MENNONITE LIFE

DECEMBER 1989

In this Issue

In 1917-18 the military training camp near Fort Riley, Camp Funston, became a testing ground for Mennonite, Hutterite, and Amish conscientious objectors to war. The War Department brought young pacifists under military rule in World War I without any clear plan on what should be done when they refused military orders. Gerlof D. Homan of the history department of Illinois State University is completing a manuscript covering the experiences of Mennonites during the war. His article on military justice and the Hutterites is part of that wider study.

The cover photographs as well as the photo essay in this issue come from the Kurt Galle collection of World War I photos recently donated to Mennonite Library and Archives by Louisa Galle. Conscientious objectors in World War I drew the line of nonparticipation at widely different points. The juxtaposition of court martialed Hutterites and saluting uniformed Mennonites is a reminder of this diversity.

This issue includes two literary pieces reflecting the experiences of Mennonites in Russia. Dallas Wiebe, Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, has written a novel about one of the most fascinating events of all Mennonite history—the trek of Russian Mennonites into Central Asia to meet the Lord. Readers of the final chapter of the novel will find their appetites whetted for the whole book. We have all assumed that participants of this failed venture came out with embarrassment and disillusionment. How does this elderly Joseph Toevs, apparent victim of Christ's failure to return on schedule, earn the right to sing a hymn of praise to God at the end of his life? Is our own praise of God pale by comparison, given our inability to harbor such radical hopes?

Peter Epp worked on his manuscript, *An Der Molotschna*, from 1929 until his death in 1954. Another excerpt from this manuscript, as well as an introduction by Justina D. Epp, appeared in the October 1969 issue of *Mennonite Life*. A collection of Epp's manuscripts are in the archival holdings of Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College. We are indebted to Linda Falk Suter for selecting and editing these selections for publication.

James C. Juhnke

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MENNONITE LIFE

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Cover

The 10th Division Infantry Approaching the Reviewing Stand at Camp Funston, December 7, 1918. From the Kurt R. Galle photo collection, Mennonite Library and Archives.

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All photos in this issue are from the Kurt R. Galle collection, Mennonite Library and Archives.

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Post-Armistice Courts-Martial of Conscientious Objectors in Camp Funston, 1918-1919

by Gerlof D. Homan

In late November 1918 Frederick P. Keppel, Third Assistant Secretary of War, received a letter from Joseph Kleinsasser, a minister of the Hutterite Bruderhof in Milltown, South Dakota, in which he informed the former of the plight of eight conscientious objectors in Camp Funston, Kansas. These men, according to Kleinsasser, had "binn" [sic] before the Board of Inquiry and recommended for farm furloughs. Yet, they had not been assigned any farm work and remained in camp where they were ordered to perform non-combatant service. This they refused to do. As a result they were to be court-martialed. "Will the United States suffer and put men in prison," Kleinsasser asked, "for doing what they belief [sic] is right before God?" He expressed the hope that Keppel, whose main task consisted of handling all matters pertaining to conscientious objectors, would investigate the case. "We teach obedience to government," Kleinsasser wrote, "but above all obedience to God and His word as we understand it." He wondered if his people should be imprisoned for what they believed and begged that such treatment not be allowed under the administration of "our worthy President, who most likely will hear of it."[1]

This article will try to explain what happened to these eight men and the court-martial proceedings against them. It may tell us something about World War I Mennonite and Hutterite conscientious objectors, American military mentality towards such men, and the system of military justice at that time. It is based mostly on unpublished primary materials.

In May 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I, military conscription was introduced. The Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917, provided for exemption from combat duty for those individuals who belonged to well-recognized religious sects or organizations whose creed forbade participation in war. However, they would not be exempted from non-combatant service. Since the law did not define non-combatant duty, military commanders could treat the conscientious objectors as they saw fit. As a result, many of the draftees who objected to military service of any kind such as drilling, bearing arms, performing various types of work, or wearing the uniform were often mistreated, taunted, and even court-martialed. It was not until March 23, 1918, that the president finally specified non-combatant duty as service in the Medical or Quartermaster Corps or the Corps of Engineers. Many conscientious objectors refused to accept these options because service in any of these three branches meant they remained an integral part of the military establishment. The executive order did allow conscientious objectors to refuse non-combatant service and instructed military commanders to segregate such men from the rest. In June 1918 the government only required conscientious objectors to keep themselves and their surroundings clean and their bodies in good physical condition. However, such individuals remained subject to military discipline. As a result many conscientious objectors were mistreated or even court-martialed if they refused to obey orders instructing them to perform tasks they considered incompatible with their beliefs.[2]

In the summer of 1918 the government finally appointed a Board of Inquiry that interrogated all conscientious objectors in order to determine the men's sincerity and to assign to each individual what it considered appropriate service. As a result, some men were denied non-combatant service, others were classified as non-combatants, but most of them were given the option to accept a so-called farm furlough. This option had been made available in March 1918 when Congress, in order to meet a serious labor shortage, passed an act providing for farm or industrial furloughs. Later, the authorities felt that farm furloughs could also be granted to bona fide conscientious objectors in the camps. However, for various reasons not all conscientious objectors accepted by the Board of Inquiry for farm furloughs were released by the military authorities and assigned to farms. They remained in the camps and often continued to be objects of ridicule and abuse. Even after the Armistice of November 11, 1918, many military authorities were still tempted to "test" and taunt the conscientious objectors or the "never-sweats" as these men were often called.[3] Such was the case in Camp Funston in November 1918.

Camp Funston, located near Manhattan, Kansas, was one of the largest cantonments in the United States during World War I. In late November 1918

Camp Funston's military commanders (General Leonard Wood at the left) stand at attention while civilian dignitaries are relaxed. Arthur Capper, Governor of Kansas, is second from left.

the total number of conscientious objectors in Camp Funston was about one hundred men. They were part of Detention Camp #1, 10th Company, 3rd Development Batallion, 164th Depot Brigade. This detention camp, according to one of its officers, consisted of "enemy aliens, conscientious objectors, moral degenerates, illiterates, and cripples."[4] In comparison with other cantonments Camp Funston treated its conscientious objectors reasonably well, although there had been many instances of physical and mental abuse.[5] A few days after the Armistice, Harry Graber, a Mennonite conscientious objector from Moundridge, Kansas, who had been drafted only a few months before, was instructed by Sergeant Charles King to make the Hutterites work. According to Graber, King had been instructed to see if he could not make the Hutterites disobey a direct order relating to the camp. Apparently, King disliked the assignment and told Graber,

> And for God's sake, Graber, go in there and tell them I don't want to get them in trouble. You tell them that, the order will be for everybody to go up on the hill, pick up some rocks in their hands and bring 'em down here and throw 'em down here.[6]

It is not clear if Graber gave the order, but on November 19, Sergeant King and also Second Lieutenant Harold T. Smutz told the conscientious objectors to pave a road in Camp Funston.[7]

On the basis of the available evidence, it seems obvious that the military authorities in Camp Funston had deliberately chosen this post-Armistice time to "test" the conscientious objectors. They, as well as the conscripts, knew that most draftees were soon to be discharged. While many conscientious objectors had stubbornly and consistently refused to perform any kind of work in the camps, military officers wondered if these "never-sweats" would now, when discharge from military service was imminent, compromise and thus be exposed as hypocrites. Most likely the military authorities believed they would be proven right and be able to show, as they had alleged for months, that most of these conscientious objectors were not sincere but cowards, slackers, and hypocrites. On the other hand, they might have hoped some men would disobey the order—a response that would result in courts-martial and imprisonment for the recalcitrants.

The work the conscientious objectors were ordered to perform seemed to be of a practical nature and beneficial to the camp's welfare. In Camp Funston, a road designated as Avenue B ran in an east-west direction, between the 9th

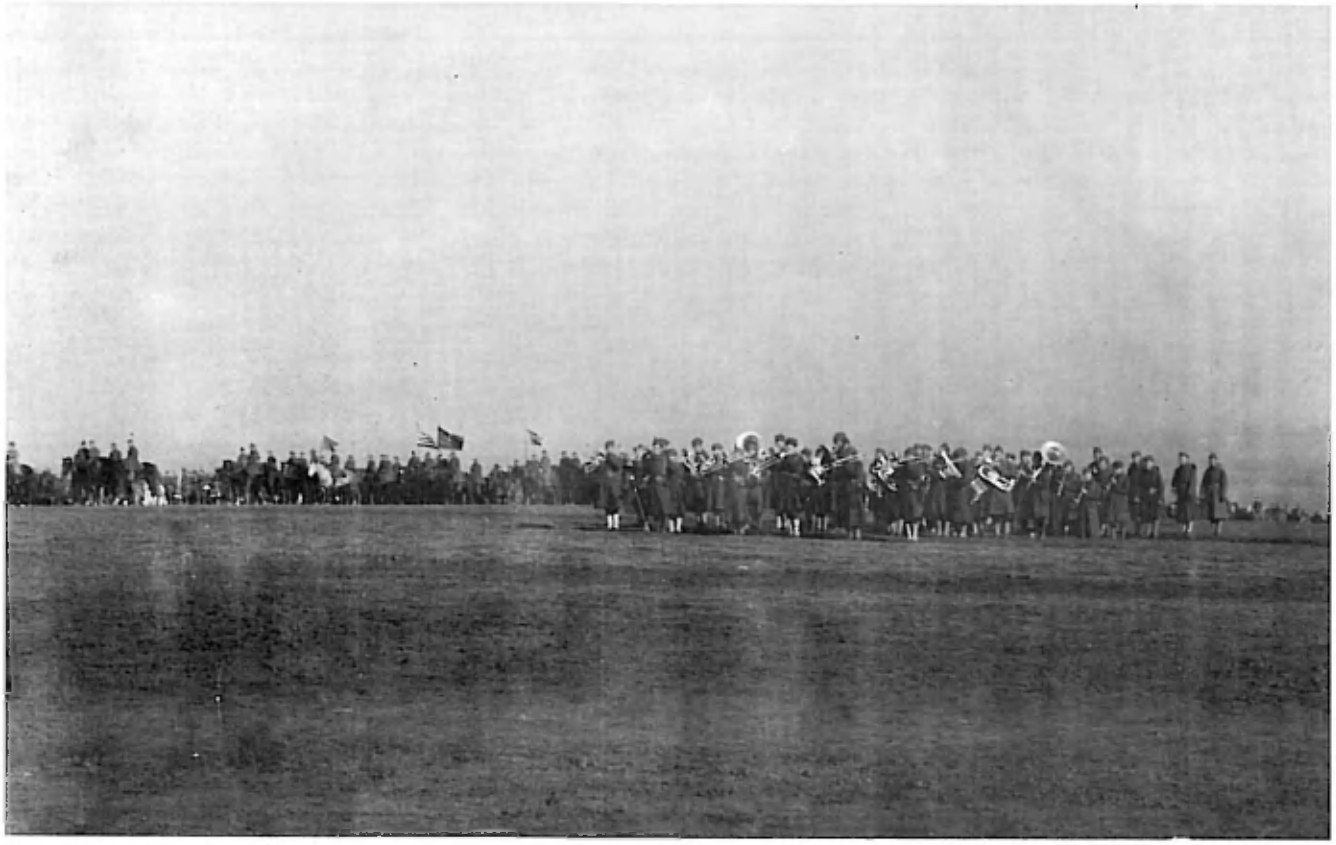
Entrance to Camp Funston

and 10th Companies, from the men's tents' to the kitchen. This road was about eighteen feet wide and had been "plowed and turnpiked" but not paved. The order of November 19 instructed the conscientious objectors to pave this road with rocks for the purpose of making it easier and more sanitary for the men to walk from their tents to the kitchen, especially in rainy weather. Yet, as was clearly shown by the defense during the court-martial hearings, paving this road was unnecessary as the men were using a narrow rock path of about two feet wide that ran almost parallel to Avenue B. The only disadvantage of this path had been its narrowness, which made it necessary for the men to walk in single file. Yet the military authorities did not stress this problem. Instead they preferred to ignore the existence of this narrow path and argued that an unsanitary situation might arise if the men had to stand or walk in the mud during or after a rain while using Avenue B.[8]

Initially, some fifty or perhaps even most conscientious objectors refused to obey the order. However, after some time there were only nine and finally eight men left who held out. These eight men were Paul and Samuel Kleinsasser, Michael Mandel, John Entz, John J. Becker, Jacob Hofer, and the two brothers Jacob M. and Joe M. Walter. These eight men voiced the same objection many conscientious objectors had expressed ever since they arrived in military camps in the fall of 1917. Their conscience would not permit them to support the military system by performing this kind or perhaps any type of work that somehow contributed to the war effort. As Michael Mandel later testified, they could not carry the rocks because that kind of work would "help build up the camp."[9] The response of Lieutenant Harold T. Smutz to their objection was not untypical of many military men when he told Joseph Walter, "To hell with your conscience."[10] Because of their stubborn refusal, the men were charged with violation of articles 64 and 96 of the Articles of War. The former stipulated that anyone who disobeyed a lawful order of a superior officer was liable to punishment. The other article provided for punishment, as the court saw fit, for individuals who had committed acts to the prejudice of good order and military discipline.[11]

The eight men ranged from ages 24 to 27—Entz being the youngest and Jacob Walter the oldest. They were all farmers with limited grade school education. Some of them were probably not fluent in the English language and not well informed about the world outside their rural communities. Thus, for instance, one of the defendants did not even know the name of the president of the United States.[12] Therefore, in some respects these eight men were not unlike many other World War I Mennonite, Hutterite, or Amish conscientious objectors who were often considered academically inferior to the Quakers.[13]

The eight men had all been drafted in the late summer of 1918 and accepted by the Board of Inquiry for farm furloughs. Except in the case of Joe Walter, it is not possible to determine why these men were not granted a farm furlough by their military commanders. Yet it is interesting to note that Joe Walter was denied a farm furlough because he refused to fire a rifle at the firing range.[14] Apparently, they had been well treated and not been asked to perform any so-called non-combatant work until that fateful day of November 19, 1918. Four of the accused were



Brass band on the Camp Funston Review Grounds

Hutterites while the others were General Conference Mennonites. The eight men were all from South Dakota, although it is most likely these draftees did not know each other until they arrived in Camp Funston. In Funston they and two other conscientious objectors shared the same tent. The four Hutterites were the two Kleinsassers, Mandel, and Entz. These four men belonged to the Milltown Hutterite Bruderhof, located in Hutchinson County, a colony that had been established in 1864 and in 1902 ordained the above-mentioned Joseph Kleinsasser as one of its ministers.[15]

All four Hutterites were married and two of them, Entz and Mandel, were parents. The latter was a father of two children, one of whom died in late 1918 while Mandel was imprisoned in the guardhouse. If these men had not been Hutterites, local draft boards might have exempted these married men or fathers from military duty. But local prejudice against these non-conforming citizens prevailed and often Hutterites who should have been exempted were drafted out of spite.[16]

