

MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1991

Gemeinnutz vor Eigennutz!
Glaube und Wissen: der
angefangene Gemeinschaftsbau ist die Zukunft unserer Kinder.



In this Issue

The Mennonite encounter with National Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s remains a troubling event in Mennonite history, even as the memory of World War II and the Holocaust continue to sear the conscience of Western civilization. How could such evil happen? How could people of good will be so compromised?

Mennonites have been a people of two kingdoms. Their loyalty to Christ's kingdom has priority, but they also believe and confess, in the words of the Dortrecht Confession (1632) that "God has ordained power and authority, and set them to punish the evil, and protect the good, to govern the world, and maintain countries and cities with their subjects in good order and regulation."

The sorting out of heavenly and worldly allegiances has never been simple. Rulers in all times and places, from Phillip II in the Spanish Netherlands to George Bush in the Persian Gulf region, have claimed to fulfill a divine mandate. In his time Adolf Hitler offered protection from anarchy and from communism. There should be no surprise that some Mennonites, especially recent victims of Russian Communism, found the National Socialist program attractive.

In this issue three young Mennonite scholars, all of whom researched their topics in work toward master's degrees, examine the Mennonite response to National Socialism in three countries: Paraguay, Germany, and Canada. John D. Thiesen, archivist at Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, recounts the story as it unfolded in Paraguay. This article is drawn from his thesis completed at Wichita State University in 1990.

Jim Lichti did his master's thesis at San Francisco State University on the German Mennonite response to the Gestapo's dissolution of the Rhoenbruderhof. Lichti is currently in a doctoral program in European history at the University of California at Los Angeles.

Benjamin Redekop's article on the Canadian Mennonite response to National Socialism comes from his master's thesis at the University of British Columbia (1990). Redekop is currently employed as a bicycle mechanic and a part-time instructor at Trinity Western University in the History of Science. In the fall of 1991 he plans to return to the University of British Columbia for studies leading to a PhD in history.

This issue also includes the annual Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography.

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Front Cover

Fernheim colony assembly hall in about 1935. The banner reads: "The common good before individual gain! Believe and know: the common work that is begun is the future of our children." Note photo of Hitler below banner.

Back Cover

Fernheim colony administration building in about 1935.

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The Mennonite Encounter with National Socialism: The Example of Fernheim

by John D. Thiesen

On the evening of 11 March 1944 a group of men assembled in the Mennonite colony of Fernheim in Paraguay to teach certain "agitators" a lesson. The people included "beginning teachers, Sunday School teachers, young and older church members, an assistant to the *Oberschulze* with his son, excommunicated church members, and non-church members" according to the elder of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren church (EMB or *Allianzgemeinde*) Nikolai Wiebe.¹ The late summer night was clear and well lit, just past full moon,² and the group made the rounds of its perceived enemies. Hans Neufeld gave a perhaps overdramatized account of the treatment of his brother Heinrich:

My brother, for example, was called out [of the house] by the group. Unsuspectingly he went. It was clear moon light and my sister Liese could observe and hear the proceedings through the window. First fell sharp words of abuse and accusation. Then an energetic and dictatorial voice asked, "Are you for or against the *Oberschulze*?" Since Legich had recently resigned his office, Heinrich said, "We have no *Oberschulze*." Immediately he received from all sides blows on the shoulders and upper arms so that his shirt was torn and the blood ran. Then they yelled, "And tomorrow you'll get it better."³

At least four other friends of Neufeld were roughed up. At a couple of places, such as Heinrich Warkentin's, the group was warded off with firearms.

Compared to the violence taking place in the rest of the world, this event seems trivial: a few young men in a fist fight, no serious injuries. What brings it to our attention nearly fifty years later is that it occurred among supposedly peaceful Mennonites.

Fernheim Colony had a population of about 2000, the vast majority of whom

were refugees who left the Soviet Union in the years 1929 to 1932. A handful of Mennonite families from central Poland were also settled there. The colony was grouped into 17 villages and was 52% Mennonite Brethren (MB), 42% Mennoniten-Gemeinde (MG), and 6% Evangelical Mennonite Brethren (*Allianzgemeinde*).⁴

The roots of the minor riot of 11 March 1944 go back to the beginnings of the Fernheim Colony. In its first three years, it had experienced the Chaco War, fought between Paraguay and Bolivia in Fernheim's immediate vicinity, and continued to receive new groups of Mennonite refugees. By 1933, however, this initial situation of uncertainty and change had ended.

With the political situation stabilized and its population relatively complete, the Fernheimers' attention could turn to matters closer to their hearts: their own economic progress and the accession of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party to power in Germany. "Although we always receive the news very late about the events in our Motherland," said the June 1933 article in the Fernheim newspaper, the *Menno-Blatt*, "yet the heart of the Chaco settler beats faster every time he eventually hears that things in Germany are again on an upward course."⁵ "The renewal movement that today is going through the whole of Germandom, both at home and abroad, has not been without influence on the German-minded (*deutschfählende*) Mennonites in the Chaco." On 18 May 1933, at a meeting of village representatives in the colony (*Bezirksversammlung*), Gerhard Isaak, an elderly MB preacher, spoke about the "national revolution" (*nationale Erhebung*) in Germany. The gathered colony leaders decided to address a letter of greeting to the new German government. They

expressed happiness that Germany now had a government "that freely and openly professes God as Creator" and "takes seriously the realization of Christian principles in social, economic, and cultural life." Referring to their own experience with communism, they contrasted the New Germany with the recent past, "we cannot at all understand that the earlier governments did not clear away ruinous Communism but for years let its undermining influence work upon the German people." They thanked God that He had now given Germany "men who attacked Communism with a strong hand."⁶ The letter went on to recall the kindness of the German people in 1929 and to express gratitude and continued loyalty to *Deutschtum*. It was signed by the *Oberschulze*, or senior colony administrator, David Löwen, and by the chairman of the colony's clergy, Nikolai Wiebe, the leader of the small EMB group in Fernheim.

This greeting to the New Germany has a number of interesting characteristics. Certain absences are noticeable: there is no mention of the Nazi Party, of the Jews, or of the *Führer* by name or title. What the Fernheimers responded to was the introduction of a more conservative public morality and the eradication of the Communist Party. This was probably not just a reaction to the anti-Bolshevik propaganda of the Nazis but also to the imprisonment of German Communists after the Reichstag fire of 27 February 1933. The residents of Fernheim seem not to have noticed the peculiarity of condemning toleration of Communism by earlier German governments and then expressing gratitude for aid from the same governments.

Aside from these relatively vague well-wishes by the adults of Fernheim,

the Nazi movement made its first vigorous impression among the youth. The young people seem to have been somewhat of a social problem at first. Near the end of 1931 the Casado company, the original owner of the land occupied by Fernheim, had begun work on a large agricultural experiment station at Palo Santo, east of the Mennonite colonies. The Casados hired about twenty young men from Fernheim to work at the station. They were there without supervision and accomplished little useful work. They also began engaging in some kind of illicit activity that the sources of this story never specifically describe.⁷ Presumably there was drinking and perhaps other moral infractions that offended the more pious citizens of Fernheim. At the beginning of 1933 the Casados fired the group, which then returned to the colony and continued its "pernicious activities."⁸ At Easter 1933 the youths held a "Chacofest" in the village of Rosenort, after which the adults of Rosenort appealed to the colony government for punitive action. A trial of some sort was held in Philadelphia, the colony administrative center, under the leadership of the *Oberschulze* David Löwen. Somehow—again the details are unknown—the colony government lost the case.

At this crisis point, two of the colony's school teachers, Friedrich "Fritz" Kliever and Julius Legiehn, were entrusted with preparing a program of youth work for the colony. Kliever was a member of the Polish group, having been born 29 May 1905 at Deutsch Wymyschle, which was at that time part of the Russian Empire. From 1921 to 1926 he studied at a teacher training school in Łódź, Poland, and from 1926 to 1930 taught at Lwówek, Poland. Coming to the Chaco with his parents and siblings in 1930, he began teaching school again in 1931.⁹ Legiehn was born in the Ukraine on 1 November 1899 and came to the Chaco in 1930 with his wife and three children, immediately taking up employment as a school teacher.¹⁰

At a meeting in the village of Friedensfeld on 20 August 1933, Kliever and Legiehn presented their comprehensive program. As Kliever described it in detail, the youth of each village, called an *Ortsgruppe*, were to meet weekly, usually on Wednesday evening. The first meeting of the month was devoted to Bible study and prayer. Bible studies followed the outlines of the *Jugendbund für entschiedenes Christentum* [Chris-



The last youth group meeting, 7 March 1937, before 140 families left Fernheim to found the new Friesland colony in eastern Paraguay.

tian Endeavor Society].¹¹ The second weekly meeting of the month was for the study of Mennonite history, using a recent history of Anabaptism by Swiss historians.¹² The third meeting of the month was for "addresses on the history and development of Germany in the past and in the present."¹³ The fourth meeting, at least during 1934, was spent in the study of etiquette using a book from a German Baptist publisher.¹⁴ The occasional fifth meeting in a month was for singing. Kliever wrote, "Since the choruses of the colony are devoted exclusively to spiritual songs the young people's organization also studies German folk songs. The need for this arose when we discovered on our outings and other social gatherings that we had no common treasury of songs, and consequently it was decided at one of the leaders' institutes to have all the young people's groups practice one common song every month."¹⁵

Kliever elaborated on the special characteristics of his youth work in a speech originally presented to the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam in 1936.

The chief difference between the young people's work in Fernheim and the young people's work which has been carried on hitherto in other Mennonite communities, is to be found in the fact that it endeavors to promote our Mennonite and German cultural heritage as well as our spiritual well-being. . . . In addition, since the World War, we have received a new insight into the significance of God's provisions through crea-

tion for our well-being, provisions which include not only family, occupation, and state, but also the nation (*Volk*). We believe that in South America we find ourselves in a peculiar situation where the dangers of the future in this respect will be much greater than they were before the World War in Russia, in Poland, and in other countries, and for this reason we are endeavoring to arouse and strengthen the national (*völkischen*) forces in our midst, so that we shall be strong to resist the forces of degeneration which will attack us from the outside. After all we as German-speaking Mennonites belong to the great German national and cultural group, and we wish to affirm our participation in "Germanism." What the Canadian Mennonites of our neighbor colony, who left their homeland for the sake of maintaining their German schools, rather unconsciously feel, that we in Fernheim wish to make conscious and fruitful in the training of our children and youth. . . . The Canadian Mennonites no longer maintain a living connection with Germany, but they do maintain in traditional faithfulness their religious and national character. The Fernheim colony on the other hand endeavors to strengthen the connections with Germany which were established at the time of our escape from Russia in 1929-30, and to do this in cultural as well as in economic respects. This purpose is also one of the purposes of our young people's work.¹⁶

During 1933 and 1934 the *Jugendbund* was quite active, with 350 members in 13 *Ortsgruppen* on its first anniversary.¹⁷ *Völkisch* or nationalist ideas were quite prominent. On 2 October 1933, for instance, the Schönwiese *Ortsgruppe* celebrated the birthday of Paul von Hindenburg, the president of Ger-

many and World War I hero, with military and patriotic poems and songs. Legiehn talked on the life of Hindenburg and the meeting closed with the singing of Hoffman von Fallersleben's *Deutschlandlied*, the German national anthem, "*Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles; Über alles in der Welt...*"¹⁸

The strong nationalistic emphasis of the *Jugendbund* was thoroughly and sincerely mixed with other religious, social, and educational themes. It was not a simple-minded, political propaganda movement. The activities that were the most public and were described most frequently in the newspapers, were the ones promoting German ethnicity. The tone of the *völkisch* statements seems slightly defensive at some points, although whatever opposition there was to the *Jugendbund* has left little record. Kliewer recalled

Also the church organizations occasionally caused difficulties in the work because many of the elder brethren did not understand the purposes and goals of the work and unjustly attributed various undesirable intentions to the new organization.¹⁹

The reasons church leaders might have opposed the *Jugendbund* can easily be surmised. In the first place, some of the youth activities would have appeared quite worldly to the more conservative. In particular, the singing of non-religious music seems to have become a continuing object of the "worldliness" critique. The express loyalty to a particular political movement may

also have been seen as a step closer to the non-Christian world since, in keeping with their religious characteristics of pacifism and separation from the world, Mennonites had generally refused political office holding beyond the local governance of their own villages and settlements.

After the first few years *völkisch* activities and the *Jugendbund* receded into the background. One of the *Jugendbund*'s founders, Kliewer, went to Germany for graduate school, while economic and organizational difficulties, including a colony schism in 1937, occupied greater public attention. Fernheim lived on the edge of survival for many years.

Despite its isolated location in the western part of Paraguay, Fernheim received rather frequent visits from outsiders. Reports of these visits shed considerable light on political thinking in the colony. Two visits by outsiders to Fernheim provide striking vignettes in the course of this encounter.

One visitor was Dr. Herbert Wilhelmly, a lecturer [*Privatdozent*] at the University of Kiel. In early 1937, Wilhelmly was conducting a "colonial geographic expedition" in South America, funded by the Albrecht Denk Foundation of Berlin, the German Research Society [*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*], and the Hänsel Foundation of Kiel.²⁰ According to the *Menno-Blatt*, he had spent a week there, had gone to all the villages and taken many photographs. Lectures with slides had been

given in four villages, showing "wonderful landscapes, mostly from the Rhineland in South Germany."²¹

Wilhelmly's own report to the Foreign Ministry gave a more informative and less innocuous picture of his work. He commented on the poor economic conditions and reported that half the population was ready to leave the Chaco. He also reported an unfavorable political climate among the Mennonites, claiming they were extreme isolationists hiding behind their "extraordinary privileges." Wilhelmly was particularly disturbed by the lack of anti-Semitism, complaining that Mennonites knew Jewish history in detail and used Jewish first names. He criticized the Mennonites' pacifism and humility [*Demut*] and contrasted them with the Nazi "will to action" [*Wille zur Tat*].

While the ignorant but religiously fanatic farmer makes no secret of his negative attitude, the preachers and administrators try to work together on friendly terms with the embassy and consulate. . . . Greeting telegrams to the *Führer*, sending peanuts to Minister President Göring and the VDA stand in crass contradiction to the political and ethnic [*völkischen*] attitude of the Mennonites.²²

Wilhelmly's only favorable comment was that the young people were more favorable to Nazism than the adults. Wilhelmly clearly saw his duties as more than just geographic field work; he was a Nazi evangelist. Among his activities were lectures with titles like "The New Germany and the Foreign Germans," "The First and Second Four Year Plans," "The Reconstruction of the German Economy," and "The Tasks of the SA before and after the Accession to Power." Perhaps Wilhelmly mistook utter boredom for opposition.

Wilhelmly's negative comments eventually filtered back to the colony and generated an angry response, resulting in a colony meeting (*Bezirksversammlung*) authorizing a written statement. The letter was dated 29 September 1937 and signed by the *Oberschulze* Jacob Siemens, the colony secretary Heinrich Pauls, and the bookkeeper Abram Loewen. It was directed to Mennonite leaders in Germany.

Now a few words about the position of the colony towards the New Germany. Yesterday's meeting devoted one and a half hours to discussion of this problem. The report of Dr. Wilhelmly about our life and activities here in Fernheim, about our "religious eccentricity" and



Fernheim colony clergy in 1935: Lower row, left to right: Jacob Isaak, Gerhard Götz, Heinrich Unruh, Abraham Penner, Johann Teichgräf, ? Thiessen (deacon), David Boschmann (deacon)
Upper row, left to right: ? Hildebrandt, Nikolai Kroeker, Kornelius Neufeld (bookkeeper), Jakob Dürksen, Franz Dück, Franz Wiens (deacon), Joh. Epp, Joh. Loewen.

our "anti-German attitude" was read. The report gave rise to various impulses. We examined ourselves in light of this report and found among ourselves many lacks and weaknesses. We can however also state that the report is greatly exaggerated and that the honorable scholar spent too little time with us and that his visit came at a very difficult time for us, so that the Doctor was able to look us over only a little. He also came to Fernheim with prejudgments. . . . He is clearly an enemy of the Mennonites.

