Provenance

4. *Immigration from Russia*

Even these peaceful Mennonite settlers who up till now have remained aloof from all history-making events are caught up in the general upheaval. They no longer enjoy the peace which dominated their steppe for so long. They are no longer permitted to live in seclusion from the world — DIETRICH NEUFELD.[1]

For the Mennonites there is only one sure way out: emigration, meaning the return to the former homeland Holland and to the relatives in America — B.B. JANZ.[2]

WHILE 7,000 MENNONITES were leaving Canada for Latin America in order to preserve their way of life, thousands of their distant cousins in the U.S.S.R. were hoping to enter Canada, also in order to ensure a better future for themselves and for their children. Uprooted in every way by the Bolshevik revolution, the Makhno reign of terror, and the ensuing civil war between the Red and the White armies,[3] 20,000 of the Mennonites in Russia—about one-sixth of the total—seized the opportunity to make Canada their home. Their migration, beginning in 1923 and continuing until the changing Canadian attitudes and policies closed the door, represented the largest organized voluntary mass movement of Mennonites in history and helped to change permanently the character of Mennonitism in both Russia and Canada.

This immigration was a mammoth undertaking for the Mennonite community in Canada, which was being reduced to nearly 50,000 by the exodus to Latin America, and required extraordinary commitment, perseverance, and overall co-ordination. Obstacles to

the venture presented themselves on both continents with depressing regularity and constantly threatened to bring about the total collapse of the scheme. That so many people managed to leave the Soviet Union was a success attributable largely to the courageous and untiring work of David Toews in Canada and B.B. Janz in the U.S.S.R. Equally important, though perhaps not as prominent, in the migration drama were A.A. Friesen and B.H. Unruh. As deputies for the Russian Mennonites, the former in Canada and the latter in Germany, both men took on the difficult tasks of representation, mediation, and persuasion with unflagging determination. All of them, of course, were dependent on the willingness of governments and the readiness of transportation companies to serve their cause.

In this respect, a most critical intercession was made by S.F. Coffman of the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario, who during the war had accomplished for his people in the East what David Toews had done in the West. Coffman personified the good name and character of the pioneer Mennonite community in Canada, whose reputation had commended to the authorities the widest possible concessions in the first Mennonite migration from Russia in the 1870s and without whose positive image Canada would surely have been less eager for more of the same. If the troubles associated with the Dutch Mennonites in the West served to justify the 1919 Canadian ban on all Mennonite immigration,[4] the esteem in which the Swiss Mennonites were held in the East, especially in the mind of Prime Minister Mackenzie King, was an important factor in having that ban removed.

Mennonites and Russia

Those 40,000 Mennonites who in the 1870s had chosen to remain in Russia had enjoyed a half-century of unprecedented prosperity and expansion of their communities and institutions. With the pioneer years largely behind them, they had proceeded to develop rapidly their vigorous economy, based as it was on a diversified agriculture, flour milling, and the manufacture of farm equipment. Their population had tripled to 120,000, and the number of settlements, including the original four mother colonies, had increased to over 50, with a total of approximately 440 villages and some 2,300,000

acres of land. The holdings of 384 owners of large estates—a true Mennonite elite—brought the acreage held by Russian Mennonites to more than three million.[5]

With their help, the Ukraine had become the breadbasket for much of Russia, and more, because grain and flour for export in large quantities regularly left Black Sea ports for foreign destinations. A gold medal won for his flour by a Mennonite miller at the world fair in Paris symbolized the high achievements resulting from over a century of hard work devoted to agricultural excellence on the part of all the Mennonite people.[6]

They had introduced improved strains of dairy cattle, notably the famed German cow, and the so-called "colonist horse," which replaced the slow ox as draft power. Also, they had developed new techniques of tilling the soil, including use of the black and green fallow, use of better seed grains, rotation of crops, some use of manure as fertilizer, and extensive practices of tree planting, for both fruit and shelter. According to V.E. Postvikov, the Mennonite farming system was "higher in quality" than that which held sway among both Russian landowners and peasants.[7]

Their industrial endeavours, almost as impressive as agriculture, provided Russia with six per cent of its farm implements and large quantities of brick and tile.[8] The farm machinery, both tools and implements, introduced by the Mennonites included the multi-share plough, the reaper, a threshing machine, improved harrows, the winnowing machine, the row seeder, the straw cutter, a special type of hay rake, several types of wagons, and many others.[9]

Among both agriculturalists and industrialists there were some very wealthy people. Millionaires were not uncommon. This wealth and a strong economy supported a network of educational and other institutions, contributing to the culture and welfare of the total Mennonite community. In 1920 the school system embraced 400 elementary schools, 13 high schools, 4 girls' schools, 2 teachers' colleges, and 3 business schools.[10] University education was also quite common. Some 300 students were attending colleges, seminaries, and universities when the war came. One-sixth of them studied abroad, mostly in Germany and Switzerland. Among the graduates were medical doctors for the Mennonite hospitals and other welfare institutions.

Thus, driven by a concept of progress and a spirit of industry that

were foreign to much of the indigenous Russian population, the Mennonites had established an economic and cultural "commonwealth" unmatched by other minorities around them or by the Russian populace at large. As is common among prosperous societies, the Mennonites were not much aware of their privileged position and the extent to which wealth was derived from land, freely given or easily purchased, as well as from servile labour in an abundant supply. Instead, they remembered their own erstwhile poverty and how hard they had worked, and consequently how much God had blessed them. Others could and would become prosperous too if only they applied themselves as the Mennonites had done. Thus, the idiosyncrasies of faith and culture, which set the Mennonites apart from the Russian peasants from the beginnings of settlement late in the eighteenth century, had been augmented in time by other differences based on the superior income, education, and social status of the Mennonites.[11] As David G. Rempel, using Russian scholarly sources as a basis for his assessment, has pointed out:

> of great value [were] a number of character traits among many of the colonists, such as sobriety, industriousness, thrift, generally high moral standards, religious and ethical beliefs and other values, plus higher levels of education, qualities in which the peasant was often deficient.[12]

The relationship of the Mennonites to their property and to the Russian people was permanently changed by the political upheaval, which catapulted the Bolsheviks into power in 1917 and which shook Russia and indeed the entire world. The privileged status of the Mennonites, which was formerly perceived to be an advantage, now became a definite liability. And it wasn't that there had been no warning, some handwriting on the wall which at least some leaders had clearly read. Premonitions of danger had arisen already during tsarist rule, and the emigration of the 1870s happened because some leaders sensed for their people a problematic future in Russia. The war with Japan in 1904–5 and the mini-revolution of that year were strong signals to that effect. In the first years of the Great War, discriminatory measures affecting language and land ownership had been applied against the country's German-speaking people, especially on the western side, a clear signal of the changing times.

In the 1917 interlude between the fall of the tsar in February and

the Bolshevik seizure of power in October, the Mennonites generally had come to the conclusion that the future would be different from the past and that very considerable thought and deliberate action had to be taken with respect to that future.[13] The Mennonite debate on how best to secure the future began with attendance at a congress of German-speaking colonists, on the assumption that there were common interests to be represented to the provisional government headed by Kerensky.

More significant was the 1917 meeting of the General Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia. The agenda was modified to include not only the traditional devotional content but also the new socio-economic, educational, and political problems facing the Mennonite people. This in turn led to a reorganization of the Conference as well as the founding of the All-Russian Mennonite Congress, a civic organization, actually a Mennonite parliament, mandated to deal "with all non-religious internal problems and to represent the Mennonites in all external relations."[14]

The founding Congress held in Ohrloff, Molotschna, on August 14–18, 1917, was attended by 198 delegates representative of the various settlements, groups, and interests. Mennonite professionals —lawyers, engineers, teachers, and theologians—were prominent in the Congress, as were the educated class generally. At least 150 of the delegates had high school education and 30 had university training. Among the Congress leaders were Benjamin H. Unruh and Jacob H. Janzen, both of whom were university-educated teachers, whose leadership gifts brought them into the forefront again and again.

The Congress discussed the crucial issues of the day, including land reform and the relationship between Christianity and socialism, in all of which a keen awareness of the issues confronting Russia and the Mennonite people was expressed.[15] Some of those present represented the view that the Kingdom of God was to be realized on earth, but that Christianity did not represent any particular economic order, the agrarian question being one to be resolved by the professionals. Others explained that while socialism and Christianity could not be equated, socialism stood closer to the Christian faith than did capitalism. The Congress recommended the creation of a state land bank in order to facilitate land distribution to the poor and to the landless. Such a land bank would include state and church lands, as well as private lands acquired for appropriate compensation. An

upper limit for private land ownership was agreed to in principle and reflected at least some Mennonite understanding of the crucial need for reform in Russia. As John B. Toews has written:

> Concern with the plight of the landless peasant (both Russian and Mennonite) generated amazingly socialistic debates on the redivision and nationalization of land even though over half of those present were landowners.[16]

The Congress further agreed to create a *Mennozentrum* (Menno Centre), a bureau with sufficient staff to implement the decisions of the Congress. Such policy decisions and organizational initiatives held great promise, but all were short-lived as the revolution engulfed all of Russia and as the Bolsheviks seized power in October. Then it became painfully obvious that all the talk about reform in Russia represented an effort which was too small and came too late.

After the revolution, the colonies were stripped of their former semi-autonomous status and brought under the supervision of regional soviets. These soviets consisted of representatives from the poorer, landless classes—individuals who, not surprisingly, used their new-found positions of authority and the revolutionary slogans of liberty and equality to better their own material conditions at the expense of the Mennonites.

In the early months of 1918, some Mennonite villages were overwhelmed by lawless military bands, generally not answerable to any higher authority. These bandits unleashed a ten-week nightmare of terror, looting, raping, and even killing.[17] The immense wealth locked into the Mennonite settlements, and the unfortunate history of Mennonite neglect, if not exploitation, of the Russian peasant, made them immediate and quite understandable targets of such aggression. In many ways they had been model farmers, and the peasants had learned many things from them. However, economic disparity bred jealousy and hostility. It was also true that Russian gentlemen farmers encouraged animosity towards the German elements in the hope of themselves escaping peasant wrath, at least for a while.[18] As Dietrich Neufeld wrote in *A Russian Dance of Death*:

> With increasing frequency, we are forced to realize that the Russian peasant is not kindly disposed towards our Mennonite settlers.[19]

The year saw the fortunes of the Mennonites in the Ukraine alternately rise and fall as successive units of German troops, White Army insurgents, Red Army forces, and dissolute robber bands battled for control of the region. Altogether, between 1918 and 1920, there were more than a dozen changes of regime in various parts of the Ukraine. After the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk in 1918 and the German occupation of territories surrendered under that treaty, German soldiers brought order and security to the Mennonite colonies, for them a welcome respite. One local newspaper, the *Volksfreund*, expressed its gratitude to the liberators as it cried, "Thanks be to God that He has saved us from these robbers through Germany's and Austria's military might."[20] Reprisals were quickly taken against any remaining Bolshevik sympathizers, and some Mennonites assisted the Germans in the identification and arrest of such people.