Of the other men, Becker belonged to the Bethesda Mennonite Church, a congregation located near Marion, South Dakota. This church had been established in 1874 and belonged to the Northern District of the General Conference Mennonite Church.[17] The two Walter brothers and Hofer belonged to the Hutterthal Mennonite Church in Bridgewater, South Dakota. The Hutterthal Mennonite Church had been established in 1877 by non-communal Hutterites and had joined the Northern District of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Yet, during the court-martial hearings, the two Walters and Hofer contended that they belonged to the Defenseless Mennonite Church. Even their church membership certificates, submitted as evidence during their courts-martial, indicated that the men were members of the "Defenseless Mennonite church at New Hutterthal Kirche." This designation caused much confusion that was not removed even after Hofer later testified that he did not really belong to a Defenseless Mennonite church but that he meant to say his church was defenseless. In order to clear up the confusion, the prosecution even called upon Reverend P. H. Richert, pastor of the Tabor Mennonite Church located near Goessel, Kansas, to explain who the Defenseless Mennonites were. The latter expressed his surprise over the presence of Defenseless Mennonites in South Dakota because, as he correctly pointed out, there were none in that state, but some could be found in Illinois. Later the prosecution used the references to Defenseless Mennonites as evidence that the defendants had been lying about their religious affiliation.[18]

Poor legal defense

Generally, Mennonite and other conscientious objectors who were court-martialed during World War I were very poorly defended by their legal counsels who were military officers. Frequently, a legal counsel was even hostile to the defendant. This was not the case in the courts-martial of the eight men in late 1918 and early 1919. They, or most likely their parents and the Milltown Bruderhof, hired F. D. Wicks, a local attorney from Scotland, South Dakota. Only in these eight court-martial cases and in the trials of two Mennonite deserters in 1920 did civilian defense counsels assist Mennonite draftees who ran afoul of military

authorities. The Hutterites knew Wicks and had hired him as early as the fall of 1917 in order to secure fair and decent treatment for their draftees in Camp Funston.[19] Wicks was not a conscientious objector and even told the court that he "despised the idea of conscientious objection." Nor did he, in spite of the fact that he had "practiced law for thirty years," know what a court-martial was all about. Yet he felt a person had a constitutional right to conscientious objection to military service. He did not arrive in Camp Funston until December 17, one day before the first trial. During the first day in Funston he spent two hours with Hofer, the first defendant to go on trial, and learned from each trial how to defend the next client who had been charged with the same offense. He made a very good effort to defend and counsel the men, although he was unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade the court to be lenient and fair.[20]

Jacob M. Hofer trial

Jacob M. Hofer was the first of the defendants to be tried on December 18, 1918. The last one to be heard was Samuel Kleinsasser who was tried on January 27, 1919. Most of the trials took only one day except Jacob Walter's whose court-martial required five days. In most of the eight courts-martial Wicks accused the judges of lack of impartiality because many of the same men tried the accused. Wicks also correctly assumed that the court lacked objectivity as it was very prejudiced against conscientious objectors. As he told the court during the trial of John Entz,

> I know gentlemen that you are army officers. I know that you are prejudiced against conscientious objectors. I know that you have an idea of deep-seated and abiding prejudice against the very idea of conscientious objection, but I take it that you are men of honor, men of honesty, of purpose, men who desire to do your duty as you see that duty to be . . . .[21]

In order to obtain a fair hearing and judgment for his clients, Wicks tried a variety of tactics and arguments. Thus he often vigorously objected to various questions asked of the defendants and witnesses and forced the court to recess frequently in order to consider his challenges, many of which were sustained. He also clearly showed that the work required of the men had been unnecessary as there was a suitable path from the men's tents to the kitchen. Not one "scintilla of evidence," Wicks argued, had been produced why this road had to be paved. You simply could not "paint a lily gold," he told the court. Furthermore, he pointed out that it had not rained in Camp Funston since Armistice Day.[22]

During Mandel's court-martial, Wicks tried to persuade the court his client strove for the same objectives as the United States in the war with militaristic Germany, a nation that stood for the principle, might makes right. The United States, Wicks reminded the court, successfully overcame German might with countermight. Also the Hutterites rejected German militarism, the defense counsel pointed out, but believed that might could be overcome by exercising the doctrine as taught by Jesus Christ. Thus the difference between Mandel and his government was one of tactics not of principles or objectives. But all of Wicks' legal finesse and eloquence were insufficient to persuade the court of the men's innocence.[23]

Unlike most other courts-martial, the eight defendants were not questioned much about their religious convictions. Thus there were few of the standard questions about the biblical foundations of conscientious objection or what the defendant would do if he were confronted with a particular situation involving physical threats to his relatives or friends. Nor were there the typical questions how a conscientious objector would react to a foreign invasion. Perhaps such questions seemed a little less relevant now that the war was over. The only defendant who was interrogated on such matters was Entz, who told the court that he found the basis for his creed in the New Testament. When told by the court that Christ had driven the money changers out of the Temple, Becker laconically replied he had "never heard that He [Christ] had hurt anybody."[24]

As was to be expected, the court found all defendants guilty of refusal to obey military orders and accused the eight men of hypocrisy and inconsistency in their convictions. Thus the judge advocate found it difficult to understand why the men had been willing to police the camp but refused to build a walk. The distinction between these two types of work was so fine, he concluded, that it required "a microscope to find the difference." The court could only find the men innocent if their creed specifically forbade the building of a path. He also expressed his contempt for conscientious objectors, accusing them of refusing to defend the nation against the German menace. If the nation had not defended itself, he alleged, hundreds of thousands of American children would now be walking through the country "with both hands cut off." The judge advocate also wondered how any human being could stand before this court and say that he would not raise his hand to stop the "ravager from entering his home and the murderer from cutting his child's throat?" To him, such a stand was inconceivable, and a person holding that position not deserving of a place under the Stars and Stripes. If South Dakota would be peopled by men of such caliber, the judge advocate warned, the nation would soon be the stomping ground of nations like the "Turks, the Bulgarians, the Bolsheviki of Russia, and the German Huns."[25]

The sentences meted out to the eight men were just as harsh as had been pronounced against most conscientious objectors in the months prior to the Armistice. During the war, court-martial sentences had been very stiff in part in order to satisfy super-patriotic opinion that demanded conformity and punishment of those who refused "to do their bit." Because of the release of many conscientious objectors shortly after the Armistice, popular feeling against these men was even more intense than during the war. Thus the eight men could not expect much mercy. They were sentenced to life imprisonment, but a few days later all but one of the sentences were reduced to terms of imprisonment varying from five to twenty-five years.[26] However, Entz's sentence was set aside by Major-General Leonard Wood because it did not "appear in the record that General Order no. 28, War Department, 1918, specifying the classes of non-combatant service to be offered to Conscientious Objectors, was read and explained to the accused." He was restored to duty and discharged soon after.[27] Fortunately, like most court-martialed conscientious objectors, the other seven men were also released in the course of 1919.[28]

Red Cross Ambulance Unit, Camp Funston

During World War I many men and women displayed courage and conviction on the field of battle. Yet also the conscientious objector and the war critic had to be firmly committed as they were espousing unpopular causes in a time of extreme intolerance and patriotic mass hysteria. During World War I it was not easy to be a conscientious objector. It was even more difficult to remain loyal to one's conviction when imminent discharge from military service might tempt a conscientious objector to compromise and relent. These eight simple farm boys had this extra courage of conviction and refused to renege on their principles.

ENDNOTES

[1]Joseph Kleinsasser to Frederick P. Keppel, November 25, 1918. Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 694, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 383.2. A copy of this letter is in Mss 72, Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. Hereafter, Record Group, National Archives is cited as RG, NA and Mennonite Library and Archives as MLA.

[2]On the legislation, executive orders, etc. concerning World War I conscientious objectors see *Statutes at Large of the United States of America* . . . (Washington, D.C., 1919): 40, part 1:78, 450; Walter G. Kellogg. *The Conscientious Objector* (Washington, D.C., 1919), pp. 18-24, 131-139. On the treatment of many Mennonite conscientious objectors see J. S. Hartzler, *Mennonites in the World War, or Nonresistance under Test*, 2d. ed. (Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1922) and especially many taped and transcribed interviews in the Schowalter Oral History Collection on World War I Conscientious Objectors, MLA. The author has also drawn upon numerous other published and unpublished sources.

[3]Kellogg, *Conscientious Objectors*, pp. 25-32. See also various taped interviews in the Schowalter Collection, MLA.

[4]General Court-Martial of Michael Mandel. Records of the Judge Advocate General, RG 153, NA, no. 125931. Hereafter General Court-Martial cited as GCM.

[5]On the treatment of conscientious objectors in Camp Funston see Sarah D. Shields, "The Treatment of Co. ...tious Objectors during World War I," *Kansas History* 4 (1981): 255-269.

[6]Interview Harry Graber. Schowalter Collection, no. 17, MLA.

[7]See GCM of Jacob J. Hofer, John J. Becker, Joe Walter, Jacob M. Walter, Jacob Entz, Michael Mandel, Paul Kleinsasser, and Samuel Kleinsasser, RG 153, NA, nos. 124363, 125928, 126676, 125677, 125930, 125931, 126210, and 126211 respectively. With the exception of the general court martial records of Mandel and Entz, these records are also on microfilm in MSS 171A and C, MLA.

[8]Ibid.

[9]GCM Mandel. RG 153, NA, no. 125931. Interview Jacob Hofer, Schowalter Collection no. 77, MLA. One other Mennonite, Peter Gross, initially supported the eight men but later decided to obey. He was not court-martialed.

[10]GCM Joe Walter. RG 153, NA, no. 125676.

[11]GCM Entz. RG, NA, 153, no. 125930.

[12]GCM Jacob Walter. RG 153, NA. no. 125677. Miss Judy Hofer, Emery, SD, kindly gave the author additional information on Jacob Walter, her grandfather.

[13]See Kellogg, *Conscientious Objectors*, pp. 33-43.

[14]GCM Entz. RG 153, NA, no. 125930.

[15]*The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Milltown Hutterite Bruderhof," by David Decker.

[16]GCM Entz and Mandel. RG 153, NA, nos. 125930 and 125931.

[17]*The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Bethesda Mennonite Church," by A. W. Friesen.

[18]GCM Hofer, Joe and Jacob Walter. RG 153, NA, nos. 124363, 125676, and 125677. On Richert see *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Richert, Peter, H.," by R. E. F. On Defenseless Mennonites see *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Evangelical Mennonite Church," by E. E. Rupp.

[19]Major Levi G. Brown, Division Inspector, 89th Division, Camp Funston, to Commander General, 89th Division. November 6, 1917. RG 393, NA, War Department, Records of the U.S. Army Cantonment Command, 1821-1920. Camp Funston, 1917-1920, 324.72. Copy also in MLA.

[20]GCM Hofer, RG 153, NA, no. 124363.

[21]GCM Entz, RG 153, NA, no. 125930.

[22]GCM Becker, RG 153, NA, no. 125928.

[23]GCM Mandel, RG 153, NA, no. 125931.

[24]GCM Entz, RG 153, NA, no. 125930.

[25]GCM Mandel, RG 153, NA, no. 125931. See also the GCM of the other defendants.

[26]GCM Hofer, Becker, Jacob and Joe Walter, Entz, Mandel, and Paul and Samuel Kleinsasser, RG 153, NA, nos. 124363, 125928, 126676, 125677, 125930, 125931, 126210, 126211.

[27]GCM Entz, RG 153, NA, no. 125930.

[28]GCM Hofer, Becker, Jacob and Joe Walter, Entz, Mandel, and Paul and Samuel Kleinsasser. RG 153, NA, nos. 124363, 125928, 126676, 126677, 125930, 125931, 126210, 126211.

The Wilhelm Galle Family and Camp Funston's "Lost Battalion"

by James C. Juhnke

The Wilhelm and Anna Krehbiel Galle family of Moundridge, Kansas, felt the impact of World War I in a special way.

The Galles had four sons and four daughters living on their farm home just south of the town. The oldest son, Menno, was no longer at home. Father Wilhelm, who celebrated his 68th birthday on the month the United States declared war, was the unpaid pastor of the West Zion Mennonite Church in Moundridge.

During the war the four younger Galle sons, Ralph, Paul, Kurt and Oswin, were all drafted into the United States army and called to Camp Funston. Deprived of his family farm workers, Wilhelm decided to sell the farm and move to town.

Moundridge's population of 700 persons included many German-Americans, and the patriotic citizens worked especially hard to demonstrate their loyalty. At a Red Cross auction on June 20, a group of farmers bid more than $1,200 for a three-inch American flag, winning the praise of newspaper editors statewide. German speaking pacifists such as Wilhelm Galle came under special pressure. To overcome the stigma of sharing a name with Kaiser Wilhelm, the hated enemy leader, Wilhelm Galle officially changed his name to William during the war.