There was much discussion back and forth at yesterday's meeting. Many statements were made and quite many viewpoints represented. There was much dispute about our position towards the New Germany and towards National Socialism. We asked ourselves earnestly, among other things, whether it is compatible with Mennonite principles and our conscience, for example, to sing the *Deutschlandlied* and the *Horst-Wessel-Lied* and to let our children in the school sing them. In all these questions no vote was taken, and no absolute unity in opinions was reached. . . .

And our position towards National Socialism? We are very appreciative of it. We know and are thankful that God created National Socialism at the time of the greatest Bolshevistic danger for Western Europe. Almighty God has made the *Führer* Adolf Hitler a blessing to many nations and may He preserve him yet many years for our beloved motherland. We love the *Führer* and honor National Socialism. That shall not mislead us to be zealots in this matter, however. We want to remain neutral and passive towards politics, since as you well know it is not compatible with our Mennonite principles to occupy ourselves with politics and participate in political parties.

This position towards National Socialism is certainly not universal in our colony, as you will easily understand. The young generation is more zealous, while the venerable older ones doubtfully shake their heads. The general thinking, though, seems to be that which is set out in the above statement.²³

Here is perhaps the clearest statement ever of the Paraguayan Mennonites' feelings towards Nazism. In a way it confirms Wilhelmy's accusations. In general the Mennonites did not live up to his fanatical standards. "That shall not mislead us to be zealots. . . ." Being favorably inclined towards National Socialism was not enough for him.

Another visit took place more than three years later. During this time, Julius Legiehn had been elected *Oberschulze* and Fritz Kliewer had returned from Germany with a doctorate and a wife. The Kliewers began immediately

to upgrade and reform the colony's school system. Fritz Kliewer also took the leadership of the pro-Nazi movement in Fernheim and encouraged the idea that the Mennonites might return to Europe under Nazi auspices and leave behind their unfavorable situation in Paraguay. Tensions in the colony rose.

In April 1940 three Mennonite Church (MC) missionaries in Argentina, Nelson Litwiller, Josephus W. Shank, and Elvin V. Snyder, were sent by their mission board on a trip to visit Protestant missions in Asunción. At their own initiative they decided also to visit the Mennonites in the Chaco. The three arrived just in time for the colony's celebration of Hitler's birthday. The North Americans (Litwiller was Canadian, Snyder and Shank were from the United States) were completely unprepared for the Nazi influence in the colony. "We were simply dumbfounded to discover what we did in the Colony," said Litwiller.²⁴ They were invited to the celebration on the evening of 20 April. It followed the standard pattern: devotions by Harder, various recitations by high school students, biography of Hitler by Margarete Kliewer "in which all the saintly and self denying virtues of Adolf were painted in their best colours,"²⁵ main address by Fritz Kliewer, a closing '*Heil Hitler!*' by one of the students.

The three missionaries spent the rest of the week visiting various sites around the colony and preaching in the villages. Snyder and Shank spoke only English, so Bernhard Epp, who came from Coaldale, Alberta, and was one of the colony's missionaries to the Indians, interpreted. Litwiller spoke German. People "asked us what we thought and so forth. We were rather careful not to be too free and felt out the folks as much as we could."²⁶ A farewell service was planned for Sunday, 28 April, and the three decided that Snyder would preach on pacifism while the other two would speak on more general religious subjects.

The service was held in the colony assembly hall in Philadelphia and Shank spoke first on "Traditional Mennonite Virtues." Then Snyder spoke on "Non-resistance and the world today." He later recorded his outline as follows:

- I. Nazism elevates into a supreme good that which is the source of man's greatest evil—the abuse of Power.

- II. Nazism is totalitarian absolutism.
- III. Nazism destroys personality.
- IV. Nazism is determined to abolish Christianity.²⁷

Snyder quoted various passages from *Mein Kampf* and statements by other Nazi leaders and set them over against Bible passages and statements by German opponents of Nazism such as Karl Barth and Martin Niemöller. Among other things, Snyder is reported to have said that Nazism was worse than communism and described it as "syphilis of the spirit."²⁸

At the end of Snyder's talk Fritz Kliewer and several young men walked out of the service. Later while Litwiller was speaking on "Jesus Christ as Lord of my Life," Abram Harder, the elder of the MG group, also walked out and remained outside the building talking to Kliewer. When Litwiller finished, Kliewer shouted in from the door of the hall that the Fatherland had been greatly insulted and this insult would be answered at the appropriate time. At this the high school young men applauded.²⁹

Snyder's talk could hardly have been less suited to winning friends in Fernheim. Its credibility was automatically weakened by its being given in English, first of all. Further, a group of people who had experienced nothing but terrorism in the Soviet Union and nothing but eager helpfulness from the New Germany were not persuaded by the statement that Nazism was worse than communism. In addition, a coarse metaphor like "syphilis of the spirit," if in fact Snyder actually said such a thing, was likely to offend the moral sensibilities of even Snyder's potential supporters. One wonders how the interpreter Bernhard Epp felt as the messenger who had to carry Snyder's unwelcome message.

Nevertheless, a few ministers in the colony felt it as a breath of fresh air. The EMB leader Nikolai Wiebe reported to MCC

The visit from Argentina was for us a blessing. A clear Gospel was preached. At just the right moment a clear, open word was spoken.³⁰

Nikolai Siemens also wrote to Snyder after the visit to thank him, although Siemen's *Menno-Blatt* report does not even mention the three missionaries' names, let alone the Sunday farewell incident.³¹ The colony's two missionaries to the Indians, Bernhard Epp and G. B. Giesbrecht, Snyder's natural col-

leagues, especially kept up contact with him after the April visit.

The war years brought some dampening of enthusiasm and tension over the New Germany. The hope of leaving Paraguay remained, but all awaited the outcome of the war. MCC sent two long-term workers from Kansas, a GC medical doctor, John R. Schmidt, and an MB dentist, George S. Klassen. Both sympathized with the anti-Nazi minority in Fernheim.

Within the ranks of the *völkisch* or pro-Nazi movement, a conflict broke out between a youthful, rebellious group known as the *Neufeld-Gruppe* (Neufeld Group), after one of its members, and the majority under the leadership of Kliever. A key incident in this conflict involved a burglary of the colony administrative office by the Neufeld Group and their publication of an embarrassing letter written by Kliever criticizing Fernheim for its lack of enthusiasm for Nazism. The presence of these various parties and interests set the stage for the events of March 1944.

The climax of Fernheim's encounter with Nazism came about rather accidentally when a small incident created by a marginal member of the colony released stored-up tensions. Toward the end of 1943, Legiehn recommended that the colony attempt to get legal recognition for its government and also update the regulations of the cooperative. The Paraguayan laws relating to the Mennonite colonies recognized their

control over their own schools and economic matters but did not explicitly deal with local government.

The person who sparked the incident, Abram Martens, was a man of Mennonite background who bore a grudge against the Fernheim cooperative because of its competition with a general store he owned at a nearby Paraguayan military post.³² In February 1944, Martens obtained a copy of the proposed new cooperative statutes and circulated it in the colony along with a "very unchristian and common" letter, as MCC worker John R. Schmidt described it.³³ The ensuing controversy brought to a head all the accumulated political and economic grievances in Fernheim. On the morning of 11 March 1944, Legiehn and his two governmental assistants decided they had had enough and resigned "under the pressure of circumstances."³⁴ The supporters of Legiehn and Kliever saw this as akin to a coup and set out in the evening to teach the "agitators" of the *Neufeld-Gruppe*, who had nothing directly to do with Legiehn's resignation, their lesson.

Not surprisingly, the next day, a Sunday, the colony was filled with wild rumors of the *völkisch* mob planning to attack again, or of the Neufeld group counterattacking, and of one side or the other arming itself. On the morning of 12 March G. S. Klassen, the MCC dentist, sent a messenger to the Paraguayan military post at Isla Poi, southeast of Fernheim. Early in the evening a truck with four soldiers arrived. This arrival

and the intervention of Schmidt, Klassen, and Legiehn dissipated a crowd that had begun to gather. Apparently John R. Schmidt did not agree with Klassen's calling in the military. Certainly many Philadelphia citizens did not, and Klassen apparently feared Orie Miller, the MCC executive secretary, would not either. "You may not agree with what I have done. I take full responsibility upon myself, that is for getting the soldiers," he wrote to Miller.³⁵

A colony meeting on 14 March took up the Martens affair and the 11 March riot. Martens was summarily expelled from Fernheim but the discussion of the riot took more time. John R. Schmidt spoke and attributed the disturbance to Kliever. He did not claim that Kliever had planned this particular event but that his *völkisch* movement and teaching had created an atmosphere that allowed and encouraged the use of force. Schmidt demanded that Kliever leave the colony or else he, Schmidt, would leave, thus cutting off the colony's medical service. Schmidt predicted, correctly as it turned out, that Kliever would be removed by the government even if he tried to stay in Fernheim.³⁶

G. S. Klassen, in a more hot-headed speech, criticized both Kliever and Legiehn for not preventing the riot. Either one, he said, could have "raised one finger" and "the mob would have gone home." Klassen stated that he would do no more dental work "until order is restored" and if nothing was done he would move his dental office to Friesland, another Mennonite colony in eastern Paraguay. By restoring order, he meant that Kliever was to leave Fernheim and that Legiehn's resignation as *Oberschulze* be ratified. Klassen also warned the Neufeld group against taking revenge for the beatings and specifically threatened his two dental apprentices with dismissal if they took part in acts of revenge.³⁷

Legiehn and Kliever agreed to "give in to the pressure from outside," as Legiehn put it, and leave the colony. On 4 June "some Paraguayan officials from Asunción, accompanied by several officials of the United States embassy" arrived in Fernheim and were surprised to find Kliever and Legiehn still there. They were ordered to leave for internment at San Pedro within 24 hours, which they apparently did.³⁸ In this way World War II ended for Fernheim Col-



Left to right: John R. Schmidt, Julius Legiehn, ? Friesen, Franz Heinrichs, ? Braunt, in Asunción about 1941.

ony, two days before D-Day, the Allied invasion of Normandy.

Fernheim's encounter with National Socialism and its denouement in 1944 left a lasting legacy of bitterness. The above account does not even begin to tell the entire story and its brevity can be misleading. It must be remembered that Nazism looks vastly different from 1991 than it did from 1933, 1937, 1940, and even 1944. Mennonites in Fernheim were attracted by Nazism's program of conservative public morality and anti-communism. In their desire to return to Europe, they were following their own best economic interests and in being willing to give up nonresistance they were keeping company with the opinions and practice of European Mennonites.

Fernheimers could hardly understand what happened to them in 1944. To them, it looked as though MCC and the U.S. and Paraguayan governments had connived to deprive them of their best leadership. In fact, MCC was as much a victim as Fernheim of the governmental actions. Much of the Mennonite encounter with National Socialism was internal; Mennonites confronted other Mennonites. There was clearly a clash of cultures between MCC and Fernheim which was unrecognized at the time and is little recognized today. Two (or more) different ways of being Mennonite struggled, and the MCC way won. A statement by a historian describing events much earlier in Russian Mennonite history seems a fitting epitaph on many other events in Mennonite history: "Free from external oppression, the Mennonites oppressed each other, in faith, in business, and in society."³⁹

ENDNOTES

¹Nikolai Wiebe to MCC, undated, folder "Paraguay Fernheim Colony 1943," AMC-IX-6-3, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana. This document, obviously, is in the wrong folder in the archives.

²Full moon was on 9 March 1944. *Bundesbote Kalender für das Jahr unseres Herrn 1944* (Newton, KS: Mennonite Publication Office, [1943]), p. 7.

³Hans (Juan) Neufeld, *Affaire Dr. Fritz Kliever in Fernheim [sic] 1940-1944* (Asunción: Hans Neufeld, 1988), p. 20.

⁴Peter P. Klassen, *Die Mennoniten in Paraguay: Reich Gottes und Reich dieser Welt* (Weierhof: Mennonitische Geschichtsverein, 1988), pp. 94-96, 320. The MG group related to the General Conference Mennonite Church.

⁵"Die Mennonitensiedlungen des paraguayischen Chaco und die nationale Erhebung in Deutschland," *Menno-Blatt*, vol. 4, no. 6, June 1933.

⁶"Mennonitensiedlungen . . . und die nationale Erhebung."

⁷Quiring, "Deutsche erschliessen den Chaco (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1936), pp. 182-183; Fritz Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work in the Paraguayan Chaco," *Mennoite Quarterly Review* 11 (April 1937):121.

⁸Quiring, *Deutsche erschliessen den Chaco*, p. 182.

⁹"RE: FRIEDRICH KLIEWER, with aliases Fritz Kliever, Federico Kliever," 5 October 1945, DF 862.20234/11-1545, U.S. State Department decimal files (DF), National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰"RE: JULIUS FRIEDRICH LEGIEHN, alias Julius Legiehn," 30 October 1945, DF 862.20234/11-2945.

¹¹For the identification of the German *Entschiedenes Christentum* with the American "Christian Endeavor" movement see Arno Pagel, "Entschiedenes Christentum," in Franklin H. Littell and Hans Hermann Walz, eds., *Weltkirchen Lexikon: Handbuch der Ökumene* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1960), p. 335.

¹²Samuel Geiser, Daniel Lerch, and Samuel Geiser, *Die Taufgesinnten-Gemeinden: Eine kurzgefasste Darstellung der wichtigsten Ereignisse des Täuferturns* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1931).

¹³Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work," p. 127.

¹⁴Albert Hoefs, *Was lieblich ist und wohl lautet: ein Buch über den guten Ton* (Kassel: J. G. Oncken Nachfolger, n.d.).

¹⁵Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work," p. 128.

¹⁶Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work," pp. 125-127.

¹⁷Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work," p. 125.

¹⁸Friedrich Kliever, "Die Mennoniten im Chaco feiern Hindenburgs Geburtstag," *Menno-Blatt*, vol. 4, no. 11, November 1933.

¹⁹Kliever, "Mennonite Young People's Work," p. 122; Heinrich Derksen, Sr., *Vom "Paradies" in die Grille Hölle Paraguays* (Asunción: Adelheid and Heinrich Derksen, Jr., 1988), p. 83, also mentions clergy opposition to the *Jugendbund* but does not give specifics.

²⁰Manfred Kossok, "Die Mennoniten-Siedlungen Paraguays in den Jahren 1935-1939 (Zur politischen Rolle der Auslandsdeutschen in Südamerika)," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 8 (1960): 368-371. Kossok, an East German historian, had access to a number of German Foreign Ministry documents from the German Central Archives in Potsdam about Wilhelmy's expedition. These sources do not seem to be available in the West. The *Menno-Blatt* briefly mentioned Wilhelmy's visit, but the rest of our information comes via Kossok.

²¹"Verschiedenes," *Menno-Blatt*, vol. 8, no. 2, February 1937.

²²Kossok, "Mennoniten-Siedlungen Paraguays," p. 369. VDA stood for *Volksbund für das Deutschtum im Ausland*. This was a private but pro-Nazi organization that supported ethnic Germans outside of Germany, especially in educational matters. The VDA funded Fritz Kliever's graduate studies in Germany.

²³Jacob Siemens, Heinrich Pauls, and Abram Loewen to B. H. Unruh, 29 September 1937, folder "Paraguay Fernheim Colony 1937," AMC-IX-6-3.

