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MENNONITE BRETHERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

NEWSLETTER

SYMPOSIUM ON THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN NOVEMBER

The Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada, located on the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, will hold a Symposium on the theme "Influences on Mennonite Brethren Theology," November 21-22, of this year.

Among the featured papers will be a paper evaluating the influence of Fundamentalism upon Mennonite Brethren theology, presented by Dr. J.B. Toews, President Emeritus of the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary and Executive Director of the Historical Commission of the Mennonite Brethren Churches (Fresno, California).

A paper assessing the influence of various educational institutions, both in Russia and Canada, will be presented by Herb Giesbrecht, long time faculty member, librarian and archivist at the Bible College.

Dr. John Redekop, Professor and Chairman of the Political Science Department at Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, Ontario) will present a paper discussing the influence of economics on Mennonite Brethren theology.

A paper tracing the development of political consciousness among Mennonite Brethren in Canada will be read by Dr. Abe Dueck, Associate Professor in Mennonite Studies at the Bible College.

In addition to these papers will be a shorter keynote paper by Dr. Henry Krahn, President of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, on the "Free Church Concept and its Implications for Mennonite Brethren Theology." Two short histories of congregations that have been significant in the history of Mennonite Brethren in Canada, Winkler and Coaldale, will also be presented.

All interested in participating in this Symposium are invited to attend. The first session will be held Friday evening, November 21, at 7:00 p.m., in the Bible College Chapel. Sessions are also scheduled for Saturday morning and early afternoon.

Saturday evening, November 22, is reserved for a banquet for all attending the Symposium. Featured will be the illustration through song of the influences of various musical trends in Mennonite hymnody, under the direction of Dr. William Baerg (Chairman of the Music Faculty of the Bible College) and a selected choir. An additional

feature will be the presentation of Mennonite poetry, in both the High and Low German languages, by Dr. John Martens, also of the Music Faculty of the Bible College.

The cost of the Symposium will be \$10.00 per registrant, including all sessions and the banquet. Further information, and lodging arrangements especially for out-of-town guests, can be obtained by writing: The Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2L 1L1.

THE CAPTURED GERMAN DOCUMENTS (1942)

A recent accession in the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada has been a group of nine microfilms, obtained from the Library of Congress in the U.S. These microfilms simply labeled, "Captured German Documents", contain materials gathered by a special forces detail of the German Army in 1941 from some 100 German (including Mennonite) villages in Russia.

The story of how these materials came to be collected and how they eventually came into our Archives is a fascinating one. But of even greater interest has been the fact that of the many people who have come to view these documents, four have indicated that they were employed by the German special forces team in gathering this material.

The story begins on June 22, 1941, when at 4:00 a.m. the German Army crossed the Russian border making its push into Eastern Europe. The army soon overran areas of German settlement. By the end of August all of the Ukraine west of the Dnieper had been captured.

The Germans living in the conquered territories felt great relief when the army from the old fatherland liberated them from the oppressive Soviet Regime. From the time that the Nazi Army had begun the invasion German villagers had been treated harshly by Soviet Commissars and blamed for the sins of the invaders. Many of the men between the ages of 16-60 were taken away by the Soviets to serve in labor battalions. Those remaining were forced to work digging trenches and tank traps in strategic areas. As the Nazi army approached the German villages Soviet officials had attempted to evacuate the whole German population eastward—but there was not enough time to complete this plan.

In August the German army stopped at the Dnieper to regroup before attempting its next push eastward. This brief stop was important in terms of what happened to some of the Mennonite villages in the area—as will be seen later.

By the end of October 1941 the German advance had reached the Donetz river region—thus effectively bringing the whole of the Ukraine under German occupation. With the area conquered the army command turned control of the area over to civilian rule.

At the head of the occupation government was Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi philosopher, and under him was a tougher and more brutal Erich Koch. Constantly hovering in the background was Heinrich Himmler, head of the Nazi secret police, whose independent "action teams" sought to eliminate elements of the population considered undesirable or subversive.

One of the leading men in the Rosenberg ministry was Dr. George Leibbrandt. He was the head of the political section of the occupation government. He had become prominent as a writer on the history of the Germans in Russia and as a leader in the

promotion of research in this field. As soon as the Rosenberg government was settled, Leibbrandt proceeded to set up machinery for making an extensive survey of all the German villages of the district.

