ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

OF

RUSSIAN-MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS

of the 1920's (Ontario)

Part I & II of Interview #19 in the series of Oral History Interviews conducted by Henry Paetkau, Graduate History Student at the University of Waterloo on behalf of Conrad Grebel College under the direction of Walter Klaassen.

Interview: Part I was conducted on Monday, July 19, 1976
10:30 - 12:00 a.m.

Part II was conducted on July 20, 1976, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Interviewee: Mr. Henry Goertz

Residing at the Heidehof Senior Citizens Residence
Apt. # B-119
600 Lake St.
St. Catharines, Ontario

Part II of the interview continues on the second half of Side B of this tape and concludes on Side B, Tape #20.

Interview:

PAETKAU: Mr. Goertz, when you were born and where you were born, a little bit about your family background and your early history.

GOERTZ: Well I was born 1898, 28th of August in South Russia. My father was Henry Goertz too. He has a little farm, not very big. Just what they call a that's what they had in our country. And he sold that and we moved to That 1902-1903 those years and 1904-1905 he died of typhus fever up there and left mother with four of us children. Then grandfather, Henry Janzen from took us back to . After a couple of years mother got remarried and I had a stepfather. The stepfather wasn't one of the type that liked schoolers too much. Worked--naturally I worked. We didn't have our own but you know I worked on the farms when I was a youngster--5:00 in the morning or--and I had to go up to work for farmer Peters, or Janzen or whoever they were and they needed a little chap like me for handy things.

GOERTZ (cont'd): I worked there for 20¢ a day. That's 20 kopek, (per day from early morning till late at night). Sometimes in a public school people need a fellow to drive the horses in the field for ploughing or whatever they had to do. I was good at it too and they called on me. My teacher was Doddy a really good teacher. He always let me go. My background is very poor. I'm not one of these that came to Canada with a high education, with money or was rich in Russia. I come of one of the poorest families you could think of what the villagers at that time had. Sometimes in the morning I went to school mother gave me a piece of brown bread and a little (?) syrup--watermelon syrup and that was it. Naturally when the farmer needs me for something well they call--20¢ a day that was a lot of money for me at that time; the teacher he knew it and left me off. But always the teacher gave me the lesson what they would have that day or so on and when I was driving the horses I was studying this lesson. I never failed the exams in public school, all those 7 years, never. My marks was actually one of the highest you could get. When he gave me--well sometimes we had to write up a story or so or he tried to read a story for us and then he said, "Now you write down your opinion." Well I could make it in a few sentences I didn't have to make me home. And that's what my marks came in for. Well I worked for the farmers until I finished school and soon as school was finished my stepfather hired me out to work in a grocery store in a neighbour village. I worked there until the Revolution 1917. I started off at 5 rubels, that would be $5.00 a month and the meal. But I had to work. I worked hard. Cleaning the store and open the doors. It was my job living in a farm area, farmers coming early 7:00 in the morning till about 8:00 at night. That was the schedule. I never grumbled, did what the boss told me. Always told me I would meet so many different people in the store. There would come hundreds of them would enter the store. Some will come in with, well say they like to have an approach with a nice smile and good morning. And the hour is even--they don't want to look at you 'cause he's grouchy from--he was born that way and he has family troubles. And he explained to me--the boss was good to me. He said, "You can get mad at people as much as you like but keeping smiling and keep your fists in the pocket." I never forget that. I got along very well with those people and the boss. Till the Revolution came and then there was nothing to sell.

PAETKAU: What was it like being a poor person in relation to some of the Mennonites who were quite wealthy?

GOERTZ: Well that is--I felt it at that time and I still have the feeling because that went in my blood I guess. There was a class distinction. They sometimes say,

GOERTZ (cont'd): "Due best moa son en son." (You're a nobody) They let you know that you belong to their--you know, if they say the well off farmers, the boys--well I associated with them too but they always let me feel that when you are asked you can talk, if you aren't you can listen in. Well that was different too. Some farmers they were really nice others were different. The same as you find people here probably in this country too. I always had the feeling I was pushed a little bit in a corner and we don't need your advice, all what we need of you is your muscles and your work and do what you have been told. That's--looking back I would say--I don't say this that I pity myself. I am glad that I went through all that because--but that probably made me a man to get along with people.

PAETKAU: Do you remember when the war started; the first world war? Did you hear about that?

GOERTZ: Oh yes.

PAETKAU: What kinds of things were they saying?

GOERTZ: Schooltime my teacher, he put something in me what sometimes —well I think he knew it. He put something in me that I was a--well we were in Russia and I was all for Russia 100%. I have had a strong feeling that I belong to Russia and Russia is my country and I'm going to live here forever. Then I started working in the store, 1914 when the war started. What was it, they harvested 12-14 whatever it was, then Russian men entered the store and he always--well he hauled loads for the store back and forth. Back to or wherever it was and then he entered the store and he said in Russian, "Good Morning". Then he said, "You are a God damm German. I could kill you right here." Well I looked at him and I knew that man and I said, "Maxine, why would you think like that? What did I do wrong?" "Well you called me German swone." He said, "You know the war broke out?" I said, "Yes, I know that but what has that got to do with me?" "Well you are all Germans, your country started the war on Russia." Well I was scared to death. Coming home on Saturday night I said, "Now mother tell me, are we Germans or are we Russians?" And mother said, "Henry, we are all German nationalities that came in. We are Russian citizens now but we came from Germany all originally, our forefathers." I told her what this man had told me. And she said, "Tell your boss, Mr. Neufeld where I worked for." Well that far I didn't but then I told Mr. Neufeld and Mr. Neufeld he said, "That's what he said?" And I said, "Yah that's what he told me. That we all should be killed." And he said, "I never thought of him that he would say things like that cause afterall he worked for me." But that was all and I don't know if he ever talked to him or not. That was the first

GOERTZ (cont'd) approach the Russians made to me. The first thing that he enlightened me that I am not a Russian. So far I always thought I was a Russian citizen, born here. My grandfather was born there, my father was born there. My great grandfather, he came as a young man to Russia and we always stayed in that village. Never moved, just stayed in that village, right from the beginning to the end. Well then you know I stayed at the store, I served all kinds. I talked the Russian language just as well as the "blot deutsche" or the High German. Well finally as the war developed you know it's getting worse and worse. One day I was approached by--you probably heard about Makhno. Here is a store what the Russian people--well not all of them, most of them were poor. They knew me that I was coming out of poor background. And some of them a lot older then me they approached me to join them. And I said, "Why would I join it? I am not--I was born no politics whatsoever." "Well," they said, "you know your people. All you would have to do is listen in and tell us and we do the rest." I looked at him and I said, "I can't do that." And they wanted to know why. And all I said, "Well that would be a traitor to the home folks and I won't do that." Since then they approached me after that once more and they were more organized and I worked for farmers again cause in the store was nothing to do. So I worked for farmers again. They approached me again and I said, "No I won't do it." I had to suffer for that later. And I suffered a lot for it.

PAETKAU: From these same people?

GOERTZ: From these same people that knew me. The Russian people. I know them all by names yet. They really--well I don't know what I should have done at that time. It was a terrible time. I joined the Selbstschutz 'cause I saw--I never thought that I would but I saw one thing once--about maybe 40-50 men came to our village, horseback men Makhnots and they took the men if they could for serving or whatever. Some of them were just beaten up. I was scared of them and I was hiding. I was way up I would say between hedges where I was hidden. They couldn't get horses through that very well. Our village was about a mile and a half long and then that wide. I knew our village I think every--as boys do you know, every corner of it. And I knew where I could hide and I did. Then I noticed from there three men on horses and just a girl. She was about 16 years old and they caught her. And naturally that girl screamed. Well that was--if I would have at that time had a gun in my hand I would have shot them all three. Even the pressure would have come up to me what they did to the girl. When they let that girl go and when that girl was bending down and crying and screaming and the devilish laughing what they had those three guys and they took off. Well I stayed there until the village was cleared. We didn't have the

GOERTZ (cont'd): Selbstschutz at that time yet. I was one of them that joined the Selbstschutz in the village just for that reason. Those guys--if I would have gone over and talked to those men what would they have done to me? They'd give me the bullet that's all to it. Even when I ask. That's all. That's the way they handled people. That was I would say anarchy. From there on it was getting from worse to worse.

PAETKAU: Were there Mennonites who joined the Makhno?

GOERTZ: Yes. There were Mennonites that joined the Makhno. All I can remember is just one but I don't know where he disappeared. Oh yes there were Mennonites 'cause they were--probably you know it comes from the home too. I would say like your coming from poor background and I remember every morning when I went away mother followed me up to the door and gave me a few thoughts or instructions how to behave during the day. And I think that has a lot to do that I didn't hate them. I didn't hate the Mennonites. Even the millionaires that we had. I didn't hate them. But I just couldn't do this thing, this going with the Makhno and giving out these people . Well I guess---I look back at it that the Lord blessed me and to have kept his guiding hands above me through thick and thin. I have been in the Selbstschutz full time for three months. I have been in the White Army. I served the Red Army. I was up to the last in the Red Army till everything went to pieces. I have been caught. I have been beaten up. I have been wounded. They have starved me half to death. They have thrown me in a room with 6-7 big dogs with a thing and they would tear me up and no dog touched me. No dog touched me. They came around and snapped their teeth but they never touched me. And an hour or so they came back again and said, "You devil still living there? Didn't the dogs touch you?" Took me out and beat me up again. Things like that.

PAETKAU: Which side were these people on that were doing this?

GOERTZ: The Makhno. Makhno was a guy if he saw his chances weren't too good he joined with the Reds. Then you know at that time they were together. But when he saw his chances are better then he hated the Reds just the same as he hated the Whites. He was an anarchist.

PAETKAU: These Russian peasants that joined Makhno, did they hate the Mennonites? Or did they hate the Germans? Or were they just out for themselves for anybody?

GOERTZ: No I don't think--in our village I know there were rich farmers and they had all hired help. I think the Russian fellows what worked there they were satisfied with the

GOERTZ (cont'd): wages they were receiving. With Makhno they had freedom. They could do what they liked, and they did what they liked. I don't think they were hating the Mennonites or the Germans. To a certain extent yes, but otherwise no. Out of our village there was the Selbstschutz, there was a lot in the White Army what served, yes. And some got killed on the firing line, on the front. And two fellows were shot by the Reds for they were in the White Army. But the rest nobody had been killed in the . Like at places they murdured 80 people, maybe the village surrounded; nothing like that. They beat up people, they robbed them up to the bones. Yes they did that, Took the horses, everything away from them.

PAETKAU: What were the feelings of the Mennonites towards the government of the Tsar and towards politics and so on?

