovers of peace and order. We still labor under Timothy Dwight's special commission to diffuse the sentiment of peace as widely as possible through education. It yet remains to prepare the principles, manners and morals of our citizens. Nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed.



George Washington at Princeton (Painting by Charles Peale Polk in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.).

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Rush, "Address to the people of the united states," *The American Museum*, 1 (1787), 8, 11.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Price, *Observations on the Importance of the*

*American Revolution, and The Means of making it a Benefit to the World* (London, 1785), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, in *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Citadel, 1945), 1, 342-43.

<sup>4</sup>Joel Barlow, *Advice to the Privileged Orders in the Several States of Europe*, in *The Works of Joel Barlow*, introd. William K. Bottorff and Arthur L. Ford (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970), 1, 146, 156, 166.

<sup>5</sup>"Thoughts on War," *The Massachusetts Magazine, or Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment*, 6 (1794), 164-65; "Reflections on War," *The General Magazine and Impartial Review*, 1 (1798), 4; Timothy Dwight, Note to *Greenfield Hill*, in *The Major Poems of Timothy Dwight*, introd. William J. McTaggart and William K. Bottorff (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1969), p. 534.

<sup>6</sup>"To Comte de Rochambeau," 31 July 1786, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1938), XXVIII, 493; "To Marquis de Chastellux," 25 April 1788, *Writings*, XXIX, 484-85.

<sup>7</sup>"To President Washington," 29 August 1790, *The Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856), VIII, 498; Alexander Hamilton, "Camillus II," quoted in Richard Buel, Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1972), p. 41; Rev. of "Considerations on the Causes and Alarming Consequences of the Present War, and the Necessity of an immediate Peace," *The American Monthly Review*, 1 (1795), 294-95.

<sup>8</sup>"To Colonel Monroe," 28 June 1793, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1905), IX, 144; Hamilton, "Camillus II," quoted in Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, p. 41; Jefferson, "To Monsieur Cabanis," 12 July 1803, *Writings*, X, 405.

<sup>9</sup>Richard Price, *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution*, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup>John Adams, *Discourses on Davila*, quoted in Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World* (1964; rpt. New York: Viking, 1967), p. 260; Algernon Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, in *The Works of Algernon Sidney* (London, 1752), p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>Significantly, the eagle faces the olive branch. Yet some of the founders questioned using the Roman war bird as a national symbol. Benjamin Franklin suggested, somewhat whimsically, that the native American turkey would be more appropriate.

<sup>12</sup>The actual title of the *Olive Branch Petition*, as printed in *Dickinson's Political Writings*, is, *Second Petition of Congress to the King's Most Excellent Majesty*.

<sup>13</sup>George Washington, "Circular to the States," 8 June 1783, *Writings*, XXVI, 495, 494.

<sup>14</sup>"On the mischievous effects of militia laws," *The American Museum*, 4 (1788), 224-25.

<sup>15</sup>*Journal of William Maclay*, ed. Edgar S. Maclay (New York: Appleton, 1890), pp. 239, 241.

<sup>16</sup>"From the journals of a debating society," *The American Museum*, 12 (1792), 305.

<sup>17</sup>Maclay, p. 175.

<sup>18</sup>Maclay, p. 240.

<sup>19</sup>Benjamin Rush, "A Plan of a Peace-Office for the United States," in *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* (Philadelphia, 1798), pp. 183-88.

<sup>20</sup>Timothy Dwight, Note to *Greenfield Hill*, in *Major Poems*, p. 534.

<sup>21</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, rev. of "Joan of Arc," by Robert Southey, *The Monthly Magazine and American Review*, 1 (1779), 225-26.

<sup>22</sup>Barlow, Note to *The Columbiad*, in *Works*, II, 429-32.

<sup>23</sup>Charles Brockden Brown, rev. of "A Eulogy on General Washington," by John Davis, *Monthly Magazine* 2 (1800), 307.

<sup>24</sup>Samuel Bayard, "A Funeral Oration, occasioned by the Death of Gen. George Washington," quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1800), 221; and Brown, rev. of Bayard, p. 220.

<sup>25</sup>John M. Mason, "A Funeral Oration . . . for the Death of General Washington," quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, (1800), 303.

<sup>26</sup>William Beers, "An Oration on the Death of General Washington," quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1800), 132.

<sup>27</sup>Fisher Ames, "An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington," quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1800), 360-61.

<sup>28</sup>Henry Lee, "A Funeral Oration, in honour of the memory of George Washington," quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1800), 123.

<sup>29</sup>Mason, quoted in *Monthly Magazine*, 2 (1800), 303.

<sup>30</sup>"To Dr. William Bache," 2 February 1800, *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York: Modern Library-Random House, 1944), p. 566.



# William O. Dyck's Story of the John and Maria (Klassen) Friesen Family

by Thomas B. Mierau

Johann Friesen, born in Russia in 1842 to Prussian immigrants, came to the United States with his wife, Maria Klassen, and family in 1875. Johann taught school in Russia and carried his trade to Nebraska. Johann read Tolstoy and European history as well as the Bible, which always lay open on the kitchen table. Johann and Maria bought homestead rights to a farm west of Henderson, Nebraska, in 1882. As time passed the farming operation became very successful, and cream cans filled with money were stored away. With this money Johann started the Bank of Henderson at the turn of the century.<sup>1</sup>

Johann and Maria (Klassen) Friesen were married in 1868 in the Molotschna Colony, South Russia.<sup>2</sup> Johann and Maria's first three children Johann J., Gerhard W., and Maria were born in the village of Paulsheim. Anna was born in Margenau shortly before the family emigrated. Abraham J. was born in York County, Nebraska, while Johann was teaching school in the county. Their youngest child, Peter L., was born after the family had moved to their farmstead in Hamilton County.

## The Teacher

Johann Friesen began his teaching career in the Molotschna Colony, South Russia. He had been an apprentice teacher in the village of Waldheim before he became a full-fledged teacher. He taught in the village of Margenau the last year that his family had remained in Russia. Johann's parents and brothers and sister had immigrated to America in 1874; however, Johann felt obligated to remain in Russia another year to honor his teaching contract. He had contracted to teach in Margenau for the 1874-1875 school year.<sup>3</sup>

Johann and Maria with their four children immigrated with Maria's

parents to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in 1875. The voyage on the *S. S. Nederland* was eventful for the whole family. Maria had packed a trunk full of roasted zwiebach. Johann had the stimulating company of Abraham Thiessen, the revolutionary representative of the landless class in Russia.<sup>4</sup> And, two-year-old Maria found sudden riches when the captain of the ship slipped a nickel into her hand. After the *S. S. Nederland* arrived at Philadelphia July 25, 1875, the Johann Friesen family as part of the extended Gerhard G. Klassen family traveled by rail to Mountain Lake, Minnesota.<sup>5</sup> When they reached Mountain Lake, July 30, 1875, Johann was considering settling there with his in-laws.<sup>6</sup> But, when Johann received a letter from his father, Johann Friesen, saying that land could be bought cheaper in Nebraska he began to reconsider. Johann and Maria with their children left the Klassen family in Minnesota and traveled to the Henderson area where they settled.

Since Johann Friesen was a school teacher, it was natural that his first job in the United States would be teaching. He taught school at the Rev. Heinrich Epp farm (southeast of present day Henderson) in a room furnished by Reverend Epp. The Friesen family—Johann, Maria, Johann (John J.), Gerhard (George W.), little Maria, and Anna—lived in a frame house consisting of two rooms and a kitchen, with one of the rooms doubling as a school. The Heinrich Epp family had lived in this house until they built a large frame house on the farmstead.

Arithmetic, writing, Bible history, and catechism were among the subjects taught in the early schools. The instructional language, of course, was German. The catechism books had been packed in a trunk and brought from Russia. German primers and other Ger-

man books were purchased in America from a Mr. Voth. Johann and Maria's oldest child, John J., was enrolled in this first school as was Heinrich Epp's son, Heinrich H. Johann received from fifty cents to one dollar cash a month per child as salary. With this money Maria bought fruits and vegetables—cucumbers, cabbages, watermelons, muskmelons, and lots of pumpkins (from which she made, among other things, pumpkin soup). Twenty-five cents bought a whole sack full of dried fruit. Maria would often make a pudding with dried plums and raisins called *pluma moos*. *Pluma moos* was little three-year-old Maria's favorite dish. Singing played an important role in the lives of the pioneers. Johann was well known for his marvelous bass voice. He often led the singing at community and church functions.

Johann and Maria bought a homestead in 1877 called the Wolfe place (one mile north and one mile east of present day Henderson or one mile north of the Peter Wolfe timber claim). The homesteader, from whom they bought the claim, had built a sod house on the land. The sod house became both home and school. Little Maria, who was four years old when the family moved to the Wolfe place, did not like the sod house or the life at the Wolfe place. She had been happy living on the Heinrich Epp farm. After having moved to the Wolfe place, she often said to her mother in Low German, "I want to move back to the Epps." Johann taught school in this sod house in the winter of 1878. The next year 1879, when Johann taught in the home of Thomas Friesen, the sod house was used exclusively as the family dwelling.

January 24, 1878, the family was blessed with a new addition. A son, Abraham J., was born to Johann and Maria in York County, Nebraska.

## The Farmer

Johann Friesen in 1882 bought homestead rights to a farm two miles west of the south side of present day Henderson. Johann built a sod house after moving from the Wolfe place. This sod house had one room with a little kitchen built on. A small window with small panes let some light into the house. Rough timbers were laid for the roof, then covered with strips of sod. A sod plow laid the sod over with the sod on top and the grass underneath; the roots of the grass held the sod together. The floor was covered with sand and had to be cleaned often. There was a shovel close by to shovel snow. Near the house a storm cellar had been dug to store vegetables and provide shelter against storms. Sod had been laid over ceiling timbers to provide a ground-level roof.

About the first thing Johann had to think about was water. Water had collected in holes in the creek west of the house where the cattle could find water to drink. Otherwise, the water level was deep, and to get down to it was a difficult and arduous task. Tied to a derrick about 30 feet high, a drill about four by four by sixteen was attached to a rope ending in a windlass. It took three men three days to drill a 100-foot well powered by a windmill. A water-bucket well was about a foot-and-a-half in diameter. Johann had a water bucket made in Sutton. The water bucket was about three feet long and eight inches in diameter. The bucket filled up from the bottom. The bucket was brought up by a windlass operated by a hand wheel.