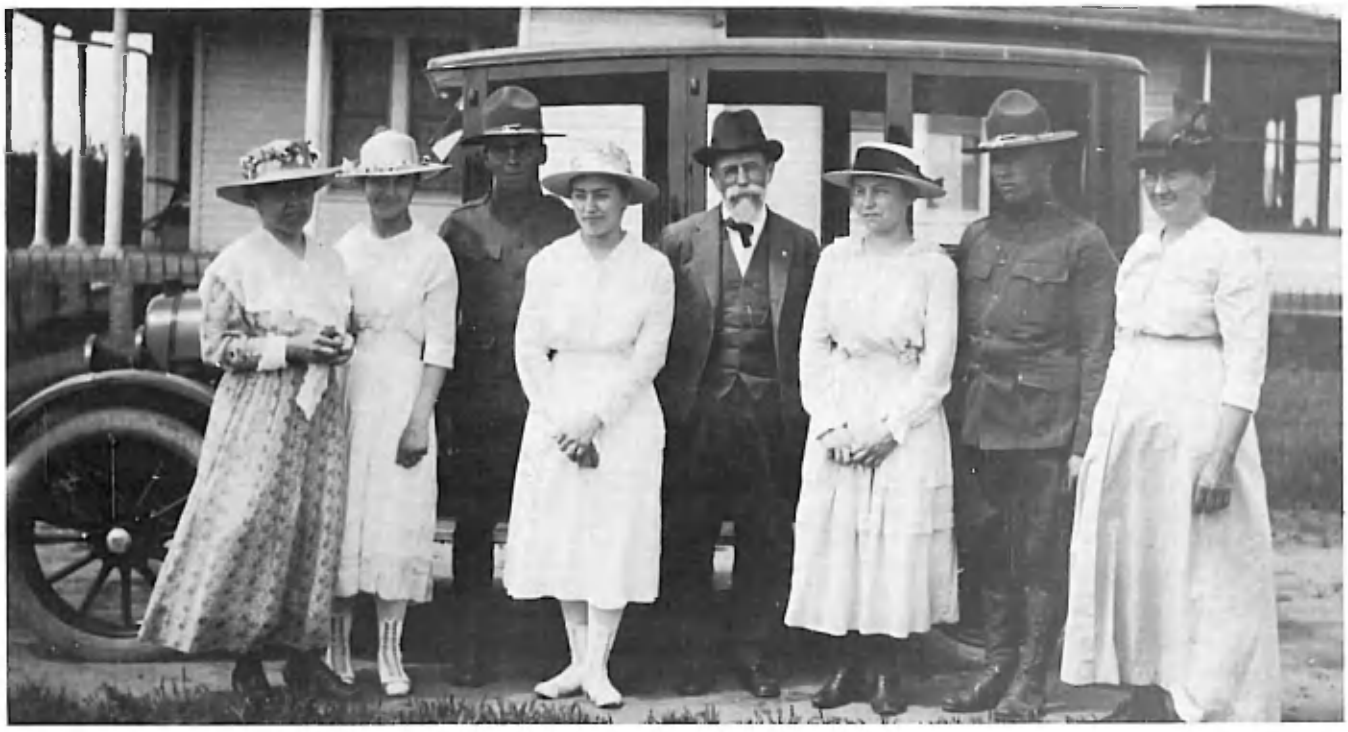
Above, Before going to camp April 21, 1918. l to r Oswin, Marna, Linda, and Kurt Galle

Middle, The four drafted brothers after the war. Paul, Oswin, Kurt, and Ralph Galle

Left, Two Galle sisters see their brothers off to military camp, McPherson, Kansas. Oswin, Linda, Marna, and Kurt Galle

"My father didn't come out and oppose the government in what they were doing publicly in the church. . . . But of course he was opposed to the war."

Oswin K. Galle



Above, The Galle family on Oswin and Kurt's first visit home to the farm south of Moundridge, June 2, 1918. l to r Marna, Linda, Oswin, Priscilla, Wilhelm (father), Clara, Kurt, Anna (mother)

Right, Reverend Wilhelm Galle and Anna Krehbiel Galle

"We were willing to do whatever the government would ask us to do except one thing, We were not going to have any part in any killing operation."

O. K. Galle

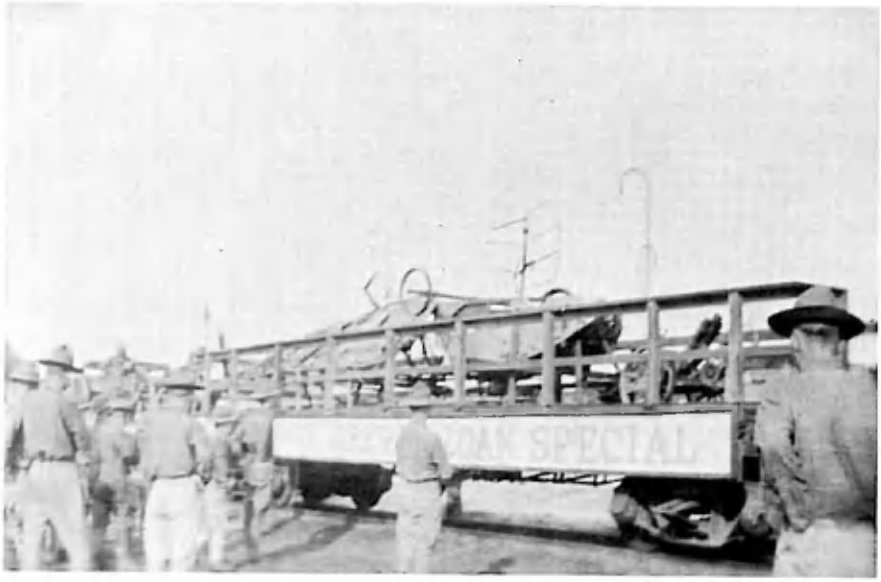
interviews in the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College. The quotations in bold type on the following pages are from the Oswin Galle interview.

Kurt Galle accumulated a set of more than four hundred photographs from 1917 to 1919. In September 1989, Kurt's widow, Louisa M. Epp Galle, donated this valuable collection to Mennonite Library and Archives. The photographs in this issue of *Mennonite Life* are a small sample from this newly available resource.

The Galle boys had varying experiences at Camp Funston. Paul Galle decided to accept regular military service, a disappointment to his father. Paul went to France with the American Expeditionary Forces. Ralph Galle was in the army only briefly. He had a severe hearing loss due to a case of childhood measles, so he was sent home. Kurt and Oswin Galle decided that they would wear the military uniform, but that they would refuse to accept guns. Oswin later said, "We were not going to have any part in any killing operation."

Unlike the absolutist Mennonite, Amish and Hutterite conscientious objectors, Kurt and Oswin agreed to work in the Quartermaster Corps. They were not mistreated in camp. They joked about their isolation and insignificance as members of Camp Funston's "lost battalion." Kurt worked in the rock quarry. Oswin was on the road maintenance crew for thirteen months and spent the last six months as supervisor of the tool house.

Oswin Galle told about his wartime experiences in a tape-recorded interview in August 1968. The transcribed interview is part of the Schowalter Oral History Collection of three hundred



Top, In the trenches

Bottom, Liberty Loan Special. War materials captured from Germany put on display

"Each one of us got a detail of Negroes
and we supervised in doing road work."

O. K. Galle

Left, Black soldiers at the rock quarry improvise a rhythm orchestra

Middle, In the trenches, ten feet below ground, Oct. 6, 1918

Bottom, Detention Camp No. 2

"Every morning General Leonard Wood went out for a ride to survey things . . . So they gave me a squad to take out and go over this road . . . so he could have a smooth road to go over."

O. K. Galle

"To me the only thing that ever will avert war is the teachings of Christ if we can get to where we will live them."

O. K. Galle

The Roads and Drainage Division of the Quartermaster Corps. Oswin Galle (first) and Kurt Galle (thirteenth) in the middle row

Our Asian Journey

by Dallas Wiebe

Dallas Wiebe's forthcoming novel, Our Asian Journey, *tells the story of the great trek of Mennonites who migrated to Central Asia a century ago. They expected Christ's Second Coming.*

The novel is divided into seven chapters, titled after the seven churches which John addressed in the book of Revelation. The seventh and last chapter is a meditation of the elderly Joseph Toews at the end of his life. Joseph and his family were on the trek, later emigrated to Kansas, and finally moved to Aberdeen, Idaho.

The book ends with Joseph's song of praise for all that has happened to him in his life.

Chapter VII: *Laodicea*
Aberdeen, Idaho
Saturday December 31, 1921 (n.s.)
Sylvester

When I went in to eat my supper, Sarah said, "Did you finish sleeping?" And I said, "No, I quit." She looked over her little nose, her fat cheeks and seven chins, pushed her wife's cap back on top of her head and said, "Chub chub, Joseph. Pray, you little mouse." I prayed for the horses in the dunes, the dogs and pilgrims in the snows and wind, for peace on earth, for good dreams and healthy visions, for good shoes for everyone on earth, for the beauty of Sarah's singing, for the souls of the dead children, for sermons full of faith and fire, for a refuge for all the wanderers of this globe, for the repose of Gerhardt's soul. I thanked God for my wind-up phonograph, my long underwear, my thick wool stockings from Sears and Roebuck. Finally Sarah said, "Amen, Joseph. The Borscht is getting cold." I kept on praying to myself while Sarah clashed the dishes, banged the pots, slopped soup and tea around the table. Sarah sat down and said, "She's my father's daughter but not my sister. Who is she?" I wrapped a white napkin around my neck and began to eat. Sarah said, "I am a father's child and a mother's child but no one's son. Who am I?" I said, "Sarah, for heaven's sake. I still haven't figured out which side of the cat has the most hair on it." American swearing amuses me. They have hundreds of ways of avoiding using the Lord's name in vain. They say, "I'll be darned," as if they were stockings. When Sarah says, "When the time comes the answers will come," I say, "The heck they will."

I wish Sergeant could sit by my side so I could stroke him. He doesn't riddle me to death. He doesn't say to me, "When nine sparrows sit on a roof and someone shoots one, how many are left?" If he did, I'd say, "Jumping jiminey. Who cares?" Answers will come, my foot. It was a relief to get up from the table and sit back down in my rocker on the porch. Sergeant flopped his tail against the rug a couple of times when I put my quilt around my legs. Sarah calls out that church is at nine o'clock next morning. I remember the Kroeger clocks. The great clock in *Heimweh.* My mind wanders. My soul limps out into the darkness. My spirit trembles at the possibility of again traveling out in search of something wonderful.

Once a pilgrim always a pilgrim. Once you have gotten rid of all you have and have set out on the great journey it's not difficult to do it a

second time, a third time, a fourth time. Once you have left the Danziger Werder and gone to Lysanderhoh, it's not difficult to leave Lysanderhoh, Kaplan Bek, Serabulak, Lausan, Newton, Aberdeen or this earth. Once you have decided that life is a pilgrimage, that life is a great journey to God, then no place is a refuge. Every place is but a way station on that journey. No place on this earth is a terminal. We were the remnant and we were the true pilgrims because we did not stop. We journeyed on, crying, "God is great" and "Peace be with you." We only tarried here and there. All the others returned to their farms or stopped along the way and settled down. We alone pushed on. We always lived in a place called "Am Trakt," along the way. Maybe Philadelphia is made up of those pilgrims who never stop moving, who never settle in any earthly city.

We tarried in Newton for thirty years and now we tarry here in Aberdeen, but even the thirty years in Newton were only a moment until we fly away up into the great face of God, hear the great shout and are caught up into the air to take our place among the great stars that crown His glory, gather with the twenty-four elders around the throne, look upon Him who is like jasper and a sardine stone, see the rainbow around the throne that is like an emerald, see the four beasts covered with eyes, see the seven lamps, sing the new song, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Here in Aberdeen we wait to be taken up when the last trumpet sounds and we are raised incorruptible in a twinkling of an eye and we are changed and are caught up in the clouds to be with the descending Lord at the shout like the archangel. We but wait to fly away into the stars to take our places with Arcturus, Rigel, Betelgeuse, Sirius, Antares and Aldebaran. To be with Saturn, Jupiter and Venus. To take our places among the great comets and come and go and fly across the heavens like motes in the eyes of God. No more quibbling, no more quarreling, no more quoting of Scripture and thumping of Bibles. We'll wear white robes and wave palm branches. In a tumult of joy and adoration I'll stand by the throne with Sarah and sing, "Great God, we praise you," "I worship the power of love" and "Now all the woods are at rest." I'll join in and hold her hand while we sing. What will be and what is. What shall come and what goes now. The great eternity and the brief life of man. Our journey will end only when we stand in our broken shoes and our humble hearts by the Crystal Sea.

I can not write a memoir for my grandchildren when there can be no earthly end to it. I could never record that last moment. What is there to say about a pilgrimage unless you know where it ends? I don't want to talk about it and neither does anyone else who went. The answer will come when the time comes. Everybody thinks we were fools. You had to be there to know what it was like and words aren't likely to do much. The scoffers and scorners weren't there. How can I write *A Short Sketch of My Life As It Reveals the Direction and Guidance of a Wonderful and Gracious God* when they will all laugh at it? How can I tell them about the brackish water, getting lost in a sand storm, the deep sands of the Kara Kum south of Terekli? How can I speak of the terrible cold at Perovski and fording the Aris and Keles Rivers? What can I say about the typhoid at Kaplan Bek, the diarrhea at Serabulak and Lausan? What can I write about crossing the Hunger Steppe, passing through the Gate of Tamerlane, the blue domes of Samarkand, the swift currents of the Zeravshan? What can I say about Ebenezer and its destruction, the journey down the Amu to Lausan, the tigers in the Tugai, the thieving and murderous Turkomans? Why babble in Aberdeen about Constantine von Kaufman and Alexander II, Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias, etc., etc., etc.? Why stutter around or mumble something about the Ust Urt Plateau and Kardijigit here near the Craters of the Moon? Here, near the Ice Cave, how could I write about Gerhardt's little ponies and his wagon painted red, yellow and green, his sons buried in the desert, the boots and shoes he made us, the little table I gave him? Sarah's shoes? Her songs on the Asian roads and streets? All those riddles I cannot answer? My diary is lost. How can I remember what I said in my sermons? How can I remember my visions and my dreams?

After seeing Samarkand, what could I write about Beatrice, Nebraska? Could I describe what we felt when we arrived there? Not to mention Newton. There was a meanness, a lowness, a barrenness, a sordidness in these little American towns that even the villages of the Russian peasants or the kibitkas of the Kirghiz didn't have. The American houses were built to fall down. Or, as I found out later, to be blown away and spread over the face of the earth so that the owners could go out and gather their planks and beams from the trees, the furrows and the creeks. Stand them back up. Move back in. Wait for the next high wind. The churches built of scrap wood, not like the golden domed churches of Leningrad and Orenburg that have stood for hundreds of years. And just a week ago I read that the godless Communists, the atheist Bolsheviks, are restoring the cathedrals and the tomb of Tamerlane.

I'm sure it's the democracy. I should tell my grandchildren that a nation built on the sands of social revolution cannot stand. I'm sure it's the equality. No one knows his place. I should tell my grandchildren that a government built on the will of the beast from the sea of the people does not answer to God. Such disorder here. Such disrespect for the soil, the trees, the water. I should tell them that wherever the hand of the Czar spread its fingers the Russians planted trees, dug wells, built roads. I should tell them that when we settled in Lysanderhoh, we were required to plant twenty trees each year. So much disrespect for each other here. When we met the Muslim natives on the roads of Central Asia they called out "Sholem Aleikem," peace be with you. When we met the Muslim pilgrims, they cried out, "Allah Akbar," God is great. Here you meet a man on the roads and you are lucky if he does not rob you with a gun. I should tell them that I do not wish to tarry in a nation filled with criminals and covered with junk.

I've tried to make some notes for my memoirs but I fail when I try to get back to those times. I pick up my pen and my little green notebook and stand like a cow before a new door. I can't remember the temperature at Perovski, the exact location of Kaplan Bek, the cost of the kayuks on the Amu Darya. I can't remember how far it was from Kungrad to Orenburg. I can't remember how high the wall of salt was at Iletsk. I can't remember what we called our horses. What I do remember is vague and I'm not sure what happened. My mother

asking for a warm room before she died in Serabulak. The junky mosque where I preached each Sunday for a Winter. Two thousand roubles missing. Kardijigit and the camel drivers squatting and eating mutton and rice around their fires on the Ust Urt. The little brown dog that followed us to Ft. Embinsk. A stag standing over us and a gold cross between his budding antlers. The empty nights by the Aral Sea when suddenly visions of horrible dreams sorely troubled me and unlooked for terrors came upon me. The huge white S.S. Fulda. The Negroes in New York. Stepping off the train in Newton and wanting to say, "I am Joseph Barnabas Toevs just come from Samarkand."