GOERTZ: Well I personally don't know how most of them felt. But I had a feeling in our school where I went to school we were all for the Tsar. That was our government and we accepted that. We were brought up in school with Russian history and I know quite a bit of the Russian history how things went on from anarchists before and so on. The Mennonites when the Tsar was on yet and the war starting getting not in the Russian favour. Russian soldiers on the front they were promised to get land after all that. The Mennonites they were privileged, they had a lot of land. I don't mean now the villagers, the farmers they had certain land, yah, but we had landowners they had 10,000 acres or more than that yet. That was promising. The Tsar they had this understanding that when you come back some of the land will be taken away and you will get it. Naturally the Mennonites don't like that. No, no. Because that was they figured their property and they couldn't touch it. You know that I had an uncle and he said the same thing. I told him, "Uncle Jake, things can come so and so." He said, "No, never can come, because I have my (?)." Like he had a deed of his land. "They can do nothing there." he said. "Do you really think they will ask for it?" "They will chase you out of a house, out of a farm." He didn't believe me. And it exactly happened to him. Not only him all the rest of them. Then when Kerensky came on, he only was a short time. He promised the Mennonites to have the delegation there about this land business. He said, "I never will ever sign a paper that that will happen." Naturally the Mennonites stood all up for Kerensky. Then you know things didn't turn out again. But Kerensky if he wouldn't have fled the country they would have killed him. And when Lenin got through and he got his program through. He was the smartest politican I can think what Russia had. All what even the Tsar if they would have said, yes we give you land and we will do something about it. Well if he would have made a right approach. Well anyway

GOERTZ (cont'd): that didn't work out, well even I didn't think it would turn out that bad as it did.

PAETKAU: Was the land kind of the most important thing to these people in terms of what they felt about Russia? Do you think that when they lost their land and everything that feelings about Russia changed then?

GOERTZ: You mean if they would have lost the land if they would change their attitude towards Russia or what?

PAETKAU: Well if they wouldn't have lost the land then would they have wanted to leave?

GOERTZ: Oh that way. Well I would say a lot would, because we had, at least I had the feeling that I didn't belong to Russia. It wasn't my place. It wasn't my homeland as I thought. I fooled myself or whatever you will call it. because they have showed it to me and I have talked to them and I knew them and they always treated me as a foreigner. But some of them sure if they could have kept the land they would have stayed in Russia. It was good for them. The farmers in Russia, I mean the big farmers--the small landowners they didn't --that wasn't--well they made their living that's about all. And others maybe they were thinking too much land--they didn't need it. One of my uncles he was an auctioneer and one of the--oh may 30-40 miles away from the village he was called there for auctioneering farms, implements and so on and he bought himself a binder. It was rare at that time yet in Russia. Then his hired man was a Russian man, he was sent to pick it up and he asked me if I wouldn't go along with him. I only was that time maybe 15, 16 years. It was a time when there was no store work. I went along and we hitched everything to a wagon, horses pulled off and naturally you know the wheels started squealing because we had no oil can with us. We came across there a very rich man and he was a Mennonite and I knew him. We stopped there and they were working on 18 binders he had there, repairing, getting ready for harvest. The hired man said wouldn't you go and ask if we could get a little oil or grease to grease the wheels. Well I don't like it too well asking. I don't like to ask people for something but it was, sure I go and do it. I approached the man what I thought had the say there and he said, "well you'll have to ask so and so because I'm just a foreman here I can't allow you that." So I went to the man and asked him and he said, "where are you from?" and I told him. He said, "You knew that you were going to pick up the binder and bring it hom to your village?" "Yah." "well did it never occur to you that you need to oil that thing." I said, "Well we just--probably nobody thought of it." "Yes," he said, "I have oil but we need it for our machines." When I came back to the wagon then and told to this Gregory what the man said he turned white. He

GOERTZ (cont'd): has hate for that fellow for not giving that. He wouldn't have hurt him a little bit. And that man, I don't know exactly but he probably had about 10,000 acres maybe more. Well we had those type of people. I know those years that I was in the Selbstschutz I was on a horse and I stood in Halbstadt. I was stationed there for a couple of days The fellow there he had a really big house. He was a rich man too and he was a brother-in-law to the other one. At night we were there stationed about 18 men we were there in that house, this man came out and asked everyone where they are from, who are their fathers and so on and so on. Then I was the last one he asked, "Who are you?" Then I said, "Well I'm the one that passed your place such and such a time and asked you for oil to oil our bindery and you said 'you should have brought some for yourself.'" He turned away and didn't say a word. I thought you know that that would be just the proper time to say it. He was so rich. I was in the Selbstschutz to help to protect. Because he fled from there and here he was stranded. His own son, my age, he never joined the Selbstschutz because he could afford to pay money to pay some of the fellows that are in the Selbstschutz. That's the way it was. When he died he starved to death. That's true, he starved to death. And all they had for that man was a sheet where they could wrap him in, even not clothes.

PAETKAU: That's all he was left with?

GOERTZ: That's all that was left. And what could that man have done? That's what sometimes I could sit down and cry about things like that, what happened. See the big contrast from one extreme to another. Here is the poor and here is the real rich. How easy could they have helped each other. Even I don't mean you know if he earns 100 rubel I don't mean give him 200 or something like that but doing a little extra and the men would have appreciated that. I don't say that would have worked with everyone. Like with Makhno I don't think it would have worked there. He was a born anarchist and there you can take it away from him. Sometimes I meet people here too and talking to people and their idea is no good. There are on that line--I don't say they are anarchists but they are on that line. "What is the problem with what I have been doing? I have to be like that." Always in the history of the world--always good and bad living together--rich and poor living together--one is probably more willing to stretch out the hand to help while others are keeping his hands in the pocket and sorta keep the pennies down.

PAETKAU: So when you were in the Selbstschutz you served in different villages?

Yes. When we served in Halbstadt we were just there and ordered in for instructions. But our area was where most of it--where the part that I was in it was Hamburg, Klippenfeld, Rudnerweide. Just on the border of Ukraine to let those

people know that we are not willing to butcher us all off. Just to show--we weren't out to go and say take Russia over or something like that. We would have been silly to do it. Just a matter of fact to protect the ones what we thought should be protected. And I really had the attitude I was willing to lay down my life if I can help keep those anarchists out from our families.

PAETKAU: When you came to Canada how did people feel about the fact that there had been a Selbstschutz? And that you had been in the Selbstschutz? Did you feel misunderstood?

GOERTZ: No, no. They still don't understand. They still don't understand, even people coming from Russia from a different part where they didn't have Selbstschutz. You probably have heard down in Manitoba they have this What they call . I sometimes laugh about that you know. I have one year you know maybe a couple of years ago--he came in here to my place and asked me if I wouldn't like to drive up to Manitoba. He wanted to go there and take him along in the car. And I said, "No I won't go there." Because I don't belong to the first , I'm a different--you know time was different and I was so and so in the Selbstschutz and then he said, "Yes he was so thankful that he wasn't in the Selbstschutz." I told him a few facts and he's avoiding to meet me. He is. He's living and I know him too well. He's still avoiding to meet me because I was in the Selbstschutz and he was so much better--he wasn't . He thank God that he wasn't so bad as the Selbstschutz was worse. Well I told him all what you fellows had to do to make an earnest approach to those people what are living (I don't know if there are too many living in Canada) and see if you can get a better understanding. I wonder what you would have done if you had been in my shoes. Never. He would have never done it. Well it could be. Probably the man would never have had a chance to do anything. The man would give him the bullet and that's all. I don't know but I must say that I'm not sorry I was in the Selbstschutz. I'm not sorry I was in the Red Army, that I served there. But I'm sorry about a lot of things that happened that shouldn't have happened. If you're in a Selbstschutz situation you are on a sharp edge--what is right and what is wrong? Well there you are, you have to know that. You have to take the stand. You are not out to do this and that. You are out for so and so and such--that's about it. I had my difficulties in the Selbstschutz. I had my difficulties in the White Army, because it wasn't--I quit it. Everything wasn't right what has been done but protect the one that are under--well depressed or so on. That's what I thought. And give them kind of a lift and let them feel that you understand them. But here in Canada, sure I have met a

GOERTZ (cont'd): lot of people. I have written articles sometimes too about it but it seems--. There's a few fellows what in my opinion what understood me, understood the Selbstschutz. Even the service in the White Army. Those fellows are gone long, long ago. No there is some of them living yet. And I know them by name. Do you know , professor? He was the one when the Selbstschtz broke down what had the guts to get up and approach the Makhno. And back for firemen for the Selbstschutz. Him and Dr. Kidapt(?), he taught from Halbstadt --those two fellows I'll never forget what they did. Of course I didn't see them at that time I was gone because I wouldn't work. But you know what I have heard. Kidapt (?) was a doctor that applied on the brain of the people and Bendimain Unruh of the heart, the conscience. And that helped. But it helped just so long. You know with anarchists you can make compromises. If you catch a fox and you want to kill him and he promise you, I won't catch your chicken anymore and you said O.K. I will protect your chicken koop. What will happen? Well anyway that's the story about that. Those two men I will never will forget them what they did for our folks. I will never forget Jacob H. Janzen. I don't know if you know him. He was our chaplain in the White Army in and he was good. Always he pointed the finger in everything we did on the conscience. That was one thing I never forget. He was there when some of our men was killed on the battleline, when we came the last honour and so on he was there. And in Canada--I know him well. That's the man--and he understood. Those three men that I mentioned they all went through times of terror. They understood us and we could talk to each other about it. And there was B. B. Janz. I don't know if you know him. That man I love him too. I went to him when everything was finished and I wanted to get out of Russia. And he gave me good advice. He knew who I was because I told him. To those people I talked free and frankly. I know J. J. Thiessen he put my paper through places where I couldn't go. He did that for me. He was a school teacher in the old country and he suffered a lot too. He was beaten up too by Makhno. Those are the people and then David Toews. You probably know his story or history a little bit when they went to Middle Asia there to find a hiding place and so on. That young fellow he went through a lot of suffering, and that made a man out of him. If he wouldn't be here in Canada I think non of our Mennonites would have been here. There wouldn't be because he--well. And there's another man, I would say everyone picks certain one they look up to a little bit. U. Lawrence(?) you know him? Well he's a great man. Oh there's probably some others. I have met others here in Canada what are high up too. They are so arrogant. They are. And they're educated. All I say what they would need to have maybe little more