Before leaving the Wolfe school, Johann purchased two red and white oxen steers named Tom and Jerry. Johann guided the oxen not with lines, but with word of command. "Gee" and "Hah" (right and left) rang through the air as he called out in his deep bass voice. Once Tom and Jerry stalled while pulling a wagon over the storm cellar. Their hoofs sunk deep into the sod covering of the storm cellar. A block and tackle had to be used to get the oxen out.

When supplies were needed or harnesses and wagons needed to be repaired or blacksmithing was needed, this team was driven over the grasslands—there were no permanent roads at that time—to Sutton, 14 miles to the south. Little Maria on occasion went along with her father for com-



*Johann Friesen Family with Klassen Relatives, ca. 1909.*

*Top. Maria, George, Klassen, Anna Kroeker (wife of Klassen), Peter L., Martha and Marie. Middle. Johann and Maria. Bottom. Bill, Ruth, Hanna, Esther, and Abe Dick.*

pany. Maria sat in the wagon bed while her father, usually on foot, would guide the oxen. This was an all day trip going and coming. They would leave at the break of day and return as the sun set in the west. The oxen moved in slow motion and would stop at will to eat grass. With a low rumble the wooden wheels creaked and moaned under a heavy load of lumber, coal, or groceries. Syrup, sugar or beans in 100-pound sacks, and other staples were traded for or purchased with cash. Little Maria had a lot of time on those journeys to reflect on the world around her; and, to her everything looked really big. Maria's mother used to remind the children that Jesus bore the yoke for us. Comparing it with the yoke born by the oxen Tom and Jerry, little Maria thought this must have been a great burden for Jesus to bear. Besides buying lumber, coal, and groceries in bulk, Johann would usually stop at a Mr. Hoffmann's house to borrow a book to read. Mr. Hoffmann possessed an extensive library for that time. He was one of the early settlers around Sutton whom the Henderson Mennonites called "Kojonista." They were German-speaking emigrants from Besserabia, near Odessa, South Russia. They were

advanced both here and in Besserabia.

The Blue River flowed through Farmer's Valley a few miles south of the Friesen farm. A wooden dam and a flour mill had been built on the river in 1881, creating a mill pond. The mill pond became a favorite spot for fishing, swimming, and picnicking. Wheat and rye were ground into flour at the water-wheel mill. Cottonwood and oak trees which grew up along the river were also cut into rough lumber at Farmer's Valley. Johann Friesen often hauled wheat sacked in 100-pound sacks to the water-wheel mill in Farmer's Valley to be ground into flour. The miller was paid with wheat. The miller also kept the shorts and bran. Johann also bought rough lumber at the saw mill.<sup>7</sup>

Johann Friesen bought a team of horses following the oxen period. He bought a white horse named Fox and a dark bay named Sal. Once Johann with two of his children drove this team hitched to a wagon to the homestead of Mr. George, who lived about a half-mile south from the Friesens. Little Maria, who was six years old at the time, was in the wagon box. George W. was supposed to stay with the wagon, tend the horses, and care for his sister while Johann left the wagon and walked



*Left. Maria Klassen Friesen, ca. 1900.*



*Right. George W. and John J. Friesen, ca. 1883-84.*

behind the barn to where the Georges were set to butcher a pig. Curiosity got the better of George W., who was only eight years old. He wrapped the lines around the wagon post and left the wagon unattended with little Maria sitting alone in the wagon box. When the stuck pig squealed, the horses became alarmed and bolted away in a fury. Little Maria was too scared to get out. Fox and Sal took the road home at top speed. When Maria (Klassen) Friesen saw the horses cut the corner into the farm yard, she shrieked, "My poor child will be killed." The mother was quick to react, however. Shouting, "God, Maria is in there," she grabbed hold of a tug on the harness as the horses raced passed the house. The horses kept running at top speed until they ran over the earthen-covered storm cellar. The weight of their bodies on the soft ground sunk Fox and Sal up to their knees which abruptly ended their journey. [This was the same storm cellar where the oxen had gotten stuck some years before.] Little Maria was found on the floor of the wagon scared, but safe.

Another near tragedy occurred that same year involving Anna. Maria (Klassen) Friesen had taken Anna with

her to attend a funeral. Anna, who was four years old, caught scarlet fever at the funeral. Anna developed a large growth on her neck; her mother thought she would die. But, Franz Wall lanced the growth with his pocket knife, and Anna recovered.

Another horse owned by Johann Friesen was a mare named Flora. Flora was bought from Johann's father. Flora later had two colts, a stallion named Jim and a mare named Dora. Dora was a gentle horse; the only one the children were allowed to ride. Jim, on the other hand, was not as calm and good natured. One day Maria (Klassen) Friesen sent her son Abraham J. (Abe J.) to check on Jim. The flies were bothering Jim. Abe, who was four years old at the time, tried to brush away the flies. In doing so, he got too close to Jim's front legs; and the horse kicked. Abe lost the sight of one of his eyes.

When little Maria was seven years old, the Johann Friesen family by horse-drawn wagon made one of their rare sun-up to sun-set trips to York, the county seat of York County. They left their horses and wagon tied to a hitching post while they went shopping for some cloth. Little Maria's overcoat was

stolen out of the wagon while they were in the store. It was a pretty gray one made by a tailor. Itinerant tailors often passed through the Henderson area making suits and overcoats out of material the tailor had on hand or out of that bought by the customer elsewhere.

The last child born to Johann and Maria arrived on the 9th of May, 1883. The baby boy was named Peter L. Friesen. As Peter grew older he became known by his initials P. L. Johann and Maria now had six children, four boys and two girls, John J. (15), George W. (13), Maria (10), Anna (8), Abe J. (5), and Peter.

Spring wheat was the first crop planted by Johann Friesen when he started farming. Corn was the next crop added and was planted in greater quantity than wheat. After a few years Johann abandoned the spring wheat and began planting winter wheat in its place. Winter wheat was sowed in the fall. At harvest time—about mid July—the wheat was shoveled into 100-pound sacks and stored in the attic. The sacks of wheat were hoisted up a ladder to the attic on the backs of the older sons. Hams—smoked and salted down to keep them from spoiling—were stored in the sacked wheat to keep flies off them.

The cream that was produced on the farm was usually sold for cash. The cream was separated from the milk, poured into a container, then placed in the livestock's water tank to cool. The cream was kept in the water tank until the man from the creamery, who came by twice a week, would pick up the cream. This man became known as the cream angel, an almost legendary figure to the Friesen children.

As the years passed Johann increased the number of acres on the farm. He bought out the homestead rights to eighty adjoining acres from Jack Bray for \$150. He also bought eighty acres from the Northwestern Railroad Company for \$4.00 an acre. Later the Northwestern Railroad paid Johann and Maria \$250 for right of way through this same eighty.

The blue stem grass around Henderson grew waist high and waved and billowed with the south wind. The prairie grass was mowed for horse and cattle feed, as well as to fire the Russian ovens. A great fear pioneers experienced came from prairie fires. The drama of a prairie fire came one day to

the Johann Friesen farm from the southwest. Johann plowed a fireline three furrows deep around the house to prevent the flames from burning their home. They beat the flames with gunny sacks. Fortunately, all their livestock and buildings were saved.

Another hazardous element the pioneers faced was snow storms. January 12, 1888, a blizzard that swept through Nebraska and South Dakota reached the Henderson area. The storm hit the great plains with sudden ferocity. The storm raged for days. Visibility was so poor that Johann had to string a rope from the house to the barn so as not to lose his way. The snow drifted so deep that after the storm Johann had to tunnel under snow drifts to reach his livestock in the barn.<sup>8</sup>

The same winter the terrible blizzard swept through Nebraska, Johann and his son George W., 17, had driven a wagon to Aurora, 14 miles northwest of Henderson, to get a load of coal. On their return home the weather changed from a beautiful, crisp, sun-shining day to a blizzard. George W. did not have an overcoat along to keep warm. He became so chilled through and through that he developed an infection which settled in his leg. The infection did not heal; he felt pain in his leg most of the remainder of his life.<sup>9</sup>

Though life on the prairie was hard, people survived because they were willing to help each other. If any one was sick or there was a childbirth or a death, Maria (Klassen) Friesen hitched up Flora and set out on her way. She was there to help in all emergencies. She also made dresses and sheets in which the dead were buried.

To help bear the burden of life on the prairie, settlers kept in contact with relatives who had either remained in Russia or who had settled elsewhere. In the early days when a letter from Russia arrived, it was tied to a stick high on top of a building or on the windmill. In this way letters from Russia were shared with all. News from Russia was eagerly awaited by the new settlers. Sometimes seeds to plant were included in the letters.

Settlers occasionally traveled back to Russia or to other areas in North America to visit relatives. Maria (Klassen) Friesen traveled by rail to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in 1884 to visit her parents and siblings. When she went on her trip, her eleven-year-old daughter, Maria, took care of the

house. Occasional visits from relatives from afar also helped lift the burden of life on the prairie.

Johann Friesen cherished friendships with non-Mennonite neighbors, as well as with fellow Mennonites. Johann's friendships with Mr. Hoffmann and Mr. George are evidence of his ecumenical spirit. The George family lived in a dugout about a half-mile south of Johann Friesen's farm. As a Civil War veteran, Mr. George was given his homestead rights by the government. The George family had come from Wisconsin. The family members were quite picturesque and colorful compared to their plain, straight-laced Mennonite and "Kolonista" neighbors. Mrs. George was a friendly, pleasant woman who smoked a corn cob pipe. She even planted her own tobacco. The Georges had four children: Nellie, Rose, Anna, and Otis (called Link in honor of President Abraham Lincoln). Link was an ornery youngster. Johann had to guard his watermelon patch to keep Link from stealing or destroying his watermelons.

The early years on the farm were filled with many unusual experiences. Once when a hog had died, an Indian asked to have the dead hog. Johann gave the person permission to take it. The Indian came back a few days later and got the pig.

Johann and Maria believed money was to be laid away, not spent. But, when little Maria was about ten years old her father did give her twenty-five cents to buy lemonade and cookies from a concession stand at the Farmer's Valley annual 4th-of-July picnic. The lemonade was five cents a glass. Little Maria had been taught, too well, the worth of a nickel. When she returned home she still had the quarter her father had given her.