²⁴Nelson Litwiller to Harold S. Bender, 1 May 1940, folder 69, box 54, H. S. Bender Papers, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-278.

²⁵Litwiller to Bender, 1 May 1940.

²⁶Litwiller to Bender, 1 May 1940.

²⁷Elvin Snyder to S. C. Yoder, 1 May 1940, folder 2/13, Elvin Snyder Papers, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-113.

²⁸Julius Legiehn to Orie O. Miller, 9 July 1940,

folder "Paraguay Fernheim Colony 1940," AMC-IX-6-3.

²⁹Litwiller to Bender, 1 May 1940; Snyder to Yoder, 1 May 1940; J. W. Shank to Orie O. Miller, 30 April 1940, folder 69, box 54, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-278; Jacob Siemens to MCC, 30 May 1940, folder 384, box 34, P. C. Hiebert Papers, MLA-MS-37. Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas; J. W. Shank, 1940 diary, box 1, Josephus Wenger Shank Papers, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-208.

³⁰Nikolai Wiebe to MCC, 7 May 1940, folder 69, box 54, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-278.

³¹Nikolai Siemens to Elvin Snyder, 10 June 1940, folder 2/13, AMC-Hist. Mss. 1-113; "Mission in Argentinien," *Menno-Blatt*, vol. 11, no. 5, May 1940.

³²Hans (Juan) Neufeld to John D. Thiesen, 8 November 1988, letter in my possession; Julius Legiehn to P. C. Hiebert and Orie O. Miller, 14 April 1944, folder 431, box 39, MLA-MS-37; John R. Schmidt to MCC, 18 March 1944, folder 431, box 39, MLA-MS-37. Interestingly, Martens is recorded as a Party member. He is listed as having been born 8 October 1903 at Wohldemfürst in the Ukraine and joined the Party on 1 May 1939 with membership number 7050626. He is described as a merchant living in Asunción. A Wilhelm Martens, apparently a brother, is also listed: born 28 April 1902 at Wohldemfürst, joined the Party 1 October 1938, membership number 6990793, farmer at Barranqueritas. U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Military Affairs, Subcommittee on War Mobilization, *Nazi Party Membership Records, Submitted by the War Department to the Subcommittee on War Mobilization of the Committee on Military Affairs*, August 1946, Part II, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., Subcommittee Print (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946), p. 140. The only other apparent Mennonite included in the Senate lists for Paraguay is Heinrich Franz Willms: born 8 April 1910 at Kleefeld, District Melitopol, Ukraine, joined the Party 1 April 1933, membership number 1533127, a mechanic in Asunción. Senate, *Nazi Party Membership Records*, part 3, p. 555.

³³John R. Schmidt to MCC, 18 March 1944, folder 431, box 39, MLA-MS-37.

³⁴Legiehn to Hiebert and Miller, 14 April 1944.

³⁵G. S. Klassen to Orie O. Miller, 17 March 1944, folder 430, box 38, MLA-MS-37; Legiehn to Hiebert and Miller, 14 April 1944.

³⁶Schmidt to MCC, 18 March 1944.

³⁷Klassen to Miller, 17 March 1944.

³⁸Willard H. Smith and Verna Graber Smith, *Paraguayan Interlude: Observations and Impressions* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1950), p. 79.

³⁹James Urry, "The Closed and the Open: Social and Religious Change amongst the Mennonites in Russia (1789-1889)" (Ph. D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1978), p. 644.

The German Mennonite Response to the Dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof

by James Irvin Lichti

“Expulsion of Mennonites from Germany”

On April 22, 1937, a Swiss Catholic paper, the *Basler Nachrichten*, ran a short article entitled “Expulsion of Mennonites from Germany.” This article appeared during Hitler’s fourth year in power. The paper reported the arrival in Holland of 31 German Mennonites who had been expelled from Germany

because—in accordance with their convictions—they did not want to perform military service. Also, they have consistently refused to employ the Hitler greeting. A few days ago Gestapo detachments appeared, occupied the community buildings and took their occupants to the Dutch border. . . . (Emphasis in original)

The report’s details were largely reliable: on April 14, 1937, a small religious community had been disbanded by the Gestapo. It identified with the Anabaptist tradition and was known as the Rhoen-Bruderhof, the Rhoen being a rather impoverished rural area lying about midway between Frankfurt and Berlin. One detail missed by the *Basler Nachrichten* was that community doctrines also rejected private property; on this basis, the Rhoen-Bruderhof came under government suspicion both as “pacifists” and as “communists.” However, it was not an oversight, but a specific error which caught the attention of German Mennonite leadership: the Rhoen-Bruderhof’s affiliation was Hutterite rather than Mennonite. The *Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden*, in which the majority of German Mennonite congregations were represented,¹ was anxious to make clear that “no Mennonites had been expelled from Germany,” and that there was no affiliation between German Mennonites and the Rhoen-Bruderhof. This re-

sponse, in turn, troubled Dutch Mennonites, who had taken in the expelled German Hutterites upon their arrival in the Netherlands: Didn’t the *Vereinigung’s* response to the dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof constitute the abandonment of a sister denomination?

In taking on this question, the fundamental issue is understanding how German Mennonites and German Hutterites, both based in the Anabaptist tradition, pursued opposing forms of “accommodation” to life under National Socialism.² In addition, the *Vereinigung’s* response to the dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof provides an unusual opportunity to contrast the “individual” and “institutional” responses to National Socialism. However, a look at the initial responses of *Vereinigung* leaders seems to present a more complex picture. Of the three leaders most directly involved at that point, Benjamin Unruh pressed for distance right away, which fell in line with his own uncritical regard for the Third Reich. The remaining two, Christian Neff and Emil Haendiges, assumed positions surprisingly at odds with their respective perspectives. Despite the diversity of response among church leadership, the *Vereinigung’s* response to the *Basler Nachrichten* fell in line with the overall pattern of German Mennonite accommodation to the Third Reich. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this happened in the very process of policy formation: what finally allowed for policy determination was a selective reliance on principles from the Mennonite tradition. These principles legitimized a position which “protected” the German Mennonite reputation under the Third Reich and maintained an uncritical stance toward the Gestapo action against the Rhoen-Bruderhof.

German Mennonite perception of the Rhoen-Bruderhof

When Hitler was appointed chancellor on January 30, 1933, German Mennonites reacted “just like their fellow Germans: they were relieved and cheered Hitler and his Brownshirts with great hope.”³ The Rhoen-Bruderhof, on the other hand, faced the moment as a solemn call to decision. Upon hearing the news, the community’s leader, Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935), called his followers together and announced that the time had come for each of them to choose their life’s direction: either accommodation to the new state or non-conformity in the context of a community of commitment.⁴

This commitment initially brought together Eberhard Arnold and Emmy van Hollander (1884-1980), who became his wife. They met in 1907; both were from respectable bourgeois backgrounds, and were influenced by two rather different movements: pietistic revivalism, which gave expression to their devout faith, and the German Youth Movement, which questioned the normative basis of bourgeois German life. World War I drew the couple into circles of religious pacifists and religious socialists; with the coming of peace, they joined with others who were questioning private property, and seeking alternatives to conventional economic, political and religious institutions. This particular wing of the post-World War I German Youth Movement, called the “communitarian” movement,⁵ enthusiastically embraced German folk culture, but fundamentally challenged the cornerstones of German middle-class society.

The movement aroused some curiosity among German Mennonite youth, but those who became actively engaged

were transplanted Russian Mennonites. Hans Klassen and Johannes Harder were examples. Klassen founded a Quaker commune in Thuringia, the "Neu-Sonnenfelder"; but since moving to Germany his contacts had been with progressive Baptists rather than German Mennonites. Similarly, Johannes Harder's contacts with German Mennonites remained rather marginal. He was the only Mennonite to live at the community founded by Eberhard and Emmy Arnold in 1920. Harder stayed at the Rhoen-Bruderhof off and on between 1925 and 1928. Toward the end of his life, Harder kept a few photos on the wall of his study of individuals critical to his intellectual and spiritual development. Eberhard Arnold was among these; but despite this, Harder could not quite bring himself to join the Rhoen-Bruderhof.⁶

Eberhard and Emmy's community developed an increasing awareness of the links between their own goals and the doctrines of the 16th century Hutterites. They attempted outreach to German Mennonites, and met with a mixture of sympathy, admiration and skepticism.

Another reason for hesitation was that Rhoen-Bruderhof outreach took the form of an urgent plea for assistance with its desperate financial condition. This issue appears to have become the unfortunate focus of the relationship between German Mennonites and the Rhoen-Bruderhof. To their credit, German Mennonites provided occasional limited assistance to the Rhoen-Bruderhof even when German Mennonites were themselves under considerable financial strain; such assistance was extended even during the weeks preceding the Gestapo's dissolution of the community. This support was motivated not only by sympathy—by 1937, the community was maintaining itself under near-starvation conditions—but also on respect. There was a very real ambivalence in the German Mennonite regard for the Rhoen-Bruderhof.

The Rhoen-Bruderhof then turned to the Hutterian Brethren of North America. Here they also met with caution; but Eberhard was eventually invited to visit the North American Hutterian communities, and he was received as a fresh voice of inspiration. Affiliation was agreed upon by December 1930. The Rhoen-Bruderhof went about making the necessary adjustments: some were easy, such as exchanging their



Eberhard and Emmy Arnold in 1921.

folksy "youth-movement" outfits for the rather similar Hutterite garb; others were more difficult, such as dispensing with folk dancing and musical instruments—or Eberhard Arnold giving up his cigars.

The Rhoen-Bruderhof and the Third Reich

Eberhard's initial assessment of Hitler soon proved itself accurate. Increasingly, Third Reich policies interfered with Rhoen-Bruderhof community life. The responses of the Rhoen-Bruderhof and German Mennonites both lie in a deeply-held German Protestant respect for worldly authority. This respect is more explicit in the Lutheran tradition, but not without basis in German Mennonite tradition. The Rhoen-Bruderhof exercised this respect with an awareness of the fundamental distance between

Hutterite doctrine and National Socialist ideology.

This distance was expressed in Rhoen-Bruderhof literature, which spoke out against militarism, private property, and idolizing German "folk identity." Distribution of such literature was blocked by the Nazi regime, and the Rhoen-Bruderhof attempted to continue distribution in neighboring German-language countries. During the spring and summer after Hitler came to power, the Gestapo inspected the community regularly and then stormed the Bruderhof in November with 120 agents in a fruitless search for weapons. A month later, the Third Reich insisted that the Bruderhof's school include Nazi propaganda in its curriculum. To circumvent this, the community immediately shuttled its children off to Liechtenstein, where a daughter community, the Alm-Bruderhof, was established. With the

introduction of conscription in 1935, draft-age men were also removed to this location. Advised by the Liechtenstein government that it was not in a position to shelter draft-age Germans indefinitely, a second daughter community, the Cotswold-Bruderhof, was established in England. This was the ultimate destination of members of the Rhoen-Bruderhof following their expulsion in 1937.

It may seem surprising that the Rhoen-Bruderhof remained in Germany at all after Hitler came to power. This was, in fact, an on-going question in the community. In the end, they felt it important that their attempt at a Christ-centered community remain. With this orientation, strategies of accommodation drew the line at principle; in a fundamental sense, the Rhoen-Bruderhof would have lost its reason for being if it had prioritized self-preservation above preservation of principle.

German Mennonites under the Third Reich

The fundamental conflict between Bruderhof doctrine and National Socialist ideology clearly identified “which side” German Hutterites were on; were German Mennonites, then, simply on the “other” side? German Mennonites were a less homogeneous community, encompassing a broader diversity of positions on issues of faith. Any generalizations on the German Mennonite response to the Third Reich must be qualified, since individual German Mennonites indeed responded differently to the rise of National Socialism. But if we vest German Mennonite institutions with the responsibility of speaking for their constituency, a pattern of accommodation to the Third Reich becomes apparent. This pattern is clearest in the *Vereinigung*.

The need for the *Vereinigung* to accommodate to the Third Reich indicates a distance between the German Mennonite and National Socialist positions. The Nazi regime placed demands on all German institutions and forced each to decide where it would “draw the line.” The *Vereinigung* responded in a manner similar to most German denominations: their pattern of accommodation operated within the framework of preserving institutional independence. National Socialist goals included government “co-ordination” (*Gleichschaltung*) of all German institutions. Virtually all German churches resisted the regime’s



Benjamin H. Unruh in about 1930.

efforts in this direction with consistency and a good measure of success.

On the other hand, the record of these same denominations on speaking out against Nazi racism and militarism is disturbingly weak. The Third Reich’s “respect” for the relative autonomy of the German churches was based on the strict condition that they confine themselves to concerns related to the “hereafter,” leaving the management of “this life” to National Socialist leadership. On the whole, German churches were prepared to meet this condition. In so doing, they indeed parted with a good measure of autonomy. With this in mind, the German churches’ resistance to National Socialist “co-ordination” becomes difficult to evaluate: was this “resistance” based on the content of their faith or on an institutional “survival instinct”? This is a question to keep in mind in considering the different responses of German Mennonite leaders to the dissolution of Rhoen-Bruderhof and the relationship between these responses and the eventual institutional response by the *Vereinigung*.

Benjamin Unruh: “They want to misuse our Mennonite name abroad”

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Benjamin Unruh was at the height of his influence within the international Mennonite community. Born in the Crimea in 1881, Unruh received his “licentiate in theology” in Church History from the University of Basel in 1907 and then

returned to Russia to teach German and religion at the *Kommerzschule* in Halbstadt. After the Russian Revolution, Unruh was in the four-member “study commission” that visited European and North American Mennonites in 1920 to explore emigration options for Russian Mennonites. Although various conferences were interested in helping, there was firm resistance to a cooperative, “inter-Mennonite” effort. Yet this is precisely what the Russian Mennonite study commission insisted upon, and it is their insistence that led to the founding of Mennonite Central Committee in that year. One of Benjamin Unruh’s on-going “causes” was to challenge the barriers blocking inter-Mennonite cooperation and communication.

After the study-commission’s tour, Unruh remained in the west. He settled in the southern German city of Karlsruhe and became the *Vertrauensmann* for thousands of Russian Mennonites making their way out of the Soviet Union. No other person played as central a role in their resettlement. Unruh’s own gifts were especially well suited to the tasks of dealing with officials, promoting cooperation, and raising the necessary funds. His ready rhetorical skills combined humor, affability, optimism, and a “childlike” relationship to his faith.⁷ He was perhaps at the zenith of his visibility at the Second Mennonite World Conference in Danzig/Gdańsk. The year was 1930, and the central concern was the devastating impact of Stalin’s collectivization program on Russian Mennonites. At the Conference, Unruh argued that the key concern was not the incompatible economic structure advanced by the Soviet Union, but the regime’s violation of the “historic Mennonite principle of freedom of conscience.”⁸

Considering Unruh’s life focus, a sympathy for National Socialism would not be surprising. In the late 1920s, Hitler began reworking his Party’s image to attract a broader electoral base. This involved a stronger appeal to Christian sentiment, an easing of anti-semitic rhetoric, and an emphasis on anti-Bolshevik slogans. All of this heightened National Socialism’s receptivity among Mennonites.