My diary was lost somewhere in the thirty years on my farm east of Newton, somewhere in the move to Aberdeen, somewhere in the four years here. Sarah wants to read it and when I tell her it's lost she smiles over her chins, clucks, reties the ribbons on her wife's cap, wiggles a finger at me and says, "Now Joseph. It's a bad man who can't think of an excuse." I think she thinks I've hidden it somewhere. It's gone and for all I know it's out there in the Craters of the Moon. Maybe a drunken Indian stole it. Maybe my grandchildren used it to start a fire. Maybe it was shredded by the mice to line a nest. Maybe God, knowing me, lifted it up so that I might be humbled. Maybe God took it to Himself so that He would know what to say to me when we meet up there in the air when I end my pilgrimage straight up into the clouds of glory. Maybe God took it, read it and ate it to preserve it for all time. Maybe the angels at this moment are correcting my grammar, correcting my spellings, correcting my German, filling in the names of the horses, measuring out and writing down the distance from Perovski to Tashkent, the depth of the Aris River, the symptoms of typhoid, listing the foods we ate in Lausan, protecting the diaries of Jantzen, Klaasen and Bartsch. Maybe the angels are writing in the answers to Sarah's riddles. Maybe, at this moment, Divine Wisdom is preparing a family, creating a marriage, from which will come a son who will one day write these things in a book which will be my memorial. Now, somewhere, maybe God is beginning to prepare for a poor farm boy from Whitewater, Goessel, Hillsboro, Halstead, Mountain Lake, Freeman, Beatrice, Aberdeen, Newton, one of our children's children, generations away, who will have the wit, the learning, the understanding, to write the last earthly part of my journey through the open door. Somewhere, God is preparing that humble and contrite boy who, as a man, will read our letters, our diaries, our memoirs, the newspaper accounts, and will be offended that we were scorned. He will see that to sell all and follow God's will is not folly. He will see that to be able to believe is a gift. He will find his life in mine as I found my life in God. Our Lord would not have it otherwise. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

When the time comes, he will appear. That man, full of wisdom and righteousness, when he reads of us, will understand and write that everywhere we go we scratch, dig, plow, build, procreate, worship, argue, die. We build barns, houses, churches, schools. We go to the Danziger Werder, Volhynia, Molotschna, Chortitza, Saratov, Khiva, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Idaho, California, Canada, Paraguay. For what? To preserve our beliefs? To serve God? To find land that we can inherit? We argue, we pound our Bibles, we divide up into churches, we grow our families, we give birth, we die, they die and our cemeteries are scattered over the face of the earth. We lie down in sorrow amidst strangers. The sons of the alien become our plowmen and our vinedressers. We are a people scattered and peeled. We are the ambassadors of peace and we weep bitterly. We go on. We sing the same old songs. We try to do good works and build up treasures in heaven. We wander out looking for eternal blessedness. We are like small dust, like the small dust of the balance.

In Newton I became upset by the Warkentines, the Ensz's and the Sudermans with their "sack cloth and ashes aren't good enough for me" attitudes. I preached to them of pilgrimage. I was vexed with those "locusts and honey won't ever cross my lips" professors at Bethel College. I told them about our chain pumps called Chighirs. I wanted to say to them in High German that we went into the desert. We were chastised. We were cleansed by suffering. Some of us survived. We entered the fabled and dangerous world of Tamerlane and Ghenghis Khan, of Alexander the Great and Muzaffar-ad-Din, Emir and son of Nasrullah, called Filkush va Mushpewer, killer of elephants and protector of mice. We walked through the fierce Turkomans. We crossed the Ust Urt Plateau. All under the hand of God. Because the deeper we went into the desert, the more danger we suffered, the greater the tribulation, the closer we came to our Lord. At night, asleep in our blankets on the ground, the wind blowing, the jackals crying, the horses whinnying softly, the wagons in a circle, standing watch as the great stars turned, I thought I could reach out and touch all heaven. I, Joseph the dreamer, like the Joseph of old, stood in the vast emptiness right beside God.

I've heard it said here in America that "Three moves equal one fire." There's some wisdom in that because each move is an unburdening. If you move often enough, you travel light. Your worldly possessions become what God always said they were, a burden that distracts you from the pilgrimage of your soul through this troubled world. There's something to the idea that your possessions can destroy your soul. But if you unburden, you also lose things of great value. Your diaries, your letters, your children, your parents, your wife, your life, which is the final unburdening.

Then, when you are unburdened, God forgive me, you get the wanderlust. It was terrible for me to live for thirty years east of Newton. I wanted to sell everything every day and move out and sleep along the open roads. I wanted to go out and test my faith in the trials and tribulations of the pilgrim entering a foreign and hostile land, crossing a desert, learning new languages, seeing new peoples and their customs, eating different foods, figuring out how to get the wagons through the deep sand or up the Ust Urt Plateau, how to get across the Aris, Keles, Syr Darya, Zeravshan, the Amu Darya, the Emba, where to find wood for coffins, how much oats to carry, how hard to drive the horses, when to rest, where to find water, how to avoid military conscription, how to escape criminals and murderers without using violence, how to preserve our faith in the presence of despair, how to repair our shoes, how to drive off the fierce dogs, all the while searching for a land that is fairer than fair.

We went on, singing, preaching, studying, arguing. Across the land until in my latter days I sold everything

once again, got on a Santa Fe train and came to a new place, Aberdeen, Idaho, where my children and their children had settled, to start again by the Craters of the Moon. I stepped out of the train in Pocatello, unburdened, and I wanted to say, "I am Joseph Barnabas Toevs, just come from the world. Behold, I've been to Prussia, Russia, Central Asia, Germany, New York, Nebraska, Kansas, and now I come to Idaho. I've been to Danzig, St. Petersburg, Nizhni-Novgorod, Saratov, Uralsk, Samarkand, Khiva, Berlin, Bremen, New York City, Niagara Falls, Chicago, Beatrice, Newton. Listen, because I have been in this world and not of it. Listen, you farmers burdened with your canals, irrigation ditches, houses, automobiles, machines, horses, children, wives, religions, I have been about this world a great deal and I know whereof I speak. I bring you messages from and about God's good earth. I, Joseph, dreamer and pilgrim, come to you on the iron rails laid down by God's direction and guidance."

As I stood by the train in Pocatello, I knew at once that Aberdeen would be no place of refuge. On that Saturday, April 7, 1917, I stepped down from the Union Pacific Railway coach into a hot wind from the west, dust flying around my eyes, and I realized that there is no place of refuge on this earth. We will find it only when we unburden, when we drop this mortal flesh so that there is only the soul left to fly away to God up there in the clouds. There is on this earth no daydream world where you can go. Solyma, Shar-i-Sabs, the Valley of the Carrots, Yespera, are the daydreams of Bible-saturated minds. We read too much. We study too much. Our minds are like light bulbs. You can use them only so much and then they burn out. It's the same with the mind. You use it too much and it burns out and you can't see right because you're in the dark. The earth enters the time of travail in the last days. The mind grows old and enters into its travail, and you start having visions—and you don't, by cracky, have to be on Patmos. I think we all must have suspected that when we sold everything in Lysanderhoh and headed out. Gerhardt was a smart man; he must have known that. That's why he went along—to see what would happen, to see faith follow its daydreams. He knew even before we started that we could never stop traveling. He took along his cobbler's tools. He knew there would always be good business for a shoemaker because of all the believers and wanderers. He had but to follow the pilgrims in order to stay in business.

I think now that we are obsessed with the ends of things. We are obsessed with the ending of seconds, minutes, hours, days. The endings of weeks, months, seasons, years, decades, centuries, millennia, all time itself. Our youth, our marriage, our death. We become obsessed with the coming of sleep, the shortening of days, the silence of Winter, the locations of our graves, the quality of our tombstones. We are obsessed with the endings of our meals, the deaths of our pets, the ending of day, the ending of night. If things end well, we say that all things are well.

Not beginnings. Even though all time is measured by beginnings. Because, I think, things begin in visions and they can't be measured or given a time. Gerhardt was right; things begin in the mind's play. Begin as the mind and soul reach out to godhead to free themselves from the burdens of the flesh. It's what makes us human. It's different from prayers and sermons where we know what we say and think. The mind and soul dancing out beyond the body and the thoughtful, beyond faith and belief, beyond the clouds and the stars. Dancing out, unburdened and unafraid, into that which is beyond the human and seems to imitate God. Just as David in his linen ephod danced the Ark of the Covenant into his city. Just as our salvation began in the visions of Isaiah, Ezra, Zachariah, Daniel, Elisabeth, John the Baptist, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the wisemen, Jesus, John on Patmos in the spirit. Our time began in the visions of the coming of Christ and of his coming just as it will begin all over again when he comes the second time. All time measured back to the beginning of the earth up to the time when visions occurred and time began a second time, but this time forward. That second measurement to last until all time begins again when all men shall see visions and Christ shall descend in all his glory to judge the quick and the dead and we will not just reset our clocks and our calendars but start counting time again by not counting it at all so that we will no longer be obsessed with or even care about the ends of things. Maybe the surest sign that there is eternal life is that as I come to the great death my visions are so constant and so intense that not even Portzeltje, Gorovei, Vereniky, Piroscky, Borscht or Mohn-Kuchen can still them. Not even Sarah's stomping across the kitchen, nor her endless riddles, nor the snoring of Sergeant, not Sarah's singing, "You sought for me and found me with great joy when I went astray. Oh, look to your little sheep so that neither poison nor power can separate it from your flock." Not even the singing by Sarah of that lovely song she learned last year about an angel band bearing me away on snowy wings to my eternal home.

As the day of my ending comes upon me, in these last days, visions of eternity come upon me. I know when I see God my visions will never end. They will be eternal because they will never end just because the sun goes down, a clock strikes, a man dies. I can't read the book of Revelation or the book of Daniel. Probably because I have my own visions and I don't need theirs. I haven't read them since I left Khiva those thirty-seven years ago. I never preached from them when I was a minister and elder in the First Mennonite Church in Newton. I didn't want someone to study them, get into the spirit, write a book about the numbers in them and the secret messages in the numbers and then lead a bunch of Kansans off to a place of refuge in Alaska, Arabia, Labrador, Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego. I feel nothing for the books now.

John wrote to the Laodiceans that the spirit wanted them to be hot or cold. How can that be? What's wrong with that condition if you're at peace in God's will, if your visions come, if you are unburdened, if you are but waiting? I don't worry now for my salvation. I don't worry now for my sins. I do not sweat and moan over what happened or did not happen before. I've received my catechism, baptism, ordination, my call, my latter days. I've raised a family. I've taken a great journey for my soul's sake. I've plowed my ground and harvested my crops. I've planted many trees. I've spoken the word of God and tended my sheep. I've purchased a new pair of shoes from Sears and Roebuck each year for Sarah. What else can I feel, think or say now that I'm at the end of my pilgrimage on this earth? In your last days, how can you be anything else but a Laodicean?

It is difficult to know what to write in my memoir when my time is at hand and death will come soon like a thief in the night. I could write that you can't go out and meet God by walking back and forth on the same field. I could write that you can't own a farm and be a pilgrim. I could write that if you see tongues of flame on your farm your crops are on fire. I could write that when you slop your hogs you don't have to wade through the deep waters of affliction. On a farm, the refiner's fire shapes horseshoes. The only mystery you need to be told on a farm is the price of wheat. The twinkling of an eye means you have chaff under a lid. No yoke is easy and no burden is light on a farm during harvest. The potter's vessel is used to store cream. The only rod of iron is the axle on a wagon. No beast from the sea rises from a wheatfield. When you are fleeing the tribulation you don't worry about the distance to town. When you go out to meet God you don't look back. When you're running from the Antichrist you don't stop at a hotel. When the Antichrist is on his way you don't sit on a rocker and wait for him. When you walk with the Lord your feet have to touch ground. When you've been to Samarkand, Aberdeen isn't much. I could write that you can't find a place of refuge in a barn filled with flies. I could write that if you find an open door on your farm the cows are out. I could write that when you plant wheat you plant yourself, when you harvest your grain you harvest complacency, when you sell your grain you sell your faith. I could write that building a barn is blasphemy, raising hogs is heresy, milking cows curdles the soul, can sausage and you can your heart, when you haul manure out of your barn you haul out God and churning butter is churning up the Bible. The four important horses are those you double-hitch to a plow. You can't cross the river Jordan on a train. The great eagle that saves the bride community is on the dollar bill. I could write that you can't take a train to the place of refuge; the tracks don't lead there and no train stops there. In America, the woman clothed with the sun is hooked to an electric wire. I could write that you won't suffer and be purified if your plagues are land, stock, machinery, money, clothes, your wife and the neighbor's dogs. I could write all that but I won't.

What I'll write is that it is 4:00 A.M. and 35° on the Ust Urt Plateau, May 18, 1884 (o.s.). It is very light because the moon is just about full. We are camped at a caravan encampment called Kara Kuin. There are two deep wells here and lots of camel wood. Kardijigit says that the wells were dug by Russian engineers when they went to attack Khiva. The water is brackish and almost undrinkable. We strain it and add vinegar. We boil it and put in green tea. But it does little good. The women are cooking the breakfasts and gossiping. Pots and kettles bang and ring through the desert silence. The horses are in from their grazing. The Dirks boy has his five sheep into the camp. The brown dog lies just outside the ring of light from our fires and our oil lamps. We eat, clean up, take down our tents and the excuse me. Hitch up the horses. The camel drivers load up the camels.

We are ready to move. We pause. Kardijigit and the three camel drivers stand outside the circle of our wagons and listen as I read from the Wisdom of Solomon: "Then suddenly visions of horrible dreams troubled them sore, and terrors came upon them unlooked for" and "For in all things, O Lord, thou didst magnify thy people, and glorify them, neither didst thou lightly regard them: but didst assist them in every time and place." I say something about our many fears. I say the Lord is with us and protects us. We sing, "God, I thank you with all my heart that in this night you watched over me and preserved me from danger, dread, peril and pain, so that the cunning of an angry Satan was powerless against me. Let the darkness of my sins pass away like this night." Kardijigit says "Amen," mounts his little mountain dromedary. The camel rises on its back legs. Kardijigit pitches forward. The front legs knuckle up; he pitches backward. He cries, "Hough, hough," and leads out to the north. Our circle is broken as it unwinds and we follow according to the numbers on our wagons. The Dirks boy whistles to his sheep; they baa and follow his staff. The loaded camels stare into the bright and morning stars and follow the lead donkeys. The brown dog barks and trots after the camels. The almost full moon fades in the west. We can see the stars in God's crown; Ursa Major, Bootes, Hercules, Draco, Lyra, Cygnus, Andromeda, Cassiopeia. They move west and make way for the bursting forth of our sun and the brutal heat of the day.