When Johann and Maria (Klassen) Friesen came to Nebraska, they had several hundred dollars, which was a sizable sum in 1875. The first few years in America, the family earned little cash money; however, they always had plenty to eat and sufficient shelter. After Johann and Maria purchased their homestead, their cash earnings increased, and they were able to make improvements on their farm and to set some cash aside. By 1888, Johann and Maria had been able to lay aside \$2500 cash.

When little Maria was about fifteen years old her parents sent her into the general mercantile in Henderson to

buy a few groceries, some cloth, and thread. Mr. Dyckmann, a man who had come from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, ran the general store. As Maria was paying for the merchandise, Mr. Dyckmann asked her how much money her father had. She answered innocently, "My father has \$2500 in a milk can at home." Later, she realized what she had done and was sorry. But, no harm came from the incident. The family was fortunate that no one ever attempted to rob them.

### The Teacher and Philosopher

Johann continued to teach school in the winter even after he began to farm. The school term was for three months. He taught school in his home west of Henderson for several years after having purchased the homestead. Johann continued to teach the basics—arithmetic, reading, penmanship, and spelling. Johann would often say in German, "Grammar is a necessity." Reading the Bible in German, spelling in German, and singing out of the German hymnbook were also important parts of the curriculum. Some of Johann's pupils were Cornelius Dick and Franz Martens and his children John J., George W., and Maria.

There was an English common school in a sod house near the George homestead. There were nine sections of land in the school district. There was a disagreement as to where the school house should be located. Finally, the public school was built on the corner across the road from Johann Friesen's farm. The school was known as the Friesen school for many years. Johann taught in this school for some time. Later, Johann Boehr taught in this school for many years. He walked several miles to the school from his home every day, rain or shine.

Johann and Maria later sent some of their children to a new German school built a half-mile north of their farm on the east side of the road. The classes were taught by Gerhard Dick. He was not a trained teacher as was Johann, but he had a talent for teaching. He lived across the road from the school. Little Maria attended this school from age nine to age twelve.

Johann was very interested in history and philosophy; he was, also, a very dedicated student of the Bible. An open Bible, which was well marked and read, lay on the kitchen table. Johann had

Christian devotions every day in his house. His favorite author was Tolstoy. Johann was attracted to Tolstoy because Tolstoy had lived the life of his convictions. Tolstoy was an author and philosopher who had a compassion for his people; he lived among the Russian peasants and shared their daily life. Johann was a self-educated student of history and philosophy. The Napoleonic wars and the philosophy of the French revolutionary era fascinated him. However, he did not subscribe to many of the conclusions of the Deist philosophers of this period. Johann believed that the basic message of the gospel was true. He believed in the virgin birth, the atoning death, the resurrection, and the coming judgment. He used to say, "If you do not believe the gospel you have nothing." Johann's favorite expression was, "Ohne Hoffnung lebt man nicht mehr!" ("Without hope one no longer lives!").

Johann was interested in the politics of his homeland. He was concerned about the injustices toward the landless classes among both the Mennonite population and the Russian peasant population. He was a friend of Abraham Thiessen, the spokesman for the Mennonite landless, who was expelled from Russia for his zealous support of emigration. Johann was a friend to his Russian neighbors. When the Friesen family was about to emigrate from Russia, their Russian maid, a young girl, begged to come along to America. She was both sorry to see the Friesen family leave and frightened by the unrest among the Russian peasants. Johann often said, "Someday hell will break out in Russia."

Johann Friesen would lie out on the bluegrass lawn at his home two miles west of Henderson with his wife and children to look up at the heavens. Looking up at the stars, Johann would describe to his children the vastness of the universe. Pointing to particular stars, he would tell his children how far away and how big they were. How the universe could stretch out into unlimited space intrigued Johann. He believed the universe was created by design, not by accident.

Johann also took pride in his physical fitness. He could impress his children with his physical agility. He could extend one leg out straight at right angles to his torso while standing and come down on his haunches and get up again without losing his balance.

## The Banker

Around the turn of the century, Johann Friesen, together with his four sons, established the Bank of Henderson. The bank was financed with two cream cans filled with money. Shortly after the bank opened, John J. withdrew from the bank and purchased his parents' farm. Johann and Maria (Klassen) Friesen, with their sons George and Peter, then moved to town. They purchased a house one block west of Main Street on Front Street. From their house they could see the door of the bank.

For the first decade of the bank's existence, Johann would arrive at the bank each morning an hour before opening. He would sweep the floor and make ready for the day. As the years went by Johann took a less active role in the bank, and George W. and Peter L. took more responsibility for the daily affairs of the bank. P. L. was the cashier. Later Peter Braun was hired to help run the bank. Abe J. held stock in the bank, but his primary occupation was farming. When the bank closed in 1935, George W. held 104 shares, P. L. held 49 shares, and Abe J. held 47 shares of stock. The stock was valued at \$100.00 per share in 1935.<sup>10</sup>

## Closing

Johann didn't spend all his time working; as he grew older, he took frequent naps. Johann's nephew, A. W. Friesen, recalled this incident: "I had an old uncle Johann Friesen from Paulsheim, Russia. I visited him years ago and noticed his Russian Kroger clock on the wall. It struck precisely on the hour—it seemed to me as if the fire alarm sounded. I asked, 'Uncle, how are you able to sleep with this alarm in the room?' He answered, 'I hardly hear it, but when it stops I wake up.'"<sup>11</sup>

Johann and Maria lived to see all their children, except Peter, marry. Peter never married. Maria married Cornelius C. Dick, who had been one of Johann's brightest pupils. Anna married Daniel J. Kroeker. John J. married Sarah Ratzlaff. Abe J. married Elisabeth Kroeker, a sister to Daniel. And, George W. married Hannah Stark, the daughter of Judge Stark, a Nebraska State Supreme Court Justice.

Tragedy struck twice shortly after two of their children married. First, Anna (Friesen) Kroeker died four days after having given birth to a baby, Anna. Second, Hannah (Stark) Friesen died of a ruptured appendix six months after she and George were married. George later married Anna Marie Koss.

Johann and Maria lived a full life. Their life had been filled with hard work but with many rewards. They had the adventure of settling a new land, serving others, and raising a family. They contributed to the growth of a community and enjoyed the prosperity that followed. Maria (Klassen) Friesen died March 12, 1911, at the age of 63. Johann Friesen died March 3, 1919, at the age of 76. Johann and Maria are both buried in the Friesen cemetery, two miles west of Henderson on the northeast corner of their former homestead.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Interviews with William O. (Bill) Dick, 419 E. 1st Street, Newton, Kansas 67114, from July 12, 1978, to August 17, 1983, in Newton and Wichita, Kansas. Most of the material presented in this paper originates from typed notes of Bill Dick. Bill's notes were made from his recollection of conversations with his mother, Maria (Friesen) Dick, who lived with him until she died. Information in this paper, unless noted otherwise, may be credited to Bill Dick.

<sup>2</sup> From a note on the bottom of a sugar bowl which had been a wedding present to Johann Friesen and Maria Klassen. The sugar bowl is in the Bill Dick collection. In an interview with Bill and Ruth Dick, Maria (Friesen) Dick was reported to have written the year of their marriage on the bottom of the sugar bowl.

<sup>3</sup> There is a photo of this school in P. M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)* (Fresno, California: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 782.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham Thiessen and his family eventually settled in Jansen, Nebraska.

<sup>5</sup> Clarence Hiebert, *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1974), 246. All the information in these two sentences came from Bill Dick except references to the name of the ship and the date and place of the ship's arrival.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold C. Schultz, *The Schultz Family—A History* (Tucson, Arizona: Published by author, 1982), 8.

<sup>7</sup> For more information about the flour mill see: Catherine R. Griess, *History of Farmers Valley Mill and Vicinity* (Sutton, Nebraska: Published by author, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> For more details about this storm see: Stanley E. Voith, ed., *Henderson Mennonites: From Holland to Henderson* (Henderson, Nebraska: Henderson Centennial Committee, 1975), 58. Also, for J. J. Friesen's account of this storm see Maria P. and Sara P. Buller, *The Epp Family Record* (Henderson, Nebraska: Published by authors), pages not numbered [page 14 in author's copy].

<sup>9</sup> Rev. A. W. Friesen in the March 5, 1955, issue of *The Mennonite* related the story of how Gerhard's (George W.'s) leg came to be healed 67 years after this incident.

<sup>10</sup> Papers concerning the foreclosure of the Bank of Henderson, are located in the J. J. Friesen file at Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas. Jacob J. Friesen was the Secretary of the Depositors Committee involved in closing the Bank of Henderson, Henderson, Nebraska. The first report was issued January 15, 1935, and the second May 22, 1935. The assets of the bank January 15, 1935, totaled \$35,239.59.

<sup>11</sup> A. W. Friesen, "Aus unseren Gemeinden—Henderson, Nebraska," *Der Bote* (January 13, 1976), 9. Translation by author. Also, letter from Ory Friesen, 1330 Overlook Avenue N. W., Salem, Oregon 97304, April 19, 1983. Ory Friesen has the clock in his possession. It has been handed down from oldest son to oldest son for four generations.



# Exercising a Free Conscience: the Conscientious Objectors of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic

by Lawrence Klippenstein

All of the nine Communist-led nations of Eastern and Southeastern Europe guarantee their peoples freedom of conscience as a constitutional right of citizenship and personal self-expression.<sup>1</sup> How this ideal is understood by the powers that be, how it is applied, and, more specifically, how it is experienced by the citizens themselves may contradict in practice what theoretically is emphasized. The degree of contrast may vary, however, from one country to another, and, as other observers have pointed out, it is not only necessary to draw attention to these inconsistencies but also to notice the variations as well.

For many persons in these countries, as in Western nations, the refusal to take the oath, and/or to bear arms as military recruits has become a public test of the free conscience privilege. Defense of "the Motherland," or the "socialist peace" is the obligation of all citizens, say the same constitutions which appear to offer a right to reject that demand if conscience so dictates. Penalty legislation for those who refuse to serve exists in all these countries, and there are few alternatives. That, for conscientious objectors, is really where the problem may begin.

Conscientious objection to military service, usually on religious grounds, is at present, an acknowledged official concern in the Soviet Union, an open debate in Hungary, as well as the German Democratic Republic, and more than just an occasional occurrence (a number of cases are known) in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> Three of these governments, namely Hungary, Poland and the GDR, already provide legal alternatives for certain categories of these "dissidents," and in several others of the nine, such forms of service can at times be obtained upon request.<sup>3</sup>

Concretely, one must ask nonetheless, what are the hurdles—and the options—which these proponents of free conscience can expect today? In what sense is their "freedom" recognized and upheld, and are further changes in that direction probable, or even possible in the near future? A brief look at two situations, that of the USSR and that of the GDR, will illustrate to some extent the range of the difficulties which objectors must anticipate, as well as a measure of flexibility which even socialist non-Western governments can offer and afford.