Chosen to head the organization that would be responsible to carry out the actual survey was Dr. Karl Stumpp, formerly a resident of Alexanderhilf near Odessa. Mennonite genealogists are familiar with Dr. Stumpp through his book entitled, "The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763-1862." Early in 1942 Kommando Dr. Stumpp, with a semi-military status, set up his headquarters in Dnepropetrovsk on the Dnieper.

To aid him in conducting the survey Dr. Stumpp made contact with able men and women in the German villages—usually school teachers. For one month he instructed them on procedures in compiling a comprehensive survey. Among these workers were Gerhard Fast, who prepared the reports for the Chortitza Mennonite villages. He later wrote a book in which he describes his activities as a worker for Kommando Dr. Stumpp entitled, "Das Ende von Chortitza."

It should be noted here that this past summer four school teachers who helped conduct the survey, under Dr. Stumpp, have visited the Center for M.B. Studies in Winnipeg, to see first hand microfilm copies of these papers they helped collect almost forty years ago. The story they tell of how the survey was conducted, and some of its ramifications, is fascinating.

According to their reminiscences Dr. Stumpp set up questionnaires which the teachers then took door to door, interviewing the villagers for the specific information. The type of information they requested was: village reports (a ten page questionnaire), lists of families in the village, a census list of actual village inhabitants, a list of those deported to slave labor in the 1930's, a list of those taken away from the villages after the outbreak of the war in June 1941, a list of those murdered by armed bands during the civil war, a list of those who died in the famines of 1921-1922 and 1933-1934, and a list of the young men who had been drafted into the Red Army. Besides these lists are family histories, a few village histories, and other assorted documents and papers which were readily available and given to the compilers.

As the school teachers went from door-to-door they found that the villagers, in most cases, were willing to cooperate and provide the information requested. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that the villagers felt secure under the German occupation and also because the interviewers were from their own village—persons they already knew.

While this information was being collected from the Chortitza area, the same was not true of the Molotschna. As was mentioned earlier the German army had stopped at the Dnieper and spent some days regrouping before continuing its push further East. This gave the Soviet officials, still in control of the Molotschna, enough time to evacuate a larger portion of the inhabitants and also time to destroy whatever documents they could of the village. In the Chortitza district the Soviet officials, before they fled, had demanded the Germans destroy their documents. Few had complied with this command and so the documents were available to the Germans.

Failure to destroy documents had both positive and negative effects. For those who can trace their roots back to the Chortitza colony, and for historians in general, every available document is important since it helps document this period of Mennonite and German-Russian history. For others, at the time, it spelled doom.

In one particular case among the documents of the Schoenau village papers was a Russian

document presenting evidence against four informers who had, previous to the German occupation, signed papers that legalized the arrest of 50% of the village male population. Even though it is surmized that the four may have been forced to sign the document, when the German command found the document three of the four men listed were shot by the German army.

The survey took several months to complete. The information they contain is, for the most part, quite detailed and accurate. In some instances the reports have not been filled out as completely as they could have been—though circumstances could have contributed to their relative completeness.

With regard to the religious life in the villages after the German occupation there is only silence. Dr. Adam Giesinger, who first discovered these documents, and to whom I am indebted for some of the information of this story, notes that not one report mentions the restoration of religious services in the villages. Yet German schools were restored, German books, medical supplies, food and clothing were brought in. All these are mentioned in the reports, but there is no mention anywhere of a German pastor brought in to restore religious services. Revival of religion was not Nazi policy.

In conclusion it should be indicated how these documents were discovered. When the Germans were forced back by the Russian army the documents were brought back to Germany in the retreat. Where they were stored in Germany is yet unknown. What is known is that when the American military took control of its sector, after the war, it discovered these documents in its jurisdiction. Eventually they were brought to the Library of Congress, in Washington, where they lay unnoticed for many years.

It was in 1958 that Dr. Adam Giesinger, then professor of Chemistry at the University of Manitoba, and presently the President of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, noticed reference to these papers in a footnote. It was not until 1973 that he went to Washington to look at these documents firsthand.

He immediately recognized their historic importance and requested a microfilm copy of them. Since 1975 they have been available for purchase from the Library of Congress.