GOERTZ (cont'd): hard experiences and they could be good men. But they are arrogant, they think they know everything and what they do is right and what others do is wrong. We have those people in Canada. I don't have to search too long for them because I know two men. God has given me 7 years and he has given me certain things what our people don't have that I can observe a lot and that I can remember a lot and I sometimes have feeling for others too "Why would you...?" And then I might say O.K. , this fellow, his thinking he's so educated, so arrogant in my opinion, I compare him with this man what didn't give me that little bit of oil to oil the wheels. Well all those-- I'm thankful and I'm glad that I came to Canada. That I had the opportunity to come to Canada. Aeltester was one of those guys. He did the utmost for anyone but wanted to come. And I have talked to him many times. We had him in our home and that time we were poor as a church mouse almost. I love that man because he was an honest man. And the others the same. One day we had a conversation about something and he said, "Well what do you think about so and so?" Well I told him. He said, "Oh you probably think---you rather would have to do with an honest man than with a than over , from yes but not over from. I said, "Yes I rather would have to deal with an honest man." Naturally in Canada when I left Russia, up to the line, to the boundary when we went out of Russia I had to do with the Secret Police in Russia. The first time when we arrived at Kingsville, Ontario, the first thing I had to do with the police here again. And he said, "Oh God. Here are the police again. Over there and here." But it was a different story here. Coming to Windsor, we arrived and we had two children and my sister. We had our tickets and they were paid to Kingsville to a certain man. We came to Windsor, a railroad station and a fellow approached me, he said, "Sprechen Sie Deutsch?" "Yah." And he said, "Come on." Well I thought we were in the right hand. Driving along in the car all of a sudden he stopped. There were two of them in the car, two drivers. He said---you know at that time I didn't speak English. I could pick up something quickly you know, what the man meant. He said, "You have money?" "Money? No." And he said, you have to go--and he tried to explain--go and sleep in a motel. Well I could make out what he meant and I said, "NO. No money." And the fellow didn't know what to do with us so he brought us to a police station, because he picked us up there. Here about 16-17 men came out and we had our little fellow in the basket. They were more interested in that little fellow than they were interested in me. Anyway they took us into the police station and made kind of a--benches where the wife could rest and the little fellow could rest and me and the sister they put in a court room. I could read that and I started

GOERTZ (cont'd): marking down and one day I going to find out what--'cause I didn't know the meaning of it. Then policeman came in and called me and with the clock he showed me--it will go around and at such a time they would pick us up and bring us to so and so place. And they gave us to eat there. And they did pick us up. They brought us to the streetcar and they brought us to Kingsville. I never forget that either. They were all nice to us. My first word I learned there was no smoking. I didn't know what it was that time but I marked it down and then I bought a dictionary for 75¢ and that was my teacher and was my teacher up to--all I had--all those years I had it. I didn't go to school at all here, cause I couldn't. Because with the time the way it was here, with the earnings so slow and you had the Reiseschuld and you had to look for a family and my wife got sick. Well you couldn't. I went one night but I thought, "By gol I sleep in here." It just wasn't possible. Well anyway we had hard times in Canada.

PAETKAU: I'd like to get back to Russia a little bit yet. When did you join the White Army?

GOERTZ: When the Selbstschutz was finished I joined the White Army. Right there. Because I knew right away if I stay home or wherever I go they fish us out anyway. The amnesty what the Russians give it never worked out, never. And I knew it from the history before. I joined the White Army. And I stayed with the White Army up till the last. That was 1920 in November.

PAETKAU: Were you in this Deutsche battalion?

GOERTZ: Yes.

PAETKAU: Were there quite a few Mennonites in that?

GOERTZ: Oh yes there were quite a few Mennonites. I don't know exactly--I was in a later group--a cavalry. I think in a cavalry if I'm right there were akout 120 men, maybe more I don't know exactly. There were others in the Deutsche Battalion--all of them together I think there could be around 600 men.

PAETKAU: Mennonites?

GOERTZ: Well I don't know about Mennonites. We had some others. Some were called Colonisting. But they have been in the Selbstschutz too. Because by Blumental when they were fighting three months there, well all those people, 20 villagers were in there--colonists or what you call them and the Molotschna had 60 villages--18(?) village that formed the Selbstschutz. But I never have been at Blumental. I have been at to fight there and many many others.

PAETKAU: What were conditions like in the White Army?

GOERTZ: Well I would say conditions in the White Army they were better than with the Reds that's for sure. First of all I didn't agree with the anarchist. Second I didn't agree with the ideology that the Reds had so what was left over. I wouldn't say that the White Army, the old Tsar Generals they made their mistakes and plenty of them. Les General Peter Wrangel , you probably heard about him too. If he would have had the saying right from the beginning things would have turned out a lot different. He was a different man. Not one of these--I have served under Denikin and I have served under others. I served under Peter Wrangel. But he was more of the younger ones and he realized what should be done to win the people. Denikin and the others they thought dictate them and they will obey and that didn't work.

PAETKAU: Did you see a lot of fighting then? Were you up front?

GOERTZ: Yes. I seen a lot of fighting. I have been wounded. I have been wounded in the right leg and have been wounded through the neck to the shoulder, head, arms. I have been wounded...

PAETKAU: And you moved back and forth quite a bit I imagine.

GOERTZ: Yes. The White Army advanced or pulled back and so on that was--if the Makhno they helped the Reds a real lot. If it wouldn't have been Makhno then the White Army probably would have taken over but Makhno was a squaller. He joined this and he joined that. And after you know the funny part of it when everything was finished then the Reds they hunted him up more than the Selbstschutz. Oh yah they shot him right there. Well they know he is anarchist. Well a fellow told me. He was not--well six of them from the Crimea when they went south. Somehow they got over without control. Anyway they were out and here they were met by a troop of cowardists --horseback men and asked them "Where you coming from?" "From the Crimea?" "What did you do?" "Well"the one said, "I was driving the horses." Two there were from Gulyaypole where Makhno was. And they said, "Where are you from?" And they said, "Gulyaypole" "And you too?" And they shot them right there without asking. And you they said so and so and so is close by there but then they let them go.

PAETKAU: How did the Russians in the White Army then treat you as Germans?

GOERTZ: Oh they treated us fine. I will tell you the officer that I had, his father was a General. He wasn't that high yet but he was a
was his name. He thought so highly of us Mennonites and they always wanted to have us with them wherever they are. They were depending on us and they realized that we wouldn't desert them or something like that. My friend and I we were once with our officer out on observation. Anyway we were caught by the Reds. Not caught but unexpected they were around there. If it would have been my friend and I the officer would have lost his life there. But we brought him along and he never forgot that, to the last moment. He was grateful to us for that but that was just a matter of helping--not let that fellow--if you could help. The Mennonites were all like that. I remember one time in the Crimea when the Reds pushed the White Army back in the Crimea. Then the Deutsche Battalion he was ordered to push those back. And they did. They pushed the Reds out of the Crimea. After that they promised this will go on the history of Russia when everything comes clear. Well they did. They were different. They tried to split up the Mennonites. Everyone wanted to have them but the Mennonites they stuck together. We had some Russians in our battalion too but they were dependable people. Then you know when the
the Russian government and
they promised amnesty for everyone--should go home and so on. But that was just on paper, that's all. They hunted them left and right wherever they could. Anyone what was against their idea that was their enemy and they had to be destroyed one way or another.

PAETKAU: ...Jacob H. Janzen before. I'm interested in that. Could you tell me a little bit more about him and about his chaplaincy in the army when you were there?

GOERTZ: Yes I could tell you much. I don't know, you are not acquainted with military procedures at all. When we were in the Crimea Jacob H. Janzen he was there too because he fled that part of where he lived in the Crimea. I think his wife died and his family was in the Crimea. I'm not quite sure about that. Anyway he was our chaplain and the Mennonites in the old country or Russia. Well anyway he was our chaplain

(End of Tape)

GOERTZ (cont'd): ...'cause he fled that part of where he lived to the Crimea . I think his wife died--his family was in the Crimea. I'm not quite sure about that. Anyway he was our Chaplain and the Mennonites in the old country or Russia, the church I mean they didn't agree with that. But he felt that was his duty because when the war was on and the Mennonites took up the medical service, the They took that up there was roughly about 7,000 of them in different places in Russia. It seems the Mennonites never had the idea to send a chaplain out to look these men up and keep them little bit in line so they wouldn't, say, go astray from the life of the Mennonites, but they didn't. Some maybe here and there on their own, ministers, went to see these guys and that's about it. They didn't have the money to hire a chaplain to do just that job. Then you look back in history and read a little bit of history you find they had money to save their land or something like that. They went up to Moscow, Petersburg, wherever they went and gave the authorities there say 100,000 rubles. They had money for that. Even before that they had--well that was the Tsar yet, they gave the Tsar 100 horses just to keep certain things in---well what I'm at is this, they had the ability to do that but they didn't have the money to have a minister. Janzen was a minister and he was a very well educated man to do these things and he would have the proper men to do it. But no. It seems to me sometimes I think their property or whatever they owned had more value for them than the soul of the person. When Janzen was in the Crimea he took that upon his own. And he did it. He did a good job. Well he did a good job. I was a soldier. I was--well we didn't have very much time for religion when you are in the army. But at home you are taught in school and you know the basic of your Christian life that you should never forget and then through horrible times that could help you out there too. Janzen, he followed the man up, oh yes. He came well not exactly to the front line but maybe 3-4 miles behind the front he was there. Certain times he preached to us. He gathered us. Some of the Mennonites boys made terrible remarks about him but that didn't keep him back. He kept and he'd always find a listener, not everyone of them. Some of them didn't care for religion whatsoever. But he came and he always said--he quoted, once I never forget it, he quoted one verse you know from the Bible at that time,

That would mean the soldiers, don't grab here and don't grab there. You get and that's about it. Keep in that line. He had a few other good points. I remember one of my friends, he dead now; he died in British Columbia. He was with me up to the last and he felt like we were

GOERTZ (cont'd): involved in the battle fields quite often and it was going rough sometimes. And he felt that if he died he should be baptized and Janzen baptized him. He overlived everything. But still you know you had the feeling that you never knew from our tower or what would be the next approach or what would happen to you.

PAETKAU: But you never got the feeling Janzen was condemning you for something you were doing?