In addition, the German Mennonite sense of ownership in the German people was heightened by a “media event” in 1929. That October, 13,000 destitute German peasants—“refugees” of Stalin’s rural collectivization program—

converged upon Moscow. Ten thousand of these were Russian Mennonite. Their plight became a "cause" of the German press and elicited a concrete response. The German government designated six million marks towards their departure for the west, with Reichspräsident Hindenburg personally contributing 200,000 marks, and the German public sending in one million marks. For German Mennonites, this linked anti-Bolshevism with an unprecedented sense that the German nation now stood behind Mennonites. As Christian Neff put it,

This is singular in the history of our own "kindred nation" (*Brudervolk*) that assistance comes to us from the outside. We have always had to rely on assistance from within our brotherhood.⁹

Neff sent Unruh the *Basler Nachrichten* article. Neff also included an article from the Dutch Mennonite paper, *Zondagsbode*, which reflected considerable sympathy for the German Hutterites. Unruh felt that the newspaper's reference to the Rhoen-Bruderhof as Mennonite was the work of Dutch Mennonites, who had intentionally promoted that association:

In my estimation, the *Vereinigung* should stick its neck out and present a very clear explanation to officials and authorities and before the public! They now want to misuse our Mennonite name abroad in the fight against National Socialism.

He went on to decry the confusion that could result from association with "Arnold-ish experiments."¹⁰

Unruh voiced similar opinions in his response to an inquiry from the German Foreign Office. He described the Swiss and Dutch articles as "clearly written with propagandizing and agitational intention" and elaborated on German Mennonite devotion to the fatherland. He cited their willing sacrifice in the Great War, the early involvement of many "*als sehr fruehe Kaempfer*" (as very happy fighters) in the National Socialist Party, and the full integration of Mennonite youth into Hitler organizations.

Unruh did qualify his position by informing the German Foreign Office of his denomination's unconditional support for "freedom of conscience." But in contrast to the situation of Russian Mennonites under Stalinism, this was not the "key issue" in regard to the situation of German Hutterites under Hitlerism. Instead, German Mennonites "must guard themselves against those

who think they can use our name in vain for the transparent purpose of criticizing measures undertaken by the German authorities."¹¹

The German press emphasized the "misrepresentation" of the Third Reich in the foreign press. By using this approach to the *Basler Nachrichten's* error, Unruh played into the hands of the regime's propaganda strategy. The principle that was central to his position on the Russian Mennonites under Stalin—freedom of conscience—receded into the background, and a concern for "accuracy in the foreign press" dominated the foreground. But at the same time that he defended the Third Reich, he also defended the domestic reputation of Mennonites under the Third Reich. Guiding his response was not intimidation from without, but intimidation from within. Although he was oblivious to the fact, Unruh yielded to the demands for conformity imposed by the totalitarian state. Prior to 1933, Unruh would have been less anxious to press the distinction between German Mennonites and the Rhoen-Bruderhof. As a Mennonite historian, he had written highly of Hutterian history and would more likely have been amused than angered by a confusion of the two. But the National Socialist preoccupation with who was "inside" and who was "outside" the *Volksgemeinschaft* put a new twist on the distinction between Mennonites and Hutterites. The new national ideology had channeled Unruh's response. Unruh was arguably respond-



Emil Händiges in about 1952.

ing from a position of intimidation. In defending the Third Reich against foreign misrepresentation, he also effectively defended the domestic reputation of Mennonites under the Third Reich.

Emil Haendiges: "There are little flags that rise up . . . to show us where a priceless treasure has sunken"

As influential as Unruh was, the response to the *Basler Nachrichten* was to come from the chair of the *Vereinigung*, Emil Haendiges. Born in 1881 in Worms, Haendiges was raised in a Baptist household. In accord with his father's wishes, he initially pursued a career in business, but found this unfulfilling. At the encouragement of his mother's family—who were Palatine Mennonite—he entered the ministry. Haendiges completed his theological studies in 1912, and began as secretary and travelling pastor for the Conference of South German Mennonites; an association of congregations founded at the urging of Christian Neff and reaching from the French Alsace in the west through the Palatinate and Baden to Bavaria in the east. In 1918, Haendiges accepted the position at the Ibersheim-Eppstein-Ludwigshafen congregation, not far from his hometown. In 1923, he responded to a call from the Elbing congregation, which moved him from the "Swiss Mennonite" base of the Rheinland/Palatinate to the "Dutch Mennonite" base of West Prussia (today part of Poland). He remained in Elbing until the end of World War II.

This new location exposed Haendiges to one of the most deeply resented consequences of the Versailles Treaty. The treaty had been imposed upon Germany at the close of World War I and was a target of all conservative German press and political parties. In fostering this resentment, they promoted the national mood that led to Hitler's electoral gains in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Quite by chance, the treaty's territorial changes had hit German Mennonites particularly hard: one out of three German Mennonites suddenly found that their citizenship had changed. Congregations that were formerly united under the German Empire now found themselves in either the Weimar Republic, France, the Free City of Danzig, or a resurrected Poland. The situation was most troubling in Haendiges' new home

of West Prussia, where the Mennonite population was divided between three different political entities. When Haendiges accepted editorship of the *Vereinigung's* monthly, *Mennonitische Blaetter*, in 1927, he used his opening editorial to voice his own resentment at the divisive impact of the Versailles Treaty on German Mennonite fellowship and communication.¹² He was hardly alone in these sentiments.

This situation increased Mennonite vulnerability to National Socialist rhetoric. Hitler combined resentment over the World War I settlement with anti-Slavic racism—modulating his emphasis in accord with his audience—by demanding the extension of German *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east. Hitler's own aims involved more than a restoration of the German Empire's former borders, but he was selective with how he phrased his aims. His audiences, in turn, were selective in focusing in on what they wanted to hear. On the surface of things, Mennonites probably would have endorsed only a conservative rendering of Hitler's foreign policy goals, but at a deeper and less aware level many also welcomed the hope, and perhaps even the "thrill," offered by Hitler's fanatical militancy. And when Hitler finally did invade Poland in September 1939, there was militancy in Haendiges' tone:

Our German ethnic communities (*Volksgruppen*) suffered unspeakable difficulties under the Polish yoke during twenty years of foreign domination. The worst at the very end. Then God, our Lord, helped them through the hand of our Fuehrer and set them free. We thank our Fuehrer for his feat of liberation!¹³

Haendiges was among those German Mennonites who had fallen, to a significant degree, under the sway of Nazism's appeal, and a number of his editorials could attest to this opinion. Curiously, this did not guide his response to the dissolution of the Bruderhof. Instead, he was the German Mennonite leader most resistant to "clarifying" the *Basler Nachrichten's* error:

It is infinitely difficult for me to release something to the public along these lines because in spite of everything, this has to do with a group of our own Mennonite lineage. . . . It is beyond me that "German Mennonites" now back away from these "Brothers in Need," that no one wants to risk *his* name in this context, and then identify it as "the place of the Chair of the *Vereinigung*" to draw the



Christian Neff.

line here out of the fear of what could happen. . . . With all their shortcomings, the brothers are suffering for a principle for which our forefathers also suffered, but which we have renounced. "There are little flags that rise up from the surface of the ocean to show us where a priceless treasure has sunken."¹⁴

Haendiges' position was significantly shaped by his talks with Emmy Arnold at the 1936 Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam. As was characteristic of German Mennonite leaders, Haendiges was very "people oriented," and Emmy Arnold's warmth, piety, and profound commitment made a strong impression. Widowed in 1935, she and fellow Rhoen-Bruderhof members had been living under conditions of extreme poverty. Ironically, it was the founder of Mennonite World Conference, Christian Neff, who would dissuade Haendiges from his position of solidarity.

Christian Neff: "In the Pursuit of Truth"

Born in 1863, Christian Neff became one in a long line of Palatine Mennonite ministers in his family. By 1937 he celebrated his fiftieth year as pastor of the Weierhof congregation with a striking list of church accomplishments to his name. Addressed as "Vater Neff," he enjoyed a remarkably uniform respect among divergent German Mennonite circles.

Neff's background might well have led to an affinity for German nationalism. He possessed vivid childhood

memories of the Franco-Prussian War, and recalled his excitement at seeing Wilhelm I, the German Empire's first Kaiser, at the Ludwigshafen train station. While a student in Berlin, he enthusiastically attended Heinrich von Treitschke's lectures on Germany. Treitschke is credited with helping to fan German nationalism. Neff was also deeply impressed when he heard Bismarck address the Reichstag. He described it as "an historically significant moment of my life."¹⁵ During Neff's childhood years, Bismarck waged three successful wars, which led to the founding of the German Empire in 1871.

While all of this had a lasting impact on the boy's imagination, the grown man's writings were not significantly swayed by nationalism. His style appealed more to reflection than sentiment. Lacking Unruh's speaking skills, Neff compensated by carefully composing all his sermons and addresses in advance; the result was a more finely reasoned presentation, "a crystalline clarity, an austere structure, altogether a linguistic mastery."¹⁶ His focus remained squarely on the welfare of the Mennonite community, and he was not wont to confuse matters of faith with the fate of the German *Volk* community, as many other German Mennonite writers of the period did.

In founding Mennonite World Conference, Neff combined two of his prime interests: fostering international contact among Mennonites, and promoting Mennonite history. At Neff's initiative, the first Mennonite World Conference took place in Zurich on January 25, 1925, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first adult baptism. He remained convenor of Mennonite World Conference until his death in 1946.

As convenor, Neff demonstrated a respect for Mennonites with doctrinal positions different from his own. An example of this was nonresistance. In preparing for the Third Mennonite World Conference of 1936, Dutch and American Mennonite leaders felt it imperative that the peace issue be raised. One reason for this was anxiety over the impact of Nazism's militarism in Germany: *Mennonitische Blaetter* had published sufficient content sympathetic to the new regime to raise eyebrows abroad. But the question remained as to whether attention to the peace issue would be self-defeating. Neff understood the integral position of nonresis-

tance in the faith of many foreign Mennonites and would not question the raising of an issue close to the heart of an important part of the "brotherhood."

This perspective was apparently not shared by most German Mennonites. They had largely distanced themselves from nonresistance over the course of the 19th century, although congregations still supported the minority who served as non-combatants in World War I. But when Hitler became chancellor, various church organs were quick to draw a line between German Mennonites and nonresistance. Strongly formulated statements emphasized that German Mennonites would no longer request "special privileges" related to military service. Although these statements said that the final decision remained a matter of individual conscience, they made it clear that church support would stop where conflict with government policy began. These statements appeared with an unwarranted urgency, since conscription was not introduced for another two years.

Among the few defending those with nonresistant principles in *Mennonitische Blätter* was Christian Neff:

I only want to say this: I affirm military service. . . . But I regret that there is so little understanding left in our circles for the question of nonresistance. Even though we have given up the strict principle of nonresistance . . . we should nonetheless . . . stand up for those who reject bearing arms and reject war based on a crisis of conscience. . . .¹⁷

Despite Neff's openness and readiness to broach the peace issue at the 1936 World Conference, he was less open to the attendance of Rhoen-Bruderhof members at that same World Conference. He wrote to a Dutch Mennonite pastor that there had been "absolutely no mention" of inviting the Rhoen-Bruderhof at the joint preparatory meetings, and that if there had been, he would have certainly voiced his reservations, "although it goes without saying that that would have not been along the lines of an outright objection."¹⁸ But he here conjectured in retrospect. It is difficult to determine whether this would have been his opinion prior to World Conference or whether it reflected his consternation at the consequence of Emil Haendiges' encounter with Emmy Arnold.

Neff responded to Haendiges' misgivings immediately:

Just between you and me, Brother Haendiges, I would like to say that I do not share your emotion-based perspective on this matter. This is simply a matter of setting the facts straight, which seems necessary simply in the pursuit of truth; . . . As always, our sympathies are with the brothers [of the Bruderhof]. But we . . . decided against a connection with them on principle.¹⁹

In apparent acquiescence, Haendiges wrote the *Basler Nachrichten*. Responding to the article's small headline, "Expulsion of Mennonites from Germany," he emphasized that "no Mennonites have been expelled from Germany." But was the central concern here "clarification," or what seemed to engage the bulk of Haendiges' letter: a distancing from principles that would impair the domestic reputation of German Mennonites?

The same question surfaced in the article Neff prepared for Mennonite periodicals. Entitled "A Necessary Correction," Neff's initial draft began by presenting the foreign press's inaccurate use of "Mennonite," and then went on to stress the distinctions between German Mennonites and German Hutterites:

Particularly this point—the rejection of military service—identifies a significant difference, even contrast between the members of the Bruderhof and German Mennonites of today. . . .

We have a high esteem of the members of the Bruderhof and their upstanding, genuine Christian convictions, but reject—along with their position on military service—their religiously based communist institution.

Before Neff's article was published, he revised the last sentence, substituting "life in common" for "communist." This initial word choice used National Socialist vocabulary to describe a Hutterite principle, perhaps signaling where Neff's concern was in fact directed. Although entitled "a necessary correction," the effect of Neff's article was a distancing of German Mennonites from principles or ideologies that were taboo under the Third Reich.

This had been a part of Unruh's original agenda, which was then countered by Haendiges' "call for solidarity." On the surface, Neff seemed to be striking a middle ground of sorts. In stressing "the pursuit of the truth," Neff had shifted the focus by alluding to a historic Mennonite principle: that "our 'eye' be an eye and our 'nay' be a nay" (Matthew 5:37). The principle of rejecting the oath prompted

a commitment to an uncompromised honesty, and this commitment proved more durable among German Mennonites than the principle of nonresistance. When Hitler revived conscription in 1935, considerable efforts were made to secure for Mennonite youth the option of "pledging" rather than "swearing" their loyalty to the *Fuehrer*.²⁰

Neff could have stressed or incorporated other principles, such as "freedom of conscience," but Unruh had already modeled a selective emphasis on this principle, lending it "center stage" in reference to Russian Mennonites under Stalin, but shifting it toward the background in reference to German Hutterites under Hitler. The positioning of the principle appears gauged by just how self-evident the "brotherhood" of the targeted population might be. It receded with the Rhoen-Bruderhof and disappeared even from the background with the frequent and concurrent sentencing of Jehovah's Witnesses to concentration camps for rejection of military service. Nor did Mennonites raise the freedom of conscience issue in regard to the growing number of regulations, directives, and prohibitions placed upon the Jewish population.

Neither Haendiges, Unruh, nor Neff denied or concealed their admiration for the piety and commitment of Rhoen-Bruderhof members. At the same time, they did not explicitly object to the Gestapo action which dissolved that community. They settled for "clarifying" the situation, allowing "honesty" to outrank "solidarity," and ultimately effecting Unruh's original agenda: an explicit distancing of German Mennonites from the Rhoen-Bruderhof.

When principle colludes with accommodation: the dynamics guiding policy creation

Neff was so focused on the principle of "clarification" that he lost sight of the role he was playing. It was as if he were "playing into the hands" of an insidious institutional dynamic within the church structure guiding policy toward institutional self-preservation. This dynamic generally characterizes human institutions. In the case of the Rhoen-Bruderhof, "self-preservation" was outranked by principle, because the principles they would have had to abandon to survive would have destroyed their reason for existence. And when the Rhoen-Bruderhof was then dis-

solved, Neff believed he was acting in accord with the principle of "uncompromised honesty," but what in effect occurred was a selective reliance on principle which then legitimized a policy that served institutional and community self-preservation.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect here is how leadership remained unaware of the dynamics at play. These were masked by the relative complexity of German Mennonite church leaders' initial response. They did not respond like robots, reacting reflexively to the whims of the totalitarian state; instead, they challenged each other in an apparently open exchange of opinion. There was at least some potential for the policy to have taken on a different form. But it did not. The institutional position which emerged fell in line with the pattern of institutional accommodation that was seeking to "find a place" for German Mennonites within the context of the Third Reich. The fact that a potential for irregularity existed helped to maintain the illusion that they were responding "freely" and on the basis of principle and overshadowed the role played by (1) intimidation by the state and (2) fundamental dynamics of institutional self-preservation.