In retrospect, the enthusiastic support given to the German occupation army was a political mistake, for the effects of this partisanship would follow the Mennonites into World War II and beyond. Seen against the anarchistic backdrop of the preceding years, however, the German-Mennonite alliance made sense. The Mennonites, like the other German colonists, abhorred and were repelled by violent insurrection, disorder, and theft. To them, the German troops appeared as if sent by providence, and in the crises of the moment there could be little reflection on the future implications of such association. All that mattered at the time was that they enjoyed the protection of authorities who spoke their language, who entrusted them with local power, who instilled in them a powerful sense of German cultural identity, and who equipped some of them with weapons useful in self-defence.[21]

Subsequently, all those suspected of having collaborated with the German enemy had to pay for their actions. They were branded as counter-revolutionaries, and their leaders were victimized by ruthless marauding peasant bands, such as those organized by the notorious Nestor Makhno.[22] At Makhno's hands, German colonists throughout the Ukraine, including the Mennonites, were subjected to a savage reign of terror during two successive winters. Once again they experienced indiscriminate torture and murder, rape and plunder.

In desperate response to the senseless savageries inflicted upon

them, some Mennonites, following the advice of, and with equipment provided by, the departing German troops, hastily assembled a Home Defence (*Selbstschutz*) despite their historic refusal to bear arms.[23] Yet, how could the men remain fully nonresistant, in the face of cruel danger to the women and children they held so dear? The existence of the paramilitary organization, however, compounded the miseries of the Mennonites, for the conclusion was inescapable that the Mennonites were open enemies of the Bolshevik state. The Mennonites paid dearly for their resistance. At least 647 of their people perished as a direct result of the brutal civil war that crisscrossed the Mennonite domain.[24] In his analysis of the effects of the Home Defence, one historian wrote:

> Caught up in the irrationalities of the movement few could foresee that bloodshed on both sides would be a much higher price to pay than the simple acceptance of the role of the suffering church. In the end the Home Defence contributed to more death than it prevented.[25]

This conclusion, of course, cannot be verified, and certainly not all historians agree that the bandits would not have committed the most outrageous acts had they had a free hand.[26] Be that as it may, the Mennonites were stunned by the cataclysm engulfing them. Events of the previous years had conditioned most of them to accept the inevitability of change with respect to their privileged special status. No one, though, could have predicted the utter economic, cultural, and social ruin that their colonies would have to undergo, as well as, and perhaps more significantly, the anti-Christian political ideology to which they would be subjected.

Working for Survival

For the time being, however, most Mennonites did not have time to dwell on the longer-term significance of the recent events. The needs of the moment were too great for that. In addition to the famine conditions and other deprivations caused by the civil strife, the Mennonites were struck by an epidemic of typhus. Cold weather, a chronic absence of wood for heating, an acute shortage of food, insufficient blankets, and ragged clothing all worked to lower the

resistance of Mennonites to the dreaded disease. Eventually, typhus killed several times more Mennonites than were felled by bandits.[27]

In response to the dire exigency in which they found themselves, a *Studienkommission* (Study Commission) was created in the Molotschna colony in December of 1919 and dispatched abroad.[28] Its primary purpose was to inform the Mennonites in Europe and North America of the desperate plight of their people in Russia and to secure material aid for the sick and the starving. As well, the members of the Study Commission were to investigate immigration and settlement possibilities in other lands, for already a growing number within the Mennonite community were convinced that Russia held no future for them. The members of the Study Commission included the aforementioned A.A. Friesen and B.H. Unruh, both of them university- or seminary-educated teachers, and C.H. Warkentin, a merchant. J.J. Esau, an industrialist, was also chosen but he withdrew from the assignment for personal reasons. Friesen and Unruh were the leaders of the commission, the former as chairman, the latter as secretary.

The physical welfare of their people was a matter of urgent concern to these men and, accordingly, they first solicited help in Western Europe. In spite of the fact that post-war Europe itself was preoccupied with the ravages of war and its own reconstruction, the Study Commission met with some success. B.H. Unruh returned to Germany after his North American tour to concentrate on soliciting European aid for the Mennonites in Russia. His frequent appeals to governments to provide both financial assistance and opportunities for resettlement proved disappointing, but he was instrumental in encouraging the German and Dutch Mennonites to organize major relief efforts.[29]

When the commission arrived in the U.S.A. in June, Friesen, Unruh, and Warkentin soon discovered that the American Mennonites were not completely uninformed of the tragic state of affairs unfolding in Russia. Relief work in Western Europe and in the Middle East had made them aware of the devastations of war.[30] However, with the comprehensive information imparted by the delegates, a greater sense of urgency and mission emerged. A general meeting of all American Mennonite relief organizations, held on July 27, 1920, at Elkhart, Indiana, concurred that it was desirable to create a central committee for a co-ordinated relief action and

volunteers were recruited immediately. The permanent organization of this new Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)[31] was completed on September 27, the very day that its first three workers, destined for Russia, arrived in Constantinople. They included Clayton Kratz, whose subsequent disappearance in Russia remains a mystery to this day, and Orie O. Miller, who later became MCC's longtime executive secretary.[32]

The initial attempts of the Mennonite Central Committee to alleviate suffering in Russia were rebuffed by Soviet officials who refused to grant entrance visas for the proposed action. Months of tedious work by Alvin J. Miller, an MCC representative working from Moscow with the American Relief Commission, seemed to yield no positive results. And all the time, the situation in the colonies was deteriorating. In one of his dispatches to the West, B.B. Janz reported the situation as follows:

> A time of dying is now beginning for us Mennonites. . . . In Russia there are few that are living, many that are vegetating, and the vast hungry South is dying. What a smell from the cadavers will rise towards heaven by May![33]

Finally, in October of 1921, an agreement was concluded by which the Mennonite Central Committee, affiliated with the American Relief Administration, was admitted for relief work in the Crimea and in the provinces of Taurida and Ekaterinoslav. In March of the following year, the first field kitchens distributed food to the famished settlers. During that winter alone, the Mennonites in North America sent approximately two million dollars' worth of aid in the form of food and clothing to Russia. When the more immediate problem of famine had been alleviated, the MCC also provided seed grain and tractors to aid in the reconstruction process.[34]

While the Study Commission abroad continued to promote relief and to prepare a new homeland, hopefully in North America, the Mennonites in Russia instituted measures for their own improvement and economic rehabilitation. What they needed above all else was a representative Mennonite civic organization, embracing all the colonies in a given area, something like the short-lived All-Russian Mennonite Congress, with its Menno Centre, founded just prior to the revolution. After months of work with the Soviets, both in the

Ukraine and in Moscow, a charter was granted to the Union of Citizens of Dutch Ancestry, hereafter known as the Union, formally organized on April 25, 1922.[35] Significantly, at that same time the Mennonites in Canada were establishing the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, the organization which was to become the chief source of hope outside the country, but more of that later.

The name of the Union reflected attempts begun already during the war to achieve a more positive identity for the Mennonites. Now it was important that it be known that they were not German and that not only were they a privileged religious minority, but also Soviet citizens who happened to be of Dutch lineage. This so-called *Hollanderei* of the Mennonites did not meet with full internal approval,[36] but the Dutch connection, however remote, served the purposes of survival during and after the Great War and, as will later be seen, after World War II as well.

The leadership of the Union fell to B.B. Janz, the quiet but forceful school teacher from Tiege in the Molotschna.[37] Janz combined the rare qualities of keen political acumen, persistence bordering on outright stubbornness, and a genuine commitment to his people. In him, the Mennonites of the Ukraine discovered their needed spokesman.[38] For the next four years Janz used the Union as the umbrella vehicle for unceasing work on behalf of every Mennonite cause relating to the problem of survival. These causes included preventing the induction of draft-age Mennonite men into the Red Army, re-establishing the Mennonite economy, and negotiating visas for those wishing to leave Russia. Fortunately, the charter of the Union, liberally interpreted, permitted this broad range of activities. Early in his work Janz was convinced that the best solution for the Russian Mennonites was emigration.[39]

In this position he was supported by the Union itself, even though the organization's stated main purpose was economic renewal. Janz made no particular effort to keep his potentially controversial position secret. He had spoken about emigration to the central executive committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party and would soon press the case also in Moscow. But would Moscow willingly agree to the departure of those citizens who had only recently been some of its most prized agriculturalists and who were now needed to rebuild a desperately impoverished agrarian economy?

Janz responded to this delicate situation by resorting to a simple

but ingenious tactic. The civil war had produced a Mennonite refugee problem and increased the number of landless, all of whom now constituted an "unproductive" element. By allowing these people to leave, Janz argued, the detrimental effects of the famine could be better mitigated and conditions would be created that would be more conducive to the future livelihood of the settlements.[40] Evidently the government accepted the logic of Janz's argument, for already in 1922 permission was granted for the Mennonites to leave, at that time for Paraguay.[41] But their destitute financial state, together with disinterest in Paraguay as a permanent homeland, caused them to decide against such a movement.

Janz was encouraged by the government's initial willingness to endorse an emigration scheme, and he continued to negotiate for the release of all those Mennonites who wished to leave the country. Incredibly, he had, by the end of 1922, won authorization for the emigration of up to 20,000 Mennonites. The government, it seemed, concurred with the notion that the removal of the surplus population would put an end to the restlessness existing within the colonies. Accordingly, it removed the legal obstacles which hitherto had prevented the possibility of such a large-scale movement. Now everything depended upon the North Americans to implement the speedy removal of thousands who were waiting in Russia.

Following the successful organization of the MCC in the United States to bring relief to Russia, the Study Commission had redoubled its search for land that would be suitable for the settlement of a large contingent of Russian Mennonites. Again, American Mennonites were expected to be of some assistance in this effort and for this purpose the Mennonite Executive Committee for Colonization (MECC) was founded in November 1920.[42] This central committee for colonization was intended to function parallel to the central committee for relief and to operate in a similar pattern, namely with the full support of the entire Mennonite constituency. In actuality, the colonization committee never gained a great deal of momentum, chiefly because of the surge of anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the States. In 1921, the United States government unveiled an immigration quota system, which decisively dashed any possibility of a mass movement to that country.[43]

Undoubtedly discouraged by this turn of events, A.A. Friesen, together with others, undertook an exploratory trip to Mexico

during the winter of 1920–21. They were impressed with the liberal concessions the Mexican government was willing to grant. Mexico, it must be remembered, was at that time one of the prospective homes of Mennonites planning to leave Canada, and in general a new settlement frontier much-touted by American real estate agents. On balance, however, the political instability of that country, along with the questionable hospitality of the local populace, outweighed the probable advantages.[44] In any event, Mexico could not be embraced as a future homeland until the possibilities in Canada had been fully explored.

The Mennonites in Canada, especially those in the west, were well-informed of the disastrous developments in Russia through letters and newspaper accounts. They too were anxious to respond to human need. A project to gather and forward relief monies was organized in the summer of 1920 by Gerhard Ens and David Toews. Ens, a former Saskatchewan legislator, had himself been born in Russia and as an immigrant in 1890 he had played a leading role in pioneer Saskatchewan settlement.[45] Thus, Ens was interested as much in solving the Russian Mennonite problem through resettlement to Canada as through relief in Russia.