GOERTZ: No. No sir. He never was condemning because he didn't---I personally think he wasn't in favour for it but he didn't condemn it because we lived in a situation. They came over our people unexpected. I'm of the opinion--you see a well fed man he never will understand the hungry man, never. A sick man or a healthy man what never has been sick he never will understand the sick person till he gets sick himself. Then it comes up to him, "hay it can happen to me too." Then he start thinking a little deeper. And Janzen had learned all that. He had a family, I think 8 children. And those years were tough sometimes, you couldn't eat the way you wanted. Well he learned all those things too and he when he became a minister, even a school teacher he had trouble with the authorities there too. He taught a little different and probably was a little different than some others. I remember even yet he told me yet once when he was elected as minister then he had to hold his sermons. I guess he went a little too far in the opinion of the old ministers and they let him go for a while yet but eventually when they thought it goes out of hand then they put him for three months on the benches to listen how the preachers minister. And he had to listen. And he did. He didn't run away and he was sitting in the benches and listened how they did it. But then when he had his way his own way, I think you know he was right. Also I liked him very well and I was real happy at that time that we had him there. Even if--if nothing I would say personally that I favored him for anything but I was glad he was amongst us. He was one of us and later on, because you know the churches at that time--I wasn't a member of the church so it didn't affect me too much. But we had some who were members of the church, they were baptized and they were members for a good number of years and they were condemning them and want to throw them out of the church. Well

101

Well he stood up then for those people and he never threw one out. Never. I know one instance here in Waterloo, he baptized Mennonite , what was uniform, flyer in an airforce uniform. He got baptized him here in Waterloo in the church. He didn't condemn him. See that was a how shall I say it--years ago--well that's a long--make it

GOERTZ (cont'd): very short. Well one of the Swedish kings he advanced through Europe to conquer country. He was a Mennonite minister and he was preaching against that doing. And he was invited to the general, whoever was to the king and how he, what he would say according to the Bible if that's right or not what they were doing. This Funk he was pretty smart I think. He said there's a difference if you go out and conquer to get more, well that's sin according to the Bible. If you are on defense or protect yourself well that's right. When I read that I said, "By golly there's another old guy who understands the Selbstschutz." We didn't go out to conquer we were there to protect our loved ones and so on. There we have people who in the old country they were against the Selbstschutz. They were. At that time I know we had to pull back and fast sometimes. We had a lot of these people who were against the Selbstschutz. But under the protection of the Selbstschutz they felt safer than under the Reds or the Makhno. History is kind of a good mixture of everything. And you have open eyes--sure everybody in my opinion would like to live in peace and quietness and so on. I personally that we in Russia would always

Well that time is gone. That isn't anymore. That was gone from the time, in my opinion, when the Selbstschutz and the White Army came and when here when the last war was on, year ago followed up a bit--how many young fellows from Canada went into the service? There's a lot of them. Did they go for conquering or what did they go overseas? Well if Makhno would have been overseas we never would have developed Selbstschutz, never. But he was right up at our doors. Yet you know, some even--nobody had condemned him. Americans what went over there--there's almost--I have quite a bit of material about that too and I never had it yet. But there's quite a few in there and what went over, they were fighting and throw bombs and they got decorations for it. Well what do you say to that? Our Mennonite history is mixed with so much unknown things what came over us and we weren't prepared to meet it. Let's put it that way.

PAETKAU: How did you finally get out of the White Army then? Were you in the Crimea in the end?

GOERTZ: M-m.

PAETKAU: And what happened after that?

Well I tell you. I was in the Crimea. I was in a village of Spat and that was as far as I could get. The roads were all loaded with army. Army supplies and armies pulling back

GOERTZ (cont'd): to Sevastropol and General Peter Wrangel had announced that everyone who would like to leave Russia there would be enough ships available to do it. I believed him. And I believe I would have gotten to Sevastropol but I came to Spat--well if you are on a fire in the front line and you had to protect yourself and pulling back and pulling back for 3-4 days in a row, nothing to eat, nothing to drink, nothing for you, nothing for the horse and you came to Spat (that's a great big Mennonite village) --I knew that man but I wasn't acquainted too well with him and I asked him "Would you have any horses yet left over?" He said, "The horses what are behind the barn you can have it." It was worse off than mine. With mine I knew I couldn't get to the place and the running and walking I couldn't make it either; I was too exhausted. So there was the Reds they were shooting with the guns over the village--explosions left and right. So in my opinion--there was one fellow approached me yet and said, he was with us and --well all our belongings what the soldiers have he was responsible for it. He said, "What shall I do with that?" He said, "Try and save your life." And I said, "Yes and after/what will happen to me after this is all gone?" He said, "Nothing. The Reds may shoot you, they might shoot you. The others they wouldn't get you to shoot, because you will be gone by then." He left and he--I don't know where--I never have seen him since. I got off my horse, took my rifle, knocked it over the wagon wheels, broke it apart and then I took my tohona(?), what you have, tore them off and took the button off the cap and took my revolver I had put it in my pocket and the holster I threw away and I thought the only thing I can do is just meet the Reds. And I did. I was riding was right to them and here I came just out of the village and there were about 7 men I approached on horses. They didn't even ask questions. I passed them and then another 50 or 20 came. They didn't say nothing to me. And I came to a village that's called Millerenchik(?)--700 miles from this place. I came to there and that village was loaded with soldiers, military, Reds. Thousands of them. And I was on a horse, riding and nobody said anything to me or asked questions. I came to a farmer what I knew from our village. He married in Crimea and he lived there, and his yard was full of soldiers. I met them and he knew that I was in West because I had my furlough or so what you call it and I visited him sometimes for 2-3 days. And he said, "You are here?" I said, "Yes." And he said, "All you have to do, give him old rags to put on, clothes and I do the rest." And he did. I crawled into a corner there and changed my uniform. Threw that away in a heap of straw there and the horse I put in the barn, tied it down, took the saddle off and my revolver I put it away too. Then he said, "Now you getting an axe and go chop wood." And I did that for one day. Sometimes he gave--sometimes I got something to eat---he didn't have nothing to eat either. The soldiers they put out everything.

GOERTZ (cont'd): But I stayed there at his place. Then one day you know she was sick that woman, his wife and she had to give the army flour to bake. She couldn't manage and asked me if I could help. And I said, "Yes, I will." I never helped in a bakery in my life but I became a baker there. That was --well --that was the that I did it. And you know my bread never turned out right. She just got up tight and instead of making it (unintelligible) and I couldn't understand it. But I wanted experience and I did it and did it. Finally I came to that idea I almost learned a trade. One morning as we were heating the oven--and I didn't have to do that---they had a bar, so long, to stir up the coals. Somehow I put on a straight (?) that fell over and I hit the one fellow that's sleeping there . And then I was in trouble. They thought I did it on purpose. And I didn't. I couldn't explain it they wouldn't believe me whatsoever. They arrested me. And over the street there was a wealthy man, the headquarters had moved there. They took me over there and at headquarters they asked me all kinds of questions--what kind of title I had as an officer? And I said, "I am not an officer. I never have been an officer." Well what company did you serve? Well I said, "I served ." That's what I did originally out there with the White Army. Not under the Deutsche . Because I won't say Deutsche--- that would be the end of it. Then they questioned me. Then they led me to another room. There was four men there and everyone had a desk. And I could see three of them were Jews, one not. And they started asking questions. Well then they had what they call protocol to put it down and said, "Sign this." And I said, "Well, would you read it to me?" And they said, "Don't you believe we have written down what you have told us?" I said, "Yes. But you know I think it would be just proper if you would read it to me that I know what I'm signed." They wouldn't do it. And they tried at me with the revolver that they would shoot me , should sign it. I didn't. Maybe I--myself-- give it to me. They did. Then I didn't get very far. I said, "Look if I signed this then I signed my own death. You shoot me and the other way you shoot me anyway because I'm not guilty what you have written down here." They threatened a couple times more yet but I didn't sign it. And it was winter, it was cold, bitter cold. There was a knock on the door and they said to let the man come in. So they came in and the soldier came in with a general cap. They had this pointed cap with the big star are on it. He came in and said, "Towhalishay(?) I'm frozen and would like to have a smoke in here." "Yes you can do that." While he was smoking they didn't ask a question. They didn't. Then this fellow took turned and he made this another war and then the one fellow said, "Look you asked for one. You got it. Get out of here." We tried to catch an officer and you are hindering us." And this fellow said, "I thought the officers have

GOERTZ (cont'd): to be caught on the fields, on the battle field. Not in a room like here. " But he went out. Then they started pushing harder than ever. It maybe took a couple minutes. The door was banged up with the guns, just two splinters. And here you know there were about maybe ten or twenty guns. Right there on all of us. "Hands up." I lifted my hands up. What was the use to--well I was the one that would be caught anyway. So they came in and took the guns from the other fellows and to me they just said, "Where are you staying?" I told them. They said, "Go back and stay there." Well that was funny. I went out and there was Borne(?) that was the name of the fellow. And he said, "What happened?" I said so and so. That's all. And it was funny to us. You know the next morning I felt bad about it and I thought, "Well they know where I am and if they come after me they only would not get me they would get that fellow what tried to help me. And they would call him-- he's hiding an officer and then he would get in there and I didn't want that. And I said , "Look Borne(?)/No matter what will happen to me I will go over. but you will be free." And I went over to the same office. And I met the same guy right on the steps. And I asked him, "You were here last night, weren't you? You were the guy what sent me home." He said, "Yes. You were the one that I sent home, yes. Well, what you came for?" Well I said, "You know I was called in and those Commissars what were there, they were asking me and they were so and so. He said, "Those Commissars, you want to see them?" "Well," I said, "Yes, I probably get into trouble if I don't see them." He said, "If you want to see them go behind the barn there and see them there." All four of them were hanging on the tree. And the reason. There was a sub
to press money out of people. And that was all they were doing and if they couldn't get money and those guys what they had if they wouldn't give them out they shot them. And he told me, "we have looked for these guys from Kypta(?) you know from/hundreds and hundreds of miles away. We places never could get them and here we have them." That was the end of them. Well then he made me an offer, "You join us." I should have done it. I would have had it easier to get out of the Crimea. But I said, "What shall I do?" Well he said, "You join us or go home." "Well," I said, "To go home I need a certain paper." "Well," he said, "I can give you a paper." And he did. So I could go home. But you know it wasn't so easy to get out of the Crimea either. They had those check points and--but I got out anyway. Not right away but maybe Easter time. This was in November and I got time to Easter time the next year.

PAETKAU:

I spent a very interesting and informative three hours with Mr. Goertz. I found that his memory was very vivid and he

recalled his experiences quite extensively and clearly. He seemed to be also a very perceptive man who, as he said, learned from his experiences, was able to understand and deal with people. Perhaps the most clear impression that remained with him was his background as a poor person in Russia as he was treated by the more wealthy people. This came out very often during the interview. I should also mention that Mr. Goertz is writing a history of his home village, Wernersdorf at the present time. He also has in his possession a collection of old letters and correspondence I believe with people in Russia and so on dating back from the 1920's which would be very interesting. And also kept a diary from 1938.

GOERTZ: I talked about the army. Do we want to proceed from there?

PAETKAU: Yes. Can you tell me what conditions were like when you got back back home.