There is always a line which cannot be crossed, i.e., where accommodation would undercut the institution's very reason for being. For the Rhoen-Bruderhof, nonresistance, community of goods, and adoption of Nazi cultural forms, such as the "Heil Hitler!" greeting, constituted such lines, while for German Mennonites and most German churches the most critical line was resisting government coordination and maintaining institutional autonomy. Unfortunately, the line drawn by Mennonites fueled the dynamics guiding institutional self-preservation, thus falling in line with the mindset guiding the *Vereinigung's* response to the dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof. One of the "blindness" on the agenda seeking institutional autonomy was concessions made in preserving the form of autonomy.

There is nothing surprising in reliance on tradition in pursuing institutional self-preservation. Doctrine and tradition are part of the institutional structure, and either might be employed—selectively—to defend the overall institution. As a result of a selective reliance on tradition, certain principles become emphasized while others are

suppressed or fade into the background. This dynamic of response continued during the escalation of the Rhoen-Bruderhof controversy. Dutch Mennonites accused German Mennonites of indeed neglecting the principle of "freedom of conscience," and of failing to demonstrate sufficient solidarity with a sister denomination. At this point, collusion with the Gestapo deepened. The Third Reich chose to distance itself from the more convoluted issue of religious principle, suppressing the Gestapo's primary motive and promoting an entirely different basis for the Rhoen-Bruderhof's dissolution: the Hutterites were accused of gross financial mismanagement, for which the government seized the community's property in the interest of its creditors. German Mennonites contradicted the Rhoen-Bruderhof's own account and aligned with the regime's position: the stigma associated with poor management joined with Mennonite stewardship norms to provide a legitimizing basis for the Gestapo's account.²¹ In this manner, a selective reliance on religious tradition placed a legitimizing stamp on church policies which either ignored, sidestepped, or even colluded with Third Reich policy.

How to forgive and not forget?

We can analyze the context sufficiently to understand why the German Mennonite leaders took the positions they did. But is this sufficient? Recent controversy among German historians of the Third Reich has challenged the empathetic approach of "historicism," i.e., of understanding a historic period by promoting "identification" with those living during that period. In understanding German social life under the Third Reich, a focus on "identification" and "empathy" tends to shift the compelling moral issues raised by Nazi crimes into the background. In denominational history, the historicist emphasis can result in apologetics rather than reflection, self-justification rather than self-examination.

At the same time, the attention placed here on "individual" German Mennonites under the Third Reich also draws attention to one aspect of the "brokenness" characterizing our attitude toward German Mennonites after the war. Christian Neff was less touched by this, since he did not live to experience the

post-war era; in addition, his response to the dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof is more of an aberration from a critical distance that was stronger than that evidenced by most other German Mennonite leaders. Emil Haendiges' call for solidarity was also an aberration; at the Fourth Mennonite World Conference in 1948, he publicly repented his uncritical response to Nazism, forthrightly "prostrating" himself before the gathering in a manner seldom demonstrated by those in positions of institutional authority. In this he presented a model to emulate. Of the three men, perhaps the heaviest cloud would remain over Benjamin Unruh, and here the failure of the international Mennonite community is clarified: we have failed to make a place for a man whose contribution has been enormous, because he "allied" himself with a movement that has captured the 20th century imagination as the incarnation of evil. And there was indeed a basis for Nazism having caught our imagination in that manner.

Many stood by Unruh, for both good and bad reasons. For those of us with a more critical perspective, it is not simply a question of whether or not to "stand by" such an individual, but neither do we have a coherent alternative. Perhaps it refers to a fundamental tension that has no clear resolution. As always, we are called to forgive, and forgive we must as a part of our own declaration of faith; but it is with equal conviction that we dare not forget. Have we really learned how to do both at the same time?

ENDNOTES

¹In addition to the *Vereinigung* there was the *Verband deutscher Mennonitengemeinden*, which was composed of German Mennonite congregations, most of which were located east of the Rhine in what is today Baden Wuerttemberg and Bavaria. These congregations should be examined separately, as they are distinguished by a stronger emphasis on pictism and a greater readiness to maintain distance from mainstream German culture. In addition, the *Konferenz sueddeutscher Mennoniten* linked south German congregations in the *Vereinigung* and the *Verband* with Alsatian Mennonite congregations.

²A striking contrast between German Mennonite and "German Hutterite" responses to the Third Reich was made by Hans-Juergen Goertz in "Nationale Erhebung und religioeser Niedergang: Missglueckte Aneignung des taufferischen Leitbildes im Dritten Reich," (*Unsrirtenes Tautferium 1525-1975*, edited by Hans-Juergen Goertz (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), p. 279. See also Dieter Goetz Lichdi, "The Story of Nazism and its Reception by German Mennonites," *Mennonite Life*, March 1981, pp. 24-31.

³Dieter Goetz Lichdi, *Ueber Zuerich und Wit-*



marsum nach Addis Abba: Die Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Maxdorf: Agape Verlage, 1983), p. 162.

⁴Interview with Herbert Sorgius, ex-Rhoen-Bruderhof member, January 29, 1986, near Rotenburg, Germany. I have paraphrased Sorgius remarks; he recalled Arnold as telling his community members they must choose "either this way, or that way."

⁵This term draws on Ulrich Linse, *Zurueck, O Mensch, zur Mutter Erde: Landkommunen in Deutschland 1890-1933* (Munich: dtv, 1983).

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 268ff; Johannes Harder interview, Schluechtern, Germany, December 13, 1986.

⁷See Abraham Braun's obituary for Unruh in *Mennonitischer Gemeinde-Kalender*, 1961, pp. 16-24.

⁸*Mennonitische Welt-Hilfs-Konferenz vom 31. August bis 3. September 1930 in Danzig*, edited by Christian Neff (Karlsruhe: Verlag Heinrich Schneider, 1930), pp. 83-86.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20; *Mennonitische Blaetter*, December 1929, p. 106; John B. Toews, *Czars, Soviets & Mennonites* (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1982), p. 133. The German government's funds enabled about 5,500 of the refugees to get to the west.

¹⁰Unruh to Pastor Kraemer, Krefeld, 30.4.37. *Geschaeftsfuehrung binder*, Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof.

¹¹Unruh to die Kulturabteilung des Auswaertigen Amtes, z.H. des Herrn Legationsrats Dr. Kundt, 5.6.37. *Geschaeftsfuehrung binder*, Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof.

¹²Introductory article by Emil Haendiges as the new editor, *Mennonitische Blaetter*, January 1927, p. 1.

¹³Emil Haendiges, "Zur Heimkehr der befreiten Volksgenossen ins Reich," *Mennonitische Blaetter*, October/November 1939, p. 65.

¹⁴Haendiges to Neff, Unruh, Crous and Braun, 5.10.37. *Geschaeftsfuehrung binder*, Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof.

¹⁵See Paul Schowalter's obituary of Christian Neff, *Gemeinde-Kalender* 1951, pp. 17-21.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷Christian Neff, "Menno Simons in seiner Bedeutung fuer die Gegenwart," *Mennonitische Blaetter*, September 1935, p. 69.

¹⁸Neff to Gorter (a Dutch Mennonite leader), 7.24.37. Neff Correspondence files, Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof.

¹⁹Neff to Haendiges, 5.19.37; note was included with a draft of "Eine notwendige Berichtigung," which explained the German Mennonite position and was published in the June 1937 issue of *Mennonitische Blaetter*. Mennonitische Forschungsstelle, Weierhof.

²⁰Dieter Goetz Lichdi, *Mennoniten im Dritten Reich. Dokumentation und Deutung* (Weierhof: Schriftenreihe des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins Nr. 9, 1977), p. 87-92.

²¹Here I am only discussing the initial German Mennonite response to the dissolution of the Rhoen-Bruderhof. Controversy in fact became more heated, and German Mennonites had to reformulate their position, using stewardship norms as a legitimizing basis. I presented this analysis in "Linking 'Bread and Sweat' to Blut und Boden," presented at the "Anabaptist/Mennonite Faith & Economics: Breaking the Silence" Conference in Waterloo, Ontario, May 26, 1990. Conference results are due to be published.

The Rhoen-Bruderhof in 1933 or 1934.

The Canadian Mennonite Response to National Socialism

by Benjamin Redekop

National Socialism aroused considerable support among Canadian Mennonites during the 1930s, support qualified by significant opposition to its more militant aspects and its more strident Mennonite supporters. Pro-Nazi sentiments were most evident among *Russlaender* Mennonites, or those who had migrated to Canada during the 1920s from the chaos and oppression of Bolshevik Russia. There were many factors contributing to this support, not the least of which was the apparent promise held out by the "new Germany" of galvanizing the exiled Mennonite community through an invigorated "German" identity.¹

The roots of the Canadian Mennonite affinity for National Socialism go back at least as far as the Mennonite sojourn in Prussia, where Dutch was assiduously preserved as a congregational language in some cases for as long as 200 years. In Russia, Mennonites spoke Low and High German dialects acquired while in Prussia, while Russian was reserved for intercourse with "outsiders" and farm animals. After Russification pressures began to be imposed in the 1870s, the Germanic aspects of Mennonite identity were reinforced by way of reaction. The relationship with Germany, however, was primarily of a cultural and religious nature, as a steady supply of German educational and devotional materials flowed into the colonies. Mennonite political allegiance, when it was acknowledged, rested with the Czar and the Russian fatherland, as events surrounding the outbreak of the First World War demonstrated. This attitude was to change during the course of the war and revolution, as evidenced by the welcome accorded the invading German army in April 1918. The delicate balance between Mennonites' Russian citi-

zenship and their Germanic cultural and religious identity was lost at this time.

The war and the subsequent revolution were disastrous for Mennonites in Russia, as they watched the steady destruction of all they had built in the previous 150 years. Many made the difficult decision to emigrate, as it became clear that their way of life was doomed. The bulk of the 20,000 Mennonites who immigrated to Canada came between 1923 and 1926, and the majority of the immigrants settled in the western prairie provinces. Migration trends during the 1930s and thereafter were to Ontario and British Columbia. By 1939, thirty percent of immigrants resided in these two provinces, while the rest remained in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.²

The Canadian Mennonite population prior to this migration numbered 59,000 and was concentrated in the five westernmost provinces.³ This number was divided into eighteen congregational families, with Mennonites of Swiss South-German origin predominating in Ontario, and those of Dutch North-German descent (i.e. former Russian colonists) inhabiting the prairies.⁴ The Swiss Mennonites had generally adopted the English language, while the Russian Mennonites on the prairies (referred to as *Kanadier* because of their early arrival in Canada) conversed in Low German among themselves, normally reserving High German for church, school and written communication. The relatively educated and literate *Russlaender* immigrants of the 1920s had become increasingly "Germanized," culturally, in the period after their more conservative brethren emigrated from Russia in the 1870s, and tended to speak more (and better) High German than the *Kanadier*.

The new immigrants found themselves in a society which had recently become suspicious of both Mennonites and Germans. Prior to the First World War, ethnic Germans had been considered among the best of citizens; but the war and the Mennonite education crisis of the late teens and early twenties combined to discredit pacifist and German-speaking "enemy aliens" in the minds of many Canadians. An ongoing feature of *Russlaender* experience in the thirty years after their arrival in Canada was both an external and internal pressure for Anglo-conformity. This pressure, coupled with the scattered nature of *Russlaender* settlement, posed an immediate and serious threat to the *Russlaender* ethno-religious identity.

Further, the *Russlaender* were eager to carve out a niche for themselves in Canadian society, both economically and socially, and they quickly set about the task with a vitality that astonished the more diffident and conservative *Kanadier* and troubled many reflective *Russlaender*. Would Mennonites be able to perpetuate their distinctive identity and social solidarity? As the forces of assimilation and acculturation absorbed them into Canadian society with great rapidity, the *Russlaender* saw their ethno-religious community not only fragmented, but dissolving before their very eyes.⁵

Canadian Mennonite support for German National Socialism must be viewed against this backdrop. Historical circumstances had brought about the dissolution of the Russian Mennonite commonwealth at the same moment that a powerful movement of "Volk-unification" began to emanate from Germany. It was very easy to appropriate the ideas and rhetoric of this movement and apply them to Mennonites who found them-

selves spread across 2000 miles of western Canada. Pro-Germanism in this context meant not only separation from the "worldly" Anglo-Canadian environment, but the possible reintegration of the scattered remnant on a linguistic, religious, and ideological basis. Thus while Nazi-Germany became a surrogate fatherland for some, it also became an important symbol in the struggle to maintain the socio-religious integrity and identity of the *Russlaender*.⁶

At a basic level, the pride in all things German which was a part of the Nazi movement was an important encouragement to German-speakers who, living in non-German environments, feared the loss of their cultural and linguistic identity. An unconscious emotional attachment to the German language and customs should not be underestimated as an important factor in Canadian Mennonite Germanism during the 1930s and beyond. In addition, German benevolence towards Mennonites, along with Nazi anti-communism, were key factors in Mennonite Germanism. For many Mennonites, Hitler became a divinely-appointed figure sent to right previous wrongs and save Germany and the rest of the world from communism. It was the combination of all the foregoing factors which gave Canadian Mennonite Germanism its particular intensity during the 1930s.

The National Socialist movement in Canada was itself weak and never able to gain a large following among German-Canadians. Although significant numbers of ethnic Germans probably sympathized with Hitler's cause in one way or another, Nazism was too unrelated to Canadian social and economic realities, and ethnic Germans identified too strongly with Canadian institutions, for it to appeal to large numbers of them, despite the efforts of the approximately 100 Nazi-Party members to gain a following.⁷

The focal point of Nazi activity was in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, which had absorbed some 70,000 German-speaking immigrants (including most of the 20,000 *Russlaender*) during the 1920s. There were seven German-language newspapers published on the prairies during the thirties, and of these, five expressed pro-Nazi sentiments. Three of these were Mennonite publications, and a fourth, *Der Nordwesten*, was widely read by Mennonites. The *Mennonitische Rundschau* was the largest of the

Mennonite papers that presented a pro-Nazi slant and is a key source for understanding Mennonite Germanism during the 1930s.

The *Rundschau* was brought to Winnipeg in 1923 from Scottsdale, Pennsylvania and quickly became an organ of the newly-arrived *Russlaender*, particularly the Mennonite Brethren. Its circulation and readership was broad, however, the *Rundschau* being read by Mennonites from across North and South America and Europe. It functioned as an important medium of communication and connection for the newly-scattered Mennonites, featuring a high proportion of contributions by readers and serving as a forum for discussion of all topics of concern. While it is impossible to analyze the content of the paper in much detail here, it is important to identify some of the major themes present in the paper during the Nazi era.

It is significant that pro-German sentiments preceded pro-Nazi ones in the paper, and this was related to the ongoing tragedy in Soviet Russia, an issue which dominated the pages of the *Rundschau* in the early 1930s. It was becoming apparent that those Mennonites remaining in Russia had nowhere to turn and were doomed to virtual extinction as a religious people. Pathetic letters from Mennonites who were sent to Siberia appeared in the paper, along with reports of horrors in the colonies themselves and general articles abhorring the atheism and communism of the new Soviet regime. Some of the editor's siblings wrote from Germany, glad to be out of Russia; one of his sisters, however, wasn't so lucky.

It would be difficult to overemphasize the effect of these events on the Russian Mennonite psyche. The sense of tragedy and loss was overwhelming. Understandably, Germany came to be seen as the great savior and protector of the Mennonites, having agreed to temporarily house and eventually relocate approximately 6,000 refugees during the attempted mass exodus of 1929-30. Expressions of gratitude were unbounded:

In heaven will it be reckoned, the great things Germany has done. By it the poor and persecuted, were pulled from the clutches of the evil one. Bless, O God, the German land, protect it with your almighty hand.⁸

A refugee wrote from Hamburg that Germany had provided for all possible

needs, and that Germans had even shown love to the refugees: "It is impossible to describe. There is no way we'll be able to pay them back."⁹ A letter of thanks to German president Hindenburg (who had personally donated 200,000 Reichsmarks for Russian-German relief) was drafted at the 1930 Mennonite World Conference in Danzig. The fact that Germany was actively involved in furthering donations for Russia relief (e.g., via the German consulate in Winnipeg) could only add to the general sense of gratitude towards Germany. Mennonites were admonished never to forget what the Germans had done for them.