During the war David Toews had become known, because of his crucial role with governments, as the "Mennonite Bishop of Canada." In actual fact only the bishop of the Rosenorter congregation, he was, however, the moderator of the Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada and a founder of the German-English Academy in Rosthern. He had left Russia as a boy in the early 1880s after he and his family had participated in the famous trek of the excessively chiliastic Claas Epp into central Asiatic Russia, from which they had returned quite disappointed and disillusioned but with greater insight concerning the various possible destinies—to them they were discouraging—of Mennonites in Russia.[46] A decade later, Toews had left his parental Kansas farm home for Manitoba, having been recruited by H.H. Ewert to teach Mennonite children in a public school. Thereafter, the Rosthern area of the Saskatchewan Valley became his permanent home. He married a girl from a Prussian Mennonite family, taught school, and became a leader in the church. The insights and dedication as well as the leadership gifts of this cosmopolitan man would soon be required, in a way he himself had not imagined, to facilitate the survival of the Russian Mennonites.[47]

Meanwhile, the relief efforts of Toews and Ens were given a boost when in August the Study Commission was finally allowed to cross the border into Canada at Portal, North Dakota. Since the Canadian immigration ban of 1919 was still in effect, even Mennonite visitors, especially would-be immigrants, had difficulty entering the country. Arrangements were immediately undertaken for the delegates to consult the communities surrounding Rosthern and Herbert in Saskatchewan and the Mennonite reserves in southern Manitoba for the sake of promoting the interests of the Canadian Relief Committee, which was formally created on October 18.[48]

A Government and a Railway

Canada's settlement possibilities appealed to the Study Commission. The country was large and, so it seemed, only sparsely populated. Its soil and climate were in many places well-suited to agricultural practices with which the Mennonites were familiar, and, not to be overlooked, there were communities of Mennonites already well-established in Canada. The only problem, and it was a major one, was that the federal government had declared itself opposed to accepting immigrants from central and eastern Europe. Mennonites were specifically named in the post-war prohibition of 1919. The publicity being given to those Mennonites determined to leave for Latin America because Canada had disappointed them didn't help matters either. In other words, when the goodwill of politicians and people was most needed it was in short supply.

The prevailing policy was directly opposite the rather liberal pre-war practice, which placed few restrictions on the races and nationalities to be allowed into the country. Settlers were needed to stock and cultivate the spacious western interior and also to provide a cheap and readily accessible labour supply for the developing resource, transportation, and manufacturing industries.[49] Hundreds of thousands of immigrants had entered the country before the advent of the war. After 1918, Canadian authorities showed little interest in resuming the flow. Their disinterest was the product of several factors. For one thing, soldiers returning home from Europe had not all been able to find work, and it was generally believed that veterans should have the first opportunity to fill the available lands and jobs. In addition, destitute immigrants from previous years, unsuccessful at establish-

ing themselves on farms, had migrated to the cities, where they were greeted by outright racial discrimination and unemployment rather than the hoped-for financial security.

The resentment felt by many Canadians towards Germany and her allies was understandable, given the recent international situation. Thus, an Order-in-Council barring enemy aliens such as Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Turks was not surprising.[50] Less easy to explain, though no less real in fact, were the discriminatory measures invoked by the government against persons of central- and east-European origin in general. Continental Europeans had been welcomed before the war because they served the country's economic self-interest. But when Canada's economy slumped, as it did just prior to and again after the war, their usefulness suffered a corresponding drop.

Business and organized labour, industry, religious and patriotic organizations, and racial purists exploited the situation, protesting that the "sheep-skin peasants" were in fact a liability to Canada's progressive growth. Critics heaped blame on the foreign immigrants for a host of the country's social and political ills. Connections were made linking the immigrants to social and civil unrest, crime, disease, undesirable social customs, and a general diminution of Canadian standards of living.[51]

Ottawa was cognizant of the ground swell of nativist sentiment and took swift steps to regulate and curb the admission of unwanted immigrants. Amendments were made to the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1919 subjecting immigrants to a literacy test, stricter medical examination, and an evaluation as to their political and social acceptability.[52] Then a monetary qualification was introduced requiring each male immigrant to possess $250 upon his arrival in Canada.[53] Immigrants were also expected to have with them a valid passport and to have made a continuous journey to Canada from their country of origin.

In 1923 additional revisions, this time designed to ensure ethnic selectivity, were appended to the immigration laws. Thereafter, immigration was restricted to bona fide agriculturalists, labourers, and domestics, all of whom were classified according to a system of preferred and nonpreferred countries. Under the terms of Order-in-Council PC 183, preferred status was given to white immigrants coming from the British Commonwealth or the United States.[54] Less

valued were northern Europeans, who in turn were followed by the nonpreferred central and eastern Europeans. Jews, Blacks, and Orientals occupied the lowest rungs of the immigration scale.

Not everyone in Canada applauded this closing of the immigration door, including business groups whose economic well-being depended largely upon an inexpensive and undemanding labour pool. Mining companies, resource industries, and transportation firms led the way in insisting that the government relax its immigration policies.[55] They argued that non-English immigrants had a reputation for physical endurance and dependability and often were the only ones willing to accept the strenuous work, low pay, and northern isolation characteristic of most mining and lumbering operations.

The two transcontinental railways, Canadian Pacific and the new Canadian National, likewise needed an accessible supply of labourers for track maintenance and construction. An even more crucial consideration for them was the millions of acres of unused land in the west. Immigrants were still required to fill empty territories and to create and sustain future demands for railway services.

The hope in government circles had been that the reduction of continental immigrants could be balanced by increased immigration from Britain or the U.S. When such migration patterns failed to materialize, the railways and the resource extraction interests redoubled their efforts to bring about a change in immigration policy. Their efforts were rewarded in September 1925 when the so-called Railways Agreement was concluded.[56] The Agreement permitted the railway companies to recruit immigrants from countries previously designated as nonpreferred. It also authorized them to certify that prospective immigrants met Canada's requirements as these related to occupation and guaranteed employment. Between 1925 and 1930, about 185,000 continental Europeans were brought to Canada under these provisions.[57]

In 1921, however, the public mood, together with existing federal legislation, presented formidable barriers to a large-scale Mennonite movement into Canada. The greatest single obstacle to the migration was found in the 1919 Order-in-Council which specifically forbade Mennonite immigration to Canada. This prohibitory regulation reflected the special problems the war had created for the Mennonites. Some people considered the nonresistant Mennonites unpatri-

otic and charged them with shirking their obligations as citizens. Others confused all Mennonites with Hutterites and Doukhobors, whose social and economic practices, the public image of which did not always conform to reality, many Canadians found objectionable.

On a number of occasions, Mennonites, acting independently, had appealed to the government to remove the restrictive immigration legislation.[58] Each time the requests were rejected. A.A. Friesen insisted that the Mennonites continue their struggle. At his suggestion a meeting was held at Herbert, Saskatchewan, in early June 1921 to discuss this matter. Out of the meeting came a decision to send a delegation to Ottawa to argue the Mennonite cause personally.[59]

In July a five-man delegation representing Mennonites from Russia, western Canada, and Ontario arrived in the capital to plead for the admission of some 100,000 Mennonites.[60] Prime Minister Arthur Meighen was out of town and so, in his absence, the men met with Sir George Foster, the acting prime minister. They informed him of the cruel circumstances prevailing in Russia and of their hopes of rescuing their unfortunate co-religionists.[61] The delegation was careful to impress upon Foster the progressive attributes of the Russian Mennonites, assuring him they had willingly conformed to Russia's education and language laws and would do likewise in Canada. The Russian Mennonites, it was asserted, were valuable agriculturalists who, on coming to Canada, would be sheltered by their own people and therefore would not exacerbate the socio-economic problems in the cities.

The delegates rightly perceived that the key to assisting their overseas comrades lay in convincing the authorities of the law-abiding nature of the prospective immigrants, especially with respect to allowing their children to attend public schools.[62] Foster himself disclosed that the main objection of the government to a Mennonite migration stemmed from their reputation as a culturally aloof people.[63] The Reinlaender, he reminded the visitors, had been a thorn in the side of the provincial governments and he was afraid the Russian Mennonites would prove likewise. It was to counter just such an image that S.F. Coffman and T.M. Reesor, representatives of the more positively regarded Ontario Swiss Mennonites, had been invited to participate in the expedition. But despite their presence, the Conservative government offered little hope that the immigra-

tion law would be changed. A federal election was imminent and the government was reluctant to introduce new policies that might jeopardize its chances of re-election.

Before leaving Ottawa, the delegates consulted with Opposition leader Mackenzie King, leader of the Liberal Party.[64] This interview proved more promising, since King assured the Mennonite guests that, should his party form the next government, the prohibitory Order-in-Council would be lifted. Not wishing to leave any avenue unexplored, the delegation proceeded on to Toronto, where they presented themselves to provincial political leaders and representatives of several influential newspapers.[65] During these meetings they described the terrible plight of the Russian Mennonites, the intention to bring them over to Canada, and the readiness of the Mennonite immigrants to adapt themselves to Canada's customs. H.H. Ewert, reporting on the delegation's activities, later observed that "a form of propaganda for the Mennonites had been initiated."[66]

Renewed attempts to effect the repeal of the discriminatory immigration ruling followed soon after the Liberal election victory in December 1921. David Toews, realizing that the situation was becoming ever more desperate in Russia, recalled King's promise and in February 1922, A.A. Friesen told S.F. Coffman that some people were starving in the colonies and others were barely surviving:

> Many of our brethren are living on surrogates, as roots, cowhides, and bread of any kind [are] not obtainable. The rest of the cattle and horses are being butchered for meat. The prospects for spring sowing are hopeless unless help from the outside will be brought.[67]

Coffman had expressed reluctance to approach Ottawa again so soon, believing that the newly formed cabinet should be given more time to familiarize itself with the duties of office.[68] The compelling tone of Friesen's letter dispelled his reserve, however, and on Coffman's initiative, a second delegation was sent to Ottawa in March. Five Mennonite representatives met with King and other leading government personnel, reviewing with them many of the same points made during the last meeting.[69] King held true to his promise made earlier and had the immigration ban rescinded.[70]

One final legal question remained. Disclosure of a possible Mennonite movement into Canada had raised the question as to whether any unusual concessions had been offered to the Mennonites. The government's public denial raised fears in the Mennonite community, which now sought to clarify the military status of any newcomers. A delegation, led by David Toews, hastened to Ottawa in April 1923, where assurance was given that the existing laws relating to military exemptions would apply equally to the newcomers as they did to the Mennonites already residing in Canada. The government was thus able to confirm to the public that no exceptions had been made for the Mennonites, while the latter were comforted by the knowledge that their right to military exemption was enshrined in the law.[71]

The first giant obstacle to the migration had been bridged, though other formidable problems remained. A permanent immigration administration had to be assembled, chartered transportation facilities and credits had to be arranged, and support funds had to be collected from the various churches. On May 17, 1922, a second major advance was made with the establishment of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, hereafter referred to as the Board.[72]

Previous meetings had confirmed a genuine desire to organize an immigration committee representing as many Canadian Mennonite churches as possible. However, the discussions revealed a discouraging degree of political fracture within the Mennonite camp.[73] Tensions had developed early between the two leading western Mennonite spokesmen, Ewert and Toews. Their competitive instincts in turn contributed to an intense rivalry over which province, Manitoba or Saskatchewan, should function as the administrative centre of the operation. The May meeting, convened at the home of H.H. Ewert in Gretna, was intended to transform verbal commitments into real substance and a viable organization. Though David Toews himself wasn't present, Ewert, overcoming his earlier reservations, or being unusually gracious, nominated Toews as chairman of the Board, to which everyone agreed and which action also established Rosthern as the location of the office.

