

Mennonite Brethren
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NESTOR IVANOVICH MAKHNO

Nestor Makhno was born Tuesday, October 17, 1889 (October 29 Gregorian) in Guliaipole about ninety kilometres east of Alexandrovsk (now Zaporozhye). His father died when he was one year old leaving his mother to care for five small boys. At the age of seven Makhno was put to work tending cows and sheep for local land owners. Later he was employed as a farm laborer and as a worker in a foundry.

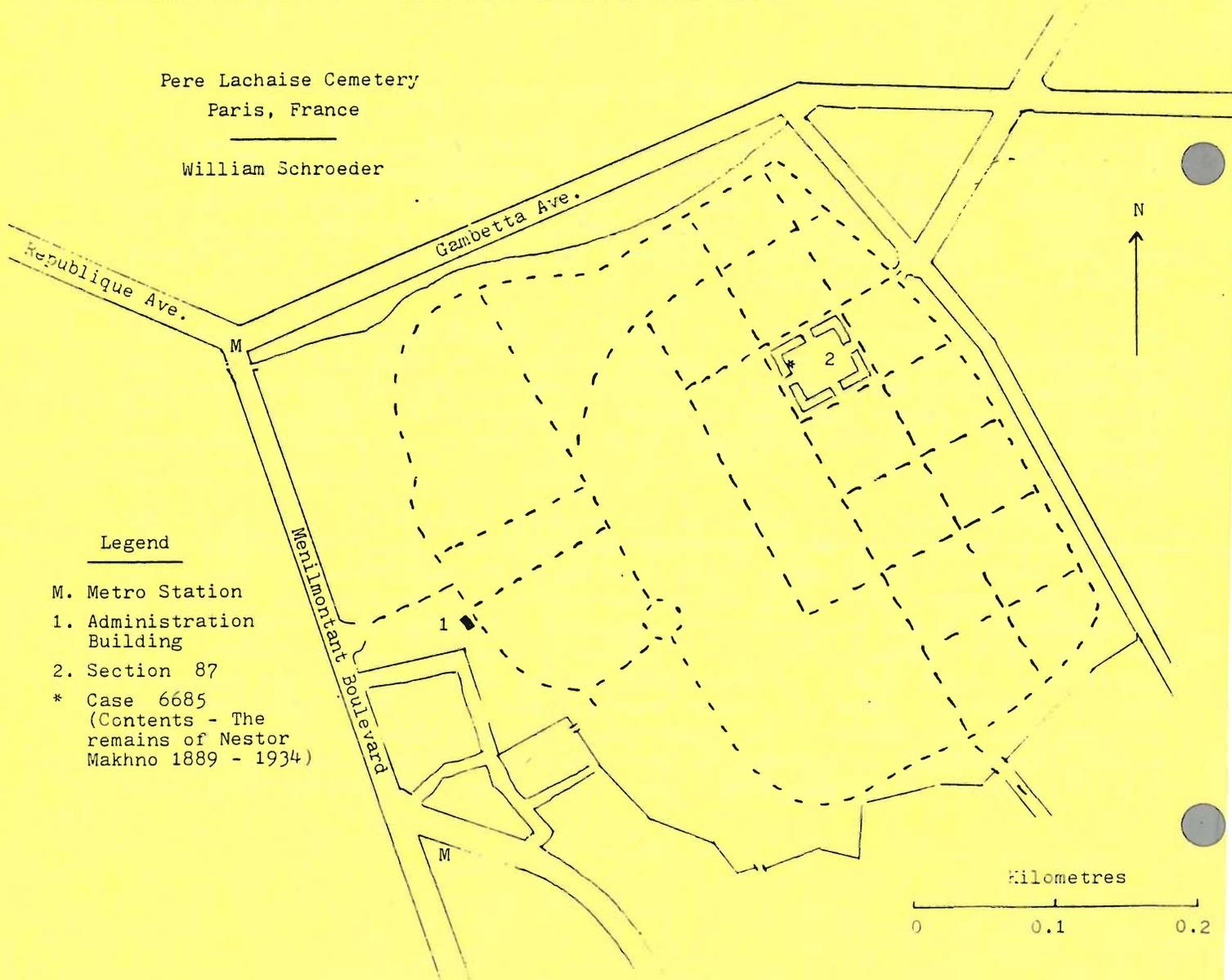
During the Revolution of 1905-07 he joined an anarchist group and took part in terrorist activities. In 1909 he was sentenced to death for participating in a crime during which a police officer was killed, but the sentence was reduced to ten years hard labor, because he was still a minor. He served his sentence in Butyrskaya Prison in Moscow, where he became a convinced anarchist.