Neither of the two settings can be regarded as typical in the full sense of the word. If the sharpness of potential conflict or opposition faced by conscientious objectors in all Eastern European countries were placed on a continuum, then the USSR would be on the end of greatest pressures, along with countries like Albania, certainly, and Romania, perhaps. The German Democratic Republic is, by contrast, presently the place of most accommodation as far as relationships between government and religious objectors to military service are concerned. Hungary, and possibly also Poland, if it had to deal with the issue on a larger scale, would be closer to the GDR.<sup>4</sup>

In the Soviet Union conscientious objectors enter the struggle the moment they register their reservations about fulfilling their military obligations with their local commanding office. The military statutes, based upon the Constitution of the USSR state that every able-bodied Soviet male between the ages of 17 and 27 years of age must expect to be called up for military service in the Armed Forces of the Motherland. This means a term of active service lasting from one to three years, depending on placement in the various branches of the forces. Temporary

deferral for study purposes in some instances or physical inability to serve are the only accepted qualifications for consideration of exemption as the law now stands.<sup>5</sup>

Members of a Soviet Peace Committee delegation, when asked about conscientious objectors on a visit to Britain, expressed open disbelief that any man would refuse to fight to defend his country.<sup>6</sup> The fact is, nevertheless, that in the USSR a growing number of individuals, certainly hundreds, and perhaps as many as several thousand a year, are insisting that the right to exemption from military service for reasons of conscience, whether religious or otherwise, ought also to be a statutory consideration.<sup>7</sup> What else, say these persons, can the much-touted "freedom of conscience" really mean?

This contention with respect to freedom of conscience and military service faced the Soviet government already in the early months of the new regime right after the Revolution. Although himself a bitter opponent of all pacifists, Lenin nevertheless yielded to the pressure of certain pragmatic considerations when he decreed an exemption clause for conscientious objectors early in 1919.<sup>8</sup> During the Civil War this decree of January 4 allowed tens of thousand of persons from such religious groups as the Russian Baptists, Evangelical Christians, Seventh Day Adventists and Mennonites to obtain a service exemption on grounds of conscience and religious conviction.<sup>9</sup>

Within a few years after Lenin's death, the decree appears to have been revoked, if not in the statute books then at least in practice. Strong pressures forced all these groups to reconsider their pacifist views and make explicit loyalty declarations to the new government.<sup>10</sup> Dissenters from such official support took their views



1.

1. A Christian serviceman is visited by family and friends. The Red Army stations soldiers as far away from their homes as possible to make such visits difficult and expensive.
2. Bernhard Guenther, a Christian serviceman, was arrested and sentenced to one and a half years imprisonment. (However, he had been imprisoned for two years awaiting his trial).
3. Heinrich Loewen was arrested on Jan. 1, 1982, and sentenced to four years in prison. Like Guenther, he belongs to an unregistered congregation.
4. The military credentials of Peter Ivanovich Dick from Tokskoe village in the Krasnogvardeisk region of Orenburg. The document was found after Dick died while serving in Afghanistan in 1982. The German Section of the European Conference for Human Rights and Self Determination received the document and published it in Die Welt, August 12, 1982.

“underground,” as the Mennonites, almost by themselves, continued to negotiate actively for an alternate to service in the armed forces. The tentative arrangements for alternative service such as construction work and forestry service also terminated when the Stalin Constitution of 1936 created a firm and permanent basis for the universal military service requirements as they now stand.<sup>11</sup>

A few years later the German invasion of World War II drew to the fore the deeply-rooted patriotic feelings of the Soviet people. At the invitation of Stalin such religious groups as the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Christians/Baptists brought open pledges to support the war effort in return for privileges of reorganization and reconstitution as legal church communities in the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> Smaller bodies with pacifist traditions, mainly Mennonites and Seventh Day

Adventists who were also of German origin, found themselves classed as “unreliable” and “fascist” enemies of the state. They were most often sent into the work battalions of prison camps and other non-military installations or labor projects. After the war, they were left for a decade or so in restricted residence (“kommendatur”) communities of the Urals and Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> Conscientious objection to military service was almost unheard of publicly, though instances of it probably did still occur.<sup>14</sup>

Since about 1970 conscientious objection as resistance to military service, and thus a form of dissent, has again increasingly become a public affair. Military authorities not infrequently express anxieties about the influence of “pacifistic ideas” in the army and in society in general.<sup>15</sup> Soviet papers and periodicals comment on this phenomenon with some regularity. Conscientious objectors, and those who



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support or encourage them, whether parents, friends, or congregations, are consistently charged with disloyalty and hostility toward the Soviet state.<sup>16</sup> At least one Soviet religious periodical, the Evangelical Christians/Baptist journal, *Bratski Vestnik*, has recently addressed the matter as well.<sup>17</sup>

Publicized cases of refusal to bear arms or to swear the military oath are found chiefly among unregistered (i.e. “illegal”) religious communities such as the Reformed Baptists (earlier known as “initsiativniki”), the True and Free Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and those Pentecostals who do not belong to the national Protestant organization, the All Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.<sup>18</sup> Similar protests may be found, albeit less frequently, among other Soviet Germans and Jews, Crimean Tatars, the True Orthodox Church, Roman Catholics, and even other groups.<sup>19</sup>



While congregational registration no doubt implies an acquiescence with the official state laws of military conscription, reason exists to think that members of registered congregations, Baptists and Mennonites more likely, are found among the objectors as well.<sup>20</sup>

Theological differences still divide these Christian and other denominations, but on the issue of bearing arms and the taking of human life, many of them agree. As these objectors interpret the Bible, in the case of Christians at least, killing in any form is wrong and sinful. Moreover, a clear New Testament command exists against the swearing of any kind of oaths.<sup>21</sup> As one Christian recruit put it before his local military officials: "I am a believer, and from my purely religious conviction I cannot take the military oath or bear arms . . . I do not refuse to serve in the ranks of the Soviet army, and am prepared to fulfill conscientiously all that my service demands. But with regards to the oath, as a religious believer, I cannot alter my thoughts and convictions."<sup>22</sup>

That expression of concern about the oath, coupled with a willingness to perform some kind of appropriate non-military form of service (or at times even including the bearing of arms) is shared particularly by many Reformed Baptist young men.<sup>23</sup> It may include some Mennonites as well.<sup>24</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses are consistently opposed to any form of military or alternative work within the framework of the forces as such.<sup>25</sup> Seventh Day Adventist believers may take their first stand of opposition to military duties on Saturday (their Biblical "day of rest") but are often cited also for refusing the oath or bearing of arms as well.<sup>26</sup>

For some individuals, the refusal of military service is less a matter of religious conviction than a concern for its impact on emigration plans. This has been true for a number of young Jews, as well as Pentecostals, and also some Soviet Germans who wish to emigrate and feel that military service could make their departure more difficult. In the past some would-be emigrants have had their requests turned down because they were considered to be holders of sensitive military information which service in the army had given them. Some Jewish applicants, having received permission from Israel to enter, hand in their Soviet citizenship papers with the claim that they are no longer

citizens of the Soviet Union, hence not subject to its military service requirements.<sup>27</sup>

Soviet military authorities will not accept from its citizens any points of view which disclaim an obligation to serve in the armed forces, either on grounds of conscience or otherwise. Refusing to swear the oath of service is generally seen also as an objection to bearing of arms. Inasmuch as the law forbids the handing of weapons to anyone not swearing the oath, this interpretation can logically follow and does often apply. Court proceedings which very frequently follow a notice of refusal will result in sentences not simply for non-swearing of oaths or "evasion of call-up to service (RSFSR Criminal Code Article 80). Charges will be laid on the basis of Article 249 of the Code, namely, attempting to evade the obligations of military service altogether.<sup>28</sup>

Punishments under Article 249 typically include imprisonment for periods from three to seven years in times of peace and could include the death penalty during times of war. A sentence of two and a half to four years seems to be most common at the present time.<sup>29</sup>

Imprisonment is not however, inevitable. Granting an alternative form of non-combatant service can occur at the discretion of the local commanding office. Some alternative service terms are granted, perhaps more often than one might expect.<sup>30</sup> However, even where court proceedings do not follow, and where an alternative form of service is granted, conscientious objectors may still encounter various pressures, and sundry forms of harassment designed to force surrender of their pacifist views, and indeed, of faith itself. Several instances of death brought about by mistreatment and abuse of Christians on active duty have been reported as well.<sup>31</sup>

The present-day military service requirements of the German Democratic Republic are in essence identical to (perhaps even greater than) those of the USSR. Conscientious objectors, however, find themselves in a considerably more flexible situation in the GDR. In East Germany a legal *Wehrersatzdienst* (alternative defense service) option has been in existence for over twenty years, and the possibilities of further accommodation to the wishes of objectors may be somewhat less remote than in the Soviet Union. The develop-

ment of such a differentiation, as well as the current status of objectors to military service in the GDR, point to a certain "shiftability" that even a Communist state may possess at times.

Many people may not remember that the GDR had no form of conscription during the first thirteen years of its short history. The war-time Allies, having attempted to crush the "military spirit of the German people," held it as a major objective in 1945 to ensure that the new Germany would be a nation of peace. For a time some people dreamed of a single neutralist state, with no more than a tiny defense force (Home Guard) along the lines of what was eventually worked out in Austria.<sup>32</sup>

Events, however, followed a different path. The Federal Republic of Germany passed a compulsory conscription law just ten years after the war ended, and in 1962 the GDR followed suit. The statutes of East Germany rendered all males between the ages of 18 and 50 liable for service in the *Nationalen Volksarmee* (National People's Army). For emergencies of defense that regulation was subsequently extended to cover women of the same age, and also to include men up to the age of 60. In the initial legislation, prison was the only legal "alternative" to service in the armed forces of the GDR.<sup>33</sup>

Significant segments of the East German public registered disapproval of the move. Among young adults, that is, those who had experienced the horrors of 1944 and 1945 as children, there was widespread detestation of violence and all forms of war. The oft-repeated slogan that conscripts would be "defending the peace" frequently fell on virtually deaf ears.