All of this moved *Rundschau* editor Hermann Neufeld to trace his ancestry back to Prussia and apply for German citizenship. Although very few people went this far, it is clear that Germany's positive example helped to make it a strong reference point for Mennonite identity after the breakdown of the Russian Mennonite commonwealth. Expressions of concern over the fragmentation of Mennonite society were present throughout the thirties and were coupled with laments over being a "people without a homeland." A poem illustrates well how Germanism was identified as a positive, unifying characteristic, and how the German nation was seen as a kindly father welcoming home his wayward children:

When in every land, the German Volk
is scattered,
so hold tight the bonds, of loyalty and
unity.
Great among the nations—the German
homeland.
It reaches gladly from afar, to its own
the hand.
To nurture unity, in joy or pain, that
is the German blessing.¹⁰

If the German "homeland" seemed attractive to some, "German" ethnicity was perceived to be of special value to Mennonites. This alleged "German" ethnic background was seen by some individuals as having been responsible for the Mennonite ability to make improvements on the land wherever they settled.¹¹ Given the traditional Mennonite reserve towards nation-states, it is understandable that this sort of stress on ethnicity became a more prominent and widespread means of identification with Germany. And more importantly, this growing sense of Mennonite "Germanness" came to be seen as the key

to the reintegration, both socially and spiritually, of the Mennonite community on Canadian soil.

The emerging German *voelkisch* movement, manifested most forcefully in the rhetoric of the National Socialists, played a significant role in this process of identity reconstitution. For example, a prominent elder of a newly-formed Mennonite congregation in Winnipeg submitted an article to the *Rundschau* in 1931 by a German writer which argued that the German *Volk* could only be helped through a rebirth of specifically "German" culture and religion—all non-German elements were to be expunged.¹² The implication for Mennonites was clear. The *Rundschau* followed events in Germany quite closely, indicating that the "voelkisch rebirth" of the German nation was of prime interest. Even rather militaristic news concerning Germany was featured, such as reports that the Stahlhelm Veterans Organization and the SA (a Nazi paramilitary organization) were being allowed to wear uniforms again, and that Hitler had proclaimed that Germans would have to be ready to sacrifice their lives if Germany were to regain its "place in the sun."¹³ This sort of reportage garnered little negative response from its "pacifist" Mennonite readership.

In the period immediately before Hitler came to power, opinions about him and the National Socialists were either undecided or positive. Heinrich Schroeder, a schoolteacher from the



Walter Quiring in 1961.

Russian colonies who had settled in Germany and who espoused National Socialist and *voelkisch* ideas throughout the 1930s, helped to "introduce" Hitler to Canadian Mennonites in 1932, claiming that Hitler was in favor of "positive Christianity" and the furtherance of *Deutschtum* throughout the world. When Hitler came to power, he would remember Germans everywhere, helping to right past wrongs against them so they could breathe easier.¹⁴

Other Russian Mennonites who voiced support for Nazism from a German base were B. H. Unruh and Walter Quiring, both of whom had ties to the German government during the Nazi era. Part of the problem in gauging the Canadian Mennonite response to National Socialism lies in determining just how far Canadian readers were in agreement with the strident opinions of these individuals, who tended to dominate discussions of Nazism and Germanism in the Mennonite press, including *Der Bote*, a smaller paper published in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

And discussions there were. From the time Hitler came to power in Germany in January 1933 until the outbreak of the Second World War, the related issues of Germanism, National Socialism, and Mennonite unity were intensely discussed in the *Rundschau*, as a number of competing claims were made on Mennonite identity and purpose. A clamor of voices put forward a whole host of ideas and opinions on these topics, some of them remarkable for their extremism and deviation from traditional Mennonite quietism, pacifism, and apoliticism. Hardly anyone disputed the importance of the German identity in perpetuating the Mennonite *Volkstum* as it had emerged in Russia; but differences existed as to the degree Canadian Mennonites were willing to make Germanism the defining feature of Mennonite identity. A few became ardent German nationalists, advocating renunciation of traditional Mennonite principles such as nonresistance and even incorporation into the German Reich. More felt that some kind of reintegration along the lines of a German-Mennonite *Mennostaat* (autonomous Mennonite state) was in order, to prevent the complete dissolution of *Mennonitentum*. The majority identified with events in Germany and promoted non-political forms of Germanism at home as a way of maintaining Mennonite identity and solidarity,

but drew the line at threats to Mennonite doctrinal integrity and half-baked ideas of some kind of new Mennonite commonwealth.

Lack of space prevents a full exposition of this discussion here, but some of the main currents deserve mention.¹⁵ Although Hitler's accession to power evidently did not bring about great jubilation among Mennonites, enough interest was present for speeches given by Hitler to be reprinted on the back pages of the *Rundschau* during 1933 and 1934, while the twenty-five point program of the National Socialists appeared in September 1933.¹⁶ Throughout this early period in the Hitler regime, letters were submitted by Mennonites and others, either travelling or living in Germany, extolling the great changes taking place there, including the suppression of communism. News articles on the communists "getting their comeuppance" from the Nazis would have been read with approval. One Mennonite, whose family had been exiled somewhere in the Soviet Union, shared the widespread illusion of many Germans that Hitler carried a Bible in his breast-pocket, was trusted by everyone, and had done a good job of cleaning up the "social-democratic, atheistic communist mess."¹⁷

There continued to be much news on developments in Germany, and almost all of it had a positive slant. Press releases from the German consulate were printed, and statements by the German Consul in Winnipeg, Heinrich Seelheim, appeared frequently. Much of the "news" must have originated from pro-German and pro-Nazi sources.¹⁸ The *Rundschau* reprinted a speech given by Consul Seelheim at the 1933 "German Day" in Winnipeg (a cultural event which took on political overtones during the thirties), in which he spoke of the "voice of the blood" drawing Germans together and of the need for Germans everywhere to be true to their *Volkstum*.¹⁹

Articles by strident pro-Germans and pro-Nazis appeared frequently in the *Rundschau* throughout this period. Heinrich Schroeder was allowed to hold forth on his ideas of a synthesis between Nazism and Christianity and of a plan for a Mennonite "traditions-colony" named "Friesenheil," to be located somewhere in Germany. Hindrances like the principle of nonresistance were to be cast off, the divisions within Mennonitism would be ignored to ground a

single "Volks-church" of "racially pure Knights of the Third Reich."²⁰ Schroeder was drawing on the *voelkisch* tradition of a "Germanic utopia" for his ideas, which had some parallels with Mennonites' own utopian vision.²¹ Although Schroeder's ideas were dismissed incredulously by some, others felt compelled to remonstrate critics for being too "scornful" of his proposals.²² From his home in Karlsruhe, Germany, Benjamin Unruh submitted numerous pretentious articles to the *Rundschau* supporting the Nazi ideology and arguing that Russian Mennonites were ethnic Germans.

All of this did not go without response from Canadian Mennonite leaders, however, as a consensus began to emerge among Canadian Mennonites, and Mennonite Brethren in particular, rejecting the more militant ideas being espoused and steering a middle way between extremist Germanism and the total renunciation of the German identity. Brethren leader B. B. Janz was the most prominent individual to do this, and the *Rundschau* printed a number of pieces from his pen on the question of Germanism and Mennonite identity.

Janz initially published a few short articles on the Dutch origins of Mennonites and Mennonite pacifism; he subsequently produced a 15,000 word article-series entitled "Wherefrom and Whereto: Spotlights on the Mennonite Past, Present and Future," which ran in the *Rundschau* during April and May of 1935. This article-series was a watershed in the Germanism debates of the thirties, as Janz posed the historic "faith of the fathers" directly against the National Socialist ideology and Germanism as normative for Mennonite identity, thus clarifying the issues at stake. The principle of nonresistance, in particular, could not be sacrificed in favor of the militant German ideology. But although Janz made a strong distinction between the universality of the Christian faith and the particularity of cultures, he was in the end subtly ambivalent about the superiority of the German language and culture as a special carrier of Mennonite identity.²³

Others combined the same elements of warmth for the German cultural identity with staunch rejection of its political aspects.²⁴ There was a feeling that although the "high cultural and moral values" which Mennonites had "inherited" from Germany were impor-

tant, it was now necessary to become full citizens of Canada.²⁵ Given the fact that the majority of Mennonites became Canadian citizens in relatively short order, this would seem to be a representative point of view.²⁶ But the problem of too-rapid acculturation and assimilation into Canadian society remained and was what motivated people like Janz to argue for the relevance of the cultural Germanism, at least as a common denominator among Mennonites. The Mennonite faith and sense of peoplehood was perceived to be closely tied to the German language and "character," and hence a rapid changeover to English, the local "worldly" language seemed to spell the demise of Mennonitism. A middle way was needed between militant Germanism, on the one hand, and the total loss of the German identity, on the other, if the socio-religious integrity of the group was to be retained.

The fear of assimilation and acculturation, of *Verenglischung*, was a prevalent feature of Canadian Mennonite life during the first two-thirds of this century, and was very evident in the *Rundschau* during the 1930s. In 1933 a Mennonite wrote bitterly of the effects of Canadianization and the "melting pot" on Mennonites: together with the loss of a closed community, these forces were responsible for a growing Mennonite crime rate and the imminent demise of Mennonite organization and discipline. A mother complained that although she had spoken German to her children from the cradle onward, they still ended up speaking English among themselves. Not only that, but the older ones were being tempted away to English Bible schools. How would youth be able to join the Mennonite church if they lost the German language?²⁷

Others decried the "wild" and "unhealthy" aspects of the "modern" English evangelicalism, like night-time meetings and a generally superficial approach. One Winnipeg Brethren leader warned of modernism and the teaching of the theory of evolution in English schools, which had turned four "German youth" (most likely Mennonites) at the University of Manitoba towards atheism. The neglect of "our magnificent mother-tongue" was a further danger for Mennonite youth, who consequently found English "fun spots" more attractive than Mennonite church

services. This was but an opening volley in what was to become a long battle against the encroachment of the English language. By 1936 both the German-English (Mennonite) Academy at Rosethorn, Saskatchewan, and the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, Manitoba, were reporting problems with student knowledge of, or willingness to learn, German. It is safe to say that within ten years of their arrival in Canada, the threat of anglicization had become very real for the *Russlaender*.²⁸

At this point in time, the German language (not least the Low-German dialects) and culture were some of the few remaining common attributes among Mennonites from the lost Russian commonwealth. Laments for this lost community, coupled with fears of the imminent demise of the Mennonites as a distinct "people," were uttered throughout the 1930s. One person wrote:

Scattered must we perish, as happens to us in all the world, when our brother-love in unity is lost. Systematically they take our mother-tongue away, which our Creator gave to us, to harmonize what we say.²⁹

A Russian Mennonite who had settled in Holland reflected sadly on the loss of a world: "O, this feeling of being cut off—externally but not internally—with such uncertainty as to whether we'll not eventually drift away or become foreign to each other." Others echoed this basic desire for reunification. Some turned an envious eye to the emerging sense of community in the new Paraguayan Mennonite colony, while others praised Hitler for bringing unity to the German *Volk*.³⁰

One particularly concerned individual asserted that through "hundreds" of private conversations he had sensed the longing for Mennonite reunification. He noted that all Mennonites had watched Hitler's success with expectation and joy. Hitler had taught Germans to be true to themselves and strengthened their self-assurance and feeling of common identity. Germans everywhere were holding fast to the motherland as never before—perhaps when Germany regained some of her lost colonies, Mennonites should start an "independent colony under German protection?"³¹

Winnipeg resident J. J. Hildebrand also tried to generate interest in starting a new autonomous Mennonite commun-

ity, or *Mennostaat*, during 1933 and 1934, making the retention of the German language and culture a prime component of the projected autonomous Mennonite state.³² Hildebrand's plan elicited a fair amount of support in some quarters, while others liked the idea but felt it to be impracticable. At least one other individual put forth an all-encompassing vision for a Mennonite society, this one not necessarily geographically separate, but economically and culturally independent. Here, too, the German language and culture figured as "a completely indispensable factor in our *Mennonitentum*."³³

Although the general reaction to these fanciful ideas was negative, few disputed the notion that Germanism was an important aspect of Mennonite identity, and there was general approbation of Nazism as a political movement, albeit one in which Mennonites were not to participate. David Toews, a General Conference Mennonite leader equal in stature to B. B. Janz, felt the instruction of "German and religion" to be "enduring goods" of the Mennonites, and also gave his qualified support to the National Socialist transformation of Germany, after a visit there in 1936. The highly-regarded Mennonite Brethren figure, C. F. Klassen, applauded the National Socialist "house-cleaning" in 1933, and in 1939 went on record as being proud of the graduates of the Mennonite Brethren Bible school in Winkler, Manitoba, who "weren't ashamed of either the Gospel or their Deutschtum." Klassen maintained that Germanism was, along with the Mennonite faith, a key source of Mennonite accomplishments: "It is good if we always remember that religion and Deutschtum were the sources out of which we have, until now, been able to accomplish much, and remain the sources for future accomplishments." Others expressed variations on the theme that Germanism bore a positive relationship to Mennonite religion, and that loss of the German language led to loss of character.³⁴

In sum, reports of great things happening in Nazi Germany may have stimulated wistful thoughts in many, but relatively few individuals actively promoted the Nazi cause, and they made much noise. One gets the sense of a receptive majority of Mennonites looking on in interest and affirmation, but eventually rejecting the more militant expressions of Germanism and Nazism.

Commenting in 1939 on the continued insistence by one individual that a person could be both a Nazi and a Mennonite, a *Kanadier* Mennonite wrote that this combination was "impossible and unthinkable for *Kanadier* as well as *Russlaender* Mennonites, "with very few exceptions."³⁵

The other Canadian Mennonite newspaper which featured a pro-Nazi stance during the thirties, *Der Bote*, presents a picture similar to the *Rundschau*, although the editorial policy of D. H. Epp tended to give the paper a slightly stronger pro-Nazi tone.³⁶ *Der Immigrant-Bote* began publication in 1924, its name being shortened to *Der Bote* in 1925. This was primarily a Russian Mennonite immigrant newspaper, sponsored initially by the Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, where a number of *Russlaender* had settled. While aimed at all the Russian immigrants, the paper appealed more to General Conference Mennonites, eventually becoming the official GC organ in 1947.³⁷

Historian Frank H. Epp undertook a quantitative analysis of Germanism content in *Der Bote* for the 1930s and found that over five percent of all published space was devoted to Germanism, with 83% favorable and 17% unfavorable. He classified Germanist contributions in terms of political, cultural and ethnic subject matter, finding that 54% of Germanist writings dealt with political subjects, 29% was culturally oriented, and 17% dealt with ethnicity. Of the political Germanism, Epp found that 71% was favorable in some way toward German political events, while the balance was unfavorable. The cultural content was almost completely pro-German, while the ethnic segments were 92% pro, and 8% con. The majority of space devoted to cultural Germanism was concerned with preservation of the language, a "missionary zeal" often being evident. The importance of the German language for Mennonite religious identity is indicated by the fact that 38% of all references to the language used the phrase "German and religion."³⁸

Epp noted that critics of political Germanism seemed to feel "uneasy" about what they were doing, often making concessions of one type or another to their opponents. On the other hand there were, as in the *Rundschau*, defenses of nonresistance and injunctions for Mennonites to stay out of

politics and be loyal Canadian citizens. Epp counted reprints from 15 German-language periodicals in *Der Bote* and contributions from 21 non-Mennonite, ethnic Germans, including Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels. Many of the press releases for German-oriented events in Canada came from the German League, while Bernard Bott contributed much on cultural Germanism. The German Consul Seelheim also contributed articles.