Makhno was released from prison by the general amnesty of March 1917, and returned to Guliaipole where he organized an armed anarchist detachment. When the armistice of November, 1918 resulted in the withdrawal of the German forces from Russian territory, Makhno managed to seize substantial quantities of abandoned arms and equipment. He won great popularity among the peasantry and soon his followers numbered many thousands (one source says 20,000). They alternately fought against or sided with the Red Army. Makhno's men were noted for their unusual cruelty. Where ever his army went they left a trail of plunder, rape and murder. The Mennonites, because they happened to live in the vicinity of Guliaipole, because they were German, because they had better supplies of horses, feed, wagons and food, and because they were

comparatively defenceless, suffered terribly at the hands of the Makhno bandits. It is estimated that they were directly or indirectly responsible for the death of about two thousand two hundred Mennonites.

When Wrangel's army had been defeated in November, 1920, Trotskii ordered his troops to attack Makhno's headquarters in Guliaipole. However, Makhno and a small battered remnant of his army managed to elude their pursuers and fled to the western boarder of the country. Suffering from unhealed wounds, Makhno crossed the Dnester River into Rumania on August 26, 1921, a year later he went to Poland and to Paris in 1923. While in Paris he worked as a cobbler, a printer and in an automobile factory. During this time he also wrote his memoirs of 1917-18 in three volumes.

Nester Makhno died of tuberculosis in the Lenon Hospital on Wednesday, July 25, 1934 at six o'clock in the morning. Besides his wife Galina Kusmenko, about five hundred mourners, anarchists and revolutionaries from all parts of Europe, who like Makhno had drifted to Paris, followed the plain coffin to the Pere-Lachaise Cemetery where his body was cremated and his ashes interred in section 87, case 6685 (see map). A portrait of Makhno done in bronze relief has been fastened to the cubical that holds his remains.



Sources

1. Peters, Victor. Nester Makhno. Winnipeg: Echo Books, 1967.
2. Great Soviet Encyclopedia (Translated Edition). New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977-83.
3. Wiczynski, Joseph L. (Editor). The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History. Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1976.

Written by
Bill Schroeder

BOOK REVIEW

HERMAN AND KATHARINA: THEIR STORY. Dr. Abram H. Neufeld, translator and editor; cover sketches by Kevin Norcross. Winnipeg, MB: Centre for M.B. Studies in Canada, 1984, 230 pp., \$8.00, pb.

The role of the itinerant minister or Reiseprediger is of significance to the Mennonites in Russia. Though the ministry of these men was crucial to the stability and growth of congregational life in Russia, relatively little documentation has survived to record their activities for posterity. Therefore it is of considerable interest that one of the most eminent of these men, Rev. Herman A. Neufeld, has written a journal covering some fifty years in his ministry, including his latter years in Canada. His journals, comprising some 8000 pages, upon which this book is based, provide important additional information on how Mennonite Brethren congregations in Russia functioned between the years 1880-1920.

As noted in the forward to this book, the establishment of the itinerant ministry occurred at the first General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1872 "in order to promote evangelism and church extension". It was decided among other matters that the itinerant ministers should maintain a diary, and report to the conference on a quarterly basis. These reports were then to be circulated among the congregations in order to promote evangelism. Even though it was expected of itinerant ministers to write detailed accounts of their experiences, it simply did not happen very often. Rev. Neufeld evidently is the only one that we know of who did so in a thorough manner.

It was Dr. Abram H. Neufeld, Herman Neufeld's son, who recognized the value of these journals not only for family members, who held various volumes in their possession, but also for the Mennonite Brethren Church. Over the years he began collecting the journals, comprising some 23 volumes. Thus he could begin the task of translating and abridging them into a more manageable work. Mary Enns, staff writer with the Mennonite Mirror, assisted in editing Dr. Neufeld's manuscript.

The book, subtitled, "The Autobiography of Elder Herman A. and Katharina Neufeld in Russia and in Canada," is a fascinating and often breath-taking account of much more than the itinerant ministry, Bible conferences and the general activity of the church. The broad vistas of Mennonite colonies scattered throughout the vast domain which is Russia, open up in this easy-to-read and highly captivating book as Elder Neufeld reports on his work and travels in Russia and in Europe. He is a participant in the 1897 Alliance conference in Blankenburg, Germany. The book also supplies significant insight into life in the colonies. His description and analysis of the tumultuous period after the turn of the century is both extensive and perceptive.