GOERTZ: Very bad. Conditions were bad because you know after all those years of revolution and the war what those people went through. In our special village where I was born and some neighbour villages too they changed in one summer maybe about 16-20 times hands; Reds and Whites, Reds and Whites. Whoever was there they always lived and took as much as they could from the people. And that made everybody as poor as could be. As a matter of fact, you know when the Selbstschutz broke down, all those colonies from Klippenfeld up to Halbstadt. There was a whole row of villages. They all fled more northern part. There when they came home about oh maybe a week, maybe ten days, I 'm not quite sure how long they stayed away. When they came home they were robbed out everyone. No matter--the big farmers, the small farmers, the working class, whoever fled--of course nobody stayed back in those villages, they all fled. They were robbed out completely. There was no cattle left. There was no chicken left. There was no furniture left. There was nothing left. And in places you know where they might have left bedding, the bedding and stuff was cut up in pieces and the feathers thrown out. Oh they made a mess anyway. So the people came back. Just the belongings what they took that's all they had. That's when the Selbstschutz broke down and when the people came back and then the White Army when they pulled in, well conditions getting worse and worse. Of course some people started working again and they managed to get help. Somehow they worked together. They ploughed the fields. They got a little this and that again. But you know as it was the army took it. The Whites they paid. The Reds took it for nothing. That was the difference. When I came home--well I was away for quite a number of years. When I came home all it was just to say hello and show that I was alive and I didn't stay home. Because I had--at that

GOERTZ (cont'd): the Reds promised amnesty for everyone no matter where they--so they promised amnesty. But they said before yesterday that wasn't--that was just talk and maybe just a piece of paper that's all, but they never meant to keep it anyway. Then I knew--well every person is kind of hanging to life as long as you can. And as life is sweet. That brought me an idea after the war when I was here in Toronto once. Wounded soldiers from England they were brought back. And I was in the station and a soldier they brought out--no legs, no arms, that was a Canadian. And somebody asked him, "How are you feeling?" And I remember he said, "Life is sweet." I very often thought of that, how people hanging to life or clinging to life as long as there is life. The same over there with us. We cling to life. We went first of all to the neighbour village and there I couldn't stay too long either because they was hunting all those Whites what they call enemy number one. They hunted them all over. So I get away from there. Another village maybe Sadovaya, was from our place maybe 35 or 30 miles away from the northern countries there, the Molotschna and stayed there for almost one year, 1919 for the summer. Then my brother-in-law he lived in first in Werner(?). He wasn't home either. He came up one day and he said, "Henry, you better pack and see that you can get away from here because they are hunting everybody up again." He brought me back to Landskrone and there I met two of my friends. They were in the army too. From there we made plans how to get out of the Molotschna, and see if we could travel to the Caucasus. We managed through friends to get two horses. We called them horses but they actually weren't horses. They were something to pull a little wagon . We had some belongings there. Then one night we started pulling out there at Landskrone. First we stopped in Hamburg and picked up another one there. And he was from the Caucasus. He had served in the White army and was in the south. He knew the Caucasus well so we thought it would be a good idea to join with him. So the four of us we took that route through Caucasus and we went through some Russia villages, even the village where Makhno lived. We went right through there. There was the one route we could choose and would be the easiest for us and if something should happen well they'd catch us right there. Miracuously we got through everywhere. We came to--that was slow moving--well day by day just so much. The horses couldn't stand it. We didn't have very much to eat. Wherever we could buy something from the farmers or trade in for some little things, even a piece of bread we did. I know one night that I was so tired from walking because we couldn't sit on the wagon; just the one. And three of us walked all the time. As a matter of fact I walked from the Molotschna to the Caucasus to the--there was a couple Mennonite villages, on foot. It was 850 miles. I didn't even sit on the wagon. Then we finally came to a place where I thought I couldn't make it anymore. I said,

GOERTZ (cont'd): "Boys, save your lives. Let me here because I can't walk anymore. I'm finished." And I quit walking. The one fellow he was quite a bit older than I am. He served in the Russian army in the Caucasus during the war. He had a lot of experience of all kinds of things. He said, "Look. I'm going to tell you what we do." That night we slept in a cow barn, just a roof on and that's all. You lay down on the straw, lift your feet up, pull as close as you can to the wall, lift your feet up in a corner and there you rest. That's your blood circulation; your blood doesn't circulate right. I slept in, I was that tired. In the morning I woke up and I still was in that position. As we talked I got up and my feet were as good as they could and I could walk no trouble since, never. That was his idea not mine. Anyway we came to the last stretch. This took us twenty-two or twenty-three days to get there. One night we stayed outside free because you couldn't get quarters nowhere and we even didn't want to. It was not a bad night. It was dry. At that time traveling like we did, it was dangerous. You know people got killed and robbed and things like that. It almost happened to us too. Two of us were sleeping and two were watching. At that time we still managed to have rifles. You know that I am the younger one and we were watching. There were two brothers, one was the older and the one was the younger. They said, "Look, that's the cemetery where we stayed and beside that there was a great big wall. And don't you see there's heads lifting up looking at us? Well I looked and you know you kinda could see against, what do you call it, well you could see it that one was lifting his head and another one lifting his head and 3-4 lifting a head. Well we didn't do nothing. We just watched for awhile and they did. Then they disappeared and came back again and then we woke up the other two guys and told them what we have seen and they should have a look at it too. They did. Then they said, "Yes, they're after us." Then we were ready for them. We had not in mind at all that they would finish us off here. We took the rifles and pushed the bullets in and they heard that. And they disappeared and they never came back. Not even in the morning; nothing there. When we pulled off in the morning we started off early again. Then we found people murdered beside the roads. Well you could see they were robbed. There were fights and so on but they were killed. And that night we came, it was around 5:00-6:00 (none of us had watches). We didn't have no time, we just looked at the stars and moon and/sun that was our guide. Then we came to the Dawner(?) River. That's a big river. The bridges at that time were all damaged partly or blown up completely but there were platoon bridges that were built there. So we tried to cross. On each side of the bridge there were two guards standing. There were four of us and we knew we had to go there and it was daytime. All they could do was to ask for our papers which they naturally did. But they stopped us and "Where are you going?" "Where are you from?" "Well," we said, "We are from the Tiege(?) ." Like you know that's were my father was died. I was a little boy there. We used--you know we didn't give them---sometimes

GOERTZ (cont'd): you say, " Well we were in need. What should we do? I told them and the rest they never had been down there. But I said we are from there. And "Where were you?" Well I said, "You all know the people from the villages there; there were 16 villages, they were chased off by the you in 1917. And we're going back there. That wasn't all that--well my friend he had money--soviets (?) money. And he had something in his hand and he asked for the papers and identification cards and stuff like that. You even had to have them for horses. You even would have to have an identification card that the wagon belonged to you. Stuff like that. Well we had prepared that all. But the main thing was here was that we had the money. And the one saw it. He grabbed it and put it in the pocket and I said, "Quick, move." Well we thought first there was something else would but we moved and nothing more happened to us. We came through and just crossed the river across the Dawn(?) we stopped right there; feeding horses, thank God that we were so far. From here on we thought it would be easier. But over there there were famine just the same as in our part; here it was worse yet. We tried to be as good as we could to find something. Sometimes you had for a day just a handful of sunflower seeds, that's all you were able to get. But I think all that kept us alive. Came into one train station and we decided we couldn't make it anymore we would split. Two would go by train. Well we didn't have enough money to pay the tickets. So you get on hiding--steal in. Two of them, one from the Caucasus and the other younger fellow they two would go by train and we two would stay with the horses. That's what we did. I stayed with the older one and the older one with the younger one and we stayed. Naturally one of our horses gave away and we had to do it with one horse. So what shall we do? Did something to the wagon, took just the front wheels . Then we had the axel on the wagon (what you call it?) you know on the wagon, one horse; you have to have two horses to pull the wagon, this--what you call it in German Well then one had to walk and hold it so that it won't hurt the horse too much. And the other was following. We couldn't go on because the horse was too weak and we had a little belongings and we want to have that along. We travelled one day like that then we managed to get another horse for money. That wasn't a horse either, just skin and bones but it was a horse. So it was a little better. And slowly, slowly, day by day we were inching towards our goal. And we arrived there. It was in October. They had given up already that we would come. They thought that something happened because they figured we would have been there in 3-4 days and here it went over a week till we came there. But we came to this fellow what I mentioned he was from the Caucasus; his father's house. Well there we had a surprise. When we came there we found another 13 men, all from the Molotschna. Even my uncle was there from Wernersdorf. You know they did the same thing. They runned away.

PAETZ: Did you think it would be better there?

GOERTZ: Well yes. I think we saved our lives. That was the reason. Not that we were looking for greener pasture. We were just more freedom and see how can we save our life because we always thought the Reds they would manage to stay in Russia forever. One day they will be fight again out and they might be beaten because the bulk of the people will be sick and tired of the Reds and they will support the revolution against the Red. And we were mistaking at that time. When we came there to this people by the name of Kohn. There was an old gentleman he started asking questions where we were from and I told him. He said, "I know your grandfather, Janzen." Well that was a surprise to me. And he said, "Did you know that your grandfather has a brother here about 24 miles away from here?" I said, "No. I didn't know." He says, "Yes he has one. He's on a farm there. If you would to go there and see if you could slip there under for awhile I can help you." Well I accepted that. Over here we planned we going to stay a certain length of time--a month or something like that. We were organizing. Not only we but there were other people organizing and getting some train--these box cars from the train and move back to the where there's quite a few Mennonites moved back at that time. The Russian government and the Red government promised them protection and stuff like that. So some of them had nothing, they lost everything there. They had nothing here so they took this chance to move back. And we were organizing with them that we go with you down there and see what we can do. Start new life there. Then I was at my uncles place there maybe, I don't know exactly how long, 10 days or something like that. Then we all the time was coming there we wanted to move. Then my uncle he helped me out with money. He said I'll give you 800 rubles. That was at that time not too much but it was something. And he gave me something to eat because they had to eat there. Then he said, "Whenever you go there and whatever your plans are from there and it don't work out as you think it should--if it's not in favour for you, you always know where we live. If you can make it come back to us and we'll keep you." Then I started off there and got to the station, loaded in and we had a little money from my uncle and that paid I think for 17 for us. You know for a box car. So we came to And you know the Caucasus people there they have violin, or guitars and whatnot all. They were kind of suspicious and they robbed the Mennonites out once. And they thought well probably something they--why would they come back--what would I do. They got suspicious. And it was. In one way you couldn't blame them. There was so many young people. There were some my age--quite a few of them. There we had--the buildings were lots there but they were all damaged. We fixed up a couple buildings as good as we could and hay for the horses. We took even the horse along. Another fellow took a horse along so we had

GOERTZ (cont'd): three horses. Hay we had plenty. We stole it. Because the Reds they had there all that land. And there was thousands and thousands of acres there baled hay. Well from there we just went with the wagon, put it on, fed the horses and even protect our shelter and stuff like that. In the daytime we went out hunting, shooting rabbits and stuff like that so we could eat. Well we didn't have very much luck with that. But we managed. There was 17 of us lived together, we ate together and we organized ourselves. One would look for wood so we could fire our house. The other would have to do this and the other that and the other that. One would do the washing, the cooking. We managed, all of us. And our plan actually,--well for us from here we planned to go to Buckoo(?); that's more--you go--there was a harbour and we thought we could slip on some foreign ships and cross and go out of Russia. It didn't work out very well. Four of us they went first to try. One starved to death there. And typhus he starved there--Harder was the name. The one was caught by the Secret Police from where we came from. They were after us. Somehow they had a little wind where we could have been and they caught one. He was on a ship and they pulled him off there. And the other two they came back again where we were. Then we stayed for awhile yet and we had to do something. One of us was a teacher. He was an educated man, a really good fellow. We were all squeezed in a very serious position there about food and stuff like that. And he took on a job as teacher for those Mennonites that were around there. And for that they would give him to eat. And that's all his got. And he did accept that. And we were smaller; the group got smaller. And he came and visited us once in awhile and he told us a few things. What he had observed and heard like that. And the Tatars they had sheep in the field and through him were able to steal sheep and make our living that way. Then finally we decided together that this is not the way that we can manage here. Those people of ours what have moved here they are so poor and we ourselves are poor and there's no opportunity for us anyway because the wild people there they--well that was a danger. So I decided to go back. And I did. Went back to my uncle and I stayed there for awhile. The rest of the boys we stayed there until 1937 then the Secret Police picked them up there. And he sent to Siberia and we never heard of them. Other fellow, there was two brothers, the one fellow they went to (I forgot the place where he went first.) But from there he went to the and from there he went to the Amur. You have probably heard of that too where the Amur River way up east. Anyway from there people were leaving Russia by night over to China. And he was caught there. And the other one his brother was picked up 1937 and never--yes they heard of him. His wife lives in Canada. He died, I don't know, about 2-3 years after he was in a labour camp there somewhere. From all those fellows as far as I can remember I'm the only one that survived up till now. And got out of the country. This fellow what was a teacher he came back