Interestingly, 26% of all Mennonite contributions espousing Germanism came from two individuals living in Germany, B. H. Unruh and Walter Quiring. Although my study of the *Rundschau* was not quantitative, a similar proportion of Germanist content in that periodical can be attributed to Unruh and Heinrich Schroeder. Epp concluded that:

The immigrant newspaper was a fairly representative reflection of the Mennonite immigrant mind, which in the 1930's was very strong on nurturing and preserving cultural Germanism as essential to the Mennonite way of life, strong . . . in its identification with (ethnic) Germanism, and though ambivalent on the question by and large also sympathetic to the political Germanism of the Third Reich.³⁹

A central feature distinguishing *Der Bote* from the *Rundschau* during the 1930s is the fact that Walter Quiring tended to dominate its pages, openly challenging Mennonite principles such as nonresistance, espousing *voelkisch* and National Socialist ideals, and viciously attacking anyone who disagreed with him.⁴⁰ Quiring argued that Mennonites were not a distinct religious people, rather they were a segment of the German *Volk* with a particular religious perspective. Mennonites, he felt, were missing the chance of their lives by not actively taking part in the great rebirth of the German nation; they were surely going to lose their *Deutschtum*, their religion, and their identity as Mennonites because of this neglect.⁴¹ Epp counted 45 separate entries by Quiring in *Der Bote* during the 1930s, which works out to about one article for every ten issues published throughout the decade.⁴²

While at least one other person besides Quiring and Heinrich Schroeder challenged the Mennonite principle of nonresistance, there was a significant negative response to Quiring and his ideas, in contradiction to the impression given by Epp's analysis.⁴³ A number of individuals argued that Quiring's perspective was not shared by North Amer-

ican Mennonites, and B. B. Janz openly challenged Quiring's "fanatical, one-sided and scornful attitude."⁴⁴ Privately, Quiring made contact with Janz and acknowledged Janz's leading position among Mennonites. He argued that Mennonites, now scattered all over the world, were safer from unhealthy influences if they rooted themselves in their German *Volkstum*. Janz replied that Mennonites needed to be rooted in the Gospel.⁴⁵

Jacob H. Janzen, prominent GC leader and Germanist himself, first gently upbraided Quiring for his National Socialist views, but eventually became frustrated and answered Quiring's diatribes with one of his own. He made a strong distinction between cultural and political Germanism, asserting that Mennonites were cultural Germans only. As well, "We all firmly believe that Hitler is the right man for Germany, but we are becoming troubled by the way people are divinizing him." Further, Nazism was a violent movement which appealed to mass instincts; and behind Quiring's writings stood the "Nazi-fist" challenging the reader to disagree with him.⁴⁶ Other contributors made the same distinction between political and cultural Germanism, and between wishing Germany well and bowing down to the altar of National Socialism.⁴⁷

Finally, it should be noted that other prominent Mennonites, like the historian Cornelius Krahn and eastern Mennonite leader John Horsch, joined the many voices rejecting militant Germanism and supporting the principle of non-resistance. Most of the individuals writing in favor of nonresistance in 1934-35 did it in the context of the fierce Germanism debates then taking place, which were instigated primarily by Quiring, and thus were responding negatively to the militant Germanism advanced by Quiring, whether it was explicitly mentioned or not.⁴⁸

The extent of actual Canadian Mennonite participation in Nazi or other fascist activities was minimal, although noteworthy. The high-water mark for this activity was reached in 1934. Early in that year a Brethren leader from Winkler, Manitoba, reported in the *Rundschau* that:

Here in our little town a movement is becoming noticeable. Hitler is known as a striving, Christian young man, and we hope that the same qualities are present

in the local organization of the Canadian Nationalists.⁴⁹

The "Canadian Nationalist Party" was a Winnipeg-based fascist organization, led by William Whittaker, which identified with the Nazis. Attempts were also made by the group to organize in the largely Mennonite Brethren community of Yarrow, British Columbia, in early 1934, but there is little evidence of much success. On the other hand, *Rundschau* editor Neufeld published Whittaker's periodical *The Canadian Nationalist*, as well as Nazi party-member Bernard Bott's *Deutsche Zeitung fuer Kanada*, which was the official organ of the German League.

In Winnipeg during the summer of 1934, the most notorious Canadian Mennonite encounter with fascism took place. As reported in *Der Bote*, young Mennonite "hotheads" took part in a June 5 scuffle between Whittaker's "Brownshirts" and Communists, and had sustained (and likely inflicted) some injuries. The most significant aspect of the whole affair was that there was widespread sympathy among Mennonites for the Brownshirts. This seems to have been due to a general wish to see the communists "get their just deserts."⁵⁰

There are also indications that a few young Mennonite men enlisted in the National Socialist cause and travelled to Germany sometime during the thirties, and that an undisclosed number of Ontario families sympathetic to the Third Reich also migrated there.⁵¹ Steinbach, Manitoba Mennonites turned out in significant numbers to hear the Nazi-propagandist Karl Goetz in 1936, and some Manitoba Mennonites were present on occasion at the provincial "German Day" in Winnipeg.⁵² In general, overt involvement of Canadian Mennonites with fascist groups was minimal, although constituting enough of a threat to bring forth condemnations from Mennonite leaders.⁵³ A more pervasive and widely cited occurrence was the purchase of shortwave radios to receive broadcasts from Germany.

There was some negative reaction by Anglo-Canadians to Mennonite pro-Germanism and pro-Nazism. In Ontario, despite the desire of most Mennonite immigrants to become established Canadians, there were rumors that Mennonites were Nazi sympathizers, and that they stored weapons in their churches. One Ontario church was set on fire by

anti-Nazi arsonists and later raided by police, while another was vandalized as an anti-Nazi protest.⁵⁴ Three Mennonite churches in Alberta and Manitoba were set on fire after the outbreak of war, causing the Coaldale, Alberta Mennonite Brethren congregation to post a watchman at the door of their new church building for a time. As B. B. Janz put it, "Although the war was thousands of miles away, we felt the ungrounded mistrust towards us as new immigrants with a strange tongue."⁵⁵ It is understandable that, given the expressions of pro-Germanism and pro-Nazism being made by some Mennonites during the 1930s, mistrust towards them would be evident once war broke out. But for the vast majority of Mennonite immigrants, such mistrust was indeed "ungrounded."

In conclusion, my aim has been to understand the Canadian Mennonite response to National Socialism in its broadest outlines, seeing it as a part of the total immigrant experience, full of struggles and feelings of dislocation and loss. As Wagner has pointed out, Nazism in Canada took on anti-assimilationist overtones and appealed to those who felt themselves being treated as inferiors or the victims of injustice or discrimination.⁵⁶

This was certainly true of the Canadian Mennonite encounter with National Socialism. Having suffered the destruction of their Russian colonies at the hands of "godless communists," and finding themselves succumbing to the forces of Anglo-Canadian assimilation and acculturation, the scattered Mennonites sensed the imminent demise of their socio-religious identity and culture. These factors, along with German benevolence towards Mennonites, Nazi anti-communism, and the apparent similarity between some Nazi and Mennonite tenets, combined to put Mennonites in a receptive position for the cultural, political and ethnic ideas associated with the "new Germany." But by the mid-thirties a distinction began to be made between political and cultural Germanism, the former becoming rejected as a valid "Mennonite" position. The events of the Second World War delivered the final blow to Canadian Mennonite support for National Socialism, but the communal, cultural, and religious associations of Germanism with Mennonitism would continue to be made into the 1950s.⁵⁷

ENDNOTES

¹For a detailed discussion of this subject see Benjamin Wall Redekop, "The German Identity of Mennonite Brethren Immigrants in Canada, 1930-1960" (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990), 223 pp.

²Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1966), p. 282, 307.

³*Sixth Census of Canada, 1921* (Ottawa: The King's Printers, 1924), Vol. 1., pp. 568-69.

⁴Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1920-1940: A People's Struggle for Survival* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1982), pp. 20-21.

⁵Studies dealing with this dilemma include Henry Paetkau, "Russian Mennonite Immigrants of the 1920's: A Reappraisal" (*Journal of Mennonite Studies* 2, 1984): 72-85; and Joanna R. Buhr, "Pursuit of a Vision: Persistence and Accommodation Among Coaldale Mennonites from the Mid-Nineteen Twenties to World War II" (M.A. Thesis, University of Calgary, 1986). Frank Epp's work also of course deals with this problem, as the subtitle of his book indicates (see above note 4).

⁶The insights of sociologist Edward Sapir and social/religious theorist H. Richard Niebuhr provides a theoretical framework for understanding the role of language and cultural identity in promoting the socio-religious solidarity of groups like the Mennonites. See Edward Sapir, "Language," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences IX* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 155-68; and H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, CT: The Shoestring Press, 1954). For an extended discussion of analytical frameworks for understanding phenomena like Mennonite Germanism, see Redekop, "The German Identity," Introduction and Chapter 7.

⁷Jonathan Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1981), pp. 59, 145-46.

⁸J. P. Klassen, "Dem deutschen Volk," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 26 March 1930, pp. 2-3. Further citations of the *Rundschau* will be given as *MR*.

⁹*MR*, 15 January 1930, p. 13.

¹⁰P. P. Isaak, "Dem deutschen Volk!" *MR*, 23 July 1930, p. 5.

¹¹P. P. Kornelsen, "Volk ohne Heimat," *MR*, 19 February 1930, p. 1.

¹²E. Sengler, "Die voelkische Bewegung," *MR*, 8 July 1931, pp. 2-3.

¹³*MR*, 17 December 1930, p. 15. There are many examples of this kind of militaristic news which could be given here.

¹⁴Heinrich Schroeder, "Die Juden," *MR*, 3 August 1932, pp. 3-4.

¹⁵For a full treatment of the *Rundschau* during the 1930s, see Redekop, "The German Identity of Mennonite Brethren Immigrants," Chapter 2: Germanism in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 1930-39; pp. 45-92.

¹⁶The first Hitler text printed in the *Rundschau* occurred earlier and was entitled, appropriately enough, "Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus." *MR*, 13 June 1933, p. 4.

¹⁷C. Martens, "Meine Beobachtungen und Eindruecke in Deutschland," *MR*, 30 September 1933, pp. 6-7.

¹⁸Wagner documents the relationship between *Rundschau* editor H. H. Neufeld and the Nazi Foreign Press Office in Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, p. 104.

¹⁹H. Seelheim, "Festreden des deutschen Konsuls auf dem deutschen Tag in Winnipeg," *MR*, 12 July 1933, p. 11, 14.

²⁰Heinrich Schroeder, "Entwurf fuer die Be-

gruendung einer Erbhofsiedlung," *MR*, 12 September 1934, p. 3.

²¹For more on the voelkisch "Germanic Utopias" see George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), Chapter 6. A sense of community and ideological mission and purity, were some of the parallels between these two very different movements.

²²Ein Beobachter, "Zu dem Schroederischen Projekt einer Erbhofsiedlung," *MR*, 3 October 1934, p. 3; Frau M. Klassen, *MR*, 17 October 1934, p. 6.

²³For a detailed discussion of Janz's article-series, see Redekop, "The German Identity," p. 66ff.

²⁴A. A. Toews, *MR*, 14 November 1934, p. 5.

²⁵H. Thiessen, "Unser Kampf," *MR*, 8 November 1933, p. 5.

²⁶See Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 319ff. Practically all Russlaender became citizens within five years of their arrival in Canada.

²⁷B. Warkentin, "Mennoniten und Verbrechen," *MR*, 22 February 1933, pp. 2-3; "Zu, De goadi oli Tied," *MR*, 4 July 1934, pp. 3-4.

²⁸"Ungesundes in der modernen Evangelisationspraxis," *MR*, 1 May 1935, 4; F. C. Thiessen, "Offener Brief," *MR*, 12 September 1934, p. 5; *MR*, 22 July 1936, p. 3; *MR*, 18 November 1936, p. 7. In addition to sources cited elsewhere in this article, Henry Paetkau's M.A. Thesis stands out as an excellent local study charting the assimilation/aculturation problem. See Henry Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival. The Russian Mennonite Immigrants in Ontario, 1924-39" (M.A. Thesis, University of Waterloo, 1977).

²⁹J. Hildebrand, *MR*, 19 April 1933, p. 12.

³⁰Jak. Thiessen, "Sind wir Mennoniten einander entfremdet?" *MR*, 17 July 1935, pp. 4-5; J. B. W., *MR*, 26 April 1933, p. 4; J. C., *MR*, 10 May 1933, p. 1; "Nachtrag zum Plauditsch," *MR*, 25 July 1934, pp. 4-5; "Deutscher Geist in Chaco," *MR*, 29 April 1936, p. 7; J. P. Klassen, "Tag der nationalen Arbeit," *MR*, 8 May 1935, p. 7.

³¹B. W., "Analyse zum mennonitischen Problem," *MR*, 4 April 1934, p. 2.

³²B. Warkentin and J. J. Hildebrand, "Mennonistat," *MR*, 29 March 1933, pp. 4-6; J. J. Hildebrand, "Vereinigung des Mennonitentums," *MR*, 30 May 1934, pp. 4-5.

³³J. P. Dyck, *MR*, 30 October 1935, pp. 5-7.

³⁴David Toews, "Unsere Probleme fuer 1935," *MR*, 16 January 1935, p. 5; *Ibid.*, "Einige Reiseeindruecke," *MR*, 30 September 1936, pp. 5-6; C. F. Klassen, "Gegen die geistlose Judenhetze," *Der Bote*, 19 April 1933, p. 2; *Ibid.*, "Das war gut," *MR*, 5 April 1939, p. 7; *Ibid.*, "Der Weg der praktischen Hilfe," *MR*, 18 February 1931, p. 2. Lack of space again prevents citation of further examples.

³⁵P. P. H., "Es interessiert mich," *MR*, 15 March 1939, p. 7.

³⁶For more on Epp's editorial policy see Redekop, "The German Identity," Chapter 3.

³⁷Frank H. Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism in the Immigrant Newspaper of a Canadian Minority Group, the Mennonites, in the 1930's," (Ph.D., dissertation, University of Manitoba, 1965), p. 208, 310.

³⁸Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism," passim.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁴⁰Some examples of Quiring's writings include: "Kampf oder Friedhofsruhe?" *Der Bote*, 21 November 1934, p. 2; "Bankrott der Wehrlosigkeit?" *Ibid.*, 5 December 1934, p. 2; "Der deutsche Gruss," *Ibid.*, 24 October 1934; "Im fremden Schlepptau," *Ibid.*, 5 September 1934, p. 3; "Warum Schlaegst du deinen Naechsten?" *Ibid.*, 31 October 1934, pp. 2-3.

⁴¹Walter Quiring, "Mennonitisches 'Volk'?" *Der Bote*, 23 May 1934, p. 2.

⁴²Epp, "An Analysis of Germanism and National Socialism," p. 220b.

⁴³Epp's quantitative approach obscures as much as it illuminates the subject. Important criteria like stature of the writer, general interest in the subject, timeliness, rhetorical strategies, and variable terminologies are all submerged, in Epp's study, in favor of physical measurements of news columns.

⁴⁴B. B. Janz, "Warum schlaegst du Deinen Naechsten?" *Der Bote*, 19 September 1934, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁵Letters of January 28, 1935, and February 13, 1935. B. B. Janz Collection, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Winnipeg, Box 7, Folder 97.