Enroute to Canada, during a stopover in Latvia, Neufeld hastens to purchase paper, pen and ink in order to resume his daily journal. Soon after arrival in Winnipeg on November 14, 1923, but for a few days to tour "this clean and modern city, with a very busy shopping area", Neufeld continues his itinerant ministry at Winkler on the following weekend. He conducts evangelical services in a number of communities in southern Manitoba, and continues to pursue his travels in this country the remainder of his days. Not only does he travel throughout Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but he also makes trips to Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, California and the Fraser Valley. He meets numerous North American Mennonite Brethren leaders of the time, commenting on their activities wherever he goes.

I suggest to readers that they consider reading this interesting autobiography of a man who was on the road as an itinerant minister in Russia and in North America for almost fifty years, to obtain valuable insights into that ministry and into the general activity of the Mennonite Brethren Church from a keen observer. This is an important addition to the annals of early Mennonite Brethren history, and anyone seeking greater understanding of it will want to place this publication on their reading list.

by Peter B. Paetkau

PLEASE NOTE: Copies of this book are available from the Centre for \$8.00 each.
Please add one dollar to cover postage costs.

Order from:
Centre for M.B. Studies
1-169 Riverton Avenue
WINNIPEG, Manitoba
R2L 2E5

VIRGIL-NIAGARA MENNONITE JUBILEE FIFTY

"Not in our strength, but with the help of God." These were the words of Lord Mayor Wilbert Dick as he alluded to the leadership his predecessor Jake Froese and he had been permitted to give to the Town Council of Niagara-on-the-Lake. They were spoken on the grounds of the administration building in Virgil, Ontario. The occasion was the unveiling of a plaque on October 13, 1984 to commemorate the fiftieth jubilee of Mennonite settlers in the Virgil-Niagara area.

Originally, the community was settled over two hundred years ago by Loyalists. Both Lord Mayor Dick and chairman Bill Andres made mention of these earlier settlers, many of whom aided Mennonite farmers in their early ventures. It was fitting that the stone for the plaque was donated from the farm of pioneer John Digby Cooper. An excited senior member was Mr. William Andres. He was the first to buy a small farm on Niven Road from land purchased by land developer Peter Wall. Together with his great grandson Richard Andres, he unveiled the plaque. A prayer of dedication was spoken by Reverend Rudy Bartel.

The plaque unveiling was only the beginning of a day of celebration. At Eden Christian College auditorium festivities began in earnest as Alfred Friesen of St. Catharines, whose parental home was in Virgil, chaired the Jubilee program. It was his enthusiasm that resulted in a committee of representatives from the five Niagara Mennonite Churches. Following the singing of "O Canada" the chairman introduced the committee and others involved in Jubilee preparations. A mixed quartet from the Niagara United Mennonite Church sang in German the anthem "The Lord is Great". Dave and Ella Dick sang the popular "Auf Adlers Fluegeln getragen" meaning "Carried on Eagle's Wings". "Hallelujah, He's Coming Again" was chosen by the Virgil male quartet.

Federal member of parliament Rob Nicholson noted that the contribution of Mennonites extended beyond farming to educational, business and political involvement. He conveyed greetings from Prime Minister Mulroney with the presentation of a plaque. Lord Mayor Wilbert Dick felt doubly honoured as he celebrated not only as a long time Mennonite resident but also as head of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Town Council. Bob Welch, Ontario deputy premier, stated that his grandfather had settled on Creek Road many years ago. Ontario is a collage of civilization old and new. The plaque he presented will be displayed at Pleasant Manor Retirement Village along with the Ottawa plaque.

Bill Andres, a former Lincoln M.P., introduced his father William Andres who delighted the audience with his off the cuff report. Mr. Andres was fortunate to come from Russia in 1929 to be reunited with his wife and family at Vineland, Ontario. She had come with her family several years earlier. He found it difficult to be an employee and started looking for land which he found at Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was exactly fifty years ago that they moved to a twelve acre farm with a large old house whose roof leaked fiercely whenever it rained! In quick succession other Mennonite families bought small land parcels. Since shelters could not be built in the winter the Andres' soon had several families as tenants for four dollars a month. How would they feed their large family that first winter? A local merchant gave staple foods on credit and a farmer "loaned" a cow while their own was 'dry'. Planting 2000 stake tomatoes proved to be a profitable investment the following summer. Visibly moved he closed his reminiscing with "Thank God for the Blessing".

George Wichert, former principal and present teacher at Eden Christian College remembered March 15, 1935 as an adventurous day of moving from Vineland to Niven Road where his father had also purchased land. For a meditation he chose I Samuel 7:10-12. Israel was surrounded by enemies. God used forces of nature

to confuse the enemy. Samuel set up the stone meaning "Thus Far the Lord Helped Us". Our people too were surrounded by an atheistic enemy that made worship difficult. The Lord led many to a new land. In Niagara a few families gathered to worship at the William Andres home before moving to larger quarters. Mennonites who used to be the "quiet" in the land have been absorbed into modern lifestyle and mindset. Assimilation can be a good thing but we also need a certain amount of separation. We are to be God's people first and Mennonites only because of distinctives.