Some Protestant church leaders of the EKD (Evangelical Church of Germany) were deeply disappointed by the government's seeming lack of respect for freedom of conscience. The EKD had in fact raised this very issue a decade or more before the service statutes of 1962 had come into being. Its synods of 1948 (Eisenach), 1950 (Berlin-Weissensee) and Elbingrode (1952) could document with public declarations a readiness to stand behind the decisions of young Germans who might at some time resist the call to military service for reasons of conscience and Christian faith.<sup>34</sup>

As the situation now developed, quite in contrast with what took place in the USSR, it was particularly the Protestant



Two symbols of the East German peace community: *Ploughs from Swords* and "*Bausoldaten*" or "*Spatensoldaten*" (soldiers of the spade).

religious leaders who helped to shape the legal status of conscientious objectors in the GDR. Church-state conversations led in the spring of 1962 to a *modus vivendi* in which the state agreed to end its earlier attacks on all forms of pacifist thinking, even admitting a willingness to tolerate those who might wish to take the stand of objection to military service for reasons of conscience. It did not, however, concede to the church's demand for a legal alternative to the taking up of arms, so that even its relatively generous treatment of conscientious objectors in the next few years could not alleviate the unrest and suspicion generated by the 1962 military service legislation.<sup>35</sup>

In 1963 a conference of EKD leaders called explicitly for the legal protection of those refusing military service for reasons of conscience and also assured such persons of church support for their position. The creation of non-combatant "construction units" (*Baueinheiten*), ordered by the state on September 7 of the following year, came by all appearances as a direct response to this conference request.<sup>36</sup>

The Party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, spoke of the move as a "military necessity" since such military building units would be a vital factor for building up the defense capacity of the nation. The need for broader "democratic legitimization" of the new state has been cited as another reason for the concession, whereas the possibility of facing a potential force of

three to four thousand conscientious objectors, and an intensified conflict with the EKD may have been the strongest motivator of all.

The *Baueinheiten*, with its recruits henceforth designated as *Bausoldaten* (lit. "building soldiers"), provided these men with a distinctive uniform carrying the design of a spade as a shoulderblade (hence also the term *Spatensoldaten*, i.e. "soldiers of the spade"). Their regular work excluded the carrying of arms. The term of service was eighteen months, equal to that of regular soldiers. Building activity included, in the first instance, construction of military sites and installations. The men were usually stationed in small units of 15 to 20 persons, although large-scale projects like that of building a new harbour at Mikran on the Island of Ruegen also used such units.<sup>37</sup>

Neither the EKD churchmen nor the conscientious objectors felt that this arrangement really satisfied their needs and objectives.<sup>38</sup> The units were still under the total control of the army, the construction of military sites seemed still to be involvement in the armed forces, and the required oath of commitment to service differed little in substance from that required of regular soldiers. Almost immediately some men protested the requirements of the units, both by appeals to authorities and by non-participation. Many men called for an open discussion of all ideas related to finding peaceful alternatives to military service.

By the fall of 1964 the regional synod of Berlin-Brandenburg had submitted a complaint that "the concerns of the conscientious objectors were not being met," while the Goerlitz provincial synod a year later asked for "a form of alternative service which would not force anyone to participate in military building projects against his conscience." In the spring of 1967, the provincial synod of Saxony registered its anxieties about students who had served in construction units being discriminated against in schools. This meant that leading career opportunities were being closed to those who refused to serve in the active military services of the country.

The call for a civilian form of alternative service began now to refocus the church's interest in the destiny of the conscientious objectors. The 1967 synod of Saxony had already heard the proposal of Bishop Jaenicke that the government ought to consider alternatives in the fields of health or disaster services. Beyond East Germany itself, the Conference of European Churches held in Nyborg in 1971 considered the same idea in propositions on peace service set forth there by Bishop Kausche. It resolved in the end to encourage churches of its membership to be sympathetic to conscientious objectors, especially in cases of discrimination or even arrest. Beyond this, it seemed that little more could be done.<sup>39</sup>

Proposals for a civilian peace service alternative have been sharpened by a seven point programme set forth in May, 1981, by the Dresden Initiative group, "Sozialer Friedensdienst" (Social service of peace). This formula includes the affirmation of a 24 month term of work, preceded by educational preparation on themes of demilitarization, disarmament, peaceful security and non-violent forms of conflict resolution. It suggests the extension of service to that of medical aides, social work, disaster control, and protection of the environment as worthy fields of work. Synods of the EKD regional churches gave this proposal sympathetic hearings as the bishops continued to warn against increasing militarization of the GDR.<sup>40</sup>

In September of the same year Klaus Gysi, the GDR Secretary of State for Church Affairs, explained his government's total rejection of such a scheme. The constitution of the GDR, he pointed out, required military service from all

Above. This photograph includes ten Mennonite men serving in the Red Army in 1922-24 as conscientious objectors. They worked in horse barns, offices, and warehouses.

Below. These Mennonite soldiers in the Red Army in 1923 include A. Neufeld, John Wiens, Abram Fast, J. Rempel, and Johann Klassen. (Peter H. Wiens of Gretna donated these photographs to the Mennonite Heritage Centre).



citizens of the nation, while the construction units catered to all those not wishing to bear arms. To make additional exceptions, he added, would undermine a fundamental principle. Moreover, the introduction of a so-called "civilian peace service" would imply that the National People's Army, which does nothing but "defend peace and socialism," is a "war service." Such an idea would be inadmissible, Gysi said.<sup>41</sup>

This latest encounter between church and state has left the situation basically unchanged. Some indication exists in recent times that the construction units are now becoming less demanding in their requirements and that duties of a civilian nature are now qualifying for the use of such units. Defense Minister Heinz Hoffmann praised the "building soldiers" at his visit to the Mukran site in July last year in a form of recognition which the Party press had not publicized hitherto. Erich Honecker himself has claimed that there is no discrimination now against these men, and some church circles seemed to support this view.<sup>42</sup>

Still, there are the *Totalverweigerer* (lit. total objectors) who resist any form of military service, the *Baueinheiten* included. This is a growing group, and the penalties for these men seem to be

increasing. All Jehovah's Witnesses, an "illegal" religious community, refuse altogether to participate in the available options. Normally they suffer the consequences, which is a prison sentence of eighteen months (it used to be, at the outset, six to eight). If they are recruited for the reserves, they spend that time in jail as well. In the building units, refusals to swear the oath by anyone or to refuse involvement in military construction can bring sentences of two years in jail. Again, it needs to be added, there are examples of lesser penalties, and, as in the early years of conscription (the sixties), cases where no action is taken at all against those

who refuse to serve.<sup>43</sup>

Annual statistics on the number of conscientious objectors in the GDR, whether in the units or beyond, are still difficult to obtain. One source places the early yearly number of *Bausoldaten* at 250, then rising to 500 in 1976, and currently at 1000 a year. The figure is estimated to be about half the number of all COs. For the years 1964-1976 about 1000 of the objectors who refused even to join the construction units were members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, again thought to be about 50 percent of the number of that category for this period. This could mean that as many as 3200 men may have served in the

units so far, and that about 2000 may have been sentenced for being total resisters during these two decades.<sup>44</sup>

Both the USSR and the GDR as nations stress their commitment to defend their countries and to build up the armed forces needed for this task. It is the governing authorities and not the citizens who have made this decision, one that in fact few nations of the world have chosen not to make. Smaller nations depend on larger ones to help when the need arises. Both the USSR and the GDR give limited space to those who want to serve their countries, but not with weapons.

Conscientious objectors in these countries perforce press on to discover the outer limits of this "limitation." The churches of both the USSR and the GDR do not speak with one voice on this situation. Some will support the pacifists and nurture their ideas and actions. Others do not. In the USSR supporters must take an "illegal" path in the main, trusting to the discretion of the system itself to make individual exceptions to the rule. In the GDR there is an officially recognized channel of serving without arms, not fully acceptable, but considerably more than the Soviet Union will grant at the present time. There is a church that will openly promote the cause of its conscientious objectors; in the USSR that is something the churches find very difficult to do.

Objectors to the chosen ideological dictums and the governing instruments of these nations always encounter dilemmas which can be resolved only at a price. What will happen if the demands for another way than that of bearing arms continue to escalate? Can the objectors be "bought off" somehow, and the churches' protests laid to rest? Can compromises be achieved which will settle the issues in these and other Eastern European countries?

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jan Triska, ed. *Constitution of the Communist Party States* (Stanford, California, USA, 1968), pp. 51, 126, 162, 192, 224, 344, 353, 401, 458.  
<sup>2</sup> Cf., for example, issues of the past five years for periodicals like END Churches Register, War Resisters International Newsletter, and various publications of Amnesty International, all published in Great Britain.  
<sup>3</sup> A recent survey of the world-wide situation regarding government policies on conscription to military service, alternative service, etc. is published as Ashbjorn Eide and Chama Mubanga-Chipoya, eds. *Question of Conscientious Objection to Military Service*. Prepared under the Auspices of the Commission on Human Rights (UNESCO), Geneva, 1983. For Western Europe no countries are listed under "conscription without alternative service," but the following as having no conscription at all: Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and the

United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> Poland provided a form of civilian service in 1979. Cf. a comparative study for the USSR and Poland in Karen Schmidt, "Kriegsdienstverweigerung in sozialistischen Staaten-Dargestellt am Beispiel der Sowjetunion und der Volksrepublik Polen," *Berichte des Bundesinstituts fuer ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien* (Köln), 43/1972, pp. 1-21.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Article 3 in the section "On Universal Military Service" in *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Sovieta SSSR* Number 42, 18 October, 1967, item 55, and a summary description of service requirements in *Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR. Their Treatment and Conditions*. (London, 1980, 2nd rev. ed.), pp. 51-52.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Catharine Perry, "Voices from Russia," *Newspeace*, April, 1982, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Exact statistics for conscientious objectors in the Soviet Union are not available. A document noting the refusals of 160 Pentecostals in the Rovno region was published in *A Chronicle of Current Events*, No. 46, 1978, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Developments regarding exemption provisions in the early years of the Soviet period have been detailed in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study of Church State Relations, 1789-1936," unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA, 1984, pp. 268-314. On Lenin's views about pacifism cf. Michael Voslensky, "The Concept of Peace in The Political Philosophy and Ethics of the Soviet Union," in *Peace: What Can We Do? International Lutheran Contributions to Peace Ethics*, ed. by E. Lorenz, (Geneva, 1984), pp. 70ff.