Finances were also discussed at the Gretna meeting. Obviously, huge sums of money were required for a mass migration. While transportation costs came first, settlement would require the larger

amounts and for the moment these amounts represented the greater concern. The problem was where to find and how to collect these in the shortest possible time. Ewert suggested that one or more Canadian families should assume responsibility for one immigrant family and that thereby sufficient capital would be raised to purchase one of the villages being vacated by the emigrating Reinlaender or Chortitzer. This village could then be mortgaged for the purchase of another, which in turn could be mortgaged for a third.[74]

Toews later objected to Ewert's plan. He simply did not think the mortgages would generate enough cash, particularly since many properties were already burdened with debts. Instead, he endorsed a proposal worked out earlier by Gerhard Ens in co-operation with Rosthern lawyer A.C. March. The plan called for the incorporation of a shareholder's society under the name of Mennonite Colonization Association of North America Limited (MCANA).[75] The idea was to raise ten million dollars by selling shares of $100 to 100,000 Mennonites in the United States and Canada. No commission would be allowed for the selling of the shares. Thirty dollars of each share was to be paid immediately by the shareholder, the balance to be borrowed and subject to call at any time. Beneficiaries of the plan were required to repay the principal with interest not exceeding five per cent. In the end, the Toews plan won the greater support within the Board, and on July 26, 1922, the Association received its charter from the government.[76] The selling of the shares, however, was quite another matter. It never happened. A legal mechanism to secure funds had been provided, but not the monetary motivation for what essentially was a commercial scheme.

The Mennonites had provided themselves with an organization to administer the Canadian end of the immigration project, and a legal instrument for the securing of settlement funds, but there still remained the task of negotiating with a transportation company the willingness to transfer, on a credit basis, the passengers from Russia to Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway showed early interest, having had its eye on a scheme involving the Mennonites in Russia already in the early years of the war. Created in the 1870s for the purpose of linking the new province of British Columbia with the rest of Canada, the CPR had since that time been heavily involved in the settling of the west. The railway's interest in colonization was a natural one—only through agricultural occupation of the land could

it hope for profitable traffic—but the huge federal land grant of 25,000,000 acres meant direct involvement in settlement on a grand scale.[77] Under the energetic leadership of Colonel J.S. Dennis, who headed the company's Department of Colonization and Development for a time, the CPR spent more on immigration and settlement of the prairies than the federal government from 1905 to 1930.[78]

Colonel J.S. Dennis, not to be confused with John Stoughton Dennis, whose surveying crew had helped to precipitate the Red River Rebellion in 1869, was not unfamiliar with the Mennonites. He had first met them in 1874 when, as a young man working on the International, he had witnessed the arrival of an earlier group of Russian Mennonite immigrants. There had been more encounters later when Dennis had held the Regina-based position of Deputy Minister of Public Works for the Northwest Territories. Over the years the colonel had become impressed with the pioneering skills and adaptability of the Mennonites.

In the first year of the Great War, the CPR had taken note of the possibility of a mass Mennonite immigration from Russia.[79] Colonel Dennis, then assistant to President Thomas Shaughnessy, drew attention to the Russian government's decrees affecting adversely the "Austrian, Hungarian, German or Turkish subjects" in the empire and endangering particularly the possessions of those nearest the western borders.[80] After further investigation through the office of the High Commission in London, Dennis confirmed to Shaughnessy that "about six hundred thousand families of these people or some three million souls in all. . . recognized as the best farmers in Russia. . . are being expelled owing to their religious scruples about bearing arms or taking life in any form."[81] Clearly, the authorities were misinformed. There were not three million with "religious scruples about bearing arms" but at most 120,000. There were not even three million "Germans" but at most two million. The danger was not so much expulsion as dispossession. And the reasons were not religion but language, economics, and politics.

The accuracy of the information did not improve much with a direct report from A.M. Evalenko, publisher in New York of the Russian-American magazine and former immigration commissioner for the Santa Fe Railway Company. Evalenko was sent to Petrograd by the CPR and returned confirming the "enforced emigration" of "two million Russian Mennonites."[82] He indicated his willingness to

act as agent in Russia for the CPR in bringing these people to Canada in return for commission on the sale of lands to the Mennonites in Canada, who, it was assumed, would be "in possession of sufficient capital to make a splendid start in the West."[83]

> Roughly estimated the lands of all the Mennonites in Russia are valued at about seven hundred million dollars, and this is the amount of money which they may possess after the land will be sold to the Russian peasants.[84]

The proposal of Evalenko was recommended in March of 1916 to the CPR president by Dennis, along with the practical suggestion that, given the wartime conditions in Europe, immigrants be brought across the Pacific from Vladivostok to Vancouver.[85] Evalenko was eager to proceed because he and his colleague, the agent working in Canada, would share equally five per cent of the commission, while another three per cent would be paid by him "to some officials in Russia."[86] The proposal had already been approved by the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Ways and Communications, and the President of the Peasants Bank. The State Councillor had been authorized "to enter into a contract" with Mr. Evalenko, following "special legislation of the Duma" to confirm the same, which "would be done at once."[87]

Thus, it was not surprising that Dennis welcomed delegations to his office in 1921 and 1922 and that he proved to be highly sympathetic to their representations. The first meeting with Gerhard Ens, who was an old acquaintance, A.A. Friesen, and H.H. Ewert came after their conference with government officials in Ottawa. Colonel Dennis indicated that his company stood ready to advance credits and offer transportation facilities for the resettlement of the Russian Mennonites, provided the Canadian Mennonites would guarantee repayment.[88] His pledge, however, was not conclusive, for he still had to convince his superiors to grant a contract on credit. In this, he was aided by the Mennonite reputation for paying their debts.[89] On June 20, 1922, Dennis informed David Toews that the CPR was willing to grant transportation credits to an initial party of 3,000 Mennonites.[90] Thus, good progress towards opening up at least the possibility of a migration was made also in the area of transportation.

Preparing the Way in Canada

Toews next turned to the imposing task of persuading the Mennonites in Canada to accept the obligations attending the contract. This challenge was as formidable as had been the task of convincing the federal government and the railway. Luckily for the Mennonites waiting in Russia, Toews was one of those rare individuals who stood his ground during the worst adversity and whose character thrived on courageous action.[91]

It was apparent from the outset that winning approval of the Mennonite constituency for the immigration would not be an easy matter. At the July 1922 session of the Conference of Mennonites in Central Canada, even before he had received the contract outlining the particulars of the agreement, Toews inquired of the delegates whether he should sign the proposed document.[92] His question was greeted by nervous silence. Three times he repeated his request and three times the delegates did not respond. Finally, Toews announced that, given the indecision in the conference, his own church would assume the contractual responsibilities until others were prepared to co-operate. As reluctant as the conference was, all other Mennonite groups in Canada at the time were even more unwilling to assume any responsibility.

The antagonism towards Toews and the work he represented intensified after the arrival of the contract in the second week of July. The terms outlined in the document were not nearly as favourable as expected and served to promote additional discord.[93] Collectively, and ambiguously, made out between "The Mennonite Church of Canada and the CPR Co.," the particulars of the contract were a tall order.[94] At a total cost of approximately $400,000 to "the Mennonite Church of Canada," the CPR stood ready to dispatch two ships, with a combined capacity of 2,642, to the Black Sea.

It was the Board's responsibility to fill the ships with passengers but should the Board, for any reason and to any extent, fail to do so, it would still be obligated to provide a forfeit payment for each vacancy. The terms of payment stipulated that 25 per cent of the total cost had to be paid ten days after the account was rendered. The second 25 per cent was due after three months, and the balance within six months, together with an interest rate of six per cent per annum.

Toews found himself in a dilemma. On the one hand, the huge

debt associated with the movement, the responsibility of producing the right number of passengers at the right time and place in Russia, the poverty of many people in Canada and their resistance to receiving the immigrants, and plain common sense all suggested that he should abandon the scheme. On the other hand, Toews recognized that the fate of many Mennonites in Russia rested with bold action in Canada. He also realized that the terms of the contract, difficult as they were, represented the best terms available. His vacillation ended when he received word from the CPR that the Soviet authorities had granted passports to 3,000 people. The imperative for immediate action was reinforced in a wire received from B.B. Janz which disclosed that 2,774 Mennonites were gathered in Odessa, a port on the Black Sea, ready to leave.[95] Toews felt compelled to act and, despite considerable misgivings, he affixed his signature to the contentious contract on July 21. Toews admitted, while signing the document, that

> I did this hoping that the CPR would not carry out the contract as it read. When I came to Montreal, I told Colonel Dennis that the contract had been signed, but that we knew we could not carry it out as it read.[96]

Time-consuming negotiations in Russia and Canada had now finally set the stage for the actual commencement of the migration. In Russia, B.B. Janz had won legal approval for the emigration of 20,000 Mennonites from Russia, and an initial party of some 750 families was ready to leave. In Canada, David Toews, battling against tremendous odds, had cleared the way for the admission into the country of the first large contingent. The CPR was ready, Colonel Dennis having informed the federal government on July 6 that "we intend sending our ship forward to the Black Sea the moment we are advised of the signing of the contract at Rosthern, Saskatchewan."[97] Similarly, the Board had applied to the government for official authorization for the pending immigration,[98] even before formally endorsing the contract, since it was its declared aim to receive the immigrants before the advent of the fall harvest.

The Board was notified that its project enjoyed the full support of the government, providing three conditions were met: first, that the admitted Mennonites would be given shelter and support by their co-

religionists in Canada; second, that the immigrants would be placed on the land as farmers; and third, that none of the immigrants would become a public charge.[99] It was also understood that the Mennonite immigrants would be subject to the immigration regulations applicable to all others. F.C. Blair, Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Colonization, later confirmed that "the Department desires to cooperate with your Association in every reasonable way with a view to assisting you in getting started the movement of settlers you have in view."[100]

The optimism thus generated was short-lived. A combination of bureaucratic delays, international disputes, and an intensifying crisis situation in Russia delivered a cruel blow to the hopes of the immigration leaders and marked 1922 as the year of bitter disappointments and opportunity irrevocably lost. The first premonition of impending trouble reached B.B. Janz in early September, when he learned that only 3,000 settlers could be transported from Russia that year. A profound mood of despair and virtual panic seized the chairman of the Union.[101] Many prospective emigrants had sold almost all of their personal possessions and had liquidated their property at deflated prices on the understanding that they would shortly be departing from Russia. Now, with the coming of winter, and only a poor harvest to sustain them, the people faced a critical situation. Furthermore, their visas, which had been obtained at the expense of tremendous effort and not a little luck, were due to expire soon.