The sun rises over the Crystal Sea as we plod north along the Chink. Sarah sits next to me on the wagon seat and says, "What donkey brayed so that the whole world heard it?" Our dust rises like a pillar over each wagon. The Crystal Sea shimmers under the new light. I hear Sarah saying, "It is no disgrace to fall but it is to stay there." The turtles lumber into the water. Eagles and kites circle over the brilliant light. A huge black eagle arises in the east. It hovers over the sea. It has two bodies connected at the side, one pair of wings, two golden claws and two black heads. It comes closer and I see that the heads are dogs' heads, furry, long pointed noses and ears that bend in the middle. Golden tongues shoot out from the slobbery jaws. The black eagle wheels and dives over the water. The other birds flap off, screaming, "Chub chub; chub chub." Cannon poke out of the eyes of the black eagle. They fire and shells tear holes in the waters. As the sun rises, the eagle screams and ascends and dives bleeding into the great sea. Above me I see a woman made of light, rising in the west. She takes the sun as she rises and I see that her head is of fine gold, her breast and arms made of silver, her belly and thighs of brass, her legs are iron and her feet part clay and part iron. All about her there is a light so bright that I can no longer look upon it. As she passes over my head and moves towards the Kizil Kum, she cries out in a loud voice, "What you see, write in a book. What you see, write in a book. What you see, write in a book." I gather dust from the wagon bed and throw it over my head. I cry out, "Seek ye first. Seek ye first. These things shall be added. These things shall be added. Take therefore no thought. Take therefore no thought." She answers, "Now, Joseph. If you get as old as a cow you still learn more." I look up. It is Sarah. Her wife's cap is pure white linen. Her hair is pure gold. Her eyes rubies. Her shoes are emerald studded with pearls. Her seven chins are sealed. I reach out and open the first seal. A trumpet sounds. Inside, there is an apple tree loaded with fruit. I take her second chin and break the seal. A trumpet sounds. Inside is a portable organ playing "Wake up. The Voice is Calling." Beneath the third seal and the third trumpet, a little wooden table with pen, ink and a blank

tablet on it. Under the fourth a samovar covered with diamonds and under the fifth a waterpipe filled with glowing coals. Under the sixth, a black jade chamber pot filled with silver roubles. I take the seventh chin and break the seal. The trumpet sounds. Under the seal is a *Songbook with Notes.* I hear a woman singing. It is Sarah again and she is rising in her white raiment of light high over the Crystal Sea and the twenty-four elders in gold, red and blue striped chalats are calling her to come back. She smiles over her little nose, adjusts the golden ribbons on her golden covering, clucks twice, and sings on, "Lord, you invite every earthly pilgrim to your table so that he might refresh his heart. Even the poorest is welcomed by You. Thus I come with my poor and sick heart to Your Word. Your heavenly pity summons me and drives away all doubt." I watch as the woman in the clouds and her song fade out into the Idaho darkness. I hear the pots and pans banging in the kitchen. Sergeant rises and sniffs at the door. There is no knocking. There is nothing in the night. In the kitchen, Sarah sings on, "You know well the heart of man and see our great guilt. Now, trusting, I drown my sins in the deep sea of Your grace."

The sun is down behind me. Orion is rising. Soon Sirius will come, that bright and shining star. In the turning, I know that the moving sun and the turning of the year are images of man's life. I know that Sarah and I shall pass from the light just as the day and the year pass from it. We shall lie down in the darkness in our little cemetery just west of Aberdeen. To lie there in the darkness with no stars, no dreams, no hunger, no more death, until the final bright and morning star, the face of our Lord, shall look in upon us. Then shall there be light again and forever. And Sarah and I will rise. Our wagon will be there. I will hitch up Samson, Faith and Charity and we shall head out on our last journey. Straight up, our little brown dog trotting along behind, until we come to that open door, to our place of refuge.

When the knocking on the door came early this morning, I awakened from a deep sleep, dressed quietly and waited. The knocking came again. I picked up my Bible. "Like a thief in the night" ran around the walls, across the ceiling and into my little electric lamp by my bed. I closed the lid of my wind-up phonograph to keep the dust off my record of "The Waltz of the Flowers." I opened my Bible and read I Corinthians 13, read again the heart-rending passages about tinkling cymbals and sounding brass, tongues of angels, the greatest of things, charity. There was another knocking on the door. I said my morning prayer to our great God, who gave us such words. I said, "Come in," and Sarah entered. She was humming "O Tannenbaum" and smiling. "Guess what I have," she said. I said I couldn't guess and she handed me the letter. The address was in impeccable German script. The writing looked exactly like Gerhardt's and I assumed it was from him. It was from a stranger and I could hardly read. I knew full well what the letter was and what was in it.

I think I should write in my memoirs the story of Gerhardt and make a memorial to him. I'll write about the death of his wife Frieda by typhoid at Kaplan Bek. I'll write about his little horses Arion and Morengo and his wagon painted red, yellow and green. I'll tell of his cobbling, his waterpipe, his boots and chalat, his kibitka. I'll write of his adopted sons. I'll write of his death in the cause of revolution. I'll write his ideas about dreams and his love of the stars. I'll write about what he read and how it led him into different paths than mine. He will stand as my companion and my comparison. I'll write that he loved this world and its people so much that he died for them in his own way on the streets of Khiva. Through him I'll make an act of praise in that there are men like him in this world who care less for themselves than for others. Who will not destroy, kill, smite, do hurtful works, shed innocent and righteous blood. Who refuse to live, even though this world might be set in darkness, in such a way that they chastise the children of God. Who do right to the widow, comfort the afflicted, sorrow in the death of great men. Who are the breath of life, not the instruments of death. Whose lives are not a blast of fire, but rather a fountain of the water of life. I'll write how he praised God by keeping his sorrow to himself and bore with good courage that which befell him. I'll write that he was worthy to walk in white raiment because he sang the new song for joy of heart.

I'll write in my memoirs for my grandchildren what is worthy. I'll write that worthy is the lamb that was slain. Worthy is the king of kings and Lord of hosts. Worthy is the son and worthy the holy spirit. Worthy are the apostles and the twenty-four elders that sing before the throne of God. Worthy the four beasts, the four horsemen, the woman clothed with the sun, the great eagle over the desert. Worthy is the Crystal Sea and the prophets who led us to its shores. Worthy is the book of life and the river of the water of life that flows from the throne of God. Worthy are the angels that testify and worthy is the bright and morning star. Worthy are the saints and the new Jerusalem. Worthy are the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven sorrows. Worthy are the seven stars, the seven golden candlesticks and the seven bowls of wrath. Worthy is white raiment and a new song. Worthy are the seas, the forests, the mountains, the rivers, the springs. Worthy are the canals, the vegetables, the fields of grain. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Worthy are Sarah, my children and my grandchildren. Worthy was our leader and Gerhardt. Worthy were Amandurdi and Kardijigit. Worthy were the horses, the camels, the donkeys and Jantzen's goats. Worthy is my dog Sergeant. I'll write that we must have been worthy too because God loved us so much that He let us believe. He called us poor, Bible-haunted Mennonites out into the desert and made a straight way for us among the heathen. Like the children of Israel we were chosen to follow God's will and we did. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Oh praise to God and all His angels. Praise to His son and His holy spirit. Praise from all things in this world to Him who made us all. I thank Him for His divine mercy. I thank Him that He delivered us from the plagues of typhoid, floods and raging rivers, grasshoppers, wild pigs, Turkomans, schism, the death of our children. I thank Him for the tongues of flame that burned away my spiritual sloth. I thank Him for the riddles that scrubbed away my arrogance. I thank Him for the Mohn-Kuchen that fed me for my worship. I thank our wonderful and gracious God who by His direction and guidance brought me to this land flowing with hay and potatoes. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

An Der Molotschna

by Peter G. Epp
translated by Clara Dyck

Peter G. Epp (1888-1954) emigrated from the Ukraine to the United States in 1924. He had earlier studied in the Molotschna Mennonite Colony, then at the University of Heidelberg. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Basel, Switzerland, in 1912. He taught at Bluffton College in Ohio for ten years, and then another seventeen years at Ohio State University.

His works that have been published include, *Eine Mutter, An Der Molotschna, Die Erlosung, Eine Wolke,* and *Die Mennoniten in Russland.* An English translation of *Eine Mutter* by Peter Pauls appeared with the title, *Agatchen* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1986). All these writings are set in the Ukraine where Epp grew up. Epp had not completed the organizing and editing of his manuscript, *An Der Molotschna,* by the time of his death. His wife, Justina Dyck Epp, organized the materials. The English translation was completed in 1986 by Clara Dyck.

Linda Falk Suter, who selected and edited the following passages, is a teacher of English at Bluffton College, where she is also registrar and assistant dean. Recently she received a faculty research grant from the Bluffton College Study Center to examine the topic, "The Peace Position in Mennonite Fiction, 1914-1945: Dogma and Deed." Peter Epp's best known novel, *Eine Mutter,* was included in this study.

Introduction
by Linda Falk Suter

My introduction to Peter Epp's delightful Russian Mennonite fiction happened many years ago. From March 27, 1946 to November 12, 1947, Epp's novel *Eine Mutter* was published as a serial in *Die Mennonitsche Rundschau.* For my immigrant parents, the highlight of the week was to receive this weekly German publication. My mother then gathered her children around the warm coal stove during those long Saskatchewan winter evenings and read to us one more episode from Epp's novel about the life of his protagonist, Agatchen, and her extended family. Now as I nostalgically recall that time and have recently reread *Eine Mutter,* Agatchen and my mother merge as one: a generous and loving mother with a simplistic faith based on biblical teaching and pious living; at the same time a mother proud of her people, their tranquillity and prosperity of the pre-revolutionary time in the Molotschna and Chortitza settlements.[1]

Whereas *Eine Mutter* is a family chronicle, recording events surrounding Agatchen's parents and her siblings, her children and her children's children living in the Molotschna from the early 1800 to the revolution, Epp's more recent novel *An der Molotschna*[2] focuses on a particular village, Altenau, in the Molotschna. The time for the first part of the novel is the early 1900s. It consists of many warm, somewhat sentimentalized vignettes featuring the customs and habits of these Mennonites. Epp likes his people and, as he admits, idealizes them. But his tone is so enchanting, that the reader also readily enjoys Epp's Mennonites. The second part of the novel goes back in history to the time of Catharine the Great, and her invitation extended to the Mennonites in Prussia to come to the Ukraine. The last part, then, is about the trek from Prussia to the first view of the Promised Land, the rich valleys surrounding the Molotschna River.

Three excerpts from *An der Molotschna* have been selected. The first one concerns the preparation for a wedding in Altonau; the second one describes one of the most important figures in any Mennonite village, the highly respected village teacher; and the third one describes the trek. All three excerpts although about specific events, suggest much beyond the immediate events: they reflect a distinct Mennonite people—their faith, their fears and their future.

ENDNOTES

[1]My parents, Tina Dyck and Wilhelm Falk, grew up in Kronsweide, Chortitza near the Dnieper River. Later they moved to Steinfeld, Molotschna, and in 1925 they immigrated to Canada.

[2]Peter Epp worked on this novel for more than twenty years and finished the more than 4000 page handwritten manuscript the day before his death in 1954.

Excerpt One: Wedding

A wedding for the Russian Mennonites was a most important community celebration. But as important as the actual wedding were the events in preparation. This excerpt describes these details: the hand-written invitations, the guest list, delivering the invitations, to the final day-before baking of the Zwieback. All required an expected decorum. Then, too, at times, Epp as narrator-participant steps back to editorialize somewhat fatalistically that life's happiness is always shadowed with sorrow.

A wedding in Altonau: Bernhard Enns, the son of Jakob Enns and his wife, nee Warkentin, to Gertrude Matthies. In the lovely month of May, when the garden is greening and blooming beautifully and the nightingales sing in the little forest. The date was set several weeks ago. That is not the usual custom. It is presumptuous to determine too far in advance what one intends to do. For, does one have control over such things? Everyone shares in this hesitation, Onkel Matthies, Tante Matthies, the Enns parents, but most especially Trudel herself. But she would like to invite Tienchen Schroeder, and it takes a long time for a letter to get there and for her then to travel to the wedding. Trudel discusses it with her mother, the latter with her father. They study the calendar, the present one, those of the last few years, regarding weather and spring work to be done. After that, the spring seeding: potatoes, watermelon, cucumbers are planted; manure strips are laid. End of May. Let's say Friday, Saturday cleaning up, Sunday resting, the week prior to that is the preparation of the shed, baking, the whole village is invited, naturally. Guests from more distant villages must be invited in good time to allow for their travels. The letters of invitation are sent, again, as always, they include, like a talisman, the turn of phrase, "God willing." Isaak Koop who brought the piglets to the Matthies in a two-wheeler, takes the letter of invitation along with him for Tina Schroeder. And Tienchen replies with many assertions of happiness, at the prospect of accepting this invitation, for, as she declares, she has never in her life attended a village wedding. Her father says she may go. And, God willing, their trustworthy chauffeur will bring her to the Matthies yard some time during the morning of the wedding day. Abram Matthies is in shock at the possible results of this prospect. A gracious hand from above intervenes in the natural course of events, orders them aright, in a way that would have been humanly impossible. It would be sin, indeed, to desire to intervene in the course of events oneself. It may be that this has no bearing upon him, in the end, at all. That's the way he tries to stifle his own desires, to kill his joy. In vain.

The preparations begin already in early spring. Trees are pruned, vegetables and potatoes weeded, the wide path through the garden strewn with sand. Abram himself went to the sandpit behind Bogdanowka with the handyman, to get the sand; it is white and even, like the whitest snow. The cobwebs are swept from the ceiling of the barn, the walls are white-washed, the manure pile nicely rounded, the shed cleared of its implements; the big centre part is partitioned off from the rest, with boards.

But that doesn't finish the preparations by any means. Joske, the Jew from Melitopol, has not yet arrived in his one-horse Droge, piled high with beef and mutton. Nor has the butter and milk which go into the making of the Zwieback been collected from the whole village.

Zwieback, this Molotschna delicacy! Although he had been pampered at the richest tables of Vienna, Berlin, Paris, nothing tasted so delicious to our most gracious Lord and Kaiser, the annointed one, as our Zwieback, when he stopped off for lunch at the Hieberts of Lindenau, on his return journey from the Vienna Congress in the year 1817.