<sup>9</sup> A. Klibanov, *Religioznoi Sektantsvoi sovremennost'* (Moskva, 1969), p. 203.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals after World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, USA, 1981), pp. 116ff.

<sup>11</sup> The Constitution stated in Article 132: "Military service in the Armed Forces of the USSR is an honorable duty of the citizens of the USSR." It meant everyone, and the wording of that article has remained basically unchanged to the present day.

<sup>12</sup> Sawatsky, *op. cit.*, p. 119. Cf. also W. Alexeev and T. G. Stavrou, *The Great Revival: The Russian Church under German Occupation* (Minneapolis, Minn., USA, 1976), pp. 53ff.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Sawatsky, "Mennonite Congregations in the Soviet Union Today," *Mennonite Life* XXXIII (March, 1978), 12-26.

<sup>14</sup> The situation is well depicted in Walter Wedel, *Nur zwanzig Kilometer* (Wuppertal, 1979), where one of the main characters mentions his conscience struggle with serving in the army during this period.

<sup>15</sup> Oxana Antic, "Atheist Indoctrination of Soviet Troops," *Radio Free Europe Research*, (August 17, 1982), 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> "Materialy plenuma VCEXB prohodivshevo 30 noyabrya - 1 dekabrya 1982 goda," *Bratskii Vestnik*, No. 1, 1983, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup> Sources for these reports have included *sanizdat* reports to places like Keston College, Keston, Kent, UK, Missionswerk Friedenstein in Gumbertsbach, West Germany, and Glaube in der 2ten Welt, Zollikon, Switzerland, or published materials such as *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas*, New York, N.Y., *Religion in Communist Lands*, or *Keston News Service*, published at Keston College, *A Chronicle of Current Events* or *Amnesty International Annual Report*, both published in London, UK, and *Nachrichten von den Feldern der Verfolgung*, (cf. January-February, 1985, issue particularly).

<sup>19</sup> Examples are found in *Amnesty International Report*, 1980, p. 304, and *A Chronicle of Current Events*, No. 53, 1979, p. 10, or more recently *Menschenrechte*, January-February, 1985, pp. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup> Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> Passages in question would include Exodus 20:13 and Matthew 5:34.

<sup>22</sup> *Prisoners of Conscience*, pp. 56-57, and "Young Christians Refuse the Soviet Military Oath," *Evangelical Times*, January, 1985, pp. 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Bud Bultman, "Serving Two Masters. Bearing Arms and the Cross in Soviet Military Service," *Sparks*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Summer, 1980), p. 6., and M. Bourdeaux, Hans Hebley, and Eugene Voss, ed. *Religious Liberty in the USSR, WCC and USSR. A Post Nairobi Documentation*, (Keston, 1976), pp. 87ff.

<sup>24</sup> Heinrich and Gerhard Woelk, *Die Mennoniten Brudergemeinde in Russland 1925-1980*, (Fresno, California, USA, 1981), p. 215.

<sup>25</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses seem to be gaining more attention in the Soviet press recently. Their refusal to bear arms is noted as evidence of their disloyalty to the nation. Cf. Oxana Antic, "Jehovah's Witnesses in the Soviet Union," *Radio Free Europe Research*, 39/82, January 19, 1983, pp. 1-2, and the March, 1984, issue of the recently published "Chronicle of the Catholic

Church in the Ukraine," which mentions 18 Jehovah's Witnesses of the Transcarpathian Ukraine imprisoned for refusing to serve in the Soviet Army (p. 11). (All extant issues (eight by now) are on file in the Keston College archives.)

<sup>26</sup> Cf. V. A. Shelkov (?) "Lenin Cited in Support of True and Free Adventist View," *Religion in Communist Lands (RCL)* Vol. 8 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 213-217. The history of pacifist thought among Adventists is surveyed helpfully in Marite Sapiets, "One Hundred Years of Adventism in Russia and the Soviet Union," *RCL* Vol. 12 (Winter, 1984), pp. 256-73. A case of conscientious objection is depicted in "Paul Schneider: Conscientious Objection and the Criminal Code," *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*, No. 34, April-June, 1979, pp. 65-69.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the experiences of Anatoli Malkin noted in *A Chronicle of Current Events*, No. 37, 1978, pp. 10ff, and that of Grigorii Viktorovich Ievich, in "Soviet Religious Samizdat," *RCL* Vol. 11/1 (Spring, 1983), p. 80.

<sup>28</sup> There is no specific article dealing simply with non-swearing of oaths. In question for conscientious objectors are normally these four articles: Article 80 "Evasion of Regular Call to Active Military Service"; Article 81: "Evasion of Call-up for Mobilization"; Article 198-1: "Evasion of Training Courses or Musters and of Military Registration by Persons Subject to Military Service," and Article 249a: "Evasion of Military Service by Manning or Any Other Method." Cf. Harold J. Berman, ed. *Soviet Criminal Law and Procedure. The RSFSR Codes* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 155-156, 184, and 197.

<sup>29</sup> Based on about 100 publicized cases of conscientious objection examined by the writer for this study. The conclusions need confirmation from a broader study.

<sup>30</sup> Gary Thatcher, "Despite official scorn, interest in religion rises in the Soviet Union," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 13, 1985, p. 12; Perry, *op. cit.*, p. 5, and Woelk and Woelk, *op. cit.*, p. 215. The cases examined by the author (cf. Note 29) included only one or two instances of alternative service grants. Grigorii Viktorovich Ievich, a Pentecostal CO, was sent to serve in a construction camp. "Soviet religious samizdat," *RCL* Vol. 11/1 (Spring, 1983), p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Bultman, *op. cit.* pp. 5-6, and "Other Cases of Religious Persecution in the Red Army," *Religion in Communist-Dominated Areas* Vol. XII, Nos. 1-3, January, February and March, 1973, pp. 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> Martin McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic Since 1945* (London, 1983), p. 7ff.

<sup>33</sup> Kurt and Hildegard Mocker, "Wehrdienstverweigerung in der DDR: Rechtsgrundlagen des Wehrdienstes," *Christen drueben* No. 1, November, 1984, pp. 10-12. These writers also cite the earliest phase of ideological development in the DDR when the slogan of the Socialist Unity Party was radically pacifist: "No German may again take a weapon in his hand" (p. 10).

<sup>34</sup> Bernd Eisenfeld, "Mit wechselnder Intensitaet: Das Eintreten der evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR fuer den waffenlosen Ersatzdienst," *Kirche im Sozialismus* Vol. V, No. 1 (March, 1979), pp. 27-28.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

<sup>37</sup> Bernd Eisenfeld, "Spaten-soldaten. 20 Jahre Bausoldaten in der DDR," *Kirche im Sozialismus* Vol. X, No. 4, 1984, p. 21ff; and Renate Hackel, "20 Jahre Bausoldaten," *Diigest des Osten*.

<sup>38</sup> Eisenfeld, "Mit wechselnder Intensitaet . . ." pp. 31-32. Mocker and Mocker, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-12; Ernst Legahun, "Bausoldaten" und ziviler Ersatzdienst," *Christen drueben*, No. 1, 1984, 8-9. The latter includes the exact wording of the oath.

<sup>39</sup> Eisenfeld, "Mit wechselnder Intensitaet . . ." pp. 31-32, 35-36.

<sup>40</sup> Hackel, *op. cit.* pp. 14-15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Mocker and Mocker, *op. cit.*, p. 12. Cf. also the comments of John Thiessen in a memo to the author, "Bausoldaten in the GDR." The comment includes a summary of remarks made by speakers at two events celebrating the 20th anniversary of the institution of the "Construction Units" in 1964. The basic materials here are drawn from an address by Manfred Stolpe entitled, "Wie dienen wir den Frieden am Besten: mit oder ohne Waffen? (How can we best serve the interests of peace: with or without weapons?)"

*A rare photograph of the Mennonite "Selbstschutz" (self-defence) organization in 1918-19. This group is from Blumenort, Tiede and Ohrloff.*



## Book Reviews

E. Morris Sider, *Messiah College: A History*. Nappanee, Ind.: Evangel Press, 1984. 314 pages.

This is the eighth book by the author, Morris Sider, professor of history and English literature at Messiah College. Sider concedes his "penchant for biography," and this becomes one of the strengths of the book—its human dimension that brings 75 years of history to life. Colleges are, indeed, the story of people and how they seek to carry out their vision and educational mission. If there is a bias in the telling of this story it is the amount of attention and affection devoted to President C. N. Hostetter, Jr., an understandable bias given his long tenure as president and the fact that the author had already written an entire biography on him (*Messenger of Grace: A Biography of C. N. Hostetter, Jr.*).

Readers will find the book highly readable, a cut above the typical institutional history. The characters in the volume come to life and grab the reader's interest. The account is clearly sympathetic to the cause, as one might expect. A casualty of this approach is the lack of any substantive critique of directions taken by the college, such as the implications of the

shift since 1960 from a strictly denominational school to an evangelical college with a very low Brethren in Christ profile.

Beginnings are important to institutions and to the author. Therefore Sider devotes most of the book to the first twenty-five years of the college and only 25 pages to the current quarter century. He begins by placing Messiah's story in the educational milieu of the five Mennonite and seven Church of the Brethren colleges founded between 1887 and 1917. Debate on the "school question" in Brethren in Christ circles became an active issue from 1897 on. Supporters cited evidence that their young people were attending other schools and all too often were lost to the church. Like the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren, the Brethren in Christ saw in the establishment of their own school a way to preserve their denomination's distinctive identity.

A Charter was granted by the state of Pennsylvania in 1909. Prominent in this Charter was a strong service and mission focus reflected in the name given the institution—Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home. Doctrinal distinctives, such as the prayer covering and feet washing, were also stated in the Charter. As with most school beginnings the early years were a struggle. Suspicion of the school by

the churches, poverty and anxiety over whether the school could stay open were yearly agendas. The frugality of these early years is caught in the main fare served in the dining room: peanut butter and crackers, mush and milk.

The overriding purpose of the school was "to challenge young people to Christian service." The religious life of the school was vigorous and visible. The focus was fundamentalist and pietistic—i.e., repeated refutations of higher Biblical criticism, revival meetings and intense prayer life. Sider notes, "prayer was almost a way of life." That has changed on this and every campus since these early years, but with some question as to whether the quality of Christian life is enhanced by its decline.