Other unexpected developments further jeopardized all movement for that year. Responding to rumours that a dreaded cholera epidemic had broken out in southern Russia, Colonel Dennis met with Board officials in Saskatoon on September 5.[102] The decision was made to contact the CPR agent in Moscow, A.R. Owen, to investigate the veracity of the report. Their worst fears were confirmed when Owen replied that all of the southern Russian ports had been quarantined because of the cholera outbreak. In addition to this misfortune, there had been renewed hostilities along the Turkish-Greek border, which seriously interfered with any traffic moving through the Dardanelles. Colonel Dennis had no choice but to inform the Canadian government, on September 22, that the departure of the CPR ships had been cancelled and that the migration would have to wait until the spring.[103]

Then, just as suddenly, an alternative presented itself. Working behind the scenes, Colonel Dennis and his advisors calculated that a move was still possible in 1922, providing the immigrants could be rerouted through the Latvian port of Libau lying on the Baltic Sea.[104] There were difficulties connected with this scheme, not the least of which was the expense required for the long journey from the southern Ukraine to the Baltic. The Board, already strapped for funds, was unable to produce the additional cash. In the end, the Mennonites in Russia themselves managed to finance the northern trip.[105] Thus, at the beginning of November, the prospects seemed good that at least an initial party of 3,000 could still be brought to Canada in 1922.

This was not to be. On November 21, the planned movement was abandoned, ostensibly for medical reasons.[106] Canadian immigration policy specified that all immigrants had to meet specified medical standards. This in itself constituted no problem except that the Soviets, in retaliation for Canada's refusal earlier that year to grant visas to visiting Soviet officials, declared that the Canadian medical inspectors would be prohibited from entering their country, thus preventing inspection on Russian soil. By the terms of the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement, Canada and the Soviet Union both consented to a mutual recognition of passports issued to persons travelling in the interests of trade. A clause, however, provided that any person could be refused entry to either country if such a person was not acceptable to the country to which he was going. Suspicious of the political sympathies of a small group of Russians, Canada declined to issue them visas, which in turn produced the Russian reaction.

It was decided, therefore, to verify the health of the immigrants after they had left the U.S.S.R. and arrived at Libau. The Soviets then further complicated matters by refusing to re-accept people who, having crossed the border into Latvia, might be rejected. The immigrants who would be disqualified by the medical officials would thus be consigned to a state of international limbo, unable to proceed to Canada or to return to their former homes, an unwelcome prospect in any event.[107] In view of these circumstances, Colonel Dennis relayed to the immigration officials his decision to "regretfully abandon the movement until much more satisfactory arrangements are entered into."[108]

The buoyant hopes and high expectations of July had by the year's end given way to a dark mood of growing despondency and resignation. A golden opportunity for beginning a mass Mennonite exodus from Russia had passed into history, first because of the time necessary to complete arrangements in and from Canada, and secondly, because of the unforeseen developments in Russia. Fortunately, the people knew of biblical parallels which sustained their faith and prevented them from giving up. As B.B. Janz said:

> Apparently the way, like that of the children of Israel, shall not be the closest one, but will once again be fought through a desert of difficulties.[109]

As if the parties involved had not encountered enough troubles, they were now forced to contend with mounting Mennonite opposition in Canada to the policies and practices of the Board. From the beginning, some had objected to the involvement of Canadian Mennonites in the rescue of the Russian brethren. An official protest was registered in July 1921 just prior to the sending of the first delegation to Ottawa.[110] The protest declared that the Waldheim-Rosthern district was categorically opposed both to the advance of money for the purposes of financing a migration and to the dispatching of an Ottawa delegation.

A large anti-Board protest meeting by leaders of the Mennonite Brethren conference took place on August 12, 1922, in Hepburn, Saskatchewan.[111] The temper of this gathering surfaced in an expansive letter subsequently forwarded to the CPR officials in Montreal. The communiqué reported that the churches represented at the Hepburn conference, namely, the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Brotherfield, Waldheim, Hepburn, Ebenezer, Neu Hoffnung, and Aberdeen, the two Bruderthaler Langham Churches at Langham, and the two Krimmer Churches, Salem and Immanuel, "refuse to be parties to the contract between the Mennonite Church of Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway as already signed by the Rev. David Toews" and that the named churches would "assume no responsibility whatsoever in any form or contract entered into by other branches of the Mennonite Church of Canada."[112]

Reports critical of the Board's handling of the migration proceedings likewise surfaced in the United States. The most outspoken

opposition appeared in the Mennonite periodicals.[113] The history of the Mennonites reveals much internal squabbling, but seldom has the disunity of these people been more graphically demonstrated than in the absorbing spectacle of Mennonite agitation against other Mennonites in the Mennonite press, concerning the proposed rescue of their people from Russia. *Vorwärts*, published at Hillsboro, *Der Herald*, published at Newton, and *Die Mennonitsche Rundschau*, published at Scottdale and later in Winnipeg for different reasons and at various times between 1922 and 1930, printed articles heavily prejudiced against the Board. Unsubstantiated allegations were published to cast aspersions on Toews and other Board officials as to the amount of financial remuneration being received, the huge debt they had irresponsibly incurred, and the religious orthodoxy of certain Board members.[114]

Toews steadfastly refused to relinquish his ground, despite the widespread antagonism to his work. His response to the critics was praiseworthy for its restraint and reasonableness:

> We are glad we signed the contract and kept it intact, in spite of all the attacks that we had to undergo. If it is poor judgement that was shown on our part I am in a way sorry, but I would rather show poor judgement in the way I did, than to show the soundest of judgement in the eyes of the world at large and fail to do our duty towards our suffering brethren.[115]

Why did so many people react so vehemently against an organization presumably dedicated to such a noble enterprise? Some opposition, undoubtedly, was connected to the matter of finances. The first post-war recession was just beginning to be felt in Western Canada. Many people, with some justification, feared the consequences of the material sacrifices that would shortly be asked of them. Their anxieties were fanned by the ambiguities with respect to the contract with the CPR. "The Mennonite Church of Canada" as a party to that contract was a new concept. A body by that name didn't really exist. There were Mennonite churches, a plethora of Mennonite churches, but not one that looked like the one referred to in the CPR contract. Was every Mennonite congregation in Canada meant? Would every Mennonite be held equally responsible for the accumulating debts? Despite repeated assurances from Toews and Colonel Dennis that the Board—and the Board only to the extent of its assets—and not

individuals, churches, or conferences, would be held responsible, the doubts persisted.

Other criticisms targeted the Board's single non-Mennonite participant.[116] Gerhard Ens, a member of the Swedenborgian Church, was suspected of participating in the project for reasons of personal monetary gain. It was well known that good money had been made in the past by agents of immigration and settlement schemes. Why should the present be any different? Indeed, some opposition, especially in the U.S.A., was due to the fact that not every land agent could get in on the prospective action. Ens's position with respect to nonresistance was also questioned. Reaction against his involvement was such that he resigned from his work in 1923. His resignation was reluctantly received by Toews, because Ens, with all his experience and contacts in governmental, financial, and legal circles, had been invaluable through the years and was especially so now. As far as Toews was concerned, Ens had served his people well and though he had joined the Swedenborgians he was in many ways still a Mennonite.

Perhaps the heart of the antipathy directed towards the projected migration lay in the fundamental parting of the ways in the 1870s that divided the Mennonites in Russia and their cousins in Western Canada. Both those who left Russia at the time and those who stayed believed the other party to be in error and themselves to be right. Since then, a considerable spread had developed between the economic and the cultural sophistication of the two groups and this gave rise to misunderstandings, suspicions, and acrimony.

Of a more serious nature were the reactions sparked by the sketchy reports received in Canada of the formation of the Home Defence (*Selbstschutz*) during the Russian civil upheaval. Some suggested that the principle of nonresistance had been abandoned. Others worried over the religious purity of the Russian Mennonites in general. One such person speculated that the Molotschna Colony was infested with modernism and that its real need was for missionaries.[117] In all, it appears that the enmity and resentment precipitated by the 1870s migration, which for so long had remained latent, now exploded with special force.

It was an uncomfortable time for Toews and the Board. Whenever possible, he responded to the critics, either in person or through the press. He knew that the public grasp of the complexities of the

proposed immigration was incomplete, often inaccurate, and badly distorted by hostile press. This deep conviction that the movement was right, and that his critics were wrong, strengthened his resolve to get the movement under way. Even a futile attempt to raise funds in the United States during the winter of 1922–23 failed to shake the Canadian leader's determination.[118]

The situation in 1923 remained deadlocked because of the Russian government's refusal to admit Canadian doctors into the country and the uncertainties this created for those emigrants who later would be disqualified from proceeding to Canada. A breakthrough came in April when B.H. Unruh obtained from the German government permission to transfer for temporary care any immigrants rejected at Libau to a holding camp at Lechfeld. In this former prisoner-of-war camp they would become the responsibility of German Mennonite Aid.[119] The Board quickly agreed to finance the transportation costs from Libau to Lechfeld, and thus the way was opened for the movement of Mennonite emigrants from Russia.

The numerous postponements had produced a restive spirit within the settlements. This disquietude was especially acute in Chortitza, a district that threatened to withdraw from the Union and to arrange for emigration independently. As in Canada, few of the rank-and-file Mennonites appreciated the awesome complexity of the task thrust upon David Toews and B.B. Janz and their colleagues. It was also true that the leaders were occasionally beset by doubts about immigration. When in the winter of 1922–23 J.P. Klassen, representing the impatient Chortitzer, stopped in Kharkov to pick up from B.B. Janz the Chortitza lists and to deliver them to Moscow directly, both Janz and Philip Cornies, vice-chairman of the Union, sought to dissuade him. Janz had just received a dispatch from B.H. Unruh suggesting considerable help from Germany in the restoration of the colonies, and both Janz and Cornies were excited about the reconstruction. Both begged him not to proceed, and according to a Klassen memoir, Cornies said:

> Think of our mission here in Russia, our Mennonite ideals, the beautiful villages, the productive land. What a wonderful future will be ours with help from Germany. No, our obligations are and remain in Russia.[120]

Klassen would not change his mind, and, lists in hand, he went to A.R. Owen's office in Moscow, where Owen reported that the CPR was ready to proceed, if the Mennonites were ready. Those in Chortitza were, Klassen confirmed, and thus immigration planning proceeded. The complaints of the people were silenced in May, when it was learned that the migration was about to begin. J.P. Klassen, representing Chortitza, and B.B. Janz, representing the Molotschna, hastened to Moscow to complete the final arrangements. They were offered the full co-operation of the authorities and by mid-June all the details were in order.