The Zwieback haven't been baked yet. Only the letter of invitation has been written, or rather two of them. Abram wrote it in his beautiful calm handwriting for he has, after all, studied in the Zentralschule at Ohrloff. The one letter, couched in an ancient form, is directed to all the residents of the village Altonau. It includes *Vollwirte, Kleinwirte,* the landless, cottage dwellers, even the Russian herdsman, they all are invited. The envelope carries the address: "To all the Residents of the Village of Altonau" and reads:

"We hereby graciously invite you and your family to the wedding of our daughter Gertrude Matthies with her fiance, which is to take place in our home at two o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, the 24th, May, the Lord willing."

Abram writes this letter in the Grosse Stube, adding "in order, along with us, to ask God's blessing upon this young couple. Respectfully, Abram and Helene Matthies."

What is it, Abram, that drives the tears to your eyes as you write this ancient form-letter that you know by heart already? The song of the nightingale, the freshly blooming garden, the violets in the little forest behind the garden, the sight of all the lovely small things of spring, the swallows on the pillar of the barn, the greening of the fields—all these you relate to the image in your heart, without a desire, pure, full of adoration. Do you not feel the approaching of a superhuman happiness?

Others are doing the planning for you, have planned everything already, how much land, where located, which your wife will inherit some day. Only how much money it will be, no one knows. Heinrich Schroeder allows no one an insight into his financial situation. But it must be very substantial, so rumors have it.

Abram knows, as do many others: I want to marry a wealthy woman. Which one? This one or that one? The one refuses, the other takes him. This happens without mystical dreams, without a shudder of awe, and they, too, are happy, perhaps equally as happy as you, my kind, noble Abram.

Now you are sitting in the Grosse Stube, writing this wedding invitation. In approximately another year a different letter of invitation will be sent out "To the wedding of our daughter Katharina with her fiance, Abram Matthies . . . ."

And still later, only a few short years, happy, very happy years later, your wife, so delicately built and light as a child, will lie in her coffin. But you first, my dear Abram. You will both rest in the ground, you will know nothing of that gruesome storm, those bloody, indescribable grotesque crimes that will pass over the colony and over your own children as well. Are you dreaming? It will not come suddenly. On Friday, the wedding day, the wedding guests sit quietly, sleepily on the red and yellow benches in the shed while the venerable *Ohms* sit on the *Ruhbank* behind the table, on which stands a bouquet of flowers, and a carafe of water, and when they, one after another, feel compelled to tell the young couple something more of what the future has in store for them, while the younger ones admire the decorations in the shed. Oh how harmless, how unsuspecting, how innocent you are!

So Abram sits at the table in the Grosse Stube. He has removed the

white lace tablecloth and moved the armchair from its place. Beside him is the list of names, compiled in the most careful manner, after hours of deliberation between father, mother, Abram; Trudel, the bride owes it to her social status that she happily doesn't have to be involved in any of these countless highly responsible actions of which woe betide if one of them is missed! This day is not a day of lightly-taken happiness, of glory, in the Molotschna colony; oh no, it is much more a day of the strictest examination consisting of innumerable, most delicate assignments, and it can therefore only be enjoyed in retrospect, after its happy conclusion, when, in fact, it is known that nothing went amiss. But what mother, at the Molotschna, is able to say of herself that she has carried out the wedding on the Molotschna without forgetting even a single one of the thousands of duties prescribed by custom. Inspite of the most meticulous concentration—still—that was forgotten! But how could it possibly be!

Wedding Guests

The list of guests, which has been such a tremendous source of worry for days, weeks, nights, contains the names of out-of-town guests. Who has to be invited? All relatives, naturally, first of all in the municipality of Gnadenfeld, in the distant villages, then in order: Muensterberg, Blumstein, Lichtenau, up to Ladekopp. A postscript suffices: "Kindly pass the letter on." Onkel Matthies himself takes the letter to Muensterberg in his *Droschke.*

It is May, beautiful weather, Ohm Matthies sits alone in his dustcoat on the rear seat of his *Droschke.* The wedding invitation is in his large leather folder in the inner jacket pocket. Pride, happiness, friendliness and dignity are apparent on his round face. That is how he drives onto the yard of Peter Hiebert in Muensterberg, a *Vollwirt* at the left side of the street. This is where Ohm Matthies turns in; at the gate he lightly flicks his whip across the backs of his horses.

How will he drive onto the yard? Sternly and somewhat elegant, as custom dictates. They attach important rules to this: if you are in a *Droschke* or in a covered wagon and want to visit, then you drive straight ahead, right up to the veranda, there you stop, the horses' heads facing the barn, ready to be unhitched. But should you only have a brief business discussion in mind, then you circumscribe a figure eight on the yard, turn around (it almost appears that you wish to distance yourself from the veranda) and then you stop near the veranda, the horses' heads facing toward the street.

There are two further possibilities permitted by custom. You sling the line around the iron handrail of the front seat and tie one of the horses to the hitching post near the fence that leads from the veranda to the street. If it is summer time you discharge your discussion on the green veranda bench, if it is winter you step into the house; you will see a homemade broom, made of brush cut from the mulberry tree and tied together, standing in front of the door. You remove your galoshes in the front entry; you will be invited to the *Grosse Stube.* Here you will sit down on the *Ruhbank* which stands in the corner, beneath the window of the long wall. There you will be able easily to see the horses through the window. The wall clock is at the other side of the room, with its two gleaming brass weights, or else four, if it is an alarm clock that rings, or a clock that strikes, a genuine Mennonite handiwork. From time to time you look at the large dial of the clock and through the window at the horses. It is either forenoon or afternoon, after coffee; it was only meant to be a short visit, just a few minutes. But that doesn't hinder you from sitting on the *Ruhbank* for a whole hour, or even two.

As a matter of fact, Onkel Matthies will not go and sit in the *Grosse Stube* at all; no one is invited into the *Grosse Stube* during the summer when the shutters are closed all day. There is another manner of discharging a business obligation. The person doesn't climb down at all; he stops in front of the veranda, holding line and whip lightly in his hand, leaning forward somewhat from the backrest, waiting. The front door opens. Tante Hiebert appears on the veranda. She looks very friendly, comes down the steps to the wagon.

"Good day, good day. Will you unhitch for a bit?"

The first polite question. She knows very well that this is not an unhitching visit, yet this question has been most strictly impressed upon the conscience of these good Mennonites. Then she wants to call her husband, is probably somewhere in the barn, no, not in the barn, then he would have heard the vehicle coming on the yard.

"Let it be, let it be, Hiebertsche. I just want to deliver something here, am in a great hurry," takes the line and whip between his knees, unbuttons his dustcoat and hauls up the large full briefcase from his inner pocket. In the midst of his papers, which probably also include a one-hundred Ruble, one called the "Katrine" with the image of the great Katharine, Czarina of Russia, who was, according to the words of a Russian statesman, the ornament of mankind. Great are her conquests, her deeds, the greatest of all, however, that she called the Mennonites to her country; these preserve her memory loyally (knowing nothing of her lifestyle whatsoever) and revere her image on the money bill lying in this briefcase, along with two letters. The Hiebertsche stands beside the *Droschke,* one hand on the backrest and waits and looks so friendly and wonders and puts on such airs about what Onkel Matthies might have for them in his briefcase.

"Here, Hiebertsche. Now guess, what this is."

She reads: Wedding invitation. And she is still more surprised, as if there had never been a wedding in the Molotschna since its beginning, although she has really known all about it long ago.

"The list of those invited, is inside, it is to go as far as Ladekopp, is that right? We'll take care of that right away."

She is so affected, yet she would like to ask another question, is afraid to do so, however, "in order not to become too intimate," as the expression goes, for the people in the Molotschna "are very touchy about their honor." Finally she has found the polite form and the friendliness of her face helps to minimize the unseemliness of her question. And yet the question is quite harmless and innocent. She asks,

"And when will we have the second invitation?"

Ohm Matthies chuckles. This question pleases him right into the very depths of his soul; his round face beams. But to the question of the Hiebertsche he merely replies:

"Don't know, have patience, time will tell."

But his chuckling tells the Hiebertsche

that there probably is something up between Abram and Tina, the daughter of the estate owner. She has heard the gossip, of course. But to ask Onkel Matthies about it directly to his face, never! She knows her manners. But she doesn't know that Tina herself will be at the wedding, not even the Bergsche in Halbstadt knows that!

Onkel Matthies grasps the line more tightly, adjusts himself comfortably on the seat.

"Well then, I will have to leave, still have to get to Ohrloff, I have another letter here."

"But the bridal couple," Tante Hiebert calls after him, as the wagon is moving away, "we are definitely counting on them."

"I will give them the message."

This means that Tante Hiebert has invited the bridal couple for a dinner, according to an old Mennonite custom.

She goes to the *Grosse Stube*, reads the letter carefully from A to Z, date, year, name of village, the letter itself: "We hereby . . . God willing . . ." and the list of those invited; name after name, and each name is alive to her, yet each one is at the same time a surprise. Their name is the first one. Then the whole row of villages up to Ladekopp. Two, three, four names per village. She studies each name separately, tries to ascertain the degree of friendship or other relationship that may have given cause for this invitation.

A rich, lively novel. And not only as to who has been invited, but also as to who has been forgotten, although that person might have been justified in expecting to be invited; according to their custom, all this comes into play. It is great sport to discover mistakes, oversights, in one's dear neighbor and to tactfully rub it in. But she doesn't find any mistakes, flaws, inspite of one or two hours of brooding, until she has inspected each family relationship most thoroughly: he, she, her family background, children, whether married, with whom.

But let us not forget Onkel Matthies, who is now the main person. He drives from the yard, turns left toward Altonau, past the Hiebert's mill. The road is sandy in Muensterberg and he drives slowly; then he spies Ohm Hiebert himself, his cane in hand. He is on the way to Altonau, to the David Regehrs, whose wife is his sister. He does that occasionally, that well-to-do Onkel Hiebert, walks to Altonau on foot, to Blumstein, distances of two to three *Werst*, slowly, thoughtfully. Onkel Matthies stops, for he would never drive past a pedestrian, if he is a Mennonite, without offering him a ride! Nor would Onkel Hiebert do so, he takes everyone along: Russians, Jews, gypsies, without distinguishing between them.

The road between the villages is bordered on either side by trees—elms, poplars, oaks, acacias—that were planted a hundred years ago. There is a footpath, crookedly poured, beside the ditch. The road is so wide that four vehicles could easily drive on it side by side, but it has not been paved; in the summer it is dusty, in the winter full of frost bumps, in the fall muddy, only in spring or after a light rain can one drive on it comfortably. The regular road leads along this wide mailroad, picking out the better, drier spots, curving back and forth, to center, to left, to right, only in a straight line. That's the way the two of them proceed, driving toward Altonau. At the right are the pumpkin fields, the meadows behind Molotschna, the white cottages behind green cherry trees, the churches of Russian villages Troitskoje and Bogdanowka, Terpenje, behind this a hill, or rather plateau. That's where the road leads to Fedorowka and Prischib, the next railway stations.

Over there, down those heights our ancestors came, a hundred years ago, on wagons, through Poland, through the Ukraine, stopped at the edge of this plateau and looked down into the valley before them: grass, reeds, the small Molotschnaja, an inconspicuous little river. Not a single tree in the valley, not a single bush; Tartars—and Nogaie—paths still winding in and out here and there today.

And now—a rich, blooming valley, mighty sheds, gardens, fruitful fields and little forests. Onkel Matthies scrutinizes the pumpkin fields to the right, carelessly his eyes sweep the Russian villages. Is he remembering the first settlers? Is he recalling one-time wastelands? Not a bit of it. He is a Mennonite, with both feet standing on reality, that is, in the valley of the Molotschnaja. These villages were and will be here eternally. Utterly happy, he looks merrily, hopefully into the future.

Ohm Matthies is driving to Ohrloff with the second letter, to deliver it to Johannes Wiebe. Johannes Wiebe surely is one of those who see a dark cloud on the horizon and hear an underground rumbling. Ohm Matthies shudders whenever he listens to Johannes Wiebe; he himself doesn't see the cloud. The world is too beautiful.

Just before Altonau a field road turns left onto the steppes (that's what the Mennonites still call their fields, into which they have transformed that other steppe). Here the road is clean and entirely of Mennonite soil. Only Mennonite vehicles move up and down these field roads: plows, boardwagons, water wagons, hayracks. The property of each one of these *Vollwirte* has been divided into fields, the fields grouped according to quality and size, each group supplied with a name. The row of the largest fields is called the *Huskoagel*, it lies just behind the small forest, thirty-two *Desjatinen*, bordered at the back with hedges, planted by order of the old Cornies. Between two *Koageln* a hedge, between the next two a field road. The field road is barely the width of a wagon, with a field on either side. When two vehicles meet, the trot slows to step by step progress, each of the vehicles relinquishes half of the road, the one side with front and back wheel in the wagon rut, the other on the field.

This is the road Ohm Matthies is driving on now, between the two *Huskoageln*, those of David Regehr and Isaak Thiessen. They are all summer fallowing this year, black fallow or Baschtan: watermelons, melons and on the other side potatoes, beets, cucumbers, and the watchman's hut.

All the same, you say? Don't say that to Onkel Matthies, to Onkel Jakob Enns or Ohm Isaak Thiessen. Just look here: to right David Regehr, to the left Isaak Thiessen's pumpkin field; the trellises on his plants are already beginning to curl. One can read the whole philosophy of these two families from these two fields. Just look at those rows, the ones straight as a yardstick, done by marker, the others crooked.

But let's not dwell on that. And Ohm Matthies has passed the pumpkin field by now. He is driving between the black summer fallow fields, nothing on them, nothing sown, only plowed once in fall with the one-share plow, then in spring and summer twice, three times, the moment even one little weed of snakegrass or thistle is seen.

Ohm Matthies has reached the end of the *Huskoagel*, the crossroad; here the road along the *Huskoagel* is a little wider so that two vehicles can pass each other. This is where Ohm Matthies turns in. He reaches for the second wedding invitation in his inner jacket pocket. To Johannes Wiebe, Ohrloff, to be passed on to the others on the list, in Ohrloff, Blumenort, across the steppe Tiegerweide, Rueckenau, Alexanderwohl, Alexanderkrone.

The cross road leads into a still wider road; it is a hill road, constructed under the leadership of the old Cornies, with a more than man-high hill on either side of the road. This is the actual mail route, the connection between Altonau and Ohrloff. Ohrloff lies before him now, the windmill, red-tiled roofs shine through the green of the trees, weather vanes, stork nests on the cross sheds. Only a few more minutes and Tante Wiebe will welcome you and have neither eye nor ear for that which is on your heart; Onkel Wiebe will complain of the difficult times, the dissolving order in the world, in our land, in the Molotschna. But neither will be able to kill your own good mood, the happiness in your heart.