8/15-

GOERTZ (cont'd): to the Molotschna. Time was more regulated already. That was way back, say, 1923-1924. Then he became a minister in our Mennonite congregation. Not at our village but and I met him once whenthey had a Bible discussion or

I went there, here you know I met him. I said, "Man, com ?" "Yes, God's grace that I'm living." Then it was for 3 days and I got with him in conversation. We talked these things over and I said, "You know, you remember yet with this sheep business down at the Terek and how that work out now you as minister? What would you say about that, what we did compared to that?" He said, "You know it wasn't right what we did but..." he said, "what did David do, King David did when he was hungry with his group?" Well that was for me again, you know, the smart answer. That fellow he was picked up after anyways. He was sent away and disappeared as all the thousands of others of them. So that's the situation. But I never settled back in my home village. For the one reason some of those Makhno lived there. They were our neighbour village. And they had beaten me up so badly about not giving out people. They wanted three people from our village. They hunted them very badly. And I knew where all three of them were and I didn't tell them. So they beat me up so badly I didn't trust--as soon as they heard or see it--well that's the finish of it.

Henry Goertz
Tape #20, Side B only

GOERTZ: You know sometimes we think we know a lot but God has a different plan sometimes than people plan. I never thought that I would be able to get out of Russia. And I knew one thing that getting out of Russia wouldn't be easy. It would have some difficulties. I didn't want to go alone to a strange country. I had an idea to get married. But this thing didn't cream overnight. As I told you before in our village there was a little class distinction between the Mennonites. I was going in a group where all well off boys and girls were and business people and so on. There was one girl she told me once when we were in a group on a Sunday afternoon together. She said, "If you wouldn't be such a poor guy I wouldn't mind to have you as a husband." There was again this poor. I looked at her and I said, "You know what Sarah?" And everybody listened. I said, "Even if you were like me I wouldn't go in for that." And she said, "Why not?" And I said, "You're too silly for me." Everybody laughed but that was--I thought they had a grudge against me --that was when I was a little younger yet but we came to that age. I always at that time and through all those years said, "God if you saved my life and things will get better I want a wife, a real companionship through my life." Not as I have seen in our village where I've worked for farmers. Sometimes I have observed family life even as I was a kid in the families. And it all came to me so natural because my mother's second marriage was an unhappy one. From here on I took a look at marriage life what it was. Anyway when I was in army yet and I came home once for three days only. The neighbours, Peter Klassen, that woman she was maybe a little younger than my mother, she had a humour no matter what the situation and I loved that. And I liked the family. She always knew all the news what happened, way around, in the village, around the village she always knew. And I was interested to find out to know what was going on. And when leaving them saying hello and goodbye she said, "Look I tell you something. I show you a picture yet before you go." And she took out some photos she had. And she reached me one where there were six girls on it. I looked and looked and she said, "What you looking so long at this photo? Don't you know anybody?" I said, "No I don't." "Well why you looking so?" "Well when I live through everything and I come home and this girl up there I will look her up and see if I can get that girl." That was the type of girl I thought I should have. She looked at me and she said, "You know you are a crazy boy. She's so far away that you never will get there. And before everything is over she'll be gone from you forever." Well that could be. We left about that but I never forgot that face what I looked at. When the war was finished and I came to Kuban to my uncle I knocked Sunday night at the door. They opened up the door and they were sitting at the supper table and there was that girl sitting that's my wife. When I saw that

GOERTZ (cont'd): you know I would say through my heart the flame went through. I don't know why or what but that's the way it was. After when I stayed there we got married. I told her my situation but she didn't know--she was not related to my uncle. Her parents they fled from the Terek and she worked as maid. Her parents they were out in the Molosch (?) in the village where I came from. But I didn't know that. But that's the way when I started asking my uncle I told her you know that's the situation of my situation. My love can be--no matter how great it can be to you and yours for mine but I have problems. I am with the government, with the politics that goes on and I am known too well and I don't know if we can make it. Well she said to me, "With God's help we'll make it." I asked my uncle there and he had nothing against it. We got married at Terek, at the Alexanderdar Church; it's a Mennonite Church. A Mennonite minister he married us. He asked me if I belonged to the congregation and I didn't. And he said, "Are you not baptized?" And I said, "No, I'm not baptized." "You know the rules? That they won't marry you if you are not baptized?" And I said, "Yes I know that. But isn't there a possibility to make an exemption?" And he looked at me and said, "You honestly want just to receive your baptism ceremony that you have made a change of life, that you are converted?" I said, "That's my idea. I don't want it sooner or I could have done it. But I didn't. I want to have it done as it's supposed to be done and I want to be convinced from innerly of my heart that these things should work out right for me in life." And he said, "I will make an exception." And he married us . Well from there we had our plans set--overseas, if possible. After we got married my uncle helped us again with money. We went to Rtishechevo (?) to her parents. She wanted to see them. And then we could see what could be done. Naturally they were on the list to immigrate to Canada because they were refugees and had the first opportunity. So Mary, my wife was included and probably could push me in too. That's how I got in touch with B.B. Janz about all this affair, and J. J. Thiessen. Well they knew all about those things. Then it didn't work out. I had troubles you know. Trachoma. I couldn't get out. So there was no use for me to stay in the village because I didn't stay there anyway and if I was I was in hiding. Then we decided ten miles away in Lonzkroma(?) we go there. I rented a room maybe a little bigger than this. That's where we lived, 1922 we were married, 1923, 1924. I picked up just hard work, digging out the roots from trees, selling those roots and bought--that time it was very hard to get food and we had millets(?) yet. That was a
That was what I traded it in and that's what we lived. We lived very poor. Then I started working for a farmer there for my uncle. He lived in that village. He was giving me so little that it was almost nothing. In the meantime American help moved in and the kitchens were set up. And people that helped. Then they gave people clothes too; the American Relief Board. Of course I didn't get anything because I was kind of an outcast. This bothered me all the time about our people

they had a great big farm. He still had at that time four horses, three cows and he had all his land , all his possessions and he got help from the American kitchen. They got clothes and they had managed to hide a lot and they had

Well they got it. I didn't get any. Yet I worked for him and he gave us just so little. Just for the one season I worked the wife got one skirt, one dress that we could buy for her and I could have a new pair of pants. That's all. And I worked from May until about fall. Of course he gave us then to eat and gave us a room where we could live. Then he wanted me because I was a good worker. No doubt about it, he was satisfied. And he said, "You know Hank for next year if you want to stay with us we do it different. And you might be able to get a little more. I am not able to give you more." Well that wasn't quite the story, he could have. But you know that was his story. He said, "I give you four disertine land." That's about 5 acres. And we were working with our horses. "You can sow in it, plant what you want and that crop with our horses we will harvest everything and that will be your wages. And top of it you can live with us." O.K. I agreed on that. Then naturally as it came, 1923 in fall we had sowed his wheat in as we did in the old country. He was a good farmer. There was no doubt about it. And then I had about two and a half acres of land where I would sow my wheat in. He gave me the seed for it. I went out by myself to finish it because it was cold. Nobody was in the field at that time except me. Well I finished it in a couple days. The horses worked slowly. When I finished it I was up to the last grain I put in the ground, I knelt down and I thanked God for it that I could do it and I said to God, "You know that this is not the time that any man with common sense would do those things but I did it because I need it. But you can, if it's thy will, you can help me that I get the crop of it." And that was it. Then in spring, he again, sunflower seed they grew a lot and corn and stuff like that and other things they planted it when time was. Mine was planted when everything was finished. Everything was finished and the land what he gave me where I could plant my stuff that was sod. We had to work that up first with the plough and then this sod you couldn't even work it. It was too lumpy and too hard and too much grass it. But that was the only way I had and I accepted it. There again what happened, I relied not on my doing, not on my uncles good heart that he did it for me but on God's blessings to that what we did. Time went on and sometimes in the summer on a Sunday when I was free I walked down there to see what was coming. It came but not too good in my opinion. But it started coming. Eventually when his was cleaned, weeded and so on. And mine out there his two girls they went with me and my wife and I we went there I wondered if things could just grow there. The girls said themselves, "No." At night when they came home they

GOERTZ (cont'd): said, "Papa

Well he didn't say very much. And they said, "Well it might will." And that's the state. We weeded it twice, that's all we could and that's all we had time for. Then the harvest came. And first all the grain and the wheat. He had a good crop of wheat again. Here again it started raining, and raining and raining and my field of wheat wasn't ripe yet to stand all this rain. And his not because it was mowed a lot and was in heaps ready to thresh. It molded away and rotted away and things like that. Then finally my wheat was ready to harvest. It was really I would say I don't know what, even couldn't trust my eyes what came out of it. I got a wonderful crop. That was just unbelieveable almost. So later on when the other harvest came with the sunflower and with the corn I'm telling you we had corn cobs they were about that long. And they were full size . They weren't just half loaded with corn, but up to the end. With the sunflower the same. We were cutting and the girls were cutting I was hauling that and stuff like that. Then the neighbour came over once and said, "And this is what you get from those fields there?" "Well," she said, "Yes, you're telling me that." So she was kinda the one who turned the wheels and was kinda stingy and she didn't like to see that I had more luck with that little bit. Well anyway I had a wonderful crop. A wonderful crop of everything. Then we started preparing to go out of the country. We had a little money and see if we could make it. Those passports cost $275.00 at that time--your rubels, that was a lot of money. And even if I would sell all my crop. Well I never thought that I would have that much money. We had a little luck there beside I couldn't get away at that time. But there was a cooperative store, a big one in Landskrone for the whole area. One day I went in there and asked the manager if I couldn't pick up a job there because I used to work in a store and had some experience. They had a board meeting and I knew some of those fellows on the board. And I walked in there and asked for Mr. Toews. I told him the situation and if they could hire somebody some day I would be willing to step in. "No, no, are you 24, 25 or whatever?" "I'm 26 already." And he says, "You are too old. We're looking for a 15-16 year old boy." "O.K., fine." I thanked them and went out. I wasn't down the step yet they followed me and said, "Look, when would you be willing to start to work? Tomorrow? Today? Well stay right here if you want to today. Come this afternoon." And that's how I worked in the store. I got 30 rubels a month. That's $1.00 a day--1 rubel a day. That really was something. I was really happy that I had that job. Then I could make things go. Then we rented a little room. Not much bigger than this. We rented, my wife and I and her brother. He worked