The Immigration Under Way

On June 22, 1923, the first group of 738 persons left Chortitza en route to the Russian border town of Sebezh. They bumped along the rails for five days in boxcars, the interiors of which they themselves had modified to suit their purposes. On crossing the border, every immigrant was subjected to a thorough delousing and disinfection process lasting several days. Thereafter, they were brought by train alongside a designated ship, where they were inspected by Canadian medical officials. Today, it seems incongruous that a people as dedicated to personal cleanliness standards as are the Mennonites were subjected to the most meticulous disinfection routine. The demand was irksome to many Mennonites and led many in North America to protest that the medical examinations were too exacting. However, sound reasons rested behind the Canadian medical policies. In the decade preceding World War I, it was discovered that typhus was transmitted by lice embedded in clothing and woollen blankets. Their bedding was not free of lice and hence Mennonites were prime candidates for the disease.[121]

The results of the medical inspections were most distressing and brought further anguish to the movement. An unusually high proportion of the travellers failed to pass the tests in Libau. Initially, there was no reason to predict such a discouraging development. After examining the first immigrants, one doctor reported: "I have no doubt that if the balance which is coming forward is like this first party, they will prove to be good citizens for Canada."[122] His early confidence was unwarranted.

Evidently the ravages of civil strife and the ensuing hygienic decay in the colonies had taken a greater toll than was at first estimated. Close scrutiny of other groups passing through Libau disclosed a high incidence of trachoma, an extremely contagious eye disease. All suspected cases were re-examined twice to verify the presence of the malady. As a consequence, almost 13 per cent of that year's 3,000 immigrants were prevented from continuing on to Canada. Of the 389 detained, 378 were suffering from trachoma.[123]

Canadian officials expressed amazement and disbelief that the Mennonites should have taken so few medical precautions when selecting the emigrants. One inspector concluded that "great carelessness has been shown on the part of some people in Russia in allowing these people to come forward."[124] Yet it is implausible to imagine now, as it must have been then, that the Mennonites, who placed such a precious value on the family, would voluntarily have left loved ones behind because of sickness or physical defects. For many, the disruption caused by the detention of one or more family members was often a greater hardship than had been life back in the Ukraine.

Immigration leaders immediately challenged the detention policies of the Canadian officials. B.B. Janz contended that the government should exhibit a greater degree of understanding and tolerance, given the problems facing the Mennonites in Russia. David Toews, likewise communicating his displeasure to the immigration officials, bluntly charged that the Mennonites had been deceived.[125] Whereas the Board had previously been told that physically defective immigrants would be treated with flexibility, it now observed that the law was rigorously applied and enforced without exception.[126]

Contrary to the claims of the Mennonites, it does not appear that the medical inspectors unjustly exercised their prerogatives. T.B. Williams reported that he and his colleagues did what they could to allow as many as possible to pass the tests. Willams personally re-examined all suspected cases twice before giving a final decision, so as to eliminate the possibility of certifying as trachoma a case that was merely conjunctivitis. For their part, the Mennonites seem never to have appreciated the debilitating nature of trachoma and the ease with which it could be contracted. At the turn of the century and continuing up to the present, trachoma remains a major cause of blindness in North and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and

northern India. The evidence would indicate that trachoma was introduced into the Mennonite settlements during the turbulence of the Russian civil war.

As time went on, medical inspectors were admitted into Russia and examinations of prospective immigrants took place in the colonies. By that time, Mennonite doctors in the Molotschna were "treating" trachoma patients to ensure that those affected would pass. The treatment consisted of flipping back the eyelids and removing the pus, etc. The operation was performed without the benefit of anesthesia and was extremely painful. It so exhausted children that they would need several days of sleep to recover, and sleep itself was a reason for medical leniency on the part of the examiners.[127] Since examinations could be repeated en route, escaping a negative medical verdict and visa refusal in Russia did not necessarily guarantee immediate admission to Canada.

Toews was disturbed not only by the forced separation of families, but also by the inflated financial burden caused by the unanticipated number of rejects.[128] More money was required from an already strained constituency to meet the expanded transportation costs to Lechfeld, to purchase basic food and clothing supplies for the refugees, and to support the required relief workers. The German government held the German Mennonite Aid responsible for the care of the detainees, but the Aid looked to the Board to cover most of the costs.

In an effort to ease the excessive pressure, Toews repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, inquired whether it would be possible to send all those detained to Canada, where they could receive treatment and where the strain imposed upon the ruptured families would be diminished. The government replied that, for reasons of health and politics, it could not accede to Toews's request.[129] For the duration of the migration, therefore, the problem of detained Mennonites persisted. Toews nevertheless continued to notify officials of complaints of irregular examinations and unjustified confinements and renewed his efforts to arrange for medical treatment in Canada.

A reception committee, appointed by the Board in the Rosthern area, had prepared for the billeting of the immigrants in eleven districts, avoiding those communities where the greatest opposition had appeared.[130] Even after the first ship had docked at Quebec City, the critics were warning people not to receive immigrants in their

homes lest they become party to the contract. However, the critics were losing out. On July 21, when the first trainload was expected, a sense of responsibility, mixed with curiosity, took hold in the area. All roads led to Rosthern that day as people drove up in their Studebakers, Chevrolets, and Model T Fords—450 of them according to one account—as well as in their buggies, hayracks, and grain wagons. A Saskatoon journalist reported the emotional reception:

> A great hush fell upon the assembled thousands and to the ears of the Canadians came a soft, slow chant . . . a musical expression of the great tragedy and heartbreak. . . . Then the Canadian Mennonites took up the song, and the tone increased in volume, growing deeper and fuller, until the melody was pouring forth from several thousand throats.[131]

The needs of the immigrants put the hospitality of their hosts to the test, because days, often weeks, and even months of free lodging and housing had to be supplied, and, if possible, employment, the payment for which was intended to help pay the transportation debt. However, the willingness to help increased, and in due course most of the Mennonite communities on the prairies were involved in the reception.[132] H.T. Klaassen correctly assessed this contribution when he wrote in the history of Eigenheim "that without the help of the Canadian brotherhood the whole work of bringing over the destitute brethren would not have been possible."[133]

The newcomers themselves strove not to be a burden, and when their hopes of early settlement on land did not materialize, they accepted whatever jobs were available, however arduous or menial. They also proceeded to organize themselves immediately in order to attend to their own needs and to speak with a common voice.[134] The Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee had small beginnings but soon it was tied into all immigrant groups, which, no matter how small, appointed district representatives. Under the auspices of the committee, D.H. Epp founded *Der Immigrantenbote*, a newspaper to serve the immigrants beginning in January of 1924.

Much-needed support for the work of the Board and for the admission of more immigrants now came also from the public press. In his full-page *Saskatoon Phoenix* feature on the "progressive Mennonites," Gerald M. Brown lauded the "eager and willing"

people who survived the "first winter without appeal to charity."[135] Though many of the immigrants were "pitifully incompetent" when it came to manual labour, having been university students, teachers, and "scions of wealthy families," they readily performed farm chores and accepted other odd jobs in order to provide for their families and to pay their debts:

> . . . day after day, with the mercury sinking in its tube, they labored away . . . there were no loafers, no drones; every man sought work, and, in most cases found it . . . and ten thousand more hard-earned dollars found their way into the coffers of the Canadian Pacific Railway.[136]

These people, said the *Phoenix*, were not "parasites" but "useful citizens." When formerly wealthy men like Heinrich Suderman, who owned 9,000 acres in Russia, accepted work as a section hand on the railroad or when a white-haired man of sixty like Isaak Zacharias, who was worth half a million before the revolution, became a farm labourer, then Canada could be certain that it was accepting good people who could "adjust themselves to the new order of circumstances." Besides, they were "enthusiastic supporters" of the Canadian educational system, eager to learn the English language:

> not only the children but their parents are anxious to learn English, and in consequence 25 night schools were established in the three western provinces, and each class has been filled to capacity with men and women since its inception.[137]

Notwithstanding the indebtedness of the Board and the disruptive impact produced by the Lechfeld situation, the relative success of 1923 brought fresh pressure upon the Board to obtain another contract. In February, David Toews and others met with CPR officials in Montreal to discuss the possibilities. President Beatty indicated he was prepared to make certain adjustments to the outstanding accounts, providing the terms of payment were so arranged that no transportation debt would remain unliquidated for a period longer than two years.[138]

In April, the second formal agreement was concluded between the Board and the CPR.[139] For the first time, the contract permitted the transport of both credit and paying passengers. This new dimension

reflected the shift that had occurred in Russia. Janz was cognizant of the depleted financial reserves in Canada and successfully won governmental sanction for the emigration of individuals with means to pay their way quite apart from the movement of groups of people without any means. Individual visas involved greater expense than did group passports and assumed a certain degree of personal solvency, but some cash passengers helped the CPR to look more kindly on the movement of others on credit.

In Russia it appeared that those of lesser means were now being neglected. Destitute Mennonites who, according to the earlier agreement forged between the Union and the Soviet authorities, ought to have left the country were unable to do so. Wealthier Mennonites, who had not planned to leave their homes, were suddenly given the opportunity to reverse their decision.[140] The restiveness pervading the Ukrainian settlements coincided with agitation in the central provinces and in Siberia of other Mennonites who wanted to be included in the emigration lists. Their demands were legitimized and strengthened by the worsening local conditions compared to the slight economic improvement that had worked its way into the Ukraine.

The Board and the CPR had their own problems. Exactly how many immigrants could they process in 1924? Twice the figures were revised, first downward and then upward. At the year's end, the bolder course had successfully been concluded and 5,048 additional immigrants had been brought to Canada. Most of them located in Western Canada, especially Manitoba, but some 1,500 were stopped in Ontario and received by the Swiss Mennonites. A.A. Friesen justified to the immigration department his agency's decision to divert such a sizeable group to the eastern province, where it was feared they would not become agriculturalists in accordance with the agreement. "The Old Mennonites," he explained, "have been in sympathy with our work from the beginning. Last year we did not bring any immigrants to Ontario because we had ample room in the West."[141]

The Swiss Mennonites were ready to make an outstanding contribution to the success of the immigration[142] in spite of the fact that doubts about the undertaking had also arisen in Ontario. The repeated setbacks and delays had prompted many to question the capabilities of the Board. S.F. Coffman had been asked to throw his

support behind American interests who wished to direct the refugees to Mexico. There was even talk of Ontario conducting its own relief and rescue mission through the auspices of the Non-Resistant Relief Organization.[143] But Coffman announced that the Ontario Mennonites were committed to work in partnership with the Rosthern organization. The promised support was translated into concrete action in 1924. In response to the Board's distress call, they offered their time, money, and homes to the needy immigrants.