Highlight of the afternoon were the handbell and childrens' choirs under the direction of Ella Dick. David Dick informed the audience that this is the tenth anniversary of the handbell choir. Their performance opened with "Thanks Be to Thee". Rendition of "This is My Country" by the full choir accompanied by piano and flute brought tears of gratitude. Last June the handbell choir served "Umsiedler" churches in Germany. Listeners were spellbound with five beautiful old German songs. "Sing Ye Joyfully," "Praise Be to Thee," and "It is Better to Light Just One Little Candle" sung by the full choir brought the mini concert to a close.

Alfred Friesen, teacher with the Lincoln County Board of Education, has given many hours toward the writing of MEMOIRS for this occasion. Copies of the book were presented to William Andres and to government dignitaries present. The Virgil ladies trio sang a beautiful medley beginning with "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less." Reverend Otto Dirks closed the afternoon session with prayer.

All guests were invited to a vesper of open faced buns and sweets. It was a good time for reminiscing with old and new friends. Many jubilee MEMOIRS were sold.

For the evening service a 75 voice choir with members of the five Mennonite churches was on the platform. In the interest of the many senior guests the Virgil M.B. German choir sang "The Lord has Done Great Things" and "We Glorify You." The Orchard Park quartet continued with "All Glory to Jesus." Suitable choir anthems were "Gloria" and "I Found Him in My Heart."

Mr. Friesen introduced the well-known historian, Dr. Frank H. Epp, professor of history at the University of Waterloo. Dr. Epp reminded the audience of the Mennonite Bicentennial coming in 1986. In 1786 the first Mennonites came to Vineland, Ontario from Pennsylvania.

Dr. Epp remarked that people who had pioneered here in 1934 had pioneered first somewhere else. "The Memory that Changes Lives" provided some soul searching questions. What about these anniversaries? Is the memory only for nostalgia, interest, entertainment and recognition? The Bible exhorts to REMEMBER in order to change the thinking, emotion and direction of our lives. In Russia there was the Golden age of Mennonitism: 55 glowing colonies, 365 villages, over four million acres of land, a vast school system, factories and much more. We had everything and lost it all. God was in it when the Communists and Machnos came.

In 1919 Canada's doors were completely closed. Ten years later they were closed again. We cannot take it for granted that we came here. Fortunately Canada needed farmers. Our good Mennonite friend, Bishop Coffman went to the government and asked for the closed door ban to be lifted. Then W.L. Mackenzie King got in and the ban was lifted. Take it for granted? We could just as well be coal miners in Karaganda. How was it that we got everything? The grace and providence of God. Did we get everything to make the same mistakes all over again? To live only for ourselves? In a world of four billion people, how long can twenty-six million say, "All of this is ours and only ours?" Remember: God doesn't give everything for nothing!

"Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem" was the choral response. For the offertory (overflow of expenses went to Pleasant Manor) a young musical group performed Vivaldi's Sonata with five movements. Niagara Christian Fellowship Chapel's ladies group sang, "I will Bless the Lord". Following the closing remarks the choir's "Hallelujah Chorus" by Handel provided a majestic benediction to Jubilee Fifty.

by Helen Reimer Bergmann

CENTRE ADDRESS CHANGE

We remind our readers that the Centre for M.B. Studies now has a new address. With the recent move by the Conference agencies onto the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, it was decided to have one address for all Conference-related activities.

The new Centre address is:

CENTRE FOR M.B. STUDIES
1-169 Riverton Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2L 2E5

BB JANZ EVENING

An evening remembering the life and ministry of B.B. Janz will be held on March 29, 1985 at 7:30 p.m. in the Coaldale Mennonite Brethren Church. The public is invited to attend this meeting. Sponsored by the MB Historical Society, Canada.

Program

Welcome.....Pastor Rudy Heidebrecht
B.B. Janz Biography.....Jacob Janz
B.B. Janz as Mennonite Moses.....Dr. John B. Toews
B.B. Janz as Church Leader.....Jacob Janz
The B.B. Janz Legacy.....Ken Reddig

This Newsletter of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada is published four times a year, by the Executive of the Society, at the Centre for Mennonite Studies in Canada, Winnipeg. All correspondence regarding the Society or the Newsletter should be addressed to:

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Executive of the Society: Helmut Huebert, Chairman; Abe Dueck, V. Chairman; William Schroeder, Secretary-Treasurer; Neoma Jantz and Harry Loewen, Members-at-Large. Editor of the Newsletter, Ken Reddig.

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: _____

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