Excerpt Two

Education, particularly as taught by their own Mennonite teachers, was extremely important to the Russian Mennonites. They were proud of their *schools and their educators. Peter Epp describes one of these "giant" educators, Teacher Lenzmann. Although Epp's tone reflects that he is clearly pleased with the overall process of education, occassionally the tone becomes ambiguous. In fact, at times a kind of tongue-in-cheek innuendo slips in that suggests Epp may indeed have some reservations about Lenzmann's pedagogy. Or perhaps he suggests that the process of education can change and, indeed, can be improved.*

Lenzmann teaches German and religion, the two most important subjects for these Mennonites. Both need to be mastered; they belong together, for the Mennonite faith has to be expressed in German (i.e. "high" German; not the common "low" German).

The ultimate test for any teacher is what happens to his students when they leave school. Lenzmann here scores very high, for his students—numerous specific names are listed—become the future leaders in education, theology, economy and industry in the Molotschna and even beyond.

In Halbstadt, in front of the factory of Heinrich Franz, near the Post Office, there is a one-and-a-half story house, of which the lower half is built into the ground. At the corner of the entry to the yard, a wooden stairway leads up to the veranda. This is where the teacher, Lenzmann, lives, the son of the *Aeltesten* Lenzmann of Gnadenfeld; his wife is the sister of Heinrich Franz, the factory owner, the daughter of the famous scholar Heinrich Franz. Lenzmann, too, is a highly educated man, has studied in Switzerland and in Germany, in Tuebingen under the famous theologian Beck. Lenzmann is presently teacher of religion and of the German language at the high school here, in Halbstadt call the *Zentralschule*. The second teacher is Papa Neufeld, still a young man; later he became known everywhere as Papachen Neufeld; aside from these two there is also a Russian teacher for the Russian language. Teacher Neufeld is a friendly teacher, not too strict, the Russian is not strict either, which is the way of most Russians.

But that Teacher Lenzmann! There he sits on his high armchair, behind the lectern which stands on a high platform, his fingers intertwined, his back scarcely touching the backrest; in front of him lies the manuscript of his Bible study. The boys sit in front of him on long school benches. There is no talking in Teacher Lenzmann's class, no turning around, no smiling, no scraping the floor with one's feet, no yawning.

"Boys," so he begins the first instruction. "You have two eyes," he raises two fingers of his right hand. "You will keep these two eyes directed on me, on my mouth, on my lips. You will look neither to left, nor to right, not up, not down," he accompanies his words with light indicative movements of his hand, "but straight ahead on my lips. The things of the world, on the street outside, don't concern you at all. Rain, snow, hail, sunshine, vehicles, all these do not exist for you in the world."

And without doubting, complaining, without any sign of protest, the boys absorb these words into their heads, into their blood. And they will still be in their blood twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years later. Some of them will become teachers, others businessmen, leaders, ministers, *Aelteste*, here in Russia, in America; but none will be able to forget that strict Teacher Lenzmann. Later they will call him the old Lenzmann. They will be proud to have attended his school. Teacher Lenzmann is known in the whole colony, in every family. And everyone is of the same opinion: that is the way it has to be, that is the way those boys have to be trained.

Nor do the boys themselves doubt that it has to be that way, they don't like sitting still two hours every day, one hour of religion and one of German, sitting motionless, yet they have no doubt in the least that they have to be treated this way. This teacher has absolute authority. They aren't even allowed to chase away a fly that may land on their face. And Teacher Lenzmann doesn't stir a finger either, doesn't jerk; he sits there, straight as a candle; the fly that lands on his forehead can walk around undisturbed, he doesn't chase it away. This is a sight that might make the boys smile. But no, one doesn't smile in Teacher Lenzmann's class. The boys don't even get the idea that they might smile, that anyone could be so enormously bad as not to obey Teacher Lenzmann! It is not fear of punishment, but a sense of respect, of veneration, of holy terror, that has infused them, body and soul, and doesn't even permit the wish of disobedience to arise in them.

Teacher Lenzmann tells the boys that they must keep their mouths shut and their ears open. But whether they really are open, that is something not even Teacher Lenzmann himself can definitely ascertain. Their hands must lie flat on the table, without stirring. As is well known, each hand has five fingers, each of which has the ability of moving relatively independantly. The ten fingers can find all manner of play whenever permitted to do so; one can bump the fingertips together (even with closed eyes), to see if they'll hit each other, one can entwine them, twist the thumbs around each other, especially in a boring class. But not so in Teacher Lenzmann's. You may only move your hand when Teacher Lenzmann asks a question, and you want to answer, then you may raise your hand, the right one, of course, and only the index finger, you must not stick out any of the other fingers, and you must rest your elbow on the table.

Just like the hands, so the feet stand side by side on the floor under the table, nor are you allowed to cross your legs. These two feet also know all manner of play with one another, and ways of passing the time whenever they are not strictly under surveillance, a hundred ways of changing their position, all of which detract from the absolute attention that Teacher Lenzmann demands for his lecture. Sliding here and there on the seat is also strictly forbidden, nor may one blow one's nose during class, one can do that outside beforehand. Teacher Lenzmann knows that the human body is thoroughly corrupt and that it, therefore, requires constant discipline in order to deter it from the greatest kind of ill-breeding.

But what happens when one of his students doesn't obey him? Teacher Lenzmann distinguishes between two kinds of misbehavior: the intentional one, when someone willfully refuses to keep the proper posture or acts contrary to a direct command, a disobedience that the student can avoid, but that doesn't happen in Teacher Lenzmann's class. The second, and milder form of disobedience, stems from weakness. Every Saturday morning they have dictation. Every mistake that the student makes here is a transgression of the law; the law says that they are not permitted any mistakes. But Teacher Lenzmann knows that this is not a case of willfull disobedience; why would the boys try willfully to make a mistake and thereby achieve poor marks? No, this is a case of natural weakness and inability to understand, simply because the student has too short a memory span. Teacher Lenzmann understands this and forgives, i.e. not that he lets it pass by without punishment, oh no, there naturally must be punishment and correction, but he doesn't become angry. The boys have to stay after school and write each misspelled word five, ten, even one hundred times. For this they use the scribbler of all sorts, in which they write with a pencil. But dictation is always written in ink, into the scribbler for dictation.

Teaching causes Teacher Lenzmann no difficulty anymore. He teaches two subjects, the German language and religion. In both of these he deals with irrefutable truths. He always knows what is true and what is false; his subjects have order and certainty, rules and laws. There are exceptions to the rules in grammar, to be sure, but one can easily memorize these, so that they, too, become easy rules to remember. There is, of course, only one method of acquiring knowledge for these students, and that is for the students to memorize word for word that which is offered them daily as unimpeachable definite facts.

And the boys do learn. But learning means nothing other than learning by rote, memorization. Then one knows precisely whether one knows one's facts or not! And the boys do learn—the Bible stories, the ten commandments, countless Bible verses, long excerpts from the Proverbs, the Prophets, the Psalms. At home before bedtime, in the early morning, at recess a buzzing fills the room, like a dense cloud.

The Teacher's Room

There is a small teacher's room between the four classrooms of the *Zentralschule;* a bookcase, a table with three drawers, one for the Russian teacher, one for Teacher Lenzmann, one for Papa Neufeld. The teachers put their journals into these drawers and lock them up when they go home. The journal, however, is the weapon of the teacher, with which he rules his class, more dangerous than gun or sword. Each teacher carries his own journal under his arm when he enters the classroom, places it on the lectern, opens it. There is pen and ink. Each page carries a register of a particular class, with small vertical and horizontal divisions, for each day of the school year, one row from top to bottom, a square for each student. The students rise when the teacher enters and sit down when he motions them to do so. Then he enters the date at the top. As the name of each student is called, he leaves his place, steps up to the lectern and recites his assignment, a part of that day's lesson. The teacher holds his pen in his right hand while the student recites. The boy is finished, the teacher dips his pen into the inkwell and writes into the square of that particular boy for that particular day, a three or two, four or five, depending on the quality of that boy's performance. Five is very good, four is good, three satisfactory, two unsatisfactory. These figures are added up at the end of a semester, the average found, and entered into the ledger as the term mark. At the end of the year the marks of the two semesters are averaged again to determine the mark for the year. Whoever has a two for his final mark, has to write another exam in this class before classes commence in the fall. To obtain two in three subjects means failure and the the class has to be repeated. Therefore Teacher Lenzmann, who teaches two subjects, has the opportunity of failing every student who does not do satisfactory work in his class. So it means that they have to exert themselves.

Only once a student had tried to deceive Teacher Lenzmann. They had memorized a poem, now they were to write it from memory. So there the boys sat, writing their poems. The one who finds memorization so difficult, fortunately has a good idea. His book is lying open just inside the compartment of his desk. He tried for hours, yesterday, to memorize the poem, it didn't help, now he gets the idea: if he were to turn sideways, manouever the open book onto his lap, then he could copy it. He does it. He knows that Teacher Lenzmann will not rise from his lectern; he is sitting on his chair, his eyes calmly roaming back and forth over the class.

And the boy copies, and thinks in his heart: perhaps now, for the first time, he will get a three or perhaps even four. He is a genuinely good and innocent boy and in his pious heart he knows that what he is doing is really swindle and he can't help but betray his bad conscience with the fearful glances that he directs at his teacher from time to time. Again and again his eyes seek Teacher Lenzmann; the latter doesn't let on, but of course, he is reading the truth on the face of this poor good boy, like an open book. He lets the boy copy until ten minutes before the end of class. Then he suddenly says, friendly and calmly:

"Show me what you have written!"

The boy turns scarlet and is confused.

"Well," says Teacher Lenzmann, "come!"

And he comes with his sheet of paper, stands in front of the lectern, the teacher, reads. Then he says:

"Take a nice piece of chalk and write it all on the blackboard once more."

And the boy has fallen into the trap, has barely been able to write a few excerpts.

Teacher Lenzmann doesn't discuss it, asks no questions, takes his pen, dips it, draws two diagonal lines across the whole page and places a large ONE at the bottom, and returns the page to the

boy. The ONE is carefully entered at the right date of the ledger. That's all, no reprimand, no further investigation; but they all know what has happened. This is proof enough for other boys, that it is better not to try at all, than to try to deceive the teacher. That is impossible. One simply has to cram for Teacher Lenzmann's exams.

And that is a positive factor for the Mennonites also. No matter what kind of flaws and weaknesses the men who studied at this school may have, they are all firmly and unalterably rooted on the rock of a healthy biblical faith. They do not merely know the biblical stories as they are taught in elementary school. No, they know the true dogmatics along with the teachings of the faith, as set up and written by Teacher Lenzmann himself. The theologians of Tuebingen were not Mennonites, therefore their teachings had to be adapted to Mennonite faith, and for this purpose Teacher Lenzmann himself wrote a short Dogma or Confession of the Faith, which he sold to students. Each copy had been personally handwritten by him, sewn together into a blue folder. Teacher Lenzmann sacrificed many, many hours to this task, early morning hours, late nights, in his holidays, on Sundays, in order to prepare enough copies for his students each year.

So he often sat at his writing desk, very carefully and accurately, copying his Bible Study. Where are these manuscripts now? Their contents have been pounded into thousands of Mennonite heads, but the written documents have disappeared, been lost. Perhaps a few of them still remain somewhere among his descendants, in some attic, or perhaps they are not extant at all anymore. For everything was destroyed at the time of the Communists. It is true, the boys did exert themselves, but they never really appreciated the immense amount of work that went into these booklets. His two most gifted students, Kornelius Unruh and Wilhelm Neufeld, will later also write a Bible Study, it will be printed, and again thousands of boys, and girls too, will study it. This one is much longer and more difficult to learn than Teacher Lenzmann's was, but it follows the fundamental truths of the former example precisely.

And what kind of men emerge from his school? Teachers, ministers, authors, poets, leaders, men who know exactly which words are to be written with ie, which with h, which with a double consonant.

There is that big Kornelius Unruh, of enormous physical stature, and equally large spiritual capacity, who is now both teacher and minister. There is Johann Braeul, the first man of the Molotschna with a "Russian mouth," likewise a teacher, writer of letters of request, protocols, complaints. There is Johannes Janzen, minister, teacher and artist; Peter Wiens, graduate of Dorpater University, Peter Friesen, the great historian who records events of the large movements in Molotschna land: of the intense quarrel in the church of Lichtenau, of the barley dispute and the landless movement, of the battle in the congregation itself, the beginning of the pious Brethren congregation. There is Wilhelm Neufeld, son of Papa Neufeld, a learned and pious man, studied in Barmen, teacher, minister. There is Johann Klassen, founder of the great Brethren congregation; David Dick, the famous mathematician; Kornelius Bergmann, pedagogue, teacher and author—all of them soundly grounded on Lenzmann's religion and grammar, worthy followers of the first series of great teachers: Franz, Heese, Tobias Voth, Heinrich Unruh, Kornelius Wiens.

Not all Teacher Lenzmann's students became great men like the aforementioned, of course. But they reach a peak high above the mass of other Molotschnaers who sink down under their low German, that can never differentiate between the different personal pronouns. They are all firmly grounded in the elementary truths of the faith, otherwise they would not be Mennonites.

Hermann Neufeld will build a big church in Petershagen, almost singlehandedly; he will donate everything—the iron works, the huge wall clock. Our dear Lord has blessed him with worldly wealth and will continue to bless him to the end of his life, in his hardware store, in his vinegar and beer brewery. They will all go their separate ways, sometimes crooked, none, however, not a single one will believe a Charles Darwin. They remain firm, unshaken, in healthy Christendom, to their blessed end.

They say that Teacher Lenzmann had been very discriminated against at one time; that hurt his feelings so badly and induced him to withdraw completely and permanently from leadership in public life. It appears that he did not possess the characteristics of a politician or leader. Great men in the church, those of the regional meetings do not allow themselves to be disciplined like schoolboys, do not make overly long speeches, practice a sly craftiness, that is not his method. He feels truly at home only behind his lectern in the classroom.

First Teacher Lenzmann's father commands the field of high politics in the Molotschna, along with the other *Aeltesten* and ministers, and now the younger ones take charge, above all the fat, loud Unruh, the quiet, friendly Wilhelm Neufeld, the Kornelius Wiens—therefore only one field is left to Teacher Lenzmann, the classroom and the careful copying of his Bible Study or Confessions of Faith.