For the 1924 movement, David Toews appealed to S.F. Coffman to arrange for the hosting of at least 2,500 people in Ontario. The 1923 immigration had taxed the resources in Saskatchewan, and the following spring most of the immigrants were still not on their own land. Besides, crop prospects on the prairies were not very good that year. It seemed like an impossible request to Coffman, and it wasn't because he didn't empathize with the movement or feel keenly for the plight of the Mennonites in and from Russia. On the contrary, he had already caused his conference to provide funds in 1921.[144] In that year Russian relief approached $4,000, one-third of all the amounts given for foreign causes, and in 1922 the amount exceeded $7,000, more than one-third of the total conference giving for that year.[145] Additionally, the Mennonite Conference of Ontario had acted immediately to authorize his participation in the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization upon its founding and in the delegation to Ottawa seeking removal of the immigration ban.[146]

In response to David Toews's plea, Coffman agreed to try for housing for 1,000, but so generous was the response from the New Mennonites, Old Mennonites, Old Order Mennonites, Amish Mennonites, and Old Order Amish that 1,340 persons were received and assigned to the various homes and districts (see Table 17). Reporting on the arrival of the first train on July 19, 1924, the local newspaper noted how complete was the involvement:

> Practically every Mennonite in the county was in Waterloo and their rigs and autos were crammed to capacity with humans while baggage was tied on in every conceivable place.[148]

Against almost insurmountable odds, almost 8,000 Mennonites had been transplanted to Canada by the end of 1924. Unfortunately,

TABLE 17[147]

SUMMARY OF IMMIGRANTS RECEIVED IN ONTARIO IN 1924
(BY POST OFFICE DISTRICT AND NUMBERS OF IMMIGRANTS)

Alma R.2	5	Kitchener	41	St. Agatha	6
Ayr	1	Kitchener R.2	15	St. Agatha R.1	2
Ayr R.1	4	Kitchener R.3	16	St. Jacobs	19
Ayr R.2	9	Kitchener R.4	32	St. Jacobs R.1	29
				Selkirk	7
Baden	28	Linwood	4	Shakespeare	9
Baden R.2	22			Shakespeare R.1	4
Beamsville	1	Millbank	7		
Blair R.1	7	Millbank R.1	18	Tavistock	14
Breslau	22	Milverton	18	Tavistock R.1	43
Breslau R.1	20	Milverton R.1	15		
Breslau R.2	9			Vineland	13
Bridgeport	4	New Dundee	48	Vineland Station	39
Bright R.1	15	New Dundee R.1	5		
Bright R.4	6	New Hamburg	18	Wallenstein	25
Brunner	1	New Hamburg R.1	11	Wallenstein R.1	9
		New Hamburg R.2	19	Wallenstein R.2	16
Conestoga	19	New Hamburg R.3	7	Waterloo	127
Crosshill	2			Waterloo R.1	29
		Petersburg	40	Waterloo R.2	25
Drayton	5	Petersburg R.1	13	Waterloo R.3	16
		Petersburg R.2	63	Wellesley	25
Elmira	35	Plattsville	10	Wellesley R.1	20
Elmira R.1	10	Plattsville R.1	3	Wellesley R.2	25
Elmira R.2	17	Plattsville R.2	5	West Montrose	2
Elmira R.3	8	Preston	44	West Montrose R.1	1
Elmira R.4	5	Preston R.1	8		
Hawkesville	7	Rainham	1	Zurich	17
Haysville	7	Roseville	8		
Heidelberg	6			Unknown	47
Hespeler	27				

Total Number of Immigrants: 1,340

the Board's depressed financial status, coupled with the poverty of the Mennonites still in Russia, discouraged the prospect of any further movement. A two-year transportation bill of over $825,000 had accumulated, of which only $183,000 had been repaid.[149] The CPR

had shown commendable charity to the Mennonites in the past, but since it was a business company it began to press with persistence for greater punctuality in meeting the payments.

In an effort to forestall imminent collapse of the immigration movement, the Board issued an urgent financial appeal to the Mennonites in the United States. But the desired American response never materialized. At one point, the Mennonite Colonization Board (MCB), an American counterpart to the Canadian Board and successor to the Mennonite Executive Committee for Colonization, had endorsed the Canadian program. The American body even recommended that a policy of close co-operation be followed between the two organizations and that an emergency fund-raising campaign be launched in the United States.[150] The organization, however, never made good its assurances and actually served to undermine the stability of the Board.

From 1923 to 1926, the MCB aggressively promoted Mexico as the best destination for the beleaguered Russian Mennonites, and it met with some success. Over 500 Mennonites from Russia made Mexico their home, at least temporarily. Although the MCB was not the only American organization to which the Board appealed for funds, its response to the plea reveals much about the priorities of American Mennonites at the time. During the time that it made available $6,850 to the Board, 28 constituent churches pledged $56,000 for the Mexico settlement project.[151]

The American Mennonites advanced several sensible reasons for their preference of Mexico over Canada. They referred to the strict medical examinations demanded by Canada, the cold climate prevailing in the western prairies, and the presence in Mexico of other Mennonites. But they failed to explain satisfactorily the lack of unanimity between the Mennonite organizations in the two North American countries. Thus, the cool indifference, if not outright hostility, displayed by the American Mennonites to the Board remains one of the real puzzles of the entire rescue venture. Late in 1925, when a large migration to Mexico had proven to be impractical, the American committee redirected its resources to Canada. The support was welcomed, but at that juncture the help offered was too little coming too late. The best years for emigration from Russia and immigration to Canada were rapidly coming to a close.

The Board had meanwhile negotiated another contract with the CPR for the year 1925. Even though the terms of earlier contracts

had not been met, the company agreed to extend its assistance in yet another contract. It insisted, however, that the Board incorporate and that $100,000 of the debt be covered by October 1. Both conditions were met, allowing 3,772 immigrants to come to Canada in 1925. They were joined by an additional 5,940 refugees the following year. The 1926 movement was unusually large—it was in fact the peak year—owing to the inclusion of nearly 3,500 cash passengers. That year's contingent included also the B.B. Janz family. Janz had officially laid down his duties as chairman of the Union in March 1926. Despite his justifiable fears that he would not be allowed to leave the country, the family managed the trip without incident, the cost being borne entirely by the CPR.[152]

The shrewd Janz had rightly gauged that time was fast running out for the Mennonites in Russia. The New Economic Policy, a reprieve from collectivization, was about to make way for the first Five-Year Plan. The Soviet Union's new leader, Josef Stalin, was implementing policies which sharply curtailed political, economic, and religious freedoms. The government's attitude towards emigration of its citizens likewise stiffened. After 1926, few Mennonites were allowed to leave the country. Only 847 arrived in 1927 and 511 in 1928 (Table 18).[153]

TABLE 18[153]

CASH AND CREDIT PASSENGERS
(BY YEAR OF IMMIGRATION)

YEAR	CREDIT PASSENGERS	CASH PASSENGERS	TOTALS
1923	2,759	—	2,759
1924	3,894	1,154	5,048
1925	2,171	1,601	3,772
1926	2,479	3,461	5,940
1927	340	507	847
1928	408	103	511
1929	1,009	10	1,019
1930	294	11	305
Totals	13,354	6,847	20,201

The Soviet door was closing and, unknown to most, the day of opportunity for entering Canada was also nearing an end. The successful settlement of the immigrants and a buoyant economy were essential to the ongoing admission of many more immigrants. The Board did what it could to put the people on land, but the Canadian door was closing anyway. Even the Canadian National Railways, jealous of the CPR's success and anxious to get a share of the action with the help of a rival Mennonite organization, could do nothing to reverse or slow the trend. The years of greatest opportunity for the rescue and resettlement of the Russian Mennonites has passed into history.

FOOTNOTES

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2 Quoted in John B. Toews, ed., *Selected Documents: The Mennonites in Russia from 1917 to 1930* (Winnipeg: Christian Press, 1975), p. 299.

3 See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Man.: D.W. Friesen & Sons for the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council, 1962), pp. 28–38, and John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Russia, 1921–1927* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1967), pp. 21–50.

4 P.C. 1204, *Canada Gazette*, 14 June 1919, p. 3824.

5 Cornelius Krahn, "Russia," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4:386–87.

6 CGC, XV-31.2, "1910-Agriculture;" David G. Rempel, "Mennonite Agriculture and Model Farming as Issues of Economic Study and Political Controversy, 1870–1917," an unpublished essay.

7 Quoted in Rempel, p. 55.

8 Cornelius Krahn, p. 389.

9 David G. Rempel, pp. 50–51.

10 C.J. Dyck, ed., *An Introduction to Mennonite History* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 178–79.

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12 David G. Rempel, p. 53.
13 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 39 ff.
14 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15 *Protokoll des Allgemeinen Kongresses in Ohrloff, Taurien, vom 14.-18. August, 1917*, in John B. Toews, pp. 449–78, 480.
16 John B. Toews, p. 395.
17 For several eyewitness accounts of the violent events, see Dietrich Neufeld, *Ein Tagebuch aus dem Reiche des Totentanzer* (Emden: By the Author, 1921), or *A Russian Dance of Death: Revolution and Civil War in the Ukraine*, translated and edited by Al Reimer (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1977); Gerhard P. Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgment* (Lodi, Cal.: By the Author, 1974); Johann J. Nickel, *Thy Kingdom Come: The Diary of Johann J. Nickel of Rosenhof, 1918–1919*, translated by John P. Nickel (Saskatoon: By the Author, 1978).
18 David G. Rempel, pp. 81–82.
19 Dietrich Neufeld, *A Russian Dance of Death*, p. 9.
20 Quoted in John B. Toews, "The Halbstadt Volost 1918–22: A Case Study of the Mennonite Encounter with Early Bolshevism," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 48 (October 1974):492.
21 Adam Giesinger, *From Catherine to Khrushchev: The Story of Russia's Germans* (Winnipeg: By the Author, 1974), pp. 261–63.
22 See Victor Peters, *Nestor Makhno: The Life of an Anarchist* (Winnipeg: Echo Books, 1970), p. 37 ff.
23 Cf. J.P. Epp, "The Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine: An Eye Witness Account," *Mennonite Life* 26 (July 1971):138–42; Lyle Friesen, "The Mennonite Selbstschutz in its Historical Perspective" (research paper, Conrad Grebel College, 1973); John B. Toews, "The Origins and Activities of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in the Ukraine (1918–1919)," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46 (January 1972):5–40; George C. Thielman, "The Mennonite Selbstschutz in the Ukraine during the Revolution," *The New Review* 10 (March 1970):50–60.
24 Adolf Ehrt, *Das Mennonitentum in Russland* (Berlin: Julius Beltz, 1932), p. 117.
25 John B. Toews, "The Halbstadt Volost 1918–22," p. 39.
26 See, for example, Gerhard P. Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgement*, pp. 37–79.
27 According to J.G. Rempel, "Typhus," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4:760, 1,500 people died in the Chortitza settlement alone.
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30 Vernon Smucker, "Our Relief Activities," *Mennonite Year-Book and Directory*, 1922, pp. 24–30.

31 For accounts of the founding of the Mennonite Central Committee, see John D. Unruh, *In the Name of Christ: A History of the Mennonite Central Committee and its Service, 1920–1951* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1952), pp. 14–16; Guy F. Hershberger, "Historical Background to the Formation of the Mennonite Central Committee," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 44 (July 1970):213–44.

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36 Walter Quiring, "Unsere 'Hollanderei'—ein geschichtlicher Irrtum?" *Der Bote* 12 (20 March 1935):1–2.

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38 The work of Janz is more fully presented in John B. Toews, "B.B. Janz and the Mennonite Emigration," *Mennonite Life* 23 (July 1968):111–14. See also John B. Toews, *With Courage to Spare: The Life of B.B. Janz (1877–1964)* (Hillsboro, Kans.: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978).