⁴⁶J. H. Janzen, "Ein Bekenntnis," *Der Bote*, 7 November 1934, p. 2; J. H. Janzen, *Ibid.*, 30 November 1925, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁷"Zu 'Kampf oder Friedhofsruhe,'" *Der Bote*, 5 December 1934, pp. 2-3; "Dem Fragesteller in Nr. 50," *Der Bote*, 2 January 1935, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁸Cornelius Kralin, "Menno Simons' Kampf fuer die Reinheit des Wortes Gottes," *Der Bote*, 20 February 1935, p. 1; John Horsch, "Menno Simons ueber die Gottheit Christi," *Ibid.*, 9 January 1935, p. 1; John Horsch, "Is Unsere Wehrlosigkeit preiszugeben?" *Ibid.*, 6 March 1935, p. 1. A few examples of other articles defending nonresistance and either implicitly or explicitly rejecting militant Germanism include: "Um hohen Preis," *Der Bote*, 27 June 1934, pp. 2-3; "Wehrlosigkeit," *Ibid.*, 17 October 1934, p. 3; Johann Rempel, "Die Wehrlosigkeit aufgeben?" *Ibid.*, 20 March 1935, p. 1; P. P. Dyck, "Wehrlosigkeit," *Ibid.*, 15 May 1935, p. 1; J. J. Klassen, "Die biblische Begrueundung der Wehrlosigkeit und ihre Durchfuehrung im Leben," *Ibid.*, 21 August 1935, p. 1.

⁴⁹P. H. Penner, *MR*, 7 February 1934, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁰"Um hohen Preis," *Der Bote*, 27 June 1934, pp. 2-3.

⁵¹Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 324; Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival," p. 169.

⁵²Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, pp. 46-48; 95.

⁵³The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren passed a resolution in July of 1934 which condemned "some brothers (who) take part in Volk-movements in which force is used." *1934 Mennonite Brethren Northern District Conference Yearbook* (Hillsboro, KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House), p. 77. Coming a month after the Winnipeg incident, the resolution was likely referring to it.

⁵⁴Paetkau, "A Struggle for Survival," pp. 181-82.

⁵⁵Minutes of the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church business meetings, December 27, 1940, Folder BA 501, 129. Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS), Fresno, California.

⁵⁶Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, pp. 29-30; 102; 146-47.

⁵⁷See Redekop, "The German Identity," Chapters 4 through 6.

Book Reviews

Margaret Epp, *Chariots in the Smoke*.
Winnipeg and Hillsboro: Kindred
Press, 1990. Pp. 380. (\$15.95).

A novel that tries to trace the history of the Dutch-Prussian-Russian Mennonites in 380 pages is bound to be fragmentary, to spread itself thin over too many characters and settings. As I glanced over the Table of Contents of *Chariots in the Smoke*, I was sure the novel couldn't succeed. It was off balance: the whole first half was devoted to the 16th-century set of characters, leaving only one chapter for the 17th century, one for the 18th century, and two chapters for the Russian revolution, civil war, famine, and migration to Canada. Yet as I read the book I couldn't help admiring how quickly Margaret Epp could paint a vivid scene, build suspense, and bring characters to moments of high emotion.

The first half of the book is based on an unlikely character and an even more unlikely premise of plot. A dashing young Spanish officer, Felipe de Silva (whose Spanishness is clumsily portrayed), is tricked into traveling to Freiburg, Germany, to escort a chained group of Swiss Anabaptists to stand trial under the Spanish Inquisition at Ghent in Flanders. Aided by love for a beautiful girl among his Anabaptist prisoners and by discovery that his own Flemish relatives are secret Anabaptists, Felipe becomes Philip Dirkzoon, a Mennonite, and lives to old age as a preacher. The Anabaptist girl's vision of the Lord's mighty hosts as "Chariots in the smoke" (Psalm 68) while she is burned at the stake becomes the theme story of the book, being repeated all the way to 1990 in Canada. Despite some implausible details, Felipe's slow conversion permits an idealizing "outside" viewpoint on the Anabaptists, together with much action, suspense, and discovery.

A few sharp vignettes represent the intervening centuries before entry into Russia, but the family links across the generations are easily forgettable. In Russia the story becomes fuller again as it follows Eduard Hildebrandt from his orphaned childhood, through his becoming teacher and elder, to the disintegration of his village in Chortitza colony in the 1920's. That sequence is interrupted by a long series of letters to Eduard's young wife from a friend on

an ill-fated trek of Mennonites hoping to settle in Tashkent. The 1920's story of war, bandits, starvation, and Communist oppression begins disjointedly and depends on readers that are somewhat familiar with the history. The chapter told in a journal by 14-year-old George, and completed by his older sister Helena, is all in the same voice. None of the family except the saintly Eduard have personalities of their own; their sufferings represent the whole community, even when the horrifying details are seen close up. Juxtaposed with these chapters of grief, the idealized joviality of the final chapter about George, Helena, and their descendants in Canada 65 years later is almost shocking.

Margaret Epp is an experienced writer, with some 40 books to her credit, including novels, children's stories, and missionary biographies. The editors at Kindred Press did not serve her well: frequent typographical errors include a howler on the first page, where there is "a burst of excretions and incredulous laughter" from the gallant Spanish riders.

Each part of *Chariots in the Smoke* brings up issues of doctrine, ethics, spirituality, and the contentions in the Mennonite churches of the period, as well as describing local customs. What the novel lacks in literary form and historical depth it compensates with its variety of action, information and inspiration. In spite of my misgivings, I enjoyed reading this book.

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Jay Beaman, *Pentecostal Pacifism: The Origin, Development, and Rejection of Pacific Belief among the Pentecostals*. Hillsboro, KS: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1989. Pp. 142.

Beaman's pioneering work is based upon his Master of Divinity thesis submitted to North American Baptist Seminary in 1982. The book is an important start in exploring peace sentiment in non-peace church traditions. Beaman is to be commended for his diligence in uncovering sources difficult to locate and his suggestive interpretations of Pentecostal pacifism. His explorations at times are rich and sometimes far too shallow, but they all point toward more areas for research.

The book has six chapters that overall attempt to cover Pentecostal pacifism chronologically from its origins to its rejection. The content of individual chapters is not always organized chronologically which sometimes creates an uneven style and repetitive content.

The first chapter traces the origins of Pentecostal pacifism to the holiness movement of the 19th century. Holiness groups rejected hopeful postmillennialism and took a pessimistic premillennial stance. War was a sign that society would not progress into perfection. Many holiness groups made official statements condemning war. These holiness groups were the foundation for the Pentecostal revival of the early 20th century and became a direct source of Pentecostal pacifism.

Chapter 2 attempts to show the extent of Pentecostal pacifist beliefs by examining the official statements of various Pentecostal denominations. Often these statements are the only evidence available about the pacifist position of a particular group. Beaman supplies the reader with brief explanations and tables categorizing the different varieties of Pentecostal denominations and their beliefs.

Chapter 3 explores key statements about major Pentecostal leaders who were pacifists. Beaman briefly argues that four things inform their pacifist worldview: 1) their premillennial views that God will intervene and overthrow the powers of this world and establish a just society, 2) their missionary impulse which gave them an anti-nationalistic outlook because they thought the gospel was for all nations, 3) their low social status which helped them to see

war as a means for the rich to exploit the poor, and 4) their restorationist impulse which led them to hold up the ethic of peace found in the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 4 explores those leaders who moderated and rejected pacific beliefs. Several leaders moved away from absolute pacifism and argued that non-combatant roles were allowable. The pressures of both World Wars attenuated pacifism as well. As the U. S. Government began to silence anti-war sentiment with the Alien and Sedition Acts during World War I, E. N. Bell, editor of a leading Assemblies of God periodical, warned pacifists about speaking out against war. Later he encouraged Pentecostals to buy Liberty Bonds and give to the Red Cross. Another leader of the Assemblies of God worked in military camps under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., a "conspicuously military organization." During World War II some Pentecostal leaders counseled members not to take an absolutist stand against war.

Chapter 5 explicitly explores the influence of both World Wars on Pentecostalism. Here Beaman all too briefly explores five cases of Pentecostals who were investigated or tried for violating the Alien and Sedition Acts of World War I. Also, he briefly lists names and numbers of COs in England and the U.S. He covers World War II in less than a page. He tells the number of Pentecostals in the Civilian Public Service and cites one appeal in a periodical of the Assemblies of God for money to help CPS men financially. More needs to be done to tell the story of Pentecostals and CPS and the overall impact of World War II upon Pentecostals.

The last chapter explores the loss of pacifism within the Pentecostals. First, the Pentecostals changed their social status and moved into the mainstream of society. This made it difficult for the average member to remain at odds with society over the war question. Beaman found that at least 76,000 men from the Assemblies of God were on active duty for the U.S. military during World War II. Second, in World War II Pentecostal chaplains were appointed. Finally, the Assemblies of God were admitted to the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 primarily because Pentecostals and Evangelicals encountered each other in the military during World War II and developed mutual respect for each other. This pro-war trend con-

tinued and finally in 1967 the Assemblies of God officially changed their pacifist stance and affirmed their loyalty to the U.S. government.

Beaman's book sets the stage for several intriguing questions about pacifism in Pentecostalism and other non-peace churches. Beaman notices the restorationist or primitivist impulse of Pentecostalism, the effort to restore or recover Christianity found in the New Testament. Clearly this emphasis helped Pentecostals to take seriously the ethic of peace found in the Gospels. Yet, while Pentecostals still are restorationists, they are not pacifists. Has their vision of restorationism attenuated to focus solely on spiritual gifts?

Beaman also noticed the anti-capitalistic strains of Pentecostal pacifism before World War I. Frank Bartleman, a holiness leader in the Azusa Street revivals in Los Angeles, thought that socialism would play an important part in the final apocalyptic conflict. Both Christians and socialists would oppose the apostate church which he identified as "the autocratic, ruling, capitalistic classes." James Green, *Southwest Socialism: Radical Movement in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), found that Pentecostal and holiness people were supporters of the socialist party. Some Pentecostal preachers became active promoters of the socialist cause. Pentecostal arguments about war exploiting the poor for the benefit of the rich are identical to socialist arguments against war. What are the connections between Pentecostals and socialists?

Comparisons between Pentecostal and other restorationist groups also is needed. For example, the parallels between the pacifism of the Churches of Christ of "Campbellites" and the Pentecostals are striking. While the restorationism of the Churches of Christ focused upon the structure or forms of the primitive church rather than the spiritual gifts, they also appealed to the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount to argue it was wrong for Christians to fight in a war. Many in the Churches of Christ were active in the Socialist party before World War I. Also, World War I severely tested the pacific beliefs of the Churches of Christ. The government threatened to shut down the *Gospel Advocate*, the largest periodical of the Churches of Christ, for its stance against war. It changed its editorial stance to support the war. Many preach-

ers were jailed or arrested. Most of the other church publications, preachers, and rank and file members supported the war effort from its start. By World War II most members of the Churches of Christ were not pacifists and those who were supported the non-combatant position. One hundred ninety-nine men from the Churches of Christ were in Civilian Public Service which is roughly equivalent to the number of Pentecostal pacifists in CPS. Churches of Christ and Pentecostal men in CPS were not supported by their traditions. As the Churches of Christ became more affluent, the tradition's pacifism faded. The vision of restorationism narrowed to exclude the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount and focused solely upon the forms and structures of the primitive church. The social and theological parallels of the Churches of Christ and Pentecostalism need more exploration and comparison with other restorationist traditions.

Beaman's book should be read by all those interested in pacifism and peace studies. I hope it will spur more research about pacifism in non-peace churches.

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Pioneers and Pilgrims: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas, 1874 to 1882. Steinbach, MB, D.F.P. Publications (Box 1960, Steinbach, MB, Canada), 1990, 604 pp., (The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series, Volume 5). C\$39.95.

This is the fifth volume produced by Delbert Plett, a lawyer in Steinbach, Manitoba, on the history of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) in Russia and North America. All the volumes so far produced combine primary source material in the form of letters, sermons, poems, etc., with genealogical information and Plett's own interesting, if sometimes idiosyncratic, interpretation of the material and its context. The first volume, *History and Events*, built around the collection of the Elder Peter Toews appeared in 1982. This was followed in 1985 by the volume *The Golden Years* which traced the formation and flowering of the KG in Russia up to 1850. I critically reviewed this volume in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* in 1986 (volume 4) and Plett replied in an appendix to his *Profile of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1874* the following year. In between appeared *Storm and Triumph* which took the KG story from 1850 up to 1874 when most emigrated to North America. The latest volume, the largest yet, deals with the move from Russia to North America and contains new primary source material, essays and genealogical material on various KG families.

Fascinating new material and other information is presented in each of these volumes, but there has been an increasing quality in the presentation of the material as the volumes have progressed. From a rather amateurish first volume, the later books have grown in quality and the standard of editing particularly has improved. Plett has become more professional in his presentation and understanding of Mennonite history and has, through his enthusiasm and example, encouraged others to assist him in the task of discovering new sources, translation and publishing. While I still disagree with Plett over some of his interpretations, there is no denying that his discovery of new material and his work in translating documents, providing good editorial comment and his identification of the people involved has been of great significance in expanding our under-

standing of Russian Mennonite history.

The latest volume (and more are promised) consists of five separate parts each containing between five and ten chapters. In the first part Plett includes letters of pioneers involved in the migration from Russia to Canada and the USA (Nebraska). In the second there are a number of personal accounts of migration and settlement, most written after the event, a few of which appeared in German in various published sources. The third part contains a mixed bag of essays on various topics including a polemical piece by Plett countering the arguments that the emigration from Russia to North America was motivated by economic circumstances. There is also detail on Steinbach, schools in Canada, the economic development of the East Reserve in Manitoba (by G. Wiebe) and details of the KG fire insurance system (by Henry Fast). Part four provides important genealogical material on KG and related families. Included are details on Barkmans, Epps, Esaus, Fasts, Harders, Harms, Heidebrechts, Schellenbergs, Warkentins and Wiens along with a mass of other families related to these "core" groups through marriage. Finally various contemporary and later accounts of the 1882 schism of the KG under the impact of the teachings of Holdeman are presented. The book has an excellent index of Mennonite names mentioned in the text.

One of the most interesting parts of the book is that dealing with family genealogies. I am aware that some archivists, librarians and historians shudder when an eager genealogist appears in their midst. Scholars do real research; genealogists are hopeless, narrow-minded amateurs. But in my experience genealogists are considerably more dedicated, tenacious and imaginative researchers than many so-called scholars who breeze into libraries and archives for a few hours work a couple of times a year. What is more the information genealogists uncover often is of times a year. What is more, the in- ing of life and events in the Mennonite past. Agreed one could often wish that the genealogist would widen their vision and be more concerned with place and context rather than in securing the exact date of birth or exact relationship of a long dead ancestor. But genealogists must be encouraged to expand their horizons by those who often despise their activities, not casually dismissed.

What Plett reveals through his own careful genealogical work is the immense importance of understanding kinship ties and marriage links in interpreting events in Mennonite history. I have learnt a great deal from looking through the information he presents on the close links between the leading religious and political families of Flemish Mennonites in Prussia and Russia. My understanding of the religious scruples and intellectual concerns of the early KG has been enhanced through seeing their links with these leading figures. The only trouble is that one needs to have read all the volumes and to hold a mass of diverse information in one's head to realize the true importance of much of this material. Some kind of synthesis will be needed at the end to draw this diverse material together. In the mean time, however, for those Mennonites who love their history peopled by family and relations, plenty of dates, religious sincerity and the occasional touch of humor, there are hours of enjoyment to be had from these volumes. Genealogists might come to realize that they can widen their horizons, and scholars of Russian and North American Russian history will neglect these new sources at their peril.

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Radical Reformation and Mennonite Bibliography, 1990

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