GOERTZ (cont'd): in the creamery there at that time. I was able to pull him in there from Venerstoff(?) And Peter(?) lived there and he boarded with us. From there I started working, really working to get overseas. There was no future left in Russia. The wife pushed more than I did. They were arresting people right and left yet and I was safe so far. Then when we came to the conclusion--yah where do you start. First thing I would have to start to get out of the country to the the office what the Reds had in the village. The next one would be the police office in the bigger villages; to the Mel . And Turk you have to go through the the big district there's another office. Those three offices you have to go through with, first of all with papers that you don't owe anybody anybody and that you are free from politics. And there were a few other things just what they were asking and you would have to have with your papers. So what could I do? I thought and thought it over and there was the only way I thought to do--was to go right to the Commissar that was there. And tell him that I want to go overseas and see if he'd give me the certificate that I don't owe anybody money and that I'm free and not suspicious about any politics and there were a few other things. I talked to him, just two of us, him and me--that I have been there in the office a couple times, but a third person there I never talked just with him. When I told him that or asked him he said, "How in the world do you even have the guts to come and ask me for it?" "Well," I said, "You are the only guy what can help me. There's nobody else can help me." He says, "You know that you have been in the White Army and that you are on a black list that one day to pick you up?" I said, "Yes, I know all that." "And then you still come in here to me?" I said, "Yes, because you are the only person I know of what can help me." He just looked down. He didn't know what to say. He didn't expect that. Then he asked, "What do you think I should do for you? Or what do you think I can do for you?" Well I didn't tell him everything. I told him just one step. "First of all this you know that I need." "Yes." And I said, "Well, get it for me. And you never will be sorry for it." Well he did. And he signed it. Then when I had his signature I thought now I can go farther. Because if his signature was there and he would say, do something that I couldn't get out I'd say, "Here this fellow signed it." And he knew it too. And I think he was sorry at the beginning he did. Then the second step he said, "Now what you have to do, let's go together to T (we had to go by train). And you go in the office there where the Secret Police is and tell them this man he is a working man and he wants to go to Canada, and see if they would O.K. that." He didn't want to do that but he did. He went with me the second step, and we went by train both of us. That day when he came out there he said, "You don't know how lucky you are." I said, "I knew it, that's not my doing, that's your doing because you are helping me and you know it." Now you know, he said, "You have to go another step." Well you should have seen his eye

GOERTZ (cont'd): pop up--he was to go with me down there yet. He did one day and he brought it all back. I didn't even go in. He did it. Those papers were all O.K. Then was J. J. Thiesen. He put the paper through , Well Alexander what we called at that time and Kharkoff. Those two places you know they had to go through that and he did it over there.

PAETKAU: Why do you think this other man, the Commissioner, Commissar did this for you?

GOERTZ: How?

PAETKAU: Why.

GOERTZ: Why? I don't know. Really I think he must have--cause I talked to him openly and freely and without--there was no beating around the bush. And I let him know he was the only guy I could--that could help me. And he was. We would say here, "You take the bull by the horns." And that's about what I did. I said if I had to perish, well I'd do it right here. And if it's God's will that I get out this man can help. This man, I never forget his face. I don't know, I don't think he lives anymore. But he wasn't a real Russian. He was from Latvia. But he was the local Commissar there. He had power. When that was all finished and we went home on the train again he said, "You know what? I done all this. There's one thing can happen and I'm in the soup and you're in the soup." Well I knew it that he would be in the soup too. If anybody would come in -- you don't talk to anybody that you want to immigrate. And if you talk to anybody the people will know it and somebody come and say, "That the guy. You know he was in the White Army and so and so. You are in. I have to do my duty. And I'm in." And I said, "I know it." So then we worked quietly. He didn't say anything and I didn't say anything. I had to go to this different type of offices. Then one day there was out of that village, maybe ten people who were immigrating--they were refugees--and they had their passports--they received them all, I didn't. So my wife's passport wasn't and mine wasn't. And the teacher from the neighbour village his passport wasn't. All the rest was. So we go to Melitopol. That was the foreign affair office. We came in there to see how come our passports didn't come through yet. Or if they come through today or tomorrow we wait in the city to receive them. We were coming in there was Towotashavinsky(?)--he was Jew. He was there. He was a polite guy. We talked to him. And he said, "No you're paper's not here. And there's nothing I can do about it." "Would it probably be tomorrow here?" Well he didn't know. So we went and what are we going to do? This teacher he was a good guy. He knew what he was talking. So we went out to look for lodging overnight. And we couldn't afford to go into a big restaurant or that would be too expensive and we didn't want to

GOERTZ (cont'd): go in a crowd. Some were private. And we saw a sign, maybe as big as the cassette there and it was written on, "Tea or Coffee, Overnight." And I think even the price was on. So let's knock the door. We knocked the door and sure enough there was a lady we told her who we were and what we came in for and she said, "Yes, come in you can stay both of you but you pay me here right now." Yes we did. I guess she figured if we stay without paying in advance they might not pay in the morning. Those things happened in Russia. So she kept us there. She gave us a little tea but nothing to eat. She didn't have anything. We stayed overnight and then we talked it over in the room, "What are we going to do?" We had this room and we were suspicious about her. She had--she was Jewish too. And we went for water or whatever in the kitchen and talked to her yet. Then we told her we came her to see Towotashavisky(?)--mentioned the name you know. "Him what for?" "Well we said, so and so we plan to immigrate and came for the passports and they should be there in his office today and they weren't in so maybe tomorrow." She said, "He is my nephew." Well that was nice to hear that he was her nephew." And we went back in our room and discussed a little bit and went back again and said, "Look Mrs. (we knew her name), this is for your effort if you will do one thing for us. If you go in the office to Towotashavisky(?) to your nephew and see that if our passports come that we get them as quickly as possible. Because you know it's urgent. The train will leave where we were supposed to go." Well she took the money and in the morning when we had our coffee her face was different than the night before. She said, "You finish and go to the office. My nephew waiting for you there." We went there and when we came in we got our passports. We both knew why--we were marked. But a little this--Where goodt schmart, goodt fairt."(?) That was in Russia. But we didn't ourselves because if we would have done it and he would be miserable he could lock us up forever . But through his hand it could be done. So we received the passport and put it in our pocket. You never know how good I felt when I had those passports in my pocket. Well anyway coming home the train was ready to leave the next day or the day after whatever it was and I worked in the store. I stayed at the store. My uncle who I worked for on the farm that treated me at the beginning a little cheap he brought my wife and little belongings to the station and I worked at the store. All the rest were gone and I knew at that time the train would leave. That time I got to be there. Then I talked to the manager what hired me and first of all he didn't want me to leave the country at all. He said, "We need you here. And I have plans for you." I said, "You know that's the situation, I go." He gave me the horses and a man he drove me to the station. When we came they were almost finished. Stepped in and off we went. Then coming to Moscow, in Moscow we visited Lenin's tombs yet and stuff like that. We did all that to be around and just to see what's what. Anyway they took the passports from everyone. And they were

GOERTZ (cont'd): checked over and the Sebezh,that's the last station in Russia we were given it back again. We were there I don't know how many people, probably 300 or so altogether. That was the last biggest group that came out of Russia; 1926 in October, November. Coming to the Sebezh station, J. J. Thiesen went with us. He was immigrating too. He brought immigrants to the station, many, many groups. Then they had elected me for the one box car to (?) on them; to look after their affairs. Well I did. Coming to that station again to get the passports again--receiving the passports for everyone--everyone was there except my wife's and mine wasn't there. So there must be a reason for it. I went to J. J. Thiesen and told him the situation. He said, "Do you have money?" I said, "No, I haven't." "Can you borrow some?" "I think I can." He said, "Get money." "How much do you think I'll need?" "Get as much as you can." he said. "This is the last chance." And I talked to a few fellows and sure they were willing to give me money and I pay it back in Canada or in Riga. Because I had a chance to get money from this Wilms, this teacher I told you. He went before me. He was a Cossack and he had money. He had a great big box, almost as big as this bed is. He had all kinds of belongings there to take over--you know things what he shouldn't. He said, "If you accept that and bring that over I'll give you 30 rubles in gold." Well that was money--30 rubles at that time. I said, "I will." I said, "What will happen if they might take it or so?" He said, "You know what, if something should happen never let them know that you are bringing this over for somebody. Just let them grab it and don't even mention that." Good. That guarantee I had from him and on that I could borrow money. And I borrowed money, that was quite a bit. Then Thiesen said, "Come with me." On a piece of paper I had it Before we walked in,he knew the Secret Police the top men there, he called them by first name and the second name--Jakob, Jakob , usually whatever they would say. Then we went in and Thiessen said to them, "This citizen hasn't got his passport. He and his wife's. It must be somewhere here in all those papers you've got. You have tremendous load today. Somewhere it must be." He said, "No, everyone has his ." And Thiessen walked by him and pushed this in his pocket. And I just saw him that he felt. And he started looking and looking and he found them. I got. We had an order to open all the suitcases, every case what we had because they would check out what was forbidden to take over and so on. So I talked with my group there that I took the responsibility and said, "The very best thing in my opinion is if we would open up everything and when they come in I will go with them alone and tell them check everything what you want, take what you want ; this is what belongs to our group here." And they agreed. They stayed outside. I went in with them. Three men came in. And the first thing was this big box there. I had it open. And I said, "Now you look them through. You look in the bottom if you wish. You look everything through. And if there's something

GOERTZ (cont'd): what somebody slipped in without knowing or without knowledge that they shouldn't have you take it out." And you know what they did? It wasn't 3-4 minutes they were out. In other places people had trouble, boy did they have trouble. Some--of course they didn't like to open up the boxes and they were all in there and they argue and stuff like that. Here was no argument whatsoever. And we closed everything. Still I was shaky. Still there was a little distance to the Red Gate what we called. I was the last one in a box car with my group and we were supposed to keep the doors locked and not open the doors. I couldn't help it, I pushed a little bit so that I could squeeze a little bit, see a little bit; are we through that Red Gate or not. As soon as we were through that I couldn't help it I just yelled "Hurrah!" The end of the box there were soldiers standing and as soon as I had my head out they put the gun out. Well I didn't know it, it was my mistake that I did it. I didn't mean to make them mad or something like that. But when we stopped at a station the first one that met me was J. J. Thiessen. He shook my hand and he said, "Thank God I never forget what he done for you and for me and for all of us." And I think I never did. And we came to Riga and to the city and there we was under the quarantine and louse or whatever they call it. Our second son was born there in Riga in a German hospital. The rest stayed so long and they went away and they kept us back on account of this. But then after everything was alright we left. In Riga I felt as a free man and I was in a business. And in Russia I don't know it happened. It was just so quick and unexpected--I had a group of people I started leading them in the city, buying clothes and stuff like that and the store man, he got his eyes on me and he said, "Look, where are you bringing all these people from?" I told him. And he said, "For all that you did, for our business you pick out a suit." I picked out a suit. I didn't have any . He gave me a suit. I naturally was enthused about it. And I brought more people and more people. And he paid me for it. He didn't skin the people--he got the customers. When he knew that I wanted to go to Canada later on he didn't want to have it. He said, "I will be willing to pay you good money. Stay in my business. I need you." And I said, "I would. I would stay right here. But there's the big eye one you know the Russians they're close by." He said, "They never will come here." And I said, "Oh yes, one day they will be here and they are." Well anyway we came to England in a boat. Well we had to go through all kinds of commotion there. We came to Canada happily I would say. We came to Kingsville. Well there we started a new life.