39 John B. Toews, *With Courage to Spare*, p. 28.

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29, 32–33.

41 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*, pp. 93–94.

42 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 69.

43 *Ibid.*

44 A.A. Friesen, "Alt-Mexico als Siedlungsgebiet fuer Mennoniten," *Vorwaerts* 19 (18 February 1921):9.

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47 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 81–92. See also CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1184, File 139, B.J. Schellenberg, "Aeltester David Toews: Sein Leben und Wirken," n.d.

48 Esther Ruth Epp, *The Origins of Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)* (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980), pp. 24–5; according to the treasurer's report from 27 July 1920 to 26 December 1924, the Canadian Central Committee had contributed $57,101.86 to a total amount of $647,657.74, *Mennonite Year-Book and Directory*, 1925, p. 31.

49 Donald Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896–1932* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), p. 16.

50 P.C. 1203, *Canada Gazette*, 14 June 1919, p. 3825.

51 Donald Avery, pp. 90–115.

52 Act to Amend the Immigration Act, 1919, 9–10 George V, ch. 25.

53 P.C. 2930, *Canada Gazette*, 4 December 1920, pp. 2180–81.

54 P.C. 183, *Canada Gazette*, 24 March 1923, p. 4106.

55 Donald Avery, pp. 93–101.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 100.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

58 During the summer of 1920 both Gerhard Ens and Peter Janzen, the latter a member of the Nebraska State Senate, hosting the Studienkommission at Janzen's Nebraska home, had asked J.A. Calder, Minister of Immigration and Colonization, to have the prohibitory Order-in-Council rescinded. CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 602. In November, H.A. Neufeld sought permission for the entry to Canada of a small group of Mennonites born in Russia but living in Germany. His request, like those of Ens and Janzen, was turned down. PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 174, File 58764, Part 6.

59 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 72.

60 The delegation party included A.A. Friesen of Russia, Gretna's H.H. Ewert, H.A. Neufeld of Herbert, T.M. Reesor of Markham, and Vineland's S.F. Coffman. PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, Petition presented to the Department of Immigration and Colonization, 19 July 1921.

61 H. H. Ewert, "Bericht ueber die Reise der Deputation nach Ottawa," *Der Mitarbeiter* 14 (September 1921):71, 75–76.

62 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, Petition presented to the Department of Immigration and Colonization, 19 July 1921.

63 H.H. Ewert, p. 71.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

65 *Ibid.*

66 The German words were: "Eine Art Propaganda zu Gunsten der Mennoniten ist eingeleitet worden." *Ibid.*, p. 75.

67 CGC, XV-1.2. A.A. Friesen to S.F. Coffman, 7 February 1922.

68 John S. Weber, "History of S.F. Coffman 1872–1954: The Mennonite Churchman" (M.A. research paper, University of Waterloo, 1975), p. 77.
69 The delegates this time included A.A. Friesen, H.H. Ewert, Gerhard Ens, Sam Goudie, and S.F. Coffman. CMCA, XXII-A, Vol. 1270, File 602, "A Statement and Petition of the Mennonites of Ontario and Western Canada," n.d.
70 According to E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites of Manitoba* (Altona, Man.: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), p. 203, the government did not publish the Order in the *Canada Gazette* because it did not want to arouse public antagonism. A copy of the Order is found in CMCA, XXII-A, Vol. 1270, File 602.
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72 "Protokoll, der Ersten Sitzung der Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization," *Der Mitarbeiter* 15 (June 1922):45–46. See also Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 72–76.
73 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1184, File 139, David Toews, "Erinnerungen aus der Zeit der Russlandhilfe und Immigrationsarbeit," n.d., p. 12.
74 *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11; Schellenberg, pp. 44–45.
75 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1389, File 1532, "The Mennonite Colonization Association of North America, Limited: Prospectus," n.d.
76 *Canada Gazette*, 12 August 1922, pp. 650–51.
77 James B. Hedges, *Building the Canadian West: The Land and Colonization Policies of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 2.
78 Peter L. Neufeld, "Colonel J.S. Dennis: Catalyst of Prairie Development," *The Western Producer* 12 April 1973, p. C6. See also Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 107–9.
79 CPR, RG. 2, (105187).
80 *Ibid.*, Col. J.S. Dennis to Sir Thomas Shaughnessy, 31 December 1914; *ibid.*, "Decisions and Orders of the Russian Government Regarding Mennonites in Russia."
81 *Ibid.*, J.S. Dennis to Thomas Shaughnessy, 31 August 1915.
82 *Ibid.*, A.M. Evalenko to J.S. Dennis, 7 August 1915.
83 *Ibid.*, J.S. Dennis to Thomas Shaughnessy, 31 December 1914.
84 *Ibid.*, "Position of Mennonites Affected by This Act and Conditions Under Which They Are To Be Moved," n.d.
85 *Ibid.*, J.S. Dennis to Thomas Shaughnessy, 13 March 1916.
86 *Ibid.*, A.M. Evalenko to J.S. Dennis, 7 August 1915.
87 *Ibid.*, J.S. Dennis to Thomas Shaughnessy, 13 March 1916.
88 H.H. Ewert, "Bemuehungen der Delegation in Bezug auf den Transport der mennonitischen Auswanderer von Russland nach Canada," *Der Mitarbeiter* 15 (April 1922):28–9.
89 A federal government loan of $100,000, granted to the Mennonite

pioneers in Manitoba in 1875, had been repaid by 1892. See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), p. 226.

90 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1271, File 608, J.S. Dennis to David Toews, 20 June 1922.

91 Such was the eulogy awarded Toews at his funeral in Rosthern on 28 February 1947. J.J. Thiessen, "I Remember David Toews (1870-1947): the Good Samaritan of his time," *The Canadian Mennonite* 15 (13 June 1967), p. 31.

92 David Toews, "Erinnerungen," p. 12.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

94 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1271, File 607, "Memorandum of Agreement," 21 July 1922.

95 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 602, David Toews, article for publication, 20 July 1922.

96 Quoted in Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 115.

97 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, Colonel Dennis to the Department of Immigration, 6 July 1922.

98 *Ibid.*

99 David Toews, "Immigration from Russia in the Past and in the Future," in *Official Minutes and Reports of the Twenty-fourth Session of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of N.A., 1926*, pp. 296-99.

100 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, F.C. Blair to Gerhard Ens, 21 September 1922.

101 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*, p. 98.

102 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1307, File 848, David Toews to B.B. Janz, 29 September 1922.

103 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 604, Chronology of events from 31 March 1922 to 12 September 1923.

104 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 602, J.S. Dennis to David Toews, 29 September 1922.

105 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 602, J.S. Dennis to David Toews, 30 October 1922.

106 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, J.S. Dennis to F.C. Blair, 21 November 1922.

107 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*, pp. 104-6.

108 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, J.S. Dennis to F.C. Blair, 21 November 1922.

109 Quoted in John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*, p. 100.

110 David Toews, "Erinnerungen," p. 6.

111 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

112 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1178, File 108, P.J. Friesen and F.J. Baerg to J.S. Dennis, 15 August 1922. The Steinbach Chortitzer Church dispatched a similar letter to Dennis.

113 CMCA, XXII-A, Vol. 1178, File 108, "Press Controversy." See,

for example, "Ein Wort zur Aufklaerung," *Der Vorwaerts*, 8 December 1922.

114 See Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 125–31.

115 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1174, File 75, David Toews to C.E. Krehbiel, 5 May 1923.

116 David Toews, "Erinnerungen," pp. 8, 21.

117 David Toews, "Erinnerungen," p. 19.

118 When one of the Board members advised cancelling the contract with the CPR upon hearing of Toews's unsuccessful fund-raising attempt, the latter replied: "Nein, ich glaube wir muessen den Kontrakt aufrecht erhalten. Wenn die Bewegung nicht in Fluss kommen kann, dann wollen wir uns wenigstens nicht beschuldigen muessen." David Toews, "Erinnerungen," p. 21.

119 Benjamin Heinrich Unruh, pp. 18–19.

120 The quote is contained, and the whole incident reported, in J.P. Klassen, "So kam es zur Auswanderung," CGC, XV.31.2, "1920-Immigration." Klassen later was located at Bluffton College in Ohio as a teacher of art. Cornies remained true to his conviction that he should stay in Russia, but was subsequently exiled to Siberia by the Soviets. For another personal account of "small events" that led to emigration, see H.H. Kornelsen, "Vor 43 Jahren," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 89 (9 February 1966):14, 15; (16 February 1966):6, 14; (23 February 1966):14–16.

121 Cf. William H. McNeill, *Plagues & Peoples* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 148–56.

122 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, C. Moguin to T.B. Williams, 6 July 1923.

123 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, W.R. Little to Mr. Black, 20 September 1923.

124 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, T.B. Williams to F.C. Blair, 23 July 1923.

125 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1271, File 608, David Toews to J.S. Dennis, 8 August and 3 October 1923. See also Vol. 1270, File 604.

126 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, T.B. Williams to F.C. Blair, 11 July 1923.

127 Interview with T.D. Regehr, 25 July 1981.

128 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part I, T.B. Williams to F.C. Blair, 23 July 1923. One immigration official observed that "it looks as though there is going to be considerable trouble and expense for somebody in connection with the rejected people if they are even permitted to reach Germany."

129 See, for example, CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1270, File 604, W.J. Black to David Toews, 8 October 1923.

130 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 145.

131 Gerald M. Brown in *Saskatoon Phoenix* (July 1923).

132 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 146–47.
133 H.T. Klaassen, *Birth and Growth of Eigenheim Mennonite Church, 1892–1974*, p. 41.
134 Frank H. Epp, pp. 204–12.
135 Gerald M. Brown, "Progressive Mennonites Get in Step," *Saskatoon Phoenix* (28 June 1924):13.
136 *Ibid.*
137 *Ibid.*
138 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 151.
139 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1271, File 607, "Memorandum of Agreement," 5 April 1924.
140 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland*, p. 147–49.
141 PAC, Immigration Branch, RG. 76, Vol. 196, File 79160, Part II, A.A. Friesen to S.J. Egan, 24 September 1924.
142 For a discussion of their co-operation, see John S. Weber, pp. 73–100.
143 *Ibid.*, pp. 82–87.
144 *Calendar of Appointments*, 1921–22, p. [23].
145 *Calendar of Appointments*, 1922–23, p. [14].
146 *Ibid.*, p. [19].
147 CGC, XV-1.1, "Billeting List for Russian Mennonite Immigration," 1924.
148 "Unexpectedly Large Quota of Mennonites for County," *Kitchener-Waterloo Daily Record* (21 July 1924).
149 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 153.
150 *Ibid.*, pp. 158–61.
151 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 164.
152 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, T.O.F. Herzer to S.G. Porter, Manager, Dept. of Material Resources, CPR, Calgary, 14 March 1928.
153 Jacob H. Janzen, *David Toews: Vorsitzender der Kolonisationsbehoerde der Mennoniten in Canada* (Rosthern, Sask.: D.H. Epp, 1939), p. 18.