What is of interest is that in the past few months the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, located on the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, has been visited by four individuals who actually participated in conducting the survey that resulted in these reports. Their excitement in seeing the fruit of their labors, in Canada, some 40 years later, is obvious. Also noteworthy is their help in piecing together this story of the genesis of these materials in Russia. It is to them that I am indebted for this story. They have requested that they not be named in connection with this article.

These materials are presently available for researchers and general interest viewing at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba. It should be noted that reports of neighboring German Lutheran and Catholic villages in the Chortitza region are also represented. Below are listed the Mennonite villages in this collection; Adelsheim, Alexanderfeld, Blumengart, Burwalde, Chortitza, Gnadental, Hochfeld, Kronstal, Kronsweide, Mariental, Neuenburg, Rosengart, Rosenort, Steinfeld, Tiege, Neu-Halbstadt, Altonau, Nikolaifeld, Reinfeld, Orloff, Neu-Schoensee, Fransfeld, Neuendorf, Neuhorst, Schoenhorst, Steinau, Neu-Chortitza, Gruenfeld, Einlage, Schoenberg, Osterwick, Blumenfeld, Friesendorf, Ebenfeld, Schoenau, Steinfeld, Alexanderkrone, Gnadenfeld, Friedensfeld, and Blumenort.

ENDNOTES

1. Giesinger, Adam, "Reports of 1942-43 From German Villages in the Ukraine," Work Paper No. 24 of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Fall, 1977, p. 19.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
5. Ibid., p. 22.

Ken Reddig
 Conference Archivist
 Canadian M.B. Archives

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
MENNONITE BRETHERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
CANADA

No. 2
 July 6, 1980
 M.B. Bible College
 Winnipeg, Manitoba

Chairman: William Schroeder
 Present: Approximately 35 members and participants.

1. The meeting was opened and all participants welcomed by the chairman, William Schroeder.
2. Ed Boldt (Ontario) led in a devotional from Acts 1:1 & 2. He noted that this section of scripture introduces the reader to the history of the first Christian Church. He urged as we work at documenting our particular church experience, Mennonite Brethren, that we write our history with the same sense of vitality as found in the book of Acts. He also noted that it is vital that we have a history of our experience for inspiration to our young people. He then led in prayer.
3. The minutes of the last annual meeting (July 11, 1979) were summarized by the secretary, Ken Reddig, and approved.

The following financial statement was presented and approved.

Balance as of June 31, 1979		\$100.50
Membership receipts	\$210.00	
Conference Grant	\$200.00	
Publication of Newsletter, secretarial services, postage	\$200.00	
Balance as of June 31, 1980		\$310.50

4. Ed Boldt reported on the progress of the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Historical

Society. In preparation for the upcoming anniversary celebration of the Ontario M.B. Conference in the summer of 1981, the society is collecting artifacts for a special display. They are also working on a Jubilee book to be published in time for the celebration. Their major project is to prepare a History of the Ontario Mennonite Brethren Conference—Anne Wiebe is the historian. Most of the research has been completed and the task of writing the history now remains.

5. Helmut Huebert reported on the Archives Facilities. He noted that a new micro-filmer and microfilm reader/printer had been purchased through special donations from interested business men and professionals of Winnipeg. These machines help in the process of acquiring new materials and permit greater use of those materials already on microfilm.
6. Ken Reddig gave a progress report on the major projects of the Archives. He noted that negotiations are in progress for the entire Mennonitische Rundschau to be microfilmed (1878-1980). This project hopefully will be completed within one year.

The Archives has also received a grant from the Federal Government under the Student Employment Program, whereby the Archives hired three students to help in indexing the Mennonitische Rundschau. It is hoped that a similar grant to carry on this project can be secured for summer 1981.

Presently the Archives is visited by approximately 40 persons each month for research purposes.

The Archives has received many donations of materials over the past year. These are listed more fully in each Newsletter of the Historical Society.

7. A recent accession, a film on the early beginnings of MBBC, donated by the DeFehr family, was shown.
8. With the business section of the meeting over, informative input was given by two individuals, John Martens and William Schroeder.
9. John Martens spoke briefly on the use of Ziffern among the Mennonites. Selections from the Liederperlen were distributed and John explained briefly how the system worked. He then led the group in the singing of two hymns using Ziffern.
10. William Schroeder spoke to the group on the subject of Mennonite maps—especially concerning Russia. Through relating his experiences in the writing of The Bergthal Colony, he indicated how through diligent research he had finally come upon maps which showed the location of this colony. He also noted his continuing interest in maps and how he presently is involved in producing maps of the colonies and villages in Russia.