PAETKAU: How did you feel once you were in Canada?

GOERTZ: How I felt once I was in Canada? A free man. There was no better--I couldn't speak the English, everything was strange to me, no work, my wife's health wasn't too good,

GOERTZ (cont'd): I had two children to look after, but I was a free man. At the beginning I looked over my shoulders; are the Secret Police behind me or not but that disappeared quickly. I picked up any job I could earn, even if it was a $1.00 I did it. We were talking before yet how people, how Mennonites are sometimes--my sister, we were--well she couldn't stay home either. We had a stepfather and he didn't like us. Anyway she stayed at a different village and that was a rich farmer. She had to work hard there. When I had the idea to imigrate I thought, Sarah come with us. Let's go to a new land. She agreed. She wanted to, but had no money. I said, "Well, Mr. Wiebe maybe will help." Well we approached and talked to him and "No. 275 rubles. Well how do you want to pay that back?" Sarah said, "When we get there I will work and send you the money." "You never will be able to pay it back. And I can't give you the money. I need the money for my business." He didn't. Here you know what happened? When Sarah was here/ and in Russia when famine time came she sent him parcels to keep him going. See that's the way it works. See he didn't trust that he would get the money and he lost everything. He lost everything. He lost and died. His son was a rich farmer; he was arrested He worked in a coal mine and he died there. And things like that. And many many of our people; we had them in our village too, rich farmers. I have talked to them and said,"try and get out. You wouldn't be well off at the beginning but eventually." No they didn't believe it. They thought, Russia that's our country, we stay, we will make it. And some of them it was too hard to part from their possessions. And when we here, what did we do from here for my stepfather, my wife's parents and other friends; we have sent a lot of parcels, food parcels. You know I worked, eventually we got more and more and we could do a little more. But we had the Reiseschuld to pay yet. My first job I picked up was tobacco factory in Kingsville. I worked not too long, maybe two weeks and they threw me out. I didn't know why. And I was too fast worker on piece work. You were supposed to earn $2.85 in 8 hours, no more. And I made over $4.00. I was awful fast in working. They threw me out; I didn't know it but this way I learned. Then I picked up a job in a brick yard with nigers. And I worked with them. I always called those two years in the brick yard my Canadian high school I went through. Boy did I work hard. I got 35¢ an hour there which I thought was very good. But I worked hard. Sometimes I came home for a meal I couldn't eat. I had to lay flat on the floor for half an hour and I was able to eat. It was too hard work for me. Then they had these great big kilns where they were heating and burning the bricks, tiles and stuff like that. When they were finished they were opened up , on top and side the air could get through then about 3-4 days time we had to unload and bring it out and put new stuff in. And they sent me up there. I was the smallest and thinnest. I could squeeze through quicker than the others and reach things down. Twice I fainted and they had to bring me out and pour water on me. When I was

GOERTZ (cont'd): O,K. again they sent me in again. I couldn't do nothing there. You couldn't complain to nobody. You needed th e money. The only thing I could do was pray that God would give me work and ability what I could do with my strength what he had given me. And one day it was so hard that I couldn't work no more and I went home from work I said to my wife, "I have to try one more thing. I have to go to Windsor, the automobile factory and see if I can get a job there." I went there and by going down there there was Italians digging ditches and I had been offered a job digging ditches. But that wasn't a steady job I thought and I didn't accept it. I went to Ford. I came there outside of the office there were about 600 people lined up from work and one of the men came out and said I need seven men today. He mentioned what type of men he needed. Then he had those 7 men and said, "Now you fellows can go home if you wish come back tomorrow. But today that's all I need." So people started going away, going away but there were still a lot left, maybe 150 . Even I was. There was a great big stone, I was sitting there and I was relying to get--at that time I realized over here if you want to have a job you have to have the language, you have to have a knowledge what some professionals have and then I said that's all I don't have but God can still do it that I get a job here. Here you know just this little prayer, a man came out and said he needed two more men. One was there with a letter of recommendation from somebody. he sent him in and he stood not too far away from me and said, "My friend do you want a job?" And I thought he pointed to different man than me. I looked around and he said, "You want a job?" And I looked around again. Then he poked me on the chest, "You want a job?" "Yah." "Go in." And I came into Ford. I worked at Ford there, of and on you know, but I was able to pay the Reiseschuld which came up to me for my sister because she helped me out. She worked in a house for$5.00or $7.00 a week. She helped me out that I could live when I didn't have work. And "Sarah," I said, "I will also pay the Reiseschuld for you too." I don't know exactly how long it took but not too long, and I paid my Reiseschuld. Then the depression set in. Well I was laid off account of that.

PAETKAU: How did the Canadians treat you at first? How did they react to you as Russians and immigrants?

GOERTZ: Well that's a subject again. Not too good. You know I worked in a brick yard or I worked in a tobacco factory and they looked at us that we were taking jobs away from them. We were willing to work cheaper than they were which wasn't true. The man who employed us sometimes he took advantage of it. He said, "Why would I pay that guy 30¢ an hour or 25¢ when this newcomer would work for 20¢ an hour.

GOERTZ (cont'd): That wasn't ours. We would like the same--as good as I could talk at that time I said, "If you pay us what the others." Well he gave us that, and I thought it was the price and I took it. I know in the brickyard there were three brothers, English; Grant was their name. They really didn't like me, not the Germans. They called us Germans. In Russia we always were called Germans and here we were called--in the beginning they called us Russians and then they called us Germans, whatever suited them the best. Anyway they didn't like it. And he told me one day, "You know what you guys would be the best to kill you all off." "Well if you feel that way, Grant," He was in the army, he was a solider. I said, "If you want to do that you can do it. There you have the butcher knife you can kill me. I won't run away from you. I stay right here." Well he didn't do it but he was hating me. And his other brother hate me too. At Ford it was different because they had all kinds of nationalities there. There was thousands of them working. I guess that was a little different. I noticed one thing there too that if I would stay there I would be in trouble with my stomach because I couldn't take that air. There was such fumes there. Now they have it different at those plants; kind of a ventilation route. But that time it was different. But I was happy. I made my money there. They paid me 65¢ an hour instead of 35¢. Then I worked maybe three weeks then I get without asking 75¢ the rest of it. Then the foreman he was a Scotchman, Frank was his name, he liked me very much. I don't know why but he liked me and when he had some special jobs to do, quick, fast, he called on me. When it, sometimes there were for overtime you know special things to do he called me. I got a lot of overtime in. I got sometimes at that time when I brought home you know about$90 in one pay, it was every two weeks or every 10 days that was big money. We managed very well. We paid off the Reiseschuld and then I had a brother-in-law in the west he was two years ahead of me in Canada. He didn't make a go whatsoever. Well I helped him. Then come over, another brother-in-law. You know my wife's relatives. Well he had a big family, he couldn't make a go whatsoever. We brought him over. I remember when I was laid off we brought $70 home and I said, "Look, Mary this is what we have. I have been laid off and Jake and Anna they want to come here and they need $70.00. What shall we do?" Well we made it a subject of prayers. We sent in the $70.00. And I had no work. And they came. The brother-in-law died in Waterloo. He was a minister there in the church, Jakob Braun. He died there about 3 years ago and she died a couple weeks ago. She was here in a home too for awhile. Then she was transferred to Roston(?) from there to Palmerston Hospital (her daughter lives there) We were there at the funeral. So that's a little bit of a story.

PAETKAU: Do you remember the church there? The beginnings of the church.

GOERTZ: In Waterloo? You bet. I lived at that time, you know we lived in Windsor and we had no job there and you could buy a job. In the depression times we moved to New Hamburg and we lived in New Hamburg fifteen years. Then I worked for a farmer there, Amish Mennonites and got 75¢ a day and got dinner and supper. But I worked 12 hours a day there. They treated me good you know with eats what strong but I had awful hard work. But I can't complain about that either, that was a time you couldn't do nothing about it. Then we had in New Hamburg a little congregation Brethren church and Mennonite church together. And that worked for such a length but then the Brethren they pushed to split up because they thought they should have it their way and we were--Eldester Janzen he came over there and Jacob Braun my brother-in-law he lived in New Hamburg at that time . Eventually we joined the Waterloo church and went there, almost from the beginning. They were a small church and it was---

PAETKAU: You mentioned Eldester Janzen the other day already. What do you remember about him here in Canada now as minister?

GOERTZ: He was I would say, a big organizer, first of all. He organized the Mennonite groups and tried to pull them together. In Reesor, Northern Ontario there was a group and Leamington there was a group, Vineland was a group, Waterloo and Kitchener, New Hamburg was a group and Hespler was a group. He tried to bring that under one head. That's was his work what he did. That man has a certain gift for organizing and getting along with people. Not along, but he got along with people, but sometimes to come to the core to the heart of people that's not you jump in and here you talk right away about it what he actually was after, and he went to certain fellows, I still know them, when there he told me once, "How can I get (he's in touch with me because we know each other from the old country and we could talk on any subject but here they were strange to him those people and they were hard--that time money was scarce. No organization can do without money. You have to have some money. Well where do we get it. Well if he gives a dime or quarter or half a dollar if he was able to do it that all brings together that even Janzen could live because he couldn't work for nothing because he was a man I would say an age and he wasn't built for that type. If he would haven't have been here I don't think things would have worked out so good. Then this particular man when he came he told me that once, he really prayed to get to this man's heart because he was doing alright at that time already. He said it took me a long time and many trips I had to make to that man until I finally got him. But he started talking pigs and cows and horses and wheat and chicken and price of egg and things

GOERTZ (cont'd): like that till he came--well I would say he really put down psychology and that was the only way. Sure a lot , well I don't know if a lot but some didn't like him because they thought he wanted to make an easy living. That wasn't the case, not at all, because he wasn't after material things. He was one of the fellows I don't think he could handle money properly. It didn't stay with him. That's the opinion I have of him. Even in the old country when he was in the army as chaplain he was on horseback just the same as we were and he lived off that what the soldiers did. Naturally over here he started working in he made trips. Eldester Toews he know very well and J. J. Thiesen and some other fellows there you know. And in the States he get acquainted. Well I would say he worked hard. He really worked hard. I always liked him even if he sometimes said things I didn't like to hear so well but it was the truth. And if it's the truth what can you do? So no? Well that's not a truth is it? You have to take it. And he did. He came to me..... (End of Tape)