True, the younger ones are surpassing him now. And that very old Papa Neufeld has begun photography here in Halbstadt and has a printing press (how does that old man get such ideas?). But Papa Neufeld is not in the least a practical man, all who have insight see in his ventures nothing but the adventure of a restless, somewhat romantic old man. And look here! First one asks why. And now all kinds of things are happening. The new Bible Study of Kornelius Unruh and Wilhelm Neufeld, both former students of his, is being printed in the printing office at Halbstadt, it is a real printed book, bound, looks quite good, like one ordered from Germany. It is true, Teacher Lenzmann can't discover any false doctrines in this book, but neither is he able to read it peacefully. Everything is outdistancing him.

These two are also publishing a reader, it's true; the content has been copied from old German books, no matter, their two names are inscribed on the front page, with a comment from the high government in Petersburg, stating that the book has been authorized for teaching in Mennonite schools.

And still more books appear: a Bible story book for elementary schools, and a reader for elementary schools. The song book is revised and newly published, a Mennonite newspaper, "The Voice of Peace" (Friedensstimme), Teacher Lenzmann doesn't go along with all that. He withdraws more and more. But as long as the colonies exist, the name of Lenzmann, Teacher Lenzmann, will be known, the one who copied the Bible study by hand.

Book Reviews

Robert S. Kreider & Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Hungry, Thirsty, a Stranger: The MCC Experience.* Scottdale & Kitchener: Herald Press, 1988. Pp. 391. $14.95 ($19.95 in Canada).

Hungry, Thirsty, a Stranger is the fifth volume in the series *The Mennonite Central Committee Story.* The first three volumes in this series provided documentary accounts of the beginning and growth of MCC programs around the world. Volume four told the story of fifteen individuals who have made significant contributions to MCC. Now, in this last installment of the ongoing story, Robert S. Kreider and Rachel Waltner Goossen have given us 30 case studies illustrating but a few of the myriad projects MCC has undertaken around the world "in the name of Christ."

The story begins, not surprisingly, with the American Mennonite response to the Ukrainian famine of 1920-1921 and the subsequent resettlement of Russian Mennonite refugees to the Paraguayan Chaco. Following a lull of several years, the narrative resumes with accounts of MCC administration of alternative service programs during World War II and relief work in Germany immediately after the war. Most of the rest of the book is divided according to world regions: Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean, Latin America and North America, in addition to sections on "Telling the Story" and "People Support." Within each of these sections are from one to six case studies exploring different facets of MCC within that region or topic. Here we meet MCC workers developing agricultural programs in Zaire, building bridges to the Vietnamese people after the US military withdrawal from that country in 1975, seeking to provide relief in war-torn Lebanon, helping with the resettlement of Mennonites and Indians in Bolivia, and offering an alternative to the North American criminal justice system through the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program.

One would expect a book such as this to be a joyful celebration of MCC's remarkable work around the world—and certainly it is that. One catches a sense while reading these chapters of the many ways that MCC workers have dedicated themselves to spreading Christ's message of love and reconciliation to those in need of that message. And yet also running through these chapters is a very different theme as well. We are brought face to face with the "complex entanglements" and moral dilemmas that have so often confronted MCC throughout its history. One of the ironies for any individual or organization that attempts to minister in regions of conflict, instability and poverty is the recognition that the best response to such situations may be a choice between several unsatisfactory responses. Every action carries with it unexpected implications that may undercut the very goals that the action was intended to accomplish. The authors of this book do not shy away from that difficult reality. They have written these case studies in such a way that the reader must ask the questions "what would I have done had I been there?" (p. 12) and "how can one be faithful when the issues and the choices are not clear?" (p. 151).

The case studies in this book illustrate only a few of the countless ways that these questions have been asked by those who have served with MCC:

- How does one provide aid simultaneously to both sides of a military conflict without alienating both factions, such as was the case in the war between Nigeria and Biafra in 1967-1970? Does the provision of such relief merely free those countries' resources to be used for military purposes?
- Is it appropriate for MCC to work in the Transkei, a "nation" that exists only because of the South African policy of apartheid? Does the establishment of such a program implicitly support apartheid and will relief programs strengthen a political entity that should not exist? On the other hand, is it appropriate to refuse help to needy people because they have the misfortune to live in such a place?
- How should MCC workers respond when they are eyewitnesses to state-sanctioned violence and the subsequent falsification of government reports regarding that violence in regions such as Botswana and the West Bank? Will a public response to such situations jeopardize MCC's ability to work in such needy areas? Is it enough simply to feed and clothe the oppressed or should MCC also be an advocate for them?
- How closely should MCC have worked alongside the US military in Vietnam during the war there? Did MCC relief work merely serve to "clean up" after the military, allowing it to do its destructive work more efficiently? Should MCC workers have protested US involvement in the war if such a response would have resulted in MCC being forced out of that country?
- Do programs such as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, supported by MCC Canada and intended to provide wheat for distribution in emergency situations, undercut MCC's traditional commitment to long-range food production in needy countries? Should MCC accept government funds for such a program, recognizing the danger that the government might then attempt to exert control over the program and that such outside funding might undermine constituent support for MCC programs?

A willingness to grapple with such difficult questions and a determined effort to be faithful in spite of human limitations has been one of MCC's strengths throughout its history. It is a credit to the authors that they have captured these tensions and goals in their book. Indeed, it is difficult to find points on which to take issue with them. In chapter 4 on World War II alternative service, I would have preferred more specific attention to the role of MCC rather than the authors' emphasis on the work of the National Service Board of Religious Objectors (NSBRO),

of which MCC was only a part. This wider scope causes the chapter to lose the focus found in the rest of the book. Such minor comments aside, *Hungry, Thirsty, a Stranger* is a well-written, engrossing and thought-provoking work and commends itself both to those intimately familiar with the work of MCC and those just becoming acquainted with the work of that organization.

Kevin Enns-Rempel
Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies
Fresno, California

Samuel J. Steiner. *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz.* Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1988. Pp. 224. ($16.95—paperback)

Jacob Y. Shantz was a Canadian Mennonite businessman with a broad view of society and of new opportunities in North America. That broad view, combined with entrepreneurial aggressiveness, led to Shantz's involvement in the immigration and settlement of thousands of Mennonites who migrated from Russia to the Canadian prairies in the 1870s and 1880s.

Sam Steiner sensibly begins his study by explaining that the Anabaptist/Mennonite movement originated in several parts of Europe, but was divided by persecution-induced migrations into two main streams, the one moving eastward and the other westward in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The two streams mingled once more in the last half of the nineteenth century when thousands of Mennonites from Russia immigrated to western frontiers in North America. Jacob Y. Shantz helped to link or bring together these two Anabaptist/Mennonite streams. His biography was appropriately written and published as part of the bicentennial celebrations marking both the arrival of the first Mennonites in Canada in 1786 and also the subsequent history of all Canadian Mennonites.

Sam Steiner, a professional archivist, has scoured the available, though admittedly incomplete, primary documentation on the life and work of Jacob Y. Shantz. He takes great care to assert no more than what can be documented. Where the documentation is incomplete, he engages in speculation and advances some suggested explanations, but meticulously indicates what can be documented and what is only deductive or speculative writing on his part.

The details of the Mennonite migration of the 1870s have been told repeatedly. This biography does not offer radical new interpretations. It does show clearly how Shantz became involved, the difficulties he encountered, and his successes. A few questions nevertheless remain. Members of Parliamentary committees investigating various immigration and colonization projects were always suspicious that the promoters might be more interested in speculation and business profits than in philanthropy. They became particularly suspicious about some of the terms and conditions of the so-called "Mennonite loan." Was Jacob Y. Shantz, who negotiated and defended the terms of that loan and who late in life promoted the Mennonite settlement at Didsbury, Alberta, and who still owned fourteen prime town lots in that town at the time of his death, a philanthropist or a speculator, or both? This biography does not provide a clear answer.

The business career of Jacob Y. Shantz is discussed in considerable detail and, unlike most Mennonite historians, Steiner seeks to set that career within the larger context of Canadian economic and political developments of the time. The effort is much appreciated, but some additional information would have been helpful. Steiner suggests that American tariffs may have contributed to the difficulties of Shantz' button factory in the 1880s, but also that Shantz strongly supported the Canadian tariff. It would be useful to know precisely what tariffs were in effect at various times. Shantz seemed to prosper and expanded his operations substantially immediately after the introduction of the new Canadian tariff in 1879, but was in serious difficulty several years later even though a branch plant was built in the United States. There were not, moreover, major Canadian or American tariff adjustments or changes in the early 1880s. Was it different for buttons? Or is it possible that Shantz simply misjudged the market, overextended his business, and got into trouble without help from the tariff?

Readers will also remain less than fully convinced of the reasons for Shantz' decision, late in life, to join the Christian Science church. Perhaps Steiner went as far as his evidence allowed, but it is curious that other Mennonites promoting new settlements, notably Gerhard Ens of Rosthern and several of the early settlement pioneers in Russia, also encountered sufficient animosity within their own churches that they looked elsewhere for spiritual solace and nurture. Some comparative work in this regard might prove informative.

Sam Steiner has given us a meticulously researched, well organized and judicious account of an important but hitherto neglected Mennonite pioneer. The biography does not tell us all we would like to know about Shantz. The remaining questions must, however, remain unanswered unless some as yet unknown documentation turns up.

T. D. Regehr
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

Dave and Neta Jackson. *On Fire for Christ: Stories of Anabaptist Martyrs.* Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989. Pp. 184. ($8.95—paperback)

On Fire for Christ is a modern retelling of fifteen martyr stories from the *Martyrs Mirror*, first published in 1660. The volume includes an introductory essay, discussion questions, and brief historical notes on each story. The authors believe that the *Martyrs Mirror*, today largely neglected, can once again become a resource for faith-building in home and congregation.

The stories follow quite closely the historical details as recorded in van Braght's original compilation, although some events or characters are added or altered for literary effect. Perhaps the greatest deviation from the *Martyrs Mirror* is the removal of its strong anti-Catholic sentiment. The authors consider it a form of "wrong remembering" to focus upon injustice rather than upon the victories of suffering. They tell the stories from varying points of view, including conscience-stricken jailer, curious descendant, and faithful church member. Issues of gender, class, religion and politics weave in and out of the stories.

The authors write more for personal inspiration than for political or religious context. Although thirteen of the fifteen stories take place in the Spanish Netherlands, there is virtually no mention of Spain or of Dutch resentment of Spanish rule. The oppressive authorities are

not credibly motivated, so readers must guess for themselves why these good martyrs were killed.

The New Testament and the *Martyrs Mirror* were both produced in the context of persecution. Sixteenth century Anabaptists followed a crucified Christ with an immediacy and intensity not easily accessible for us in a tolerant and ecumenical environment. Yet the martyr stories can call us to a higher standard of holiness. Dave and Neta Jackson have helped to make the martyrs "come alive for readers today."

James C. Juhnke
Professor of History
Bethel College
North Newton, Kansas

Rocky Mountain Peace Center. *Communities of Conversation and Action: A Manual for Building Community.* Boulder, CO: Rocky Mountain Peace Center, 1988. Pp. 157. ($5.95)

The book is more a guide or a manual than an examination of what community is. It is divided into six parts, with three to eleven sub-sections in each part. The sub-sections can not be described as chapters, or articles, since most are too brief to be considered such.

The book is a product of a community project and in turn created a community. A wide diversity of authors wrote sections of the book and their writings were then reviewed in community. The book grew out of the process.

The first part is the most theoretical. It discusses the nature of a community and acknowledges the stimulus provided by the base communities of Latin America, but does not intend simply to duplicate the model in a North American context. The writers rather attempt to help groups find their own pattern.

The second part presents the essentials for building a sense of community. This part is followed by a discussion of group processes. A group in community has different kinds of relationships. The fourth part examines the various aspects and the functions or roles needed for community.

The final two parts deal more with the content about which the authors feel a community should act. The first of these two parts is concerned with various kinds of oppression and the second lists what the authors feel to be important social and cultural issues.

Almost every section has questions listed at the end. These are intended to aid the group in establishing its own identity and agenda. The "conversation" would help the group go into more depth since often the sections are so brief as to give a sense of being fragmentary and at times superficial. Certainly one can find better resources for the issues raised than this brief book provides. Suggested readings are given at the end of most sections and a list of additional references is found at the end of the book.

A number of the readings suggested at the end of the subsections in parts four and five are from the Rational Island Publishers of Seattle. Most groups would not have ready access to these publications. Many of the other suggested readings are standard in the field.

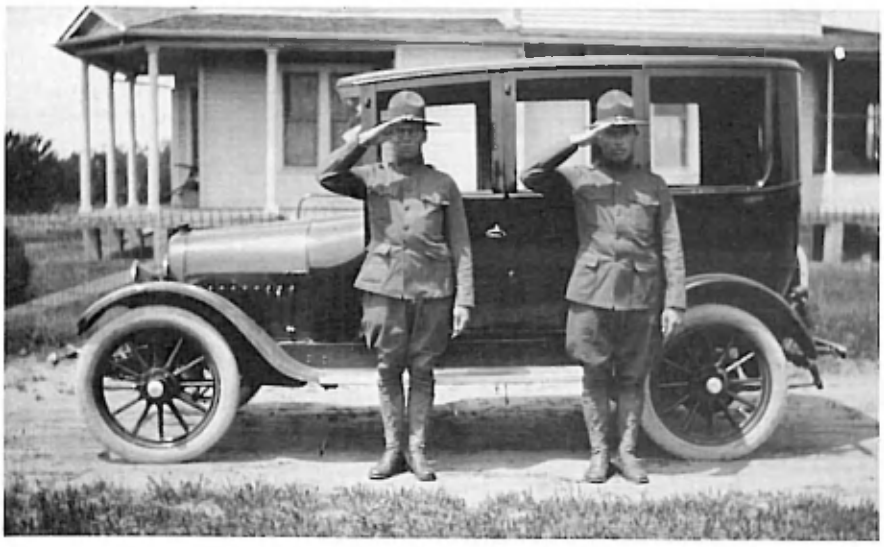
Sub-section 9 on "Consensus" is a good description of that process and might be worth reproducing for groups who want to use that method even if they are not interested in the rest of the book.

Occasionally terms are used without definition or explanation, such as "win-win" and "win-lose" on page 35. They may be unfamiliar to the uninitiated in the field of conflict resolution. The group or persons within the group might need to do preparation for discussion by looking up the meaning of such terms elsewhere to facilitate the "conversation."

Some typographical errors crept into the book. It appears that they might have resulted from too heavy dependence on a computer spell checker. Some other awkward readings occur where the meanings seem obscure. They may be typographical errors but may just be poor style.

The book would best be used by persons wishing to interact with others to create a sense of community and to work for social justice. It would probably be best if the persons already had some familiarity with the issues raised in parts five and six or were willing to pursue some of the readings suggested.

William Keeney
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio



Noncombatant Mennonite draftees show respect. Oswin and Kurt Galle