C. N. Hostetter, Jr. is the transitional president (1934-1960) in both upholding the strict standards of earlier years and in moving the college into the contemporary era of long-range development plans and strategies for student recruitment. In these years Messiah Bible School evolved from an academy and junior college into a four-year college with a liberal arts orientation. Hostetter understood fully the necessity of Messiah not being too far ahead of the church in its practices. How to lead without losing your constituency is a continuing delicate question



for Messiah and other church colleges.

"How Anabaptist is Messiah College" was one of the questions this reviewer kept asking. Only six sentences refer to Anabaptism in the entire book. A new Goals Study and Statement of Philosophy was undertaken in the 1960s and again in 1982. The current Mission Statement seeks to balance its three historic traditions—Anabaptism, Wesleyanism and Pietism.

Every action has consequences. Their Evangelical focus led Messiah to play a leading role in founding the Christian College Consortium (and later the Christian College Coalition), but at the expense of active interest in the Council of Mennonite Colleges in which it holds membership. President Arthur Climenhaga, resigning in 1964 to head the National Association of Evangelicals, symbolizes this tilt toward American Evangelicalism.

C. N. Hostetter, Jr. resigned in 1960 after 26 years as president. Under his successor, Climenhaga, grandson of founding president, S. R. Smith, Messiah received regional accreditation in 1963; and the conscious widening of the school's base, in faculty, students and constituency, began. Climenhaga's successor, Ray Hostetter (1964—) was also very much a campus kid. Both his grandfather and his father had been Messiah presidents. The reader can hardly overlook the "inbreeding" of Messiah's presidents. They constitute a close family circle, but also a very successful one.

Within a year of Ray Hostetter's inauguration a merger was arranged between Messiah and struggling Upland College in California, the only other Brethren in Christ college in the nation. Perhaps the most visible characteristic of the current administration has been the spectacular growth in enrollment from 248 in 1963 to 1,612 in 1983. Such growth demanded fundraising and many new facilities. Total assets grew from a modest \$600,000 in 1953 to over \$57,000,000 in 1983. Endowment zoomed from \$388,500 in 1964 to \$27,000,000 in 1984.

Enrollment success has also changed the makeup of the student body. In 1963 some 62 percent were from Brethren in Christ congregations. By 1983 only ten percent came from the founding denomination. One result was the dissolving of the legal ownership of the college by the church in 1972. A covenant document seeks to maintain an in-

formal relationship. What are the long-term consequences of such a direction? Will Messiah become another Wheaton College?

All readers interested in Christian Higher Education will enjoy this volume. There are many universals in the telling of Messiah's story, such as President C. N. Hostetter, Jr., writing on a trip to Kansas, "the budget is always so difficult," that are readily identifiable with almost any church college.

Harold J. Schultz  
Bethel College  
North Newton

John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust, Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*, (Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, 95 pp.)

Christian pacifists, including Mennonites, traditionally have found themselves polarized over against exponents of the Christian just war tradition. It has seemed to pacifists that the theory of justified war was used quite uncritically to rationalize participation in whatever military conflict governments chose to engage in.

John Howard Yoder, the most widely read Mennonite pacifist today, takes the position in this slender book that the just war tradition is worth taking seriously. Yoder has not abandoned his pacifism. Rather he calls Lutherans, Presbyterians, Catholics and others to greater responsibility for the logical consequences of their own tradition.

There are, Yoder says, usable criteria for determining when war is unjust. When wars meet those criteria, Christians of just-war commitments are obligated to withhold participation and support. The problem is that non-pacifist Christians have generally given little attention to clear understanding of the criteria, nor have they educated and prepared young people in their churches for the costly discipleship of conscientious objection which must be an option in the just-war tradition.

The book is written in six short chapters which define the terms of just and unjust war, trace the historical development of the theory, and suggest the outlines for contemporary application. Charles P. Lutz, Director of the Office of Church in Society of the

American Lutheran Church, provides an introduction and a series of discussion questions for each chapter.

James Juhnke  
Bethel College  
North Newton

Richard K. MacMaster, *Land, Piety, People: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America 1683-1790*. Vol. 1: The Mennonite Experience in America. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1985. Pp. 343 (\$12.00 prb.)

Rarely, without being vague or mysterious, does a title catch in a few words the essence of a history of a people. To readers steeped in American Mennonite history it comes as no great surprise that land, piety, and peoplehood are significant clues to the story.

Finally, we have in hand the long-awaited first volume of the proposed four-volume history of the "Mennonite Experience in America" project. High expectations had been built. The first volume admirably fulfills the dream. For the first time in 300 years we can begin to see the whole sweeping panorama of American Mennonite history, with the first century sketched in with voluminous detail.

That first century, the 1700's, was just too long ago to be recalled, despite the fact that Mennonites have often done remarkably well in perpetuating the oral history. Now we see a marvelous amount of light shed on a dim century that had been punctuated only here and there with little candles. By comparison this history is a huge bonfire in the light it throws in many directions as it enlightens many shadowy corners.

We understand so much better now the original impetus that brought migrating Mennonites to the New World and how the unique ethos of American Mennonitism began to form as they purchased large acreage and began communities. Of course, the political and social patterns around them and intermingled with them also helped shape that ethos. Here a considerable number of Anabaptist/Mennonite understandings of faith began to respond and react to and begin to come

into tension with an unprecedented freedom of movement, as they acquired hundreds of acres of land and discovered a respect from other religions around them not known before. If persecution and economic deprivation would not eradicate Mennonitism in Europe, what would almost unlimited freedom in America do?

The evidence is not all in yet; succeeding volumes will need to give us more perspective also. However, we now begin to understand the piety and peoplehood patterns of the old-line eastern Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia so much better.

If this author left very many of the proverbial stones unturned in his research and documentation efforts, this reviewer would not know where to look for them. No doubt, some will turn up. A few always do. It seems improbable though that enough major items would turn up to make substantive changes in the general story and the interpretation. From scant church records to local, regional, and national government records, to many items from expected and unexpected places, the author has sifted carefully. Here is finely crafted history based upon enormous research. Unquestionably, the author's earlier work on *Conscience in Crisis* (Herald 1979) laid a massive foundation of significant documents from which he could now paint the broader brush strokes of telling the story in an interpretive way.

The volume rightly lays the groundwork carefully for the whole American story. If an inordinate amount of space seems to have been given to background, to immigration patterns, and to the establishment of the land base of Mennonite communities, it eventually becomes clear how crucial these are. Succeeding chapters on Mennonite piety, congregational life, interchange with society, and their scrapes with reality in the American Revolution rightly lead to the question whether these were "A People Apart?"

Every historian of the larger picture inevitably stands on the shoulders of many previous historians and genealogists. Indeed, a plethora of new discoveries and writing in the last decade or two made it possible for MacMaster to paint the picture far more adequately. He carefully gives credit for this privilege. His 13-page "Bibliographical Essay" is a delight

because it reveals so much more material available than most people thought. Herein are clues also for others to search further. Clearly the author absorbed a phenomenal amount of widely-placed material which he integrated into his history.

Seldom does the author draw conclusions unless they are embedded in solid documentation. If he ventures out on a limb, he says so. Sometimes he challenges sources. In one instance he should have challenged much more heavily—the Morgan Edwards 1770 figure of 400 Mennonite families in a Maryland region (p. 128). MacMaster generally avoided the pitfall of accepting ethnic names *per se* as "Mennonite names." If things were tentative he indicated it.

He hesitates not a bit to indicate shadows as well as light. Not all the forefathers and mothers come off looking as saintly as some might wish. For those who are inclined to "use" history to "prove" a given stance to be followed today, or that Mennonites today have "departed from the faith," MacMaster may be of as much discomfort as help. He draws conclusions based upon the data he had available. He does not begin with a thesis and read back into history what he would like to find.

For some who thought Mennonites came to America for reasons of religious persecution, they may not be altogether happy to learn that many migrants came with mixed motives. Nor were Mennonites entirely free from land-grabbing from the Indians. It is heart-warming that Pennsylvania Mennonites did try to become involved in making peace with Indians. But on occasion they fled the problem rather than face it. Today's church planters may be less than excited to learn that most Mennonites moved with the frontier not so much to plant churches as to find good cheap land. And, believe it or not, there were even a few isolated cases of Mennonite slave owners. For those who thought Mennonite communities were rather closed—that they were isolationists—MacMaster documents the opposite. Mennonites engaged freely in pluralistic living not only in Virginia but also in most other places.

And what of Pietism? For those who only see the influx of that renewal movement as an undermining of true Anabaptism/Mennonitism, the author's conclusions may be unsettling. He documents extensively how and where Pietism seeped in. One of the crucial

places was in the adoption of many Pietist hymns. Pietism is described as having much in common with Anabaptism. Friedmann's book, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* (Goshen, 1949) comes under considerable challenge. MacMaster concluded that Pietism "may well have helped at least as much as it hindered keeping the Anabaptist-Mennonite-Amish faith renewed and vital." (p. 182) The venerable 18th century writer and Mennonite spokesman, Heinrich Funk, is given his just dues, but he comes off looking slightly less sainted than he has been painted heretofore. Funk, it is concluded, never quite got his theology and the facts of his life together.

Perhaps Funk tried to do the impossible. The long emphasis upon suffering began to be hard to defend when one became wealthy, as was happening to numerous Mennonites. The long and traditional watchword of "suffering" began to be replaced by the watchword "humility." One could be in varying economic circumstances and still be humble. The question persists, Can one go first class economically and still remain humble?

We get in this work a significant and creative look at Mennonite response and reaction to the German revival movements of the late 18th century. It is a fascinating story of accepting elements of renewal, but then eventually drawing back and away from some of the emphases. Mennonites were not a dead church, not even during the German revival movement.

And what of politics and keeping one's nonresistant faith? Mennonites went quite fully into voting and even into holding an occasional low-level office. Thus they could prove they were good citizens. Indeed, for years, the Mennonite vote could swing elections in local areas and they had no small influence in Pennsylvania politics. Then came the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Mennonites and Amish began drawing back. They furnished teamsters to help guard Pennsylvania's frontiers, but when the revolutionary patriots put strong pressures on to fight and pay war taxes, Mennonites had second thoughts. Finally, they became alienated and excluded from politics because many refused to identify with the radical patriots who were forming a new national peoplehood. Mennonites returned in a sense to "being subjects more than citizens. The American Revolution had



made Mennonites more than ever a people apart." (p. 280)

This volume has excellent illustrations and a number of fine maps; of course, like a good history should, it has an index. The introductory pages give the clear impression that there was a considerable delay in getting the volume out. The author hints that the editor may have exercised a heavier hand than is normally expected, although the final product gives little obvious evidence of how heavy or light the editor's touch was. It reads easily, and the typeface and layout are good. A few misspelled words crept in. The paperback cover tends to curl up but the attractive cover and price, no doubt, were intended to lure many people to read it. Most Mennonites should read this volume, for it is a significant history of an obscure century in American Mennonitism.

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Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Anabaptism and Mission*. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1984. Pp. 264. (\$11.95 paperback)

It was two years ago that I first learned of the Catholic priest Leonard Dorfbrunner, who was converted in 1526. He lived as an Anabaptist for only one year and during that time baptized some three thousand persons in southern Germany and Austria. We have known through our study of Anabaptism that the early leaders of the Mennonite church were so enthusiastic about the gospel that they went everywhere to share it with receptive listeners. But this evangelistic heritage has for the most part been kept in the closet so that little has been known about these potential heroes of the faith.

As recent a book as Walter Klaassen's *Anabaptism in Outline: A collection of primary sources* gives no quotations from Anabaptist writers that focus specifically on evangelism or mission. This in spite of the fact that church historian Franklin H. Littell informed us as early as 1952 that no scripture texts appeared more frequently in the confessions of faith and court testimonies of the Anabaptists than the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. Thus it is indeed timely that this selection of articles on

Anabaptism and Mission by thirteen authors (twelve Mennonite and one Methodist) be brought together and published. The Anabaptists of the 16th century were the only church group that called for a believers church and sought to make this a reality.

This book, edited by the missiologist and Vice-President of the Mennonite Board of Missions, has a good selection of authors representing the Mennonite church in various parts of the world: Dutch, Spanish, and Japanese, in addition to American. An article by Methodist Franklin H. Littell on "The Anabaptist Theology of Mission" rightly leads the list. It was first read to the American Society of Church History in 1946. While the major focus is on the sixteenth century, there are two chapters, by Ramseyer and Yamada, on "The Anabaptist Vision and Our World Mission." The final article by David A. Shank also links the Anabaptist vision and our present situation. Here we have a source by which we can reflect on our heritage of evangelism and by which we can rediscover an anabaptist vision of mission.

A volume, such as this, suffers from the fact that the articles were written over a span of years for different audiences. Some are well documented while others have no footnotes. The latter leave us wondering about the data for the conclusions.

In reading this volume I have been led to reflect on what happened to us so that we lost the early sense of mission. N. van der Zijpp in his article "From Anabaptist Missionary Congregation to Mennonite 'Seclusion'" helps us to understand the shift in the Dutch Mennonite church. However he focuses more on the theological forces than the existential. A recent writer (whose name I don't recall) suggested that the evangelistic fervor was "burned out of us by the fire, and beaten out of us by the sword." I feel that the loss of so many leaders and the prolonged persecution drove our people in upon themselves. The outward mission was turned inward and the emphasis was changed to evangelizing our own children. (Could the tremendous investment of our resources in our schools, colleges and seminaries be seen as the result of this?) A recent visitor to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart from South Africa, Graham Cyster, has suggested that the dreadful experiences of the

persecution were driven into our unconscious and there they fester, inhibiting us from being effective witnesses. He further suggests that until we are willing to examine this experience and come to terms with it we cannot reach out beyond our own. The result will be a continuation of our efforts to gather migrating Mennos and a lack of vision for being a light and leaven to our generation.

David Habegger  
Church Planter  
Western District

John Allen Moore, *Anabaptist Portraits* (Scottdale, PA, Herald Press, 1984), 261 pp.

John Allen Moore, retired professor of church history from the international Baptist Theological Seminary outside Zurich, Switzerland, has written a succinct, easily-read study book of the lives and teachings of six early Anabaptist leaders—Conrad Grebel, Felix Mantz, George Blaurock, Michael Sattler, Hans Denck, and Balhasar Hubmaier.

Each profile contains two types of well-integrated information—biographical and doctrinal, the latter in the form of measured excerpts in English translation from the Latin and German writings of these men. The excerpts are well-chosen, although the reader should beware that they represent a sampling of their extant writings, although only Denck and Hubmaier wrote theology as such. Grebel, Mantz, and Sattler wrote confessionally, and Blaurock wrote almost nothing. Hence, his chapter is the briefest (22 pages); and there is a direct correlation between the length of each chapter and the volume of extant writings to digest (40 and 78 pages, respectively, for Denck and Hubmaier).

These chapters offer an excellent six-session adult study book in the educational program of any church. It's a study in "roots" for any church in the Anabaptist lineage. It's a study in radical-type witness in any church of Catholic or Protestant mainline type.

The portrait of Grebel features the organizer of the counter-movement, the "ringleader," to use the mainline Reformer's polemical label. It also portrays the prerequisite moral conversion of a sick soul and the mind of the "true

believer." The climax of this story is the birthday of the movement on January 21, 1525, and its missionary expansion in spite of (or because of) increasingly intense persecution. Grebel's personality becomes more attractive as we follow his career to his death at the age of 28. Moore excerpts his famous doctrinal letter to Muntzer, one of the earliest formulations of the nature of radical discipleship, the ethics of nonresistance, and the nature of the believers' church with particular reference to baptism and the Lord's Supper. Moore knew about the "libellum confutatio" (Grebel's little book of counter arguments), but failed to show us the more winsome side of Grebel's polemics that an excerpt or two might have revealed. This reviewer is less certain than Moore that it was written "not in Zurich but perhaps in Basel." That it was written underground is certain, and Moore might have added that it probably circulated along with Sattler's "Schleitheim Articles," continuing to provide stability to the movement following their demise.

Mantz ("Anabaptist martyr") and Blaurock ("called strong George") are enigmas to the early movement. The former was meek, centered down on the simple truth as he understood it, steadfast, innocently nonresistant. The latter was a pulpit stormer, arrogant, incoherent, not always steadfast in spite of his "strong George" nickname, and sometimes flirting with the thought of using God's sword in the hands of the righteous. That innocent Mantz was executed in Zurich while Blaurock was beaten and expelled after taking the oath never to return is part of the enigma of that drama.

The comprehensiveness, balance, and sequence of the movement is filled out in the portraits of Sattler, Denck, and Hubmaier. (A seventh profile of Pilgrim Marpeck would have added still another important dimension to the picture). Sattler is the explication of "holiness in the church, in life and in death." Like Mantz, this was a man in whom there was no guile. Unlike Mantz, this was a man who wavered until he found what he was looking for: "the quiet, pacifist evangelical faith of the Swiss Brethren." Having found it in the underground movement in the north of Zurich's *Unterland*, following

the demise of Grebel and Mantz, he willingly took on their mantle of leadership, explicated the faith for the persecuted faithful, and provided for the survival of the movement at the cost of his own life. Like Jesus and Paul, he was already living in his celestial body as they cruelly tortured and burned his terrestrial body; and there will be moaning and gnashing of teeth in eternity by those who hated and tortured this innocent man in the name safeguarding the one holy apostolic church.

The most intellectually stimulating, anxiety-producing of the profiles is that of Hans Denck, whom Harold Bender wrote off as too free, mystical, and universalist to be truly Anabaptist. Moore's interpretation reclaims Denck as a brilliant theologian whose Biblical hermeneutics might have tempered the movement at points of Biblical literalism and rigidity. For us today, Denck's masterful writings might help to counter an anti-intellectual fundamentalism, an arbitrary definition of authority in the church, and a culturally bound set of traditional restraints.

For Denck authority is given in response to faithful discipleship. "The Mediator is Christ, whom no one can truly know unless he follow him in life." After "listening" to Denck's teachings, the reader is made more mindful of the tenuousness of truth claims in the church, the possibilities that the truth of any matter may be other than what one has been led to believe, and that God's love in the person of Christ might yet save us in spite of our human arrogance. Denck was an evangelist at heart and would that all of us were more concerned with spreading the good news than with defending the fundamentals. Denck did not relish doctrinal controversy, was simultaneously an Anabaptist and an ecumenist, and always wanted to get on with the mission of the church. "That infant baptism is wrong the truth amply testifies, in that the first and most needful business for messengers of Jesus Christ is that they teach and make disciples for the Lord and seek the kingdom of God above all things." Like all of these profiles, the story of Denck's life is a sad, if not quite so tragic one. He escaped martyrdom, but he died at the age of 27, burned out after repeatedly being compelled to do what he hated: defend his views in disputations which always led

to banishment from one city after another. His legacy is a corpus of magnificently written writings, not all of which are yet available in the English language.

And finally, Hubmaier, whose story and writings took 78 pages to tell—two to three times more space than any of the others. The enigma of Hubmaier is that he represents a part of all the others—the shepherding role of Grebel and Sattler, the theological teaching role of Sattler and Denck, the martyr spirit of Mantz, Grebel, and Sattler, and a bit of the arrogant fighter's spirit of Blaurock. Yet, in spite of suffering torture and execution, he was not as steadfast as Mantz, not as literalist as Grebel and Sattler, not as *gemutlich* as Mantz, and not as arrogant as Blaurock. Like Denck he held that "truth is immortal," but he always begged his readers to show him his errors. Hubmaier had the qualities of a cathedral preacher and a mass evangelist; but unlike the other four he was slow in embracing an ethic of nonresistance. Thus, he represents another type of Anabaptist—parish church, non-pacifist. In his defense of the use of the sword, Hubmaier wrote, "Our kingdom should not be of this world, but unfortunately we must confess before God that it is . . ." Thus, Hubmaier represents our dilemma—in the world, yet not of the world.

Although this book is potentially very useful for group study and discussion, Moore's biographical profiles suffer a little from the unavailability of C. Arnold Snyder's *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Herald Press, 1984) and my own *Sources of Swiss Anabaptism* (Herald Press, 1985). As I read the chapter on Grebel I listed seventeen minor errors of fact, the result of transforming Harold Bender's 1950 biography into concise narrative. In Chapter 4 Moore uncritically adopted the earlier now-questionable thesis that Sattler joined the Anabaptists in total rejection of his Benedictine roots, which Snyder shows conclusively to be far from the truth. Indeed, although Sattler probably imbibed more from the Swiss Brethren than Snyder allowed, his Christocentric orientation was surely more Benedictine than Swiss Brethren; and this revisionist reinterpretation adds more data for the continuing dialogue.

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