Note: Both of these presentations were well received. The Historical Society would like to thank both speakers for their excellent input.

11. The meeting was adjourned. A tour of the Archives was conducted followed by prips, Twieback and butter.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Reddig, Secretary

THE RUNDSCHAU INDEXING PROJECT

The major summer project of the Archives, financed by the Federal government, involved three students indexing the Memnonitische Rundschau. The first stage of this project was completed on August 29, 1980. While the project made only a small dent in the vast amount of historical material contained in the Rundschau—it was, nevertheless, a notable success.

The Memnonitische Rundschau, up until the year 1980, contains 65,600 pages of informative material. This summer's project, which covered the years 1920-August 1926, completed the indexing of approximately 5,600 pages.

The three students involved directly with indexing were Charlotte Rempel, Hilda Dyck, and Carolyn Hamm. The diligent effort, on their part, of carefully surveying each page and dutifully placing each article within a proper subject classification, is commendable.

It is hoped that next summer the project can once again qualify for Government funding. Another summer hopefully could bring Volume III of the project to completion.

Long range projections are to eventually complete 5 volumes of an index to the Rundschau as follows:

Vol. I	1878-1899
Vol. II	1900-1919
Vol. III	1920-1939
Vol. IV	1940-1959
Vol. V	1960-1979

SOME RECENT ACCESSIONS OF THE CENTER

1. Minutes and correspondence of the Manitoba Home Missions Committee (1 linear foot). Covers the years 1973-1978. Donor: Helmut Huebert.
2. Sermons of Heinrich H. Regehr, mostly from his radio ministry of the 1960's and 1970's (2½ linear feet). Donor: H.H. Regehr via Walter Regehr.
3. MBCI Board Minutes of the late 1960's and early 1970's (1 linear foot). Donor: Walter Regehr.
4. Dorfkarten of the Molotschna Mennonite colonies, produced by the German S.S. (1 file folder). Purchased from: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia.
5. The Peter Lohrentz Family History (1811-1980). Purchased from Solomon Loewen, compiler.
6. The Genealogy of Heinrich Thiessen (1755-1976). Compiled and donated by Kay Paters.
7. So Wie Es War, autobiography of Heinrich and Katie Regehr. As yet unpublished. Donor: Heinrich and Katie Regehr via John Regehr.
8. Borden M.B. Church History (1905-1980), compiled and donated by Ewald Church.
9. Erinuerunger eines Russland-Deutschen, written and donated by Hermann Rempel, Enkenbach, Germany.
10. 27 photographs and 13 books from the H.S. Voth materials. Donated by Mrs. Sarah Klippenstein.

11. Sermon tapes (13) of Dr. A.H. Unruh of the years 1947-1948. Donated by Walter Kroeker.
12. M.B. Conference Yearbooks (6) and Missions booklets (24). Donated by John Wiebe.
13. The Dueck Family Genealogy compiled and donated by Jacob P. Dick.
14. Two leather bound volumes of sermons by Cornelius Unruh (n.d.). Donated by Helmut Huebert.
15. The House of Heinrich (The Epp family genealogy), compiled and edited by Anna Epp Ens.
16. The Unger Family History, compiled and donated by Ervin Dahl.
17. Lasst Uns Den Heiland Froh Erhoehn, recording of the Winkler M.B. Church choir. Donated by William Schroeder and John J. Elias.
18. Drei-Band (hymn book, 1929). Donated by the John Klassen family.

The NEWSLETTER of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada is published three times a year, by the Executive of the Society, at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Canada, Winnipeg. All correspondence regarding the Society or the NEWSLETTER should be addressed to:

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
M.B. Historical Society of Canada
77 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2L 1L1

Executive of the Society, William Schroeder, Chairman; Helmut Huebert, V. Chairman; Ken Reddig, Secretary-Treasurer and Editor of the NEWSLETTER; Abe Dueck and Harry Loewen, Members-at-large.

If you know of someone who would be interested in becoming a member of the Society and receiving the NEWSLETTER please have them fill out the following form:

NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ PROVINCE: _____

POSTAL CODE: _____

Send form together with the yearly membership fee of \$5.00 to the Society Secretary in care of